



# COVENANT NEWS

BUKÁS-LOÓB SA DIYÓS COVENANT COMMUNITY • ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK

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## NEWS

## COUNSELS

### BLD Newark Disciples Gather



More than 100 committed and covenanted disciples gathered at Divine Mercy Parish last Saturday for this year's first BLD Newark Disciples' Assembly. As it is at almost every BLD meeting, the afternoon started with Praise and Worship. This time, it was led by representatives from each of the Apostolates - Management, Pastoral, Evangelization, Formation and Mission. A quick lunch followed and then the afternoon's agenda was underway.

Things started with a brief report on 2018's financial results, which was presented by the Management Stewards, Vino and Beth Guiang. Through God's bountiful blessings and with the cooperation of members in curtailing spending, BLD Newark ended the year with a small surplus.

As for the rest of the afternoon, it was primarily about the assembly's main theme, derived from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians - how there are many parts, but we are one body (cf. 1 Cor 12:12). To highlight how this is also the case with regards the BLD Newark Community, each of the ministries in the five apostolates

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### Go and Sin No More

THEME: We live Christ's sacrificial love when we repent of our sins and commit to renew our life.

WORD: Is 43:16-21 ~ Ps 126:1-2,2-3,4-5,6  
Phil 3:8-14 ~ Jn 8:1-11

ORDER: "Go, and from now on do not sin any more." (Jn 8:11b)

REFLECTION:

**F**or the 5th Sunday of Lent, our theme is – We live Christ's sacrificial love when we repent of our sins and commit to renew our life. Today's Gospel is an unparalleled story of mercy and forgiveness. Jesus demonstrates His compassion towards the adulteress who was about to be stoned to death as the Jewish law demanded for the offense of adultery. The Pharisees presented the adulterous woman to Jesus to entrap him. Instead, with this challenge, Jesus gave His unqualified acquittal and pardoned her who was proclaimed a sinner in the eyes of man: "**Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.**" (Jn 8:7)



Judging and condemning others seems to be socially acceptable nowadays. Media is abuzz with news, even fake ones, and tabloids are putting people in the limelight and exposing their immoral actions. The natural reaction is to condemn the sinner instead of the sin. It is so much easier to condemn those who have committed wrongdoings, especially grievous ones.

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### Promise of the Week

*Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.*

– cf. Ps 126:5

Two More from the Disciples' Assembly:

## The New Order Has Already Begun

*"...the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come."* (2 Cor 5:17)

It will be difficult, but we can do it! We can do it because, despite our limitations and failures, there is something at the very center of this Community that is alive and will enable us to renew ourselves continuously, and thus be able to adapt ourselves to new situations as they arise.

What is this something? It is the spirit of constantly seeking the will of God. It is that sensitivity to the Spirit that will enable us to recognize where, and in what direction, Christ is calling us today. Let us respond to that call.

Our heroic-driven discipleship, with a deepened prayer life will lead us to focus on what lies ahead, what greater goals can be achieved, and what ways there are to ensure that important parts of our vision and mission remain vital, and that they are not overlooked. If we choose to be humble and just accept where we are failing as disciples and as a community, we will be able to imagine and pursue an inspiring future and strive to shape it, rather than passively watch the future happen around us.

As disciples, we should first rid ourselves of ingrained habits, prejudices, cultural preferences and the 'we've always done it this way' attitude – in other words, the hindrances to proper and timely adaptive responses. Of course, not everything should be discarded. We must be wisely selective. Core beliefs and values should be preserved, and this is non-negotiable, for they will serve as the anchor that allows for purposeful change.

Another key to our challenging world is obedience because obedience facilitates community life and our ministries. We need to be flexible enough to do whatever the situations call for – whether it be in the assignment of tasks to be completed, in accepting responsibilities, or even in determining the next personal steps we are to undertake in the Community. A certain indifference is needed, or, to put it in another way, there must be less attachments to personal preferences, with a focus on what's needed in order to accomplish things instead.

God's will is upon us and if we open our hearts to change in the way we do things, we will be able to extract gold from the opportunities at hand, →→

→ rather than wait for opportunities to be handed to us. In search of effective avenues, we could also look back to the old fashioned ways of how the community started, and find the things that should still work.

The choice is ours! While many things are beyond us, we still have a choice - a choice in the way we see things; a choice in the way we react to things; a choice in how we discern our future actions; a choice in the way we let our circumstances define who we are and how we set our priorities in pursuit of our mission.

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## It Begins with Me



I belong, perhaps, to the few who remain optimistic about the future of our Community. I am not discouraged about what is perceived to be a dwindling attendance. If at all, through God's wisdom, I am more encouraged than ever, knowing that the best is yet to come for us and to our community as a whole.

We have had many encounters and seminars, and so, we can probably say that hundreds, if not thousands of would be members have joined us... and then moved on. But we can all probably agree that the Word of God, the Seed, has been planted into their hearts. While we cannot ascertain which direction has been taken by those who have left, we also believe that the Word of God is living and effective and can pierce through anything to bring about change and direct lives in the service of God.

The garden of evangelization is something special that we should talk about. We should remember that our Community is just one small garden in the vast kingdom of God. How true it is today that we can share some great stories about members who have left us, who have grown and blossomed. Their stories are ours too because God has used our Community as an instrument, a stepping stone on their spiritual journey. Remember though that God is the Gardener not us.

I also would like to touch on the pastoral care issues that were raised.

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## COUNSELS

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But mercy defies logic. It is dispensed, not because of the requirements of the law and justice, but mercy comes from the goodness of the heart. Jesus did not just blindly comply with the law. During His ministry, He did not condemn sinners, but forgave sins and showed us the impact of forgiveness – He reintegrated forgiven and repentant sinners into God’s community of the righteous.

We are given chance after chance to renew our lives, away from sin, through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When one goes to confession with a sincerely contrite heart, no sin is too big to be forgiven by our Lord.

We know that in the Ten Commandments, adultery is a serious sin. But in the Gospel, Jesus demonstrated His love by condemning the sin, but not the adulterous woman – **“Go, and from now on do not sin anymore.”** (Jn 8:11b). God does not deal with us according to our sins because His love is so great for those who fear Him (cf. Ps 103:10-11).

In the First Reading, we receive this assurance when we are reconciled back to God: **“Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; see, I am doing something new!”** (Is 43: 18-19) Jesus is not interested in our past, but in what we can become by God’s power and grace. With His help, any sinner can become a saint.

It is exactly a week before Palm Sunday, the day that ushers in Holy Week. The season of Lent is indeed a fitting preparation for Holy Week when on Good Friday, we commemorate the day that Jesus died. He died



because of His love for us. He offered Himself as the ultimate Sacrificial Lamb for people like us, who are sinners, and who are tempted and are prone to sin again. Lent offers us an opportunity to review our life’s journey towards eternal salvation. It is the time to acknowledge our sinfulness and beg God for His mercy, trusting in His goodness and unconditional love for us. From the dark alleys of our sinful lives, we can lead a renewed life of grace and be assured of the Lord’s promise: **Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.** (cf. Ps 126:5)

Direction:

Fast, immerse yourself in prayer, and give alms.

Two More from the Disciples’ Assembly...

(from page 2)

The responsibility for pastoral care should not solely be relegated to the Pastoral Ministry or to our DCS. Pastoral care is our collective responsibility. We do not have to wait for our leaders to direct us to pastor and to help. We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers; and we should make ourselves accountable to each other. Let us be guided by words from Mother Teresa of Calcutta: “Do not wait for leaders, do it alone, person to person.”

The issue about being late for worship was raised, and I share the sentiment expressed against tardiness. There is an easy fix for this - if we reflect on who we are, why we are here and what we are here for. Self-introspection is an avenue for change. Let us pray about it.

Lastly, there was also a call for worship leaders to step down. It sounded harsh, but at its heart, it was simply a call for change for the better, to make our Friday Worship truly special. However, I urge our Worship Leaders not to step down. This is not what our Community has taught us. I exhort them to just be reminded of the prophetic and priestly role of Worship Leaders. One does not give up and put away garments just like that. We are taught to pray first.

This assembly reminded me of the story of the woman by the well. It was probably an afternoon of conversation between the woman and Jesus. They talked about worshipping in the temple, with all its richness and splendor, and what it is to worship in the mountains under the canopy of the heavens and nothing else. The conversation centered on the heart of the worshipper. It was about worshipping in Spirit and in Truth. When we worship in Spirit and in Truth, we are able to focus more on what is truly important, away from the distractions, annoyances and human imperfections that surround us.

In one of our Friday worships, I was excited to see our Worship leaders because I like them. They were bright, intelligent and articulate, and they are good witnesses. Somehow during the worship, I got lost and distracted, but I couldn’t really place any blame for that on them or on the Praise Ministry. I then looked at myself and realized that I came to that worship with the wrong disposition in my heart. There was deception and a lack of Spirit in me.

So, I wholeheartedly agree! We need to make some changes in how we conduct ourselves in Community.

... And the change should begin with me!

# NEWS

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took turns in describing their ministries – their activities, along with their successes, as well as the challenges that they currently face. What emerged was that, although there are many diverse roles, we are bonded together in ecclesial communion. For many in the assembly, it was a good overview of the many things that BLD does. The presentations were capped by a talk given by Jovy and Emily Lucero, about their roles as Cluster Shepherds and what they've seen in Newark, as well as in the other districts in our cluster.

Although the presentations took a while to complete, afterwards, there were still a good number of people still there for a lively Q&A. Among the topics discussed were the issues surrounding the noticeable decline in attendance, excellence in worship and the need for a renewal of pastoral efforts and shepherding.

There is a lot of work ahead, but with God's grace, and the continued efforts by the different ministries, the Community can look ahead to thriving once again in the years to come.

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From Divine Mercy Parish...

- BLD Members' Evangelization Efforts in RCIA

## Go therefore and make Disciples...

*“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” - Mt 28:19-20*



At this year's Easter Vigil Mass at Divine Mercy, Catechumens will be baptized, celebrated and welcomed as new Catholics. They're the candidates currently undergoing the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) at the Parish.

Since September of last year, an untiring group of BLD members have been assisting DMP and the Catechumens in their preparation. They've provided a program of weekly classroom instructions and teachings on the rubrics of the Catholic faith. At the start, there were only a few candidates; but that number has now grown to eleven!

Last month, on the Third Sunday in Lent, the Catechumens were presented to the congregation at Mass. They then entered into what's called →→

Please note that a pdf of this Covenant News is also available online at BLDNEWARK.com

# LORD'S PROVISION

## PREVIOUS WEEK'S

Collections:	Last Week	YTD
Tithes	\$ 2,044	\$ 20,339
Love Offerings	\$ 713	\$ 10,487
E-Giving	\$ -	\$ 1,475
Mission	\$ 85	\$ 9,897

Financial details are available to all members through [treasury@bldnewark.com](mailto:treasury@bldnewark.com)

Thank you for your continued support!

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**No BLD Newark Praise and Worship on April 19, Good Friday**

**BLD NEWARK**  
**7 Last Words of Christ**  
 Reflections by:  
**Msgr. Paul Schetelick**  
 DMP Auditorium  
 April 13, 2019 1 - 6 PM

Seats are limited. Email [community.retreat@bldnewark.com](mailto:community.retreat@bldnewark.com) to RSVP, or Register online at [www.bldnewark.com](http://www.bldnewark.com) and click on Community Retreat flyer  
 Registration Deadline: March 28

**Marriage Encounter**  
**Weekend 52**  
 18<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> of May 2019,  
 Sacred Heart Center, Newton, New Jersey

*I hold you in my heart, for we have shared together God's blessing.*  
 Philippians 1:7

Please contact [mla@bldnewark.com](mailto:mla@bldnewark.com)

Marshaling	Date	Apostolate
	Apr 12	Mission
	Apr 26	Pastoral
	May 3	Evangelization
	May 10	Formation

→ the *Scrutinies*, the Period of Enlightenment and Purification. Included in what they now do are discussions of their reflections with their RCIA mentors. The conversion of hearts (metanoia), turning them around to Christ is now evidenced through, and strengthened by, their scripture reflections.

As we await celebrating their reception of the Sacraments with them, let us keep them in prayer, together with our BLD members who, with the grace of God, and with the support and the guidance of Fr. Alex Cruz and Fr. Robert Lamirez, have persevered in bringing the Light of Christ to the world.