



Pope speaks of exodus in our time

In his Wednesday catechesis, Pope John Paul II recalled the wonders God wrought, as he reflected on Psalm 114 which celebrates Israel's escape from Egypt.

This deliverance is a sign of God's "paternal concern in his meetings with His people," the Holy Father said, "the saving love of the Lord who sustains and regenerates humanity while it advances in the desert of history."

Similarly, the Lord leads us by baptism to freedom from our sins. His greatest gesture of love was when he gave his Son for the salvation of the world, making his blood a "spiritual drink" for people.

(Zenit.org, December 3'03)

Fr. Paul exhorts assembly

After worship last Friday, our District Spiritual Director Fr. Paul Lehman addressed the assembly on how we can improve the practice of certain spiritual gifts in the community. He dwelt on the moment of deep communion with the Lord, and how we honor and gain the graces of His Presence by our *silence and listening*. As silence is called for at certain parts of the Liturgy of the Mass, so should we observe silence during the empowerment phase of our corporate worship.

Fr. Paul then turned to the gift of prophetic utterances, and how it is authentically evinced in our charismatic community during worship. He stressed that *we share in Christ's prophetic office* so that we may *encourage, upbuild and console*. Even as we *"strive eagerly for the spiritual gifts"* (1 Cor 14), we must discern before we proclaim, for prophecy is *distinct from teaching, preaching and pious reflections*.

We thank Fr. Paul for the vigorous teaching and specific guidelines (*please read the article on page 3*) in the proclamation of prophecies, as we seek to identify those who have the "prophetic ministry" among our members while being zealous not to lose this precious gift. We pray that his message will be received with a spirit of generosity and obedience.

COUNSELS

Our Advent Preparation

WORD: Bar 5:1-9; Ps 126:1-6; Phil 1:4-6, 8-11; Lk 3:1-6

ORDER: "Prepare the way of the Lord." (Lk 3:4b)

REFLECTION: Before our renewal, the Advent season for us was the start of the busiest time of the year. There was shopping for presents, wrapping of gifts, office and home parties, decorating the house with lights, putting up the Christmas tree and sending out Christmas cards. We were so consumed with the holiday preparations. Only after our renewal did we truly understand that Advent is not really about "those" types of preparations. Advent is really about spiritual preparation, and getting ready for the coming of the Savior. It is about "making straight" the way of the Lord.

On this second Sunday of Advent, we hear the cry of John the Baptist echoing the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." (Lk 3:4) St. John undertakes to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah by **proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins** (v3). He further preaches, "Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth." (v5)

The Greek word for **repentance** is "**metanoia**" which means "a change of mind." However, in Hebrew, the word means "to turn back or turn away from." When we truly repent of our sins, we do a 180-degree turn and go the opposite direction: to the Lord, away from those things that keep us apart from Him.

One of the best ways of preparing for Jesus' coming into our hearts this Advent is thru the gift of repentance. We examine our hearts and ask the Holy Spirit to help us identify

(Page 4)

God's Promise for the Week

"The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." (Lk 3:5b, 6)

Childhood and *Simbang-Gabi*

December brings back happy memories of my childhood.

I still remember how my older sisters would wake us up at around 3:00 in the morning starting in mid-December to hear Mass at dawn. On our way home from church, I would smell freshly-cooked *puto-bumbong* (violet glutinous rice steamed in tubes served with sugar and grated coconut) and *salabat* (a ginger brew). That was one of the most enjoyable parts of that tradition. To me, then, *Simbang-Gabi* (Midnight/Dawn Mass) in the Philippines meant early morning masses and *puto-bumbong*. It was only when I came to New Jersey that I researched on how it originated.

Since Miguel Lopez de Legazpi celebrated the first feast of the Nativity of our Lord in the Philippines in 1565, Christmas has been the best loved festivity among Filipinos. In preparation, a novena starts on December 16th and this is known as the *Misas de Aguinaldo*, or Gift Masses. This in turn started in Mexico when, in 1587, Fray Diego de Soria, prior of the Convent of San Agustin Acolman, petitioned the Pope for permission to hold Christmastide Masses outdoors because the church could not accommodate the multitude that attended the services. The request was granted and these Masses came to be known as *Misas de Aguinaldo* and later on, as *Simbang-Gabi*.

In the Philippines, these dawn Masses were held during the harvest season when, to accommodate the farmers who had to be in the fields at the crack of dawn, the Masses were moved up to four o'clock in the morning. So powerful is tradition that to this day, urban residents attend *Misas de Aguinaldo* without questioning why they attend Mass at such an ungodly hour. After the service, it is *puto-bumbong* and *salabat*. The novena ends on *Noche Buena* (Christmas Eve) with a Midnight Mass known as *Misa de Gallo*, Mass of the Rooster. (Today, the terms *Misa de Aguinaldo* and *Misa de Gallo* are used interchangeably.)

In the United States, due to the busy schedules, *Simbang-Gabi* is celebrated at night to encourage more people to attend, instead of the customary midnight or dawn masses. Now, *Simbang-Gabi* has a different meaning for me, for it greatly helps me focus on Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

Doing God's Will

Will verbal commitment to our Lord count to be considered a faithful follower of Christ? Jesus said: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."* (Mt 7:21)

It is only by doing the Father's will, by being one with Jesus in our words and actions deepest desires and motivations; in abiding by His Word and being

committed to His cause can we be considered a true follower of Christ. Doing God's will with a cheerful heart despite the difficulties and trials that may cramp our lives is one sign of an authentic follower of Christ.

To do the will of the Father is to be like Jesus - not only to cry out *"Lord, Lord"* but to live as He lived. To abide by the Father is to have not only a cerebral or even a signed covenant with the Lord, but one that is sealed by the unity of our words, motivations, aspirations and actions, by the oneness of our lives with our minds and hearts.

To do God's will is to reflect His character, His will and plan for us, to be Christ to all. We pick up our cross and carry it in His Name. We die to self, to our pride and arrogance. We always ask God for the grace to submit to Him: *"not what I will but what you will."* (Mk 14:36)

In John 4:34, Jesus said: *"My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work."* Doing God's will is the only food that will bring satisfaction, fulfillment and wholeness. We build our lives on Christ just *like a wise man who built his house on rock*. We give Him the right to work out His will in our lives.

Let us then move forward and do God's will in order to experience fulfilled lives that nourish and refresh and bring us the peace and serenity we always long for. God's will is good, totally acceptable and perfect. It brings us joy and contentment even in our most difficult situations.

God's will for us was sealed on the Cross of Christ; ours should not be far behind.

Childlike Faith

It is only natural that a person who has "grown up" with the Bible will experience less difficulty understanding it than one who reads it for the first time. For centuries, scholars have studied the Bible word for word and tried to interpret it. Nonetheless, the messages as conveyed by these scholars are not always similar. How can two people reading the same Scripture passage react so differently? Does God withhold His revelation from one while allowing another to receive it? Why does a particular passage in Scripture suddenly "leap off the page" and strike at one's heart but has no meaning or significance to another?

"I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike..." Turning to the disciples in private he said, *'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I say to you, many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.'* (Lk 10:21, 23-24)

If I read to my ten-year old son, say, the "Mission of the Seventy-two" (Lk 10:1-12), he will not have the slightest trouble following and believing the story. Adults, on the other hand, immediately will question the significance of the reading and as a result experience difficulty understanding it. As adults, we tend to lose our



innocence, our ability to be teachable and more importantly to be good listeners, and our worldliness may color our perceptions.

The truth is in the Gospel—a trusting, childlike acceptance of Christ’s divinity will transform us to be worthy recipients of the Father’s revelation. God prefers the simple-hearted, those who approach Him with the confident **trust** and **love** of a child. With childlike faith, we are able to accept things that we cannot understand. Unable to unravel the divine mysteries, we have to accept God’s word in a childlike manner, on the basis of His authority. We should take the role of student rather than teacher. It is not knowledge that makes the difference—it is the attitude.

We are God’s children; this is our security, peace and joy. Our Abba Father is our creator. Before we were conceived in our mother’s womb, He knew us, anticipated us, and then created us. From the moment of our baptism, God adopted us as his own children, children He would die for. **Let us be and remain as children**, so that we may experience once more His revelation of divine love and peace.

[On Silence, Listening and Prophecy](#)

Directions from our Spiritual Director

Silence ushers us to the contemplative dimension, which all the Lord’s holy ones should aspire for. Silence manifests that we are present to God and “at home” with Him. We should therefore dedicate a period of silence to listen to the Lord and to commune with Him in our personal daily prayer and reflection. As a community, we should observe silence at certain parts of the Liturgy of the Mass: after Penitential Rite, after the first reading, after the second reading, after the homily and after Communion. A period of silence should likewise be observed during the empowerment phase of the corporate worship.

We need to give the Lord our attention as He ministers to us individually and as a community during worship. As the holy people of God, we share in Christ’s prophetic office. The Lord intends through prophecy to encourage, upbuild and console His church (1 Cor 14:3). “He does this not only through the hierarchy who teach in His name and with His authority, but also through the laity” (Lumen Gentium #35).

Hidden from the wise and learned, the Lord reveals His prophecy to the childlike (Mt 11:25). While the Spirit has designated some members of the church to be prophets (1 Cor 12:28), God’s word encourages us to “*strive eagerly for the spiritual gifts...that you may prophesy*” (1 Cor 14:1). Just as Christ’s mystery was revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph 3:5), “*no prophecy ever came by human will...but...by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Pt 1:21).

Prophecy, which is distinct from teaching, preaching and pious reflections, must be discerned and proclaimed. Proclamation must be done properly and in order (1 Cor 14:40). I request that the following Friday night worship,

MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Servant Leaders’ Retreat tomorrow Dec 6 at St. Antoninus 9am-5pm. For the Long Island and Newark DCS, and the Core Leaders of the Newark cluster of Districts-in-Process. Fr. Paul Lehman will be the Retreat Master. *Let us always keep our servant leaders in prayer!*

Teachings Tomorrow Dec. 6 at St. Antoninus 1-6pm
LSS 1-20 Encounters with Jesus; Intro to Intercession;
Intro to Commitment
LSS 1-19 Understanding Corporate Worship; MGT
LSS 1-2 Christian Parenting, Part I

Disciples’ Assembly Saturday, Dec 13 Boland Hall 3-7pm. *All committed and covenanted disciples are expected to be present.* The DCS, with help from the DLC steering committee, will facilitate the Assembly.

Christmas Calendar

- Instead of a single Christmas activity, BLD Newark
- will be treated to a series of Christmas programs on 3 consecutive Fridays after worship, starting Dec 12 when our Mark 10 children kick off festivities with their presentation.
- The DCS encourages everyone to meet the Lord in
- the Sacraments.
- All Ministries and Classes are urged to make the
- Spirit of Christmas alive through compassionate sharing of your time, gifts and material goods with those who are needy around us.
- Please contact Noel and Letty Trillana for help
- with your planned group activities.

2004 Medical Mission to Our Lady Queen of Peace Hospital in Paranaque on Jan 24-25 departs Jan 19. *Volunteers and donations are still wanted.* We have secured low group airfare. Please contact: Tom Pattugalan, Ency/Baby Alberto or Tony/Baby Arambulo.

guidelines regarding the proclamation of prophecies be followed on an experimental basis:

- Lead couple will announce a 5-minute period of silence, after which they will declare the community’s openness to the prophetic word.
- A maximum of 4 persons will line up by the microphone and proclaim the word in English (1 Cor 14:29-32). The prophecies should be relatively brief and Christ-centered.
- People should “confirm” the prophecy they heard if they feel the Holy Spirit has touched them through the word.
- If a person feels he has a prophecy, but is unable to give it, he should write it down and give it to the DCS.
- All the prophetic words should be recorded and kept in calendar order, to discern a possible direction for the community and persons who may have the prophetic “ministry.”

Counsels from page 1

those things that are standing in the way of receiving Jesus, and show us areas of darkness that He wants to heal. We need to acknowledge our sins and seek forgiveness, not only as a once-and-done process, but as a way of life. We need to confess years of accumulated sin that have established mountains and valleys of unbelief, pride and self-will; to make untruthful and dishonest ways straight. As we bring our sins into the light through repentance and confession, we will find them losing their power over us. Our hearts will be cleansed and we will experience true freedom. Our love for Jesus will burn more brightly, and a peace surpassing all understanding will rest on us. God will be our “*shade from the parching heat of day, refuge and cover from storm and rain.*” (Isa 4:6)

John’s greatest passion was to prepare his people for the coming of the Lord. His own words reflected his humility and love for Jesus that he wanted others to experience as well: “*One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals.*” (Mk 1:7)

God had called John to be forerunner of the Messiah. We too can be Jesus’ forerunner and friend as we bring our families, friends, colleagues or fellow co-workers closer to God. Seeing them have a relationship with Jesus will be our greatest joy and reward.

As we prepare for Christmas, John invites us to love Jesus and to express that love to others so that our love for one another may increase and abound. Let us accept the invitation and let the grace of Jesus Christ fill our hearts and minds this Christmas.

Let us ask the Spirit every day during this Advent season to search our hearts and bring us closer to Him. Every day as we pray, read scripture, and repent for our sins, we open the door to His grace. As we empty ourselves of selfish motives and seek to give love more than receive it, we can be confident that our Father in heaven will continue to complete the good work He began in us until the day of Christ Jesus.

DIRECTIONS

- Let love increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception.
- Discern what is of value to the community.
- Share Jesus Christ with others especially the poor and needy, through evangelization and personal witnessing.
- Frequent the sacraments; we have Reconciliation available every First Friday.

Visit us at
www.bldnewark.com.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Dec 6	Newark Teachings, St. Antoninus 1-6pm
Dec 6	ME#22 Grand Reunion, Boland Hall 1-6pm
Dec 6	YLC Reunion, HS Basement 1-5pm
Dec 6	Solo Parents X'mas Party, Boland Hall 6-11pm
Dec 6	Christmas Mission to the Homeless
Dec 7	Christmas Mission to Newark Children
Dec 12	Healing Mass, Christmas Presentation
Dec 13	Disciples’ Assembly, Boland Hall 3-7pm
Dec 19	Mass, Christmas Presentation
Dec 26	Mass, Christmas Presentation
Dec 28	YE10 Reunion, Boland Hall 1-6pm
Jan 20	Newark Teachings, St. Antoninus 1-6pm
Jan.24-25	Medical Mission, Paranaque, Metro Manila (see Ministry Announcements)

May the blessings of the Lord be upon you. . .



BIRTHDAYS

Dec 5	Tess Farinas, LSS6	Dec 8	Fil Malabanan, ME21
	JhoMartin, LSS15		Brenda Abao, SE#12
	Michelle Alto, SE11		Elyssa Noblesala, Mk10
	Christopher Medina, SE#12		Kat Camacho, YE10
6	Rey Duma, LSS9		Madeleine Camacho, YE10
	Sally Santiago, LSS13		Marie Francisco, YE9
	Marvin Daclan, ME21	9	Zeny Garcia, LSS5
	Maricar Parra, SE#12		Vivy Malantic, LSS15
7	Flor Jovellanos, SPE5	10	Angelu Gonzales, SE#12
	Christian Boncan, Mk10		Arvin Lugay, SE#8
	Don Labung, YE6		Daniel Luna, Mk10
	Kaye Plata, YE9		Carlo Badiola, YE9
			Katrina Badiola, YE9
		11	Frank Valeriano, LSS18

ANNIVERSARIES

Dec 6	Leni&Tita Tionsgon, LSS1
7	Al & Aimee Pena, LSS2

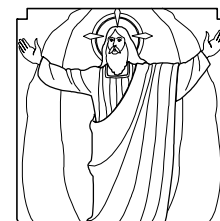
THE LORD’S PROVISIONS

COLLECTIONS

11/14	\$3,759
11/21	3,996
11/28	3,749
47-wk avg	3,775

EXPENSES

47-wk avg	\$4,371
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Thank you for your generosity!

Maranatha! 
Come Lord Jesus!



Bringing Christmas joy to children & homeless

Disciples brave snowstorm

Filled with the Holy Spirit, our Mission servants braved the weekend snowstorm to hold Christmas parties for Newark's needy children and homeless adults, in collaboration with the Missionaries of Charity.

Kindness of heart is a manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit in us. *"Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own."* (Is 58:7)

Undeterred by the blistering winter condition that cancelled Friday worship and other weekend activities, our Mission servants prayed for a break in the weather. They took advantage of a window of opportunity given by the Lord on Saturday morning, and drove to the venue with very little difficulty. Although some of the registered guests could not come, forty unregistered were welcomed and served. Amazingly, there seemed to be a multiplication of gifts, for there were enough presents for all.

Sunday's event was for the needy children, and it was filled with abounding joy. With entertainment provided by Mark 10 and John 6 children, and with some of our Youth rendering volunteer service, the honored guests had a ball. They played games. They danced. They had their fill with food and had picture taking with Santa. They received their Christmas gifts.

A young girl's unsolicited comment said it all, "I really like this party." In another touching moment, a young boy who was so happy with his present sought out his donor, whom he approached and hugged with a most gracious thank you.

To all who donated gifts, to all who offered prayers, and to all who came and served, we offer our most gracious thank you. *"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."* (Mt 25:40)

Please await announcements on rescheduling of activities that were cancelled due to the snowstorm.

COUNSELS

Rejoice! God is with us

WORD: Zeph. 3:14-18; Is. 12:2-6; Phil.4:4-7; Lk.3:10-18

ORDER: *"Rejoice in the Lord always, I say again, rejoice.* (Phil.4:4)

REFLECTION:

Through the first two Sundays of Advent, we were called to prepare and watch for the coming of the Lord. The Word of God on this Third Sunday calls us to rejoice. *"Shout for joy! Sing joyfully! Be glad and exult with all your heart!"* (Zeph 3:14) We rejoice exuberantly because God delivered us from sin, and because He is present in our midst - *Emmanuel, God with us*. The final verses of our first reading contain tender expressions of God's love for His people: *"He will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in His love."* (v17a)

Our Psalm taken from Isaiah is a hymn of thanksgiving. The prophet calls on the community to praise the glorious Name of God. We are to extol the wonders that He has accomplished and to proclaim them to the nations. Of all the wondrous works God has done, we are to celebrate the transformation He brought to our lives the most. Only God can take people in need of salvation and transform them into witnesses of God's power.

St. Paul suggests in his letter to the Philippians that we can expect joy in the Lord that is grounded in faith in Jesus Christ. He calls all believers to live lives of kindness and gentleness, and to show compassion for others regardless of their faults or situations. This kind of genuine Christian behavior should be visible to all.

(cont'd on page 4)

God's Promise for the Week

"The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil.4:7)

Advent Reflections

Advent has four Sundays. Since the 10th century, the first Sunday has marked the beginning of the liturgical year in the Western Church.

The Advent *theme of expectation of the coming of Christ* is two-fold. During the first two weeks, the final coming of Christ as Lord and Judge at the end of the world is the focus of attention. From December 17 to 24, the emphasis shifts to anticipation of the celebration of his Nativity on the solemnity of Christmas. There is a shift from the somberness of vigilance, to joy and rejoicing. *Gaudete in Domino semper!* Rejoice in the Lord always!

- ❖ “The best is yet to come.” (Mother Teresa, on Christian attitude for Advent)
- ❖ Advent is a time of waiting to open “our hearts to him who brings, with his coming among us, the priceless gift of peace to the whole of humanity.” (Pope John Paul, Nov 30 general audience)

Other Advent quotes from Pope John Paul II

- ❖ Build peace in hearts.
- ❖ Reawaken the hope for world peace.
- ❖ Christ is coming, the Prince of peace!
- ❖ Put down the weapons of rancor, of vengeance and of every form of egoism.
- ❖ Let us join forces to preach nonviolence, forgiveness and reconciliation!

From Archbishop Angelo Comastri, papal preacher

- ❖ In Advent, we Christians recall the first coming of Jesus, his birth in Bethlehem. We recall that first coming to prepare for the second coming, Jesus’ return.
- ❖ *“Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low.”* (Is 40:4 and Lk 3:5) To level the mountains means to level the human being... to recover humility because pride impedes listening to God. The valleys, the voids, must be filled... means to throw earth on vanity, with which we try to hide the inner need we all have for God.
- ❖ By rejecting the Christian message man plunges into chaos.
- ❖ Much sadness exists today in a world that lives as if God did not exist. “We see shop windows lit up, well-dressed people, all seem satisfied. But inside, they are desperate.”
- ❖ “Today there are many, many conversions, as God walks on tiptoe through the streets of the world, as he approached on tiptoes the disciples of Emmaus, who were leaving Jerusalem. History continues, and conversions continue to be today the most beautiful pages and the surest sign that Christ is alive and is walking through the streets of the world.”

Reaching Out to the Lost

“If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly father that one of these little ones be lost.” (Mt 18:12-14)

It is of great concern to our Heavenly Father to save the sinners, heal the sick, raise up the underprivileged, strengthen the weak, and seek out those whom the world considers insignificant. He wants us to reach out to those who need our love and forgiveness, those who caused and are still causing us pain. Through our witnessing and evangelization, we are to bring unbelievers and “doubting Thomases” to Christ. Their encounter with God’s mercy and compassion will melt their stony hearts. All of heaven rejoices when the lost, unstable and indifferent are led to the waiting arms of the Lord.

“Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Mt 10:5-6) *“I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.”* (Mt 9:13b)

The love of God compels us to subordinate our own needs and concerns for the benefit of others. As if to remind us that we must be fruitful instruments of the Lord’s will for His people, our community was recently established as an Association of the Faithful in the Archdiocese of Newark. Thus we share in the task of the Church to bring back God’s lost children to the fold of His love.

“The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.” (vv 37-38)

We must not forget that we are all workers in the Lord’s vineyard. We are all stewards of our God-given talents and treasures. It is the Lord who will raise up and send workers to His vineyard. Our responsibility is to tend the Lord’s flock with the same selfless love we have received from Him. We are our brothers’ keeper, accountable for their spiritual welfare. This task comes with labor and pain, a little price to pay compared to the glory that awaits us in heaven.

Surely, we give our genuine thanksgiving whenever we give ourselves in service to the Lord. Everything is possible when we do our work with God in our heart, and for His glory alone.

At the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe

My Faith-Building Experience

It was the morning of December 8th when we visited the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I had been waiting for this day for many years, and the feeling was indescribable. A few miles before the shrine, I was touched by the sight of pilgrims on foot holding the image of Our Lady. The pilgrims' family members followed with their luggage, a sign that they came from a long journey.

When we reached the shrine, thousands of pilgrims were already gathered. This spectacle brought tears to my eyes. "Where did these people come from?" I thought. At that moment, I could feel the warmth of God's love radiating from everyone. They came because of their love for our Mother. What was it about our Lady's picture that people would travel so far for just a glimpse? After the Mass, the pilgrims moved toward the altar to get a better view of the picture. I asked myself, "Is this it?" Too soon, it was over and we were about to leave. In my heart, I was looking for something but I couldn't understand what it was. I believed that our Lady knew what was in my heart.

As the crush of the crowd pushed us out of the Shrine, I felt sad. Like a child talking to her mother, I said, "Goodbye, Mother. I'm leaving tomorrow. I want to stay but I know I can't because of our travel plans. I lift everything to you, my Mother. Even from this short visit, I can feel your love for me." Then looking from afar at our Lady's picture, I saw an image of her crucified Son and the image of Pope John Paul II come in the lower right part of the picture. I began to cry and started to look for my husband. He had been pushed far away from me. I saw one of my friends and pointed at the picture. "Look! Do you see?" I cried out. She cried and nodded her head. She had seen the same vision I had. We cried and embraced each other.

As we walked out of the Shrine, I thought about the image of Pope John Paul II. Why his image? At that point, I saw a huge statue of Pope John Paul II. He was the one who canonized Juan Diego, the man whom our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to and asked to build this Shrine. I remembered how great his devotion is to our Blessed Mother.

I left Guadalupe with much joy and fulfillment. This pilgrimage inspired me to evangelize the Word and to live with a servant heart.

The Lord's Provisions

COLLECTIONS:

11/21	\$3,996
11/28	3,749
12/05	0
47-wk.Avg	3,696

*Thank you for
your generosity!*

EXPENSES: 47-wk.Avg \$4,284

Ministry Announcements

Suffering And Trusting In The Lord

God allows us to suffer not as punishment for our sins, but to test our faith and make us grow spiritually. But there can be times in life when we feel forgotten by God, and few feelings are more painful than this. God holds the answer to every adversity and trial, and such hardships only make us more acutely aware of something that is true at all times - that we need His loving eyes to look upon us in mercy. "*Remember your compassion and love, O Lord.*" (Ps 25:6)

In our community, many of our brothers and sisters are partaking of the Passion of Our Lord, physically, emotionally or spiritually. We offer prayers; sometimes we fast. We feel great compassion for all those who are suffering pain and infirmity.

I have been struggling now for four years. After suffering a simple fall, I've had two knee surgeries and a neck surgery. I have not recovered. In August 2002, I was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease. I have exhibited symptoms of muscle weakness and pain, difficulty in walking and swallowing, and now slurring of speech. By the grace of God, I have not been hindered or prevented by these difficulties from attending Sunday mass, community worship and teachings, and receiving the sacraments. For each pain and sorrow, I seek the Lord's comfort and find peace and joy. "*Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.*" (Mt 11:28)

With my faith in God, I learned to completely depend on Him. The more I know Him, the deeper my relationship is with Him. I always thank God for giving me strength throughout all my trials. I can only praise Him for giving me a new life to live. In the desert of my trials, I have in God an oasis of comfort.

But I must trust Him and abide in His Word: "*Take my yoke upon you... For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.*" (vv 29-30)

2004 Medical Mission to Our Lady Queen of Peace Hospital in Paranaque on Jan 24-25 departs Jan 19 from JFK. Airfare: only \$650 per person, taxes included. *Volunteers and donations are still needed.* Please contact: Tom Pattugalan, Ency/Baby Alberto or Tony/Baby Arambulo.

Disciples' Assembly tomorrow, December 13 Boland Hall 3-7pm. *All committed and covenanted disciples are expected to be present.* Let us all pray for everyone in assembly and the rest of our community.

Counsels *from page 1*

Everyone should be the beneficiary of Christian kindness and love.

These readings lead us to our theme for this week: ***We increase and abound in love as we serve our brothers and sisters in charity and justice.*** The gospel reading from St. Luke gives us John the Baptist as a role model on how we are to accomplish all these things in our lives. As the crowds gathered around John to hear him and be baptized, he was asked three times, "What should we do?" Even though John lived an ascetic life, he did not ask anyone to dissociate themselves from their own lives or occupations. He challenged them to continue with their lives, but to carry out their daily responsibilities with concern for others.

The "crowds" were the first to question John. He exhorted them to share their surplus food and clothing with those who lack the necessities of life. Here we have two examples of the corporal works of mercy that we are called to do as Christians. "Feed the hungry" and "Clothe the naked" are only a small part of helping those less fortunate. The tax collectors and Roman soldiers were the next to ask John on what they ought to do. John instructed them to stop their exploitative practices. He counseled them to collect only just taxes and not to oppress those over whom they exercise authority.

John's teachings are relational in nature: share with the needy and do not exploit the vulnerable. How can we apply this to our community? Are we ready to go out on mission in the most needy areas of our communities? Can we bring Advent joy to those who have little to be happy about? The answers to all these questions lie with our complete faith and trust in the God who is always with us. This Advent season, let us all seek ways to serve the needy. Our Christmas mission to the nursing homes and shelters are great opportunities to share God's love with others, but let us not stop there. All year round, we should actively help and share our blessings with others. As an Association of the Faithful in the Archdiocese of Newark, we should make our presence felt and serve actively in the areas we are directed to by the Church.

As we heed the Lord's instructions, may we grow in humility and obedience. May our reflection on the Word this *Gaudete* (Rejoice!) Sunday bring us God's tremendous promise of peace in our lives.

DIRECTIONS

- Have no anxiety at all
- Fear not, don't be discouraged
- Present your needs to God in prayer and petition full of gratitude
- Give alms to the poor

Community Calendar

Dec 13	Disciples' Assembly, Boland Hall 3-7pm
Dec 14	ME22 Grand Reunion, Boland Hall 1-6pm
Dec 19	Mass, Christmas Presentation
Dec 26	Mass, Christmas Presentation
Dec 21	Evangelization Team Christmas mission
Dec 28	YE10 Reunion, Boland Hall 1-6pm
Jan 10	Discipling, St. Leo Conference Rm 1-6pm
Jan 20	Newark Teachings, St. Antoninus 1-6pm
Jan 24-25	Medical Mission, Paranaque, Metro Manila (see Ministry Announcements)



*May the
blessings of
the Lord be
upon you!*

BIRTHDAYS

12/12	Bea Chan, LSS20	12/15	Earl Manguiat, LSS#11
	Felix Ekweghari, LSS20		Leo Matanguihan, LSS#13
	Krystle Castillo, YE7	12/16	Annie Felibrico, LSS8
	Parov Dela Cruz, YE9		Aida Koryan, LSS2
12/13	Rene Castaneda, LSS4		Adel Camposagrado, LSS18
	Lucille Ermita, LSS13		Jason Bustos, YE6
	Rudy Santos, LSS18		John Allgood, SE#6
	Luz Santos, LSS19		Acel Adriano, SE#10
	Hazel Adao, Mk10	12/17	Eric Amador, LSS15
	Melissa Isidro, YE6		Eric Alberto, LSS17
12/14	Sara Del Fierro, YE9		Eric Escobinas, LSS#4
	Manny Manguiat, LSS9	12/18	Yollie De La Trinidad, ME21
	Eddie Santos, LSS15		Kimberly Herrera, Mk10
	Kookie Besa, LSS17		Justine Madrigal, Mk10
	Carmelle Fernandez, SE11		Alissa Amador, SE#10
12/15	Myrna de Luna, LSS8		Rach Rebanal, SE#5
	Amy Olegario, LSS3		

ANNIVERSARIES

Dec 15	Mel & Baby de La Cruz, LSS17
Dec 17	Jun & Fely Escobar, LSS16



Newark disciples gather in Assembly

Fifty-two disciples were in attendance at our quarterly Disciples' Assembly last Saturday at Boland Hall. The District Council of Stewards presided over the meeting which opened with worship, proclamation of the Word and invocation of the Holy Spirit for discernment and guidance.

Over the next few hours, the assembly engaged in open and impassioned discussion of issues that currently engage the community. Among these were the definition of who an "active" member is; sabbatical and leave of absence from the community; prophesying during Friday worship; and the demands of BLD activities in light of the need to balance community, prayer and family life. Our District Servant Leader also gave an update on the review and pending approval of the Covenant of Communion, and the upcoming district conference for Newark followed by the initial global conference of District Leaders in Manila.

Other matters like the medical mission, Rockland prayer group and continuing search for a venue to house our growing community were briefly touched on as the assembly ended.

"O Lord, take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted." (Ps 80:15-16)

ME 22 holds grand reunion

Eleven couples from their class attended the ME 22 grand reunion last Sunday at Boland Hall and shared how their experience of the Encounter has changed them forever. They were joined by family members, the ME 21 sponsoring class, MLA, the praise ministry and other auxies. The class shepherd, Henry & Aida Koryan led the group in prayer and worship, and after breaking bread together, everyone was treated to love songs and Christmas hymns by the class. We give Almighty God all the praise and glory!

"Give thanks to the Lord, acclaim his name; among the nations make known his deeds, proclaim how exalted is his name." (Is 12:4)

COUNSELS

Mary's Obedience

WORD: Mic 5:1-4a; Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19; Heb 10:5-10; Lk 1:39-45

ORDER: Believe that what was spoken to you by the Lord will be fulfilled. (From Lk 1:45)

REFLECTION: Mary, the mother of God and our mother, is the personification of our theme from this Sunday's liturgical readings: *We increase and abound in love as we become obedient to the call to communion and mission.*

The angel Gabriel had just given Mary an incredible message, one that defied logic, tested her faith, risked her life and jeopardized her relationship with Joseph. A virgin, she was to conceive the Son of the Most High (Lk 1:32), not through any relations with a man but through the power of the Holy Spirit (vv 34,35). The solitary sign that the angel gave Mary to gain her trust was the news that her relative Elizabeth, who was old and barren, was six months pregnant. Mary responded by believing and obeying in faith: *"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."* (v38)

Mary was obedient to the call to communion: *"You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus."* (v31) Prior to the annunciation, Mary was already one in spirit with the Lord. She was born without sin and remained holy throughout her life. By her "fiat", Mary completely united her will with God's will,

[] Page 4)

God's Promise for the Week

"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." (Lk 1:45)

Have a Blessed, Very Merry Christmas !

Christmas Greetings from His Excellency,
The Archbishop of Newark



December 12, 2003

Reverend Paul J. Lehman
Bukas-Loob Sa Diyos Covenant Community

Dear Members of Bukas-Loob Sa Diyos,

What a great joy it is for me to send you greetings during this Christmas Season! In a special way I want to offer you my deepest gratitude and congratulate you on your work and your recognition as a Private Association of the Faithful. I am honored to have you as active men and women of faith in this great Archdiocese.

As our hearts and minds turn once again to the stable of Bethlehem we are reminded of all those who were so privileged to welcome the Christ Child on that first Christmas Day. The message of the Angels still rings out as we carry the message of the birth of Christ to the world, "Fear not!" So many in our cities, in our country and world are in fear for one reason or another. Our task is to remind them of the Good News of Jesus Christ and His message of hope and peace.

I pray that each of you may have the strength to bring that message of Christ to the world which so desperately needs to hear it. As we celebrate 25 years of the Pontificate of our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, we are reminded of his words to us time and again throughout these years, "Do not be afraid!" We have nothing to fear because Christ is with us.

Thank you for your commitment to the Bukas-Loob Sa Diyos movement and the commitment you have made to Jesus Christ. May our Lord bless you and your families throughout the New Year with his gift of joy.

With kindest personal regards, I am

Sincerely in the Lord,
Most Reverend John J. Myers
Archbishop of Newark

Fr. Paul's Christmas Message

Gazing At The Newborn Babe

This Christmas, the Church invites us to focus on the "body", and in a special way, on the most perfect body - that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing is more beautiful and awesome than the body of a little baby! We are all very aware of the body, especially today when the body is used in so many abusive ways. Pornography and sexual abuse of the body is taken for granted. A "spiritual" reaction to this abuse is to scold the abusers that the "natural law" is being broken, and that repentance and self-control are in order so as to reestablish right and correct living. There is no question that this approach is correct. But is it sufficient to convince?

Pope John Paul II answered this question with an incarnational spirituality called the "theology of the body." His approach is Scripture-based and a rediscovery of the connection between body and spirit. Between 1979 and 1984, he gave over 120 teachings on the theology of the body during his general audience. While he may seem to the worldly to be very unconnected to reality, he is in truth a prophet for the true lovers of the body and sexuality. He can talk about contraception as a violation of the language of the body, and love as the total offering of self. He reminds us that original sin is a rupture and opposition between male and female, and that God's words "He shall rule over you" are not a natural consequence of the male ego, but rather a punishment following original sin. Thus the Pope is in the camp of the true liberators of women.

Ephesians 5 talks about mutual submission, not about male control. Lust is a propensity of fallen human nature to regard others not as persons but as objects to be controlled or means to be used for personal gratification. The Pope talks about the "redemption of the body" in which grace enables the body to once again express the person as it did at creation. The differences between male and female, far from dividing human nature, enable communion, characterized by authentic self-giving. Thus marriage becomes a communion of persons.

Redemption, accomplished by the death-resurrection of the fleshed-out Jesus, enables us not to be ashamed of our bodies, but to be proud of the differences that draw us - married, single and celibate - into a perfect communion of love. All this is involved in the mystery of Christmas, so simple as a newborn baby, and yet so profound as to enable us to enter into the mystery of God-made-man, *Emmanuel*, *God with us*. A holy Christmas to all!

Christ is coming, the Prince of peace!

Pope John Paul II

Share in the Life of Jesus

The journey towards balanced spirituality begins with the examination of our interior life, our life in Jesus. At certain stages, we could find ourselves beset with a chilling of heart, a clouding of vision, a deflation of hope or a futility of endeavor. We ask ourselves how these could happen now that we are followers of Christ. We look for answers at the wrong places, and find ourselves more confused and frustrated. But through our eyes of faith, we learn from these experiences and see that they are meant to reveal that we still lack God in our life.

St. Paul said, “*In Jesus, you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*” (Eph 2:22) In Jesus is our wholeness. If we lack in Jesus, we lack in God. Then, we are not “*built together,*” we are not whole. Our relationship with Jesus is the foundation and structure on which our spiritual life is being built (1 Cor 3:11). “If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and straw, it will come to light, for the Day will disclose it. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each one’s work.” (1 Cor 3:12-13)

The intimacy of friendship, the fellowship of community and the ministry of good works are gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and straw unless they are the fruit borne of our abiding life in Christ. Without Christ, love is fickle, community is fractious and ministry is fruitless. Without Christ, a spiritual life built on good relationships and good works collapses at the onslaught of adversity (Mt 7:25). Only in Christ are solid relationships and fruitful work possible (Jn 15:5). Only in Christ can we truly become God’s building (1 Cor 3: 9), where He is ever-present in Spirit.

In this life, we will constantly be hungering, thirsting and longing for the Lord who alone can satisfy our heart and bring wholeness to our being. Aware that our heart desires an ever-deepening communion with Jesus, St. Paul exhorted us to “*pray without ceasing.*” (1 Thes 5:17) A life filled with prayer is a life filled with Christ. St. Augustine counsels us to seek that “interior kind of prayer without ceasing, namely the desire of the heart...*Whatever else you may be doing, if you but fix your desire on God’s Sabbath rest, your prayer will be ceaseless. Therefore, if you wish to pray without ceasing, do not cease to desire.*” And God our delight will not cease to satisfy our heart’s desire (Ps 37:4).

Visit us at
www.bldnewark.com

WHAT ARE OUR COMMUNITY VALUES?

Values are *dispositions of the spirit* regarding a disciple’s life with respect to oneself, with one another and with one’s Community. Paragraph 5.2 of our Covenant of Communion enumerates 38 values that are valued most by the Community. These are classified into 2 categories: Personal and Communitarian.

PERSONAL VALUES are *inner, qualitative dispositions*:

- * **Righteousness:** (Wholeness of person, soundness of character and rectitude of spirit) is a super-ordinate value binding together and heading eighteen (18) other Personal Values.
- * **Self-Responsibility:** Fruitfulness; Initiative and Perseverance; Orderliness; Discipline; Temperance; Openness to learning.
- * **Self-Knowledge:** Prayerfulness; Simplicity; Sincerity; Trust; Advocacy; Openness to correction.
- * **Self-Giving:** Humility; Vulnerability; Obedience; Detachment; Compassion; Readiness to forgive.

COMMUNITARIAN VALUES are *expressed, active dispositions*:

- * **Servanthood:** (openness to love, willingness to serve, readiness to offer, preparedness to give what is valuable or useful to others) A super-ordinate value, binding together and heading eighteen (18) other Communitarian Values.
- * **Group Responsibility:** Sense of Mission; Commitment and Involvement; Subsidiarity; Accountability; Stewardship; Commitment to excellence.
- * **Group Understanding:** Sense of dialogue; Respect for person: Truthfulness; Discernment; Consensus; Commitment to growth.
- * **Group Solidarity:** Sense of communion; Transparency; Submission; Interdependence; Sharing; Commitment to reconciliation.

Build peace in hearts.
Pope John Paul II

THE LORD’S PROVISIONS	
COLLECTIONS	
11/28	\$3,749
12/05	0
12/12	3,520
49-wk avg	3,693
EXPENSES	
49-wk avg	\$4,210

Thank you for your generosity!

Counsels *from page 1*

which was for her to provide a body for His Son (Heb 10:5). She thus became one flesh with the Lord: Jesus is the flesh and bone of Mary. Her womb was home to the unborn Babe for nine months. Mary was the living Ark of the New Covenant (Rev 11:19, 12:1), the covenant that made us one family and Church with God as our Father and Head.

Mary was obedient to the call to mission. Her first mission was one of will, to agree to become the mother of mankind's Savior. Thus she united herself to His mission. Her second was to proclaim the Good News to Elizabeth and Zechariah. This required her to travel from Nazareth in Galilee to the hill town in Judea believed to be Ein Kerem - an estimated distance of 100 kilometers. She hastened, for she was filled with the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit does not waste time (Mk 1:12). Mary carried the Word of God in her womb and in her voice. The Good News' first encounter with man fulfilled the Lord's purpose, for "*When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth (was) filled with the Holy Spirit.*" (Lk 1:41) God's Word did not return to Him void but fulfilled His will (Is 55:11).

Because of Mary's obedience, the Lord "*has looked upon His handmaid's lowliness*" (Lk 1:48) and blessed her with abounding love. She conceived and gave birth to Love (1 Jn 4:8). Her love nurtured, shaped, strengthened and sustained Jesus throughout His life. Although she stayed in the background during Jesus' public ministry, her love for others was evident in her intercession in Cana (Jn 2:3, 5), and at Calvary when Jesus entrusted the beloved disciple, representing the Church, to His beloved Mother (Jn 19:26). Acts 1:14 shows Mary carrying out this trust as she prayed with the disciples prior to the Pentecost. Tradition has Mary present to and inspiring the growing number of disciples in Jerusalem and Ephesus. She is forever one with her Son and all the saints in heaven in interceding for the Church. Truly, Mary's own prophecy, "*From now on will all ages call me blessed*" (Lk 1:48b), has come true.

Our community will be similarly blessed by following the example of Mary. Obedience is a foundational quality of Christian discipleship that finds its most eloquent expression when we discern and follow God's will, impelled not by fear but by our love for the Lord. It is His will that we love, shepherd and serve one another, in His name and strength, and remain one with our brethren in community, and one with His Church (Mic 5:3).

DIRECTIONS

- Bring the good News to our brothers and sisters in need.
- Adhere to our community's Personal and Communitarian Values (*see page 3*).

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- Dec 26 Mass, Christmas Presentation
- Dec 21 Evangelization Team Christmas Mission
- Dec 28 YE10 Reunion, Boland Hall 1-6pm
- Dec 28 LC3 Reunion, St Leo HS basement, 1-6pm
- Jan 10 Discipling, St Leo Conference Rm 1-6pm
- Jan 20 Newark Teachings, St. Antoninus 1-6pm

2004 Medical Mission to Our Lady Queen of Peace Hospital in Paranaque on Jan 24-25 departs Sunday, Jan 18 from JFK. Airfare is only \$650 per person, taxes included. *Volunteers and donations are still needed.* Please contact: Tom Pattugalan, Ency/Baby Alberto or Tony/Baby Arambulo.

*May the blessings of the Lord
be upon you!*



BIRTHDAYS

- Dec 19 Irma Alquiros, LSS9
Ver Nacion, LSS17
Monica Avisado, Mk10
- 20 Maricris Mangasi, YE8
- 21 Anabelle Duma, YE8
Rannie Lopez, YE9
Daniel Pena, YE1A
Grace Palomares, LSS17
Fanny Rodriguera, LSS19
Michael Punzalan, SE12
- 22 Linda Monserate, LSS8
Jun Isidro, LSS15
Matthew Osemeha, LSS18
- 23 Vicky Gatchalian, LSS2
Kris Capili, YE9
Nicholas Punzalan, YE4
- 24 Theresa Bani, SPE5
Germaine Yray, YE6
- 25 Jess Olaso, LSS11
Joshua Cruz, YE10

ANNIVERSARIES

- Dec 19 Bobby & Dolly Fernandez, LSS12
Ching & Myrna Castillo, LSS20
Vic & Mila Malantic, LSS20
- 20 Chito & Olive Encarnacion, LSS9
Manny & Nette Manguiat, LSS9
- 21 Ralph & Lucy Almonte, LSS4
Mauricio & Claudia Paredes, ME21
- 22 Eric & Claire Macalintal, LSS11
- 23 Dom & Jesse de La Cruz, LSS16
Alan & Tess Cam, LSS17
Nonoy & Em Catelo, LSS17



Pope begs God for peace

Pope John Paul II appealed to *Jesus Christ, Savior of the world*, to “save us from the great evils which rend humanity in these first years of the 3rd millennium.”

The Holy Father appeared at St. Peter’s Square to read his Christmas message and offer the *Urbi et Orbi* (to the city and the world) blessing.

The tensions and fears of the times were clearly reflected in his plea to God for help. “Save us from the great evils which rend humanity in these first years of the third millennium. Save us from the wars and armed conflicts which lay waste whole areas of the world, from the scourge of terrorism and from the many forms of violence which assail the weak and the vulnerable.”

The Pope then turned his attention to Mary, asking “the Virgin of expectation and fulfillment” to “make us able to recognize in the Child whom you hold in your arms the heralded Savior.”

Youth go on first Mission Outing

“Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Mt 25:40) Mindful of God’s absolute mercy in giving us His only Son, 14 youths overcame their Saturday morning inertia on December 20, and woke up early to serve the Lord in the poor at the Hillside Food Bank. The volunteers worked until noon sorting and cleaning cans of food and stacking them into Christmas boxes that would be handed out to poor families.

It was the first ever mission outing by the BLD Newark Youth Ministry which set service as a goal this Christmas. The ministry hopes that many more will join in their plans to organize future mission outings.

Accompanied by some youth stewards, the 14 youth who served at Hillside were Steve Banom, Alexandra Briones, Andrea Briones, Elaine Canlas, Kimberly Ciocon, Grace DeLuna, Elizabeth Encarnacion, Kirk Inocencio, Maricris Mangasi, Asia Raagas, Kenneth Reyes, Chris Trinidad, Joseph Valle and Justin Verzosa.

COUNSELS

The Holy Family


WORD: Sir 3:2-6, 12-14; Ps 128:1-5; Col 3:12-21; Lk 2:41-52

ORDER: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” (Col 3:16)

REFLECTION: All of the Sunday readings reflect a common theme - honoring the human family and defining the duties of each member. Our community takes these readings seriously because they are part of our mission: to restore the human family to God. The basis of all of this is the recognition that we become children of our Father in heaven through our brother and savior Jesus Christ.

As a loving Father, He gave as a command with a promise: *Honor your father and your mother* (Ex 20:12). This is the fourth commandment and it is the only command with a promise. Our Father promises that if we obey this command, our days will be prolonged in the land which God is giving us.

From the teachings of our community, like Christian Parenting and Shepherding, we learned about the importance of honoring our parents. Somehow, in parental honor lies the foundation for our attitude toward all authority figures. If we do not learn the fourth commandment, then we are going to have no foundation for respecting the rest of the authority relationships in our lives. From the fourth commandment we learn how to relate to our boss, our teachers, our pastoral leaders, government officials etc. We often think that an authority figure has to earn the right to be honored.

page 4 

GOD'S PROMISE FOR THE WEEK

“He who honors his father atones for sins; he stores up riches who reveres his mother. He who honors his father is gladdened by children, and when he prays he is heard.” (Sir 3:3-5)

Christmas Messages From Manila

From our Spiritual Director

The Beatification of a great Christian is still fresh in our mind: Mother, now Blessed, Teresa of Calcutta, beatified by Pope John Paul II on October 19, 2003. Mother Teresa is **“blessed”** because in her lifetime she was a living incarnation, enfleshment, of the love of God most especially for the poorest of the poor. She has made visible and tangible the love of God, making the words written by St. Augustine comprehensible to us *“Love and say it with your life.”* Trust in God becomes credible and is communicated above all when it is lived out.

I would like to make use of Mother Teresa’s legacy – her genuine, active, love for the *“least of the brethren”* as the centerpiece of my greeting to the BUKAS LOOB SA DIYOS community during the Christmas season. *“Love and say it with your life.”* This is what Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, has done. He made the love of God visible, tangible, enfleshed, with his life. And He did so by bridging the gap between heaven and earth, by removing the contradictions and divisions, by bridging the rich and the poor in the *“alliance of charity.”*

The meaning of Christmas has been uttered time and again. What we need is to *“say it with our life,” sa pamamagitan ng pagbubukas ng ating mga kalooban sa Diyos at sa kapwa* and by contemplating the face of God even in the most difficult circumstance.

ANGEL N. LAGDAMEO
Archbishop of Jaro & BLD Spiritual Director

Lord, like the Magi of the East, who followed the Bethlehem star, we too are overjoyed, we too are privileged to bow before You in homage. We come bearing no gifts of gold, frankincense or myrrh, but only our lives laid down in adoration to You, our Prince of Peace!

In His love,
The Council of Servant Leaders

From left to right: Boy/Nena Salud (Mission), Bogie/Margie Lorenzo (Evangelization), Dodo/Paulette Javier (Pastoral; Presiding Servant Leader), Mon/Nene Lim (Management) and Kiko/Aida Josef(Formation).



From the Council of Servant Leaders

It is with great joy that the Council of Servant Leaders bring you greetings of peace as once again we await the celebration of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, **“For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.”**

The good news of Christmas is that God has shared our weakness. In the midst of the darkness that covered the earth, the darkness of human pride, a light shines on in darkness. It is the light of the Son of God, the reflection of the Father’s glory. It is a light that restores us, that cleanses us from our sins, that comforts and redeems. It is the real light - which gives light to every man. May our prayer be *‘Lord, make us a people of this light’*.

“We have beheld His glory.” The glory of God lives among us, the story of Christmas is told and retold as God invites us to share in the kingdom He has prepared for us through His Son. The story of Christmas is the story of how God’s kingdom enters our lives. We tell the story not only in words, but more so in the language that is beyond words: by how we live. Christmas is a story about all of us receiving that which we most want and need: love—deep, strong and unconditional. The Christmas story is about how God so loves us, that He asks us to be partners in loving the world.

“The Word became flesh and lives among us.” May each day be Christmas and may we tell the story by our lives each day, the story of how we cared for the presence of Christ entrusted to us, by caring for each other in our families and community, as we listen to the cries and laughter, and love as we have been loved.

We pray that you and your loved ones may have a most blessed Christmas and New Year - full of hope and love as we journey together in this pilgrimage, becoming God’s gift to one another.

☞ *Continued*

Transplanted Servant Leader Greets Newark

Maligayang Pasko at Manigong Bagong Taon po sa inyong lahat!

It seems ages ago since we saw you last Christmas because we miss you so much. We hope the Lord will allow us to see each other again when our daughter graduates in Fordham in springtime.

People who came here on vacation have all told us how the Newark community continues to be vibrant and growing in doing Christ's work. That's good news indeed. As for us, a lot of things happened this year. Irma and James joined me and my 2 other sons after having sold our NJ house; Armi alone stays on in the USA. She visited us last summer and is coming again this month. Nicolo and Luigi have both been busy with their jobs. James is happy in his new school where the children are of diverse cultures; he still misses his Mark 10 friends in Newark.

We tried to help the Manila Praise Ministry raise funds for their equipment (and most of you donated generously), but we never served in it. We were early on re-anointed as teachers, our first assignment being in BLD Lipa, Batangas. Every other Saturday, we take a trip to Baliuag, Bulacan (a new homestead of BLD Malolos) to worship and bi-ref with the parish-based prayer group we helped build two years ago, and conduct mini-teachings for their sustained growth. After the last Emergence, we were discerned to coordinate the Discipling Apostolate. We were included in the roster of prayer leaders by middle of this year, and in October led the corporate worship for the first time. We serve God's people in any way we are called - happily but hardly noticeably, because it is God who leads and we just follow His promptings.

We look forward to joining Newark's annual medical mission here, although not full time as Irma and I will be serving as moderators in the 2004 Inter-District Conference that same weekend. It is comforting to know, though, that we will be attending to the needs of your new DCS members and your DSL during the Conference. These certainly will be great reunions.

Let me end with the words of St. Paul (Phil 1:9-11): *"And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God."* We love you all. May God bless us all!

Humbly in Christ,
Roger and Irma Santiago

Feast Day Today, December 26

Saint Stephen, Protomartyr

Little is known about where or when St. Stephen was born, but it is believed that he was a Jew and one of the seventy-two disciples of the Lord, for shortly after the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we find him perfectly instructed in the law of the gospel, blessed with extraordinary gifts of the Spirit and furnished with miraculous powers. (Acts 6:5)

St. Stephen is well-known as the first martyr, but he was also the first deacon of the church. The apostles saw a need for assistants because the Greeks were complaining about being neglected. Calling the community together, the apostles instructed them to choose seven men of an unblemished character, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, who would be able to administrate less important tasks, thus freeing them up to preach the Word of God. Stephen and six others were chosen, and the apostles laid hands upon them to qualify them to become ministers of God's holy mysteries. Later on, we hear St. Paul speak of this sacred ministry and what is required of a deacon (1 Tim 8-13).

Stephen preached and pleaded the cause of Christianity with undaunted courage, confirming his doctrine by many public miracles. Because of his success in converting people to Christianity, he had enemies that envied him and were full of malice towards him. A conspiracy was formed to discredit and have him charged with blasphemy against God and Moses. He was taken to the Sanhedrin and ordered to defend himself against these charges. At this time, it pleased God to diffuse a heavenly beauty and a shining brightness on the saint's face, so that to those in the Sanhedrin, St. Stephen looked like an angel.

Full of courage, he admonished his accusers and preached Jesus Christ to them. Enraged, his captors dragged him outside and stoned him to death. Enduring his passion, St. Stephen prayed to Christ, *"Lord, do not hold this sin against them,"* and died. (Acts 7:60)

In St. Stephen, we have the most perfect pattern of meekness. During his ministry he meekly bore the weakness, ignorance and prejudice of some; and the perverseness, envy and malice of others. Charity, meekness and humility consist the very spirit of Christianity - virtues that we can learn from our first martyr and deacon.

THE LORD'S PROVISIONS

Collections

12/05	0
12/12	3,520
12/19	3,693
50-wk average	\$3,696

*Thank you
for your generosity!*

Expenses

50-wk average \$4,167

Counsels *(from page 1)*

And if we find an authority figure who is imperfect and below our personal standard, then that person does not deserve our respect. Scripture tells us that this is not true: we are still bound to honor authority in our lives even when that authority is imperfect. Let us remember that the fourth commandment applies at all times to all children of God, young and old, who call God their Father.

For all families who may be experiencing some difficulties, the Gospel of Luke about the family of Jesus should give us hope. We can very much relate to the Holy Family. Just as there was tension brought about by the child Jesus getting lost and His parents looking for him, we see our own family encountering the same experience, characterized with difficulties in communication and unmet expectations between parents and children. It is refreshing to know that our difficulties are not unique and are similar to the experiences of Mary, Joseph, and even the child Jesus.

From this Gospel, our families can derive some lessons that are helpful. We are encouraged to improve upon our communication, setting proper expectations, mutual respect for each other, a life-giving role for parents, application of fraternal correction, and most importantly, unconditional love. Most of these qualities are also reflected in the second readings of Paul to the Colossians, exhorting all members of God's family to be clothed with "*compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.... And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection.*" (Col 3:12,14)

As we approach the New Year, let us examine how we are spending our time. Let us ensure that our "attention" is properly supporting our "valuable intention" – to give rightful primacy to our families. As a community, we have to remember that our mission is to unify the family. On this Feast of the Holy Family, we do well to reflect how **we increase and abound in love as we honor our parents and nurture our families.**

DIRECTION:

Review and examine all community activities and ensure that we support and give high priority to family life and unity.

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom
a light has shone. (Isaiah 9:1)

***A Child is born to us, a Son is given us;
upon His shoulder dominion rests.
They name Him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.*** (Isaiah 9:5)

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- Dec 27 SPE4 Reunion, Mariano Residence, Newark 12-5pm
Dec 28 YE10 Reunion, Boland Hall 1-6pm
Dec 28 YLC3 Reunion, St Leo HS basement, 1-6pm
Jan 10 Discipling, St Leo Conference Rm 1-6pm
Jan 17 Newark Teachings, St. Antoninus 1-6pm

2004 Medical Mission to Our Lady Queen of Peace Hospital in Paranaque on Jan 24-25 departs Sunday, Jan 18 from JFK. Airfare is only \$650 per person, taxes included. *Volunteers and donations are still needed.* Please contact: Tom Pattugalan, Ency/Baby Alberto or Tony/Baby Arambulo.

BIRTHDAYS

- Dec 26 Rey Zoleta, LSS6
Tess Montemayor, LSS#7
Francis Isidro, SE12
Dec 27 Gigi Vibar, LSS1
Jemma Reyes, LSS18
Elaine Canlas, YE8
Dec 29 Dolly Fernandez, LSS12
Dec 30 Norie Abes, LSS2
Emy Pattugalan, LSS15
Bobut Gongob, LSS19
Dec 31 Linda Avisado, LSS8
Linda Cruz, LSS10
Jan 1 Jamie Ciocon, Jn 6



*May the
blessings
of the
Lord
be upon
you...*

ANNIVERSARIES

- Dec 26 Raffy & Mariz Obrera, LSS16
Ken & Brenda Julien, ME21
Lou & Gayle Alejandro, LSS18
Dec 27 Rod & Alma Soriano, LSS17
Dec 28 Joe & Beth Baluyot, LSS3
Dodong & Loring Demegillo, LSS11
Robin & Amy Guiao, LSS16
Jim & Norca Altieri, LSS20
Dec 29 Frank & Sally Belarmino, LSS3
Dec 30 Rennie & Madonna Razal, LSS19

The angel of the Lord said, "*I proclaim to you
good news of great joy. Today a Savior has
been born for you Who is Christ and Lord.*"
(Luke 2:10-11)