



COVENANT NEWS



BUKÁS-LOÓB SA DIYÓS COVENANT COMMUNITY • ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK

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BLD NEWARK CLUSTER SHEPHERDS' NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

The beauty and excitement of bright lights, the shopping for presents, the planned gatherings with family and friends, the decorated trees and the energy that's been building up since Thanksgiving, all seem to slowly fade away after Christmas. But let's not forget that the last days of December have a significance of their own. Once all the gifts are opened and the parties are over, our mind starts to look forward to the coming of the New Year, the beginning of a fresh 365 days.

As we approach the last days of the year, we reflect on all our happy gains, all the tremendous blessings we received from God, for which we are truly grateful. However, we also ought to be thankful a million times for what we don't have, for it is in what we lack that we realize what we have. We each have been given so much that was never ours to begin with; certainly we are not talking about colorfully wrapped presents left under brightly lit Christmas trees, but the lasting gift that Jesus leaves in our hearts.

And so as the New Year unfolds, we are to use God's gifts as we continue to work with greater zeal and renewed faith to be messengers of His peace and witnesses of His mercy, in gratitude to Him for what He has given us.

"Today, there is a need for people to be witnesses to the mercy and tenderness of God, who spurs the resigned, enlivens the disheartened, ignites the fire of hope." - Pope Francis

Even in the midst of the seeming confusion and division that looms in the future, brought about by the recent elections, we are to be filled with the conviction of faith and the fire of hope that God has something really good in store for us in this coming year. We hold on tightly to God's fulfillment of His promises, for with Him, we are never alone in our moments of trials and difficulties, for He is **Emmanuel**, God with us.

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COUNSELS

You are Sons

THEME: We experience God's presence when we keep Him in our hearts.

WORD: Nm 6:22-27 ~ Ps 67:2-3,5,6,8
Gal 4:4-7 ~ Lk 2:16-21

ORDER: **"Invoke my name"** (Nm 6:27)

REFLECTION:

In the wisdom of Holy Mother Church, she leads us to celebrate the first day of every year honoring the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, on her Solemn Feast Day. The discerned Theme for this week's global worship of our community is centered on one of Mary's revered virtues, much worthy of our emulation: *keeping God in our hearts*.

God's attributes and blessings are manifold, each one deserving of our grateful praise. The Second Reading directs our attention to a most praiseworthy gift from on high: that *we have received adoption as sons of God*.

Invoking God's Blessing (from Numbers 6:24-26)



The LORD bless you and keep you!

The LORD let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you!

The LORD look upon you kindly and give you peace!

What a precious doctrine of our faith is this adoption, bringing unmerited grace, akin to our justification by the work and person of Christ our Savior. This may not be easy for us to comprehend, to really appreciate and live by. But St. Paul says that God sent His Son, that we might receive adoption as sons. (cf Gal 4:4)

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Promise of the Week

"I will bless them." (Nm 6:27)

“Do whatever he tells you.” -Jn 2:5 (from the Gospel Reading for Sat, Jan 7)

The Blessed Mother Mary told the waiters to take orders from our Lord. The servants filled the jars with water, which Jesus converted into wine. Taking the narrative as it stands, we have one of the best authenticated of Our Lord's miracles; for, unlike the case of the cure of bodily ailments, the waiters were comparatively disinterested parties, and yet they bore witness to the water becoming wine, the best wine of the feast.

What greater miracles than these could I look for than to believe from the servants' faith that Jesus is He Who created all things in wisdom? When Christ openly changed water into wine by His power the whole crowd rejoiced, finding the taste of this wine to be wonderful. Today the Church's banquet is where we are all seated for the wine is changed into the blood of Christ and we all drink of it in holy gladness, glorifying our great Bridegroom. For the true Bridegroom is Mary's Son, the Word from all eternity, Who took the form of a slave and created all things in wisdom.

Saint Deacon Ephrem of Syria commented in the fourth century: “In the desert, our Lord multiplied the loaves of bread, and in Cana, He changed the water into wine. Thus, He got people used to His bread and to His wine until the time when He gave them His body and His blood. He let them taste a transitory bread and wine, so that the desire for His life-giving body and blood might grow in them. He attracted us by means of these things that are pleasant to the palate, to lead us even more to that which gives life in full to our souls. He hid sweetness in the wine He made to show His guests what incomparable treasure is hidden in His life-giving blood. As His first sign, He gave a wine that gave joy to the guests, to show that His blood would give joy to all nations. For if wine plays a part in all of earth's joys, in the same way, every true deliverance is linked to the mystery of His blood. He gave the guests at Cana excellent wine, transformed their minds and let them know that the teaching with which He would quench their thirst would transform their hearts. This wine, which was only water, was changed in jars, a symbol of the first commandments, which He brought to perfection. The transformed water is the Law brought to its fulfillment. The people who were invited to the wedding drank what had been water, but without tasting that water. In the same way, when we hear the former commandments, we taste them not with their former savor, but with their new one.”

Jesus changed the water into wine. Jesus is working through us to change our images of ourselves as separate from and into a living union of sisters and brothers. In Christ, the ordinary has been transformed into the extraordinary. Everything is holy now.

“You set a table before me...my cup overflows.” (Ps 23:5)

HOLIDAY PARTY – PART TWO

BLD Newark's celebration of Christmas continued last Friday with a Community Worship, led by a number of members from several different Ministries. This was then followed by another fun time at Fellowship, with presentations from the Youth Ministry, our Golden Years members, and the most recent FE class. Just as it was during Part One of the Christmas festivities, the Service Ministry (and its immersion class members) tirelessly served everyone a sumptuous meal. Throughout the evening, gifts were exchanged, door prizes were won and feet line danced, all adding up to a very Merry Christmas indeed!



EMULATE MARY

When we were asked to lead tonight's family worship, our knees buckled and we were weakened. We felt inadequate and presented our feelings, protesting that we were just ordinary members of the Community, and disqualifying ourselves because we did not hold any significant leadership positions. So first, we refused the invitation and questioned the prayer leader selection process. Suddenly, it felt like God was testing our obedience, and perhaps, wanted to see the authenticity of our professed love for Him. But God is God, and soon, we realized that our trip to Florida got cancelled because God wanted us to do this.

We prayed and called on a community elder who opened our hearts with his exhortation **"Be filled with the Spirit"** - from Ephesians 5:18. Then, as I read this Sunday's Gospel, there I saw the example of the Blessed Mother agreeing to the plans of the Father, and I was enlightened. We are children of God and as children, we should be obedient; that hiding in obscurity does not serve the Lord.

Over and over, the Church challenges us to abandon our fears and doubts, and to focus deeply on our relationship with God. We should not allow our questions and doubts to diminish our faith. May our shared thoughts and prayers then, contribute to your spiritual journeys.

Mother Mary's role in our salvation is exemplified by her complete trust and submission to the Father. Although Gospel episodes that she is in are not many, we can probably assume that Mary was constantly at Jesus' side during His mission. She was the first to urge Him to perform His first miracle, at the wedding in Cana. She stood at the foot of the Cross on Calvary as she cried and joined fully in the sacrifice her Son was offering.

In the Gospel reading for January 1, it says that **"Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart."** (Lk 2:19) We see the radiance, beauty and character of our Mother in her fiat. Mary and Jesus shared the same heart, full of love and devotion to the Father, and full of love for mankind. She is perfect as the Mother of God and our Mother.

Finally, as we celebrate the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we give her the highest of titles - "The Mother of God." We can only reflect on the role she willingly accepted...to carry our Savior in her womb, to give birth to Him so that the will of →→

COUNSELS

(from page 1)

He then assures us by something that we now possess, that we grasp more keenly after our Baptism in the Spirit. **"As proof that you are children, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'** So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God." (Gal 4:6-7)

So, what lessons does the Word hold for us this week? If we look up to the Blessed Virgin Mother as our model, we can take a closer look at the Gospel passage and her actions. We see her obedience to God's angel in naming the baby Jesus. She and Joseph followed their faith community practice of having the baby circumcised. And of course, Mary is described as reflecting on the events surrounding her, recognizing God's hand and keeping them in her heart.

This week's Theme shows us the path to having a clear sense of God's presence by keeping Him in our hearts. With a clean heart, we shall better recognize and be more inclined to obey God's will for us. Finally, we will be led to a superior understanding of our calling and ongoing formation as disciples of the Lord Jesus, and to fidelity to our faith community.

Mary, lead us always to Jesus. Amen.

Directions:

- Spend quiet time in spiritual reflection.
- Proclaim God's name with boldness.
- Glorify and praise God for His love and mercy.

→ the Father might be fulfilled through her.

"When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption." (Gal 4:4-5)



She consented to God's will, and because of her love and obedience to the Father, accepted motherhood, as well as servanthood. As Mary carried Jesus in her womb, it expressed the union between Divine and human, a love from the Heavenly Father coming down to earth. We are undeserving, but the Father is true to His covenant with us. Mother Mary is blessed with the fullness of God's grace and we emulate her as a model of faith, obedience, hope and love.



2016



YEAR IN REVIEW

Jan - Mar Singles attend March for Life
 Mark 10's Change for Change
 Med Mission: Tagbilaran, Bohol
 YLSS 21
 Teachings / Reunions / Parties /Outings / Fridays
 Launch - BLD Newark on Office 365

Apr - Jun Community Teaching
 Disciples' Assembly
 SE 36 LSS 46
 Mark 10/John 6 - May Crowning of Mother Mary
 Eucharistic Celebration - Archbishop Bernardito Aua
 BLD Singles - Night of Praise and Worship
 SPE 18
 Teachings / Reunions / Parties /Outings / Fridays

Jul - Sep YE23 FE 23
 Community Day Summer Photos
 Disciples' Assembly Teachers' Forum
 Second Annual Formation Gathering
 Youth Battle of the classes
 GK Village School Supplies Distribution
 Summer Holy Door Pilgrimages
 Divine Mercy Morning of Mercy
 LSS - BLD Allentown
 Teachings / Reunions / Parties /Outings / Fridays

Oct - Dec Aspirants' Retreat JC 17
 Mercy-Merci Raffle
 LSS at St. Anthony de Padua, Belleville, NJ
 Mark 10 Parade of Saints ME 47
 LSS 46B AIG/WOF Retreat
Jubilee of Mercy - 48 Holy Doors
 Community Worship Family Worship
 Christmas Presentations
 Teachings / Reunions / Christmas Parties /Outings



Note: Listed above are some, but certainly not all of the BLD Newark events in 2016.

New Year's Message...

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As such, we welcome the **New Year, 2017** with open hearts to receive the grace of God that unifies us to be one with Christ working for His greater honor and glory.

On behalf of the entire BLD community, we wish you and your families the message of Jesus this New Year, His peace, His hope, His love and His mercy.

Together, we pray for the special blessings of a bright and peaceful New Year!

All glory be to God!

- **Manny & Arlene Mangalanzo**

LORD'S PROVISION PREVIOUS WEEK'S

Collections:	Prior Week	YTD
Tithes & Love Offerings	\$ 2,009	\$ 133,750
Mission Collections	\$ 179	\$ 7,596
Christmas Envelopes	\$ 1,315	\$ 2,654

Financial details are available to all members through treasury@bldnewark.com
 Thank you for your continued support!

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

YLSS Salubungan - Friday, January 6, 2017

Teaching Calendar

Teachings for Saturday, **January 21, 2017** - 1 to 6 pm:
 - Christian Maturity Program II, Part II (LSS 1-45)
 - New Creation Realities / Growth in Prayer (LSS 1-46B)



Washington, DC - Friday, Jan 27, 2017

(one week after the Presidential Inauguration)

Medical Mission

February 13-16, 2017

Maasin, Leyte, Philippines

Contact Persons: Ramon/Leonie Mariazeta

rmariazeta@msn.com / lmariazeta@msn.com

Symbolon Study at Divine Mercy Parish

The Catholic Faith Explained

Monday nights - Jan 9 - Mar 13, 2017, from 7-9pm

Student booklet is \$25 / Contacts: Ray & Suzie Atienza (908-463-0449) / Registration deadline is **Jan 2, 2017**

Marshaling	Schedule	Date	Apostolate
		Jan 6	Management
		Jan 13	Mission
		Jan 20	Pastoral
		Jan 27	Evangelization

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