

SIMBAHAY

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ST. JOHN BOSCO PARISH CHURCH, MAKATI CITY, PHILIPPINES

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 13

DECEMBER 2013

Christmas in Our Hearts

THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

by Jon Elarmo



“Christmas is our celebration of the birthday of Jesus. Look! There He is in the manger, baby Jesus, with Mama Mary and St. Joseph watching over him.” These are my words to my two kids, Bea (7) and John (2), in an effort to explain to them the mystery of Christmas, the mystery of the Incarnation, of the Word made flesh to dwell among us. And as I looked at my children gazing with wonder at the nativity scene, I felt their joy at that moment – the Joy of Christmas!

Come to think of it, *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)*, Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation to us, may well be the joy of Christmas.

The happiness and grace of Christmas, to me, is the infant Jesus himself. He is the Good News, the Word in flesh. His good news is a Child and all children. *Kaya nga’t ang Pasko ay para sa mga bata*. For Christmas is Jesus, the baby. And a baby brings happiness, smiles and laughter to everyone around, suffusing all with childlike wonder.

The gospel, the good news of Christmas is hope. For that is another thing that a baby brings hope – the conviction that things will be better, that after a dark night, dawn will follow to usher a bright new day! *Nakatanaw ng isang malaking liwanag ang bayang matagal nang nasa kadiliman* (Isaiah 9:2).

The message of Christmas is family. For a baby completes a family. No matter how abject their conditions were in that smelly and dirty house of animals, Mary and Joseph were happy, as they found heaven in that stable – for they had the baby Jesus with them. And that was all that mattered. . . that is all that matters!

The story of Christmas is a story of sharing. That is why we have Kris Kringle and exchange gifts. And did you know that Kris Kringle came from the German word *Christkindl*, which means “Christ child”? The baby Jesus is God sharing himself with us, God sharing in our humanity.

The Gospel of Christmas is love. As the song goes, “For God so loved the world, He gave us His only Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior, His most precious one”.

These are bleak and depressing times for many of us, especially for those whose homes, property and loved ones were lost in the earthquakes that leveled Bohol and the super-typhoon that washed away entire barrios in Leyte, Eastern Samar and parts of Cebu. These are the times when we need to proclaim the Joy of the Gospel that is Christmas – let us bring hope to those who despair; let us be family to those who lost parent, spouse or child; let us share what we have with those who lost what they once had; let us love and make others feel that they are loved.

If we are able to proclaim the Joy of the Gospel of Christmas, then, when we say that Christmas is a celebration of Jesus’ birth, we no longer point to the manger. Instead, we look into our hearts and find Jesus there, Christ in our hearts, the Word dwelling within us!



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SCHEDULE OF MASSES

Monday to Friday:

6:30am • 7:30am • 12:15pm • 6:00pm

Holy Hour every Thursday after the
6:00 pm Mass

Saturday:

6:30am • 7:30am
6:00pm (Anticipated Mass)

Sunday:

6:00am • 7:15am • 8:30am • 10:00am*
11:15am • 12:30pm • 4:00pm • 5:30pm
7:00pm • 8:30pm

*with sign language interpreters

Confessions are available during all
the Masses

Adoration Chapel - open daily from
7:00am to 8:00pm

PARISH OFFICE & RELIGIOUS STORE HOURS

Monday to Friday (except Thursday)
8:00am - 11:30am • 12:30pm - 6:00pm

Thursday:
8:00am - 11:30am • 12:30pm - 4:00pm

Saturday:
8:00am - 12:00pm • 1:00pm - 5:00pm

DECEMBER 2013



And none of those who helped so generously thought of themselves as “heroes.” They simply saw themselves as “people helping people.” But heroes they were. And more than that. Indeed, all those who helped, whether they were aware of it or not, were messengers of God’s love. And so, it came to pass that the Lord God, who knows how to write straight even with crooked lines, transformed this immense tragedy into a showcase of solidarity, generosity, compassion, and hope.

It is beautiful to realize this as we prepare to celebrate Christmas, the feast of hope, the feast of the GOD WHO BECAME LOVE IN PERSON to help humankind out of the tragic devastation into which the relentless super-typhoons called “SIN” have been plunging mankind since the time of Adam and Eve.

And thus, God the Creator became also God the Rescuer, through the promised MESSIAH, who was no less than God’s own Son. We call that wonderful event “IN-CARNATION,” and its yearly commemoration “CHRISTMAS” — two simple, sublime words that enfold in potency the greatest love story ever told.

This is what we recall with gratitude and relive with joy as we commemorate the birth of JESUS CHRIST, the greatest messenger of God’s love. He came to teach all peoples that we are all brothers and sisters, called to care and share till it hurts, and thereby become for one another as many messengers and instruments of our Father’s love.

And this is what we mean as we wish one another

A BLESSED CHRISTMAS and A HAPPY NEW YEAR!



— Fr. Salvatore Putzu, SDB

Fr. Salvatore Putzu, SDB (General Manager and Editor of Word and Life Publications and Radio Veritas broadcaster), writes *Exploring God’s Word* a comprehensive yet easy-to-follow study guide for Sunday Mass readings, which we use for Simbahay’s “Sunday Mass Reflections”.

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St. John Bosco Parish,
Makati City, Philippines

&



St. John Bosco Parish Makati
Activities in Photos



CHRISTMAS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN

by Rescy Bhagwani

Around us, everything seems to look pretty much like the past Christmases. But inside of us, we know for sure, Christmas has never felt this way, and that in fact, it will never be the same again.

Last November 7, we were warned that the forthcoming storm would be the strongest typhoon ever recorded. It was so scary that we prayed and organized prayer brigades like never before. So when super-typhoon Yolanda swung by Metro Manila with only brief gusty rains, we scratched our head saying "That's a super-typhoon? The weather forecasters simply had it wrong!" We were happy that the typhoon "weakened" and we felt some pride in how effective our prayers must have been that the Lord "calmed the storm".

It was only the next day that we learned that the Eastern Visayas got a direct hit of the strongest force of over 300 km/hr winds, the same speed as that of an airplane in flight. As news started to trickle in, we learned that our *kababayans* in the Visayas suffered catastrophic pains, as though, on our behalf as we were spared, but they were not.

Over a month after the record-breaking calamity, we still cannot believe the extent of the problems that beset the typhoon victims. Countless people watched helplessly as gigantic waves swept away their loved ones and as falling objects smashed against them; many more could not even recover the remains of family and friends,

to this day, allowing no closure for their loss; still others have been terrorized by survivors who resorted to criminal acts. To escape the stench of death and the lack of basic provisions, many have left their homes for the uncertainty of Metro Manila. While the rest who have stayed on are still clueless as to how they will start rebuilding their lives, with virtually nothing: no home, no school, no source of livelihood, not even an identification card.

Thus, as a country, Yolanda shattered our perception of how Christmas ought to be celebrated. All of a sudden Christmas parties are being cancelled, usual exchange gifts being foregone, merry-making being toned down, and Christmas shopping simply being passed up this season. It is as if Christmas has been reinvented—now it is focused on extending help to the faceless needy. It is about gratitude for our present quality of life, which seems all too frivolous compared to the living conditions of those who lost their loved ones and most of their material possessions. It manifested in a REAL and somehow surreal way how Jesus was indeed born in the humblest of places as in a manger.

Christmas this year is like no other. It ushers in a new era of sustained and meaningful gift-giving, for the task of rebuilding has barely started. Indeed, the deep joy in "progressive" giving is sublimely emanating from hearts renewed, at the very core of our humanity.

SUNDAY MASS REFLECTIONS

Simbahay features the Sunday Mass Readings' themes from Fr. Sal Putzu's "Exploring God's Word".

These themes are part of a systematic approach to study and have a good knowledge of the Biblical passages which will be used in the coming Sunday Masses and to relate these readings to our lives.

Listen to Fr. Salvatore Putzu, SDB (General Manager and Editor, Word and Life) at *Bisperas sa Veritas* 846 AM, 5pm Saturday.



SOLEMNITY OF CHRISTMAS

25 December 2013 Readings

Midnight Mass

*Is 9:1-6 – The coming of the Messiah will bring light and freedom to all men.

*Ti 2:11-14 – Our response to the self-offering of God to us in Jesus Christ

*Lk 2:1-14 – The Savior is born at Bethlehem, and the shepherds are the first to receive the good news.

Mass of the Day

*Is 52:7-10 – The Messiah is a source of joy and consolation for all.

*Heb 1:1-6 – The Incarnate Son of God is the revelation of the Father's glory.

*Jn 1:1-5.9-14.18 (or Jn 1:1-18) – The eternal Word of God becomes a frail human being.

Midnight Mass

Theme: CHRISTMAS: GOD WITH US, FOR EVER

The Incarnation and Birth of God's Son is not just a very important event which made the difference in the lives of all those who came in contact with him. **It has actually changed, in a decisive manner, the course of human history. It has even changed the life of God Himself.** In all truth we can say that, after that first Christmas, God will never be the same again, for the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity has also become a human being,

and so he remains even now in the glory of heaven.

Likewise, mankind will never be the same again because, **with the Incarnation, God has become a member of the human family, a brother to every human being.** Nothing can change such a new relationship, whose consequences affect positively each human person at all times and in all places. Christ, the "Immanuel," is "God with us" for ever, and gives a special dignity to what we are and a special value to what we do.

Mass of the Day

Theme: JESUS, THE LIGHT OF OUR LIVES

We instinctively abhor darkness. We are afraid of the physical darkness which does not allow us to see what is around us. We are even more afraid of the intellectual darkness of ignorance; the emotional darkness of betrayal and disappointment, the darkness of suffering without hope. Unfortunately, not many equally abhor and reject the darkness of sin because the devil has managed to hide its ugliness with the alluring glitter of pleasure. But all those who fall into the trap of choosing it soon discover that **there is no greater darkness than the darkness of sin.**

In his love for us, **God's Son came as "the Light of the world"** to unmask the deception of the devil by filling our lives with the splendor of his presence, and even by **making us "children of the light" and "children of God."**

Christmas, "the feast of light," should remind us of this great privilege offered us by the coming of our Lord, and spur us to become as many "genuine lights" in this world still mesmerized by the deceptive glitter of so many forms of sin.

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY (A)

29 December 2013 Readings

*Sir 3:2-7.12-14 – The Lord will reward those who respect and love their parents.

*Col 3:12-21 – Ideal behavior in a Christian family

*Mt 2:13-15.19-23 – A family protected and guided by God

Theme: THE FAMILY WE ARE CALLED TO FORM AND LOVE

Our family is our "little world," the place where we feel at home, where we remove our "make-up," where we find acceptance, understanding, solidarity, sincere love, and forgiveness. It is the environment where we first feel loved and where we learn to love and care.

This is what God wants every family to be, what every decent person dreams of.

Unfortunately, in our days, in far too many cases, this is not the reality. The plan of God and the dream of our hearts have been shattered by selfishness, unfaithfulness, jealousy, pride, irresponsibility With immense sorrow, many see their family as a "paradise lost," or even as a "paradise that never was"

Our celebration of the Feast of the Holy Family repropose to all of us both the attractiveness of the dream and the means to make it a happy reality in our lives by putting into practice the sound advice of St. Paul.



SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

World Peace Day

1 January 2014 Readings

*Nm 6:22-27 – Prayer to implore God's blessing

*Gal 4:4-7 – We are all adopted children of God in Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary.

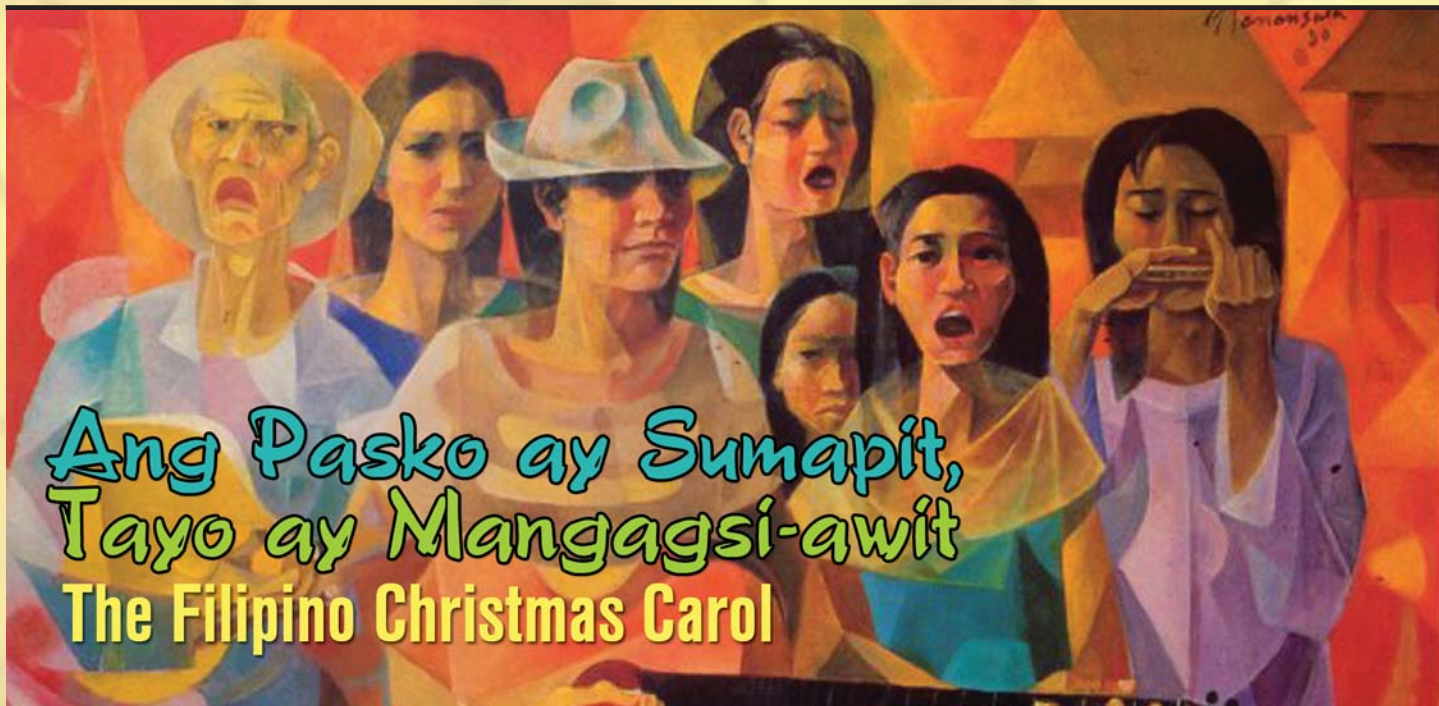
*Lk 2:16-21 – Mary treasured in her heart all that she heard about Jesus.

Theme: MOTHER OF GOD, MOTHER OF PEACE

Today is a triple celebration: it is the Solemnity of Mary's Divine Motherhood, New Year's Day, and World Peace Day. These are three good reasons to rejoice.

As Christians, we rejoice with Mary Most Holy over the unique privilege granted her by Almighty God to bring into this world and love with motherly care His Only Begotten Son. This lasting "mother-son" relationship is the root of all other graces and privileges granted by the Lord to the Woman He chose from all eternity.

As "lovers and promoters of peace," **we gladly receive from her JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD, the PRINCE OF PEACE,** as the only one who can make our yearning for genuine peace a lasting reality in this New Year. With full confidence we entrust to her motherly intercession our desire that the peace we pray and work for may brighten every day of this New Year and beyond.



By Vi P. Hernandez

Combining religious fervor with innate musicality, Filipinos have been composing and singing many beautiful native Christmas hymns and carols for more than a century. In 1894, Marcelo Adonay, the Prince of Philippine Church music, created the first Filipino Christmas hymn, “*Responsarium*” in the tradition of Spain’s *villancicos*. While the first truly Filipino carol “*Sumilang ang Manunubos*” (The Redeemer was Born) was composed by Dr. Francisco Santiago in 1932.

Inspired by the liberation of the Philippines from the Japanese in 1945, Professor Felipe de Leon wrote a thanksgiving Christmas carol, “*Payapang Daigdig*” (Peaceful World), said to be the first of its genre to become really popular; it remains so to this day.

The Filipino Caroller

Despite “competition” from the carols from the West, Filipino carols have held their own. Singers and choirs, some with philharmonic orchestras, perform local compositions in Christmas concerts and choral competitions. In between rehearsals for *Simbang Gabi*, parish church choirs make

the rounds of nearby villages and neighborhoods with guitars and portable organs to raise funds for their projects, while, enterprising, young children with a repertoire of about two songs and makeshift instruments from cans, spoons and bottle caps happily serenade neighbors, motorists and harried commuters for loose change.

Favorite Filipino Carols

Among the favorite Filipino Christmas carols are: De Leon’s “*Pasko na naman*” and “*Noche Buena*” Rubio’s “*Ang Awit ng Kampana*”, Celerio’s “*Mano po, Ninong*”, “*Sa Maybahay ang Aming Bati*” and “*Ang Pasko ay Sumapit*”, Estanislao’s “*Pasko na, Sinta ko*”, Cayabyab’s “*Kumukutikutitap*”, Chan’s “*Christmas in our Hearts*” and the

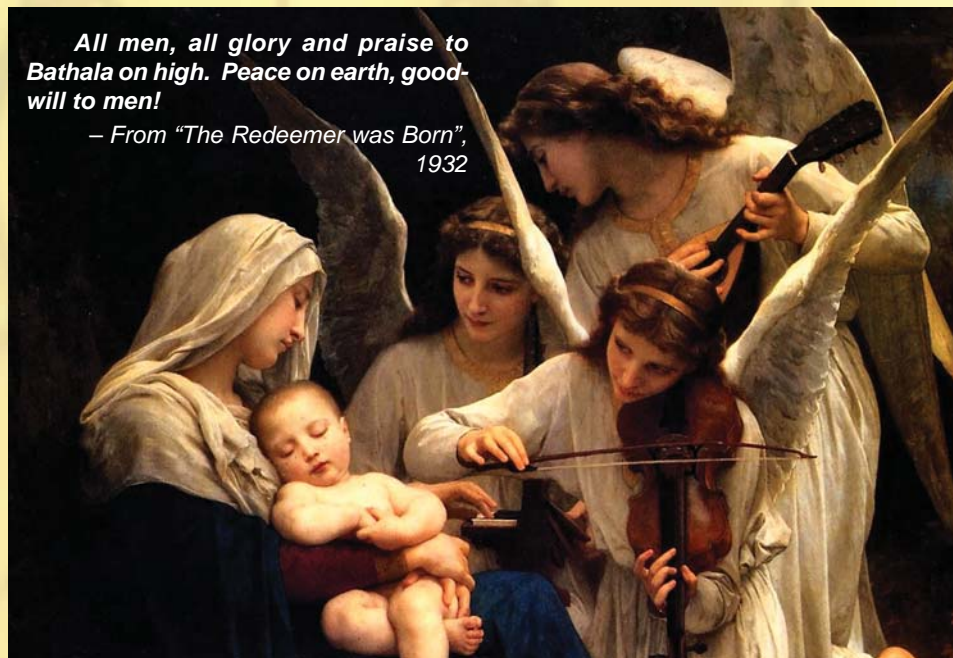
APO Hiking Society’s “*12 Days of Pinoy Krismas*”.

An Ageless Carol

Christmas without carols is as “incomplete” as *Noche Buena* without food, the giant parols of San Fernando without lights and Handel’s *Messiah* without the Hallelujah Chorus. While one can do without them, surely, there is more “joy to the world” with them. And despite attempts to silence or spoil the music of Christmas, with “carols” on everything and everyone but the One whose birth we are celebrating in song, Christmas carols continue to transcend time, borders, language and cultural barriers resonating with the angels’ timeless message of peace and hope for all.

*All men, all glory and praise to
Bathala on high. Peace on earth, good-
will to men!*

– From “*The Redeemer was Born*”,
1932





A CONCERT TO CELEBRATE THE SEASON

By Maris Katigbak-San Juan

Advent and Christmas are two of the most beautiful seasons of the year.

Advent is a time of preparation to celebrate the birth of Jesus. A time of prayer, sacrifice, repentance, love, reconciliation . . . peace. The four-week preparation culminates in the joyful season of Christmas.

There are spiritual ways of welcoming Jesus in our hearts during Christmas, without setting aside the merry preparation of gifts for our loved ones, the traditional Christmas fare, decorations, parties and caroling – the sights, savors and sounds we look forward to every December.

But can Advent come in September with Christmas in November? Yes, this year, they did – and this is our Advent/Christmas story.

Last September, Fr. Ting, our beloved parish priest, conceptualized “LIVE THE DREAM”, a concert to celebrate the coming Christmas season. He formed a committee to make this shared dream come true. Proceeds of the concert would benefit Parish projects such as the free Parish

dental and medical clinics, the addition of stained glass windows to enhance the beauty of the church building. It likewise blessed beneficiaries outside the Parish including, typhoon Yolanda victims and the Heartbeat Asia program for pregnant women.

Monday evenings would find the committee, meeting in Fr. Ting’s office – all well-prepared with their individual reports on the status of preparations: from catering and flowers, publicity, tickets and security to production and sponsorship. Every sponsorship letter was accompanied by a prayer and a blessing from the Parish priest. One of the highlights of those meetings was the wonderful news that we were going to be honored by the gracious hosting of Ms. Boots Anson Roa, whom Fr. Ting and I personally invited. On the week of the concert, when the general rehearsal at the CCP was rated excellent, it was all systems go to “live the dream”, save for one more “meeting”. The night before the November 29 performance, our “Christmas Eve”, the committee gathered at the SJB church for an hour of adoration.

When this Christmas issue of Simbahay comes out, our beloved Parish priest Fr. Ting will no longer be with us. Sadly, he announced the end of his term as our pastor, a few days after “Live the Dream”, far exceeded the performance and production standards of the very successful 2011 Tin1g concert. Truly, like love, SJB concerts are lovelier the second time around . . . even farewell concerts.

Often, a few chords of a song, a refrain, or even a hummed melody could bring back memories of the song and even the “singer”.

Fr. Ting’s Masses, especially his homilies, his prayers, blessings, greetings, his kind words and gentle ways, his voice – are the musical songs and melodies that we will remember him by, the gifts we will always treasure.

Thank you, Fr. Ting, for your wonderful gifts of songs and melodies to the SJB Parish!

A Blessed Christmas in Fuzairah!



A NIGHT OF BEAUTIFUL MUSIC & DREAMS FULFILLED

By Ian Culibao

There are special times throughout the year when a community gathers to celebrate a monumental occasion. "Live the Dream – A Celebration of the Season," a benefit concert held on 29 November 2013, was such an event for St. John Bosco Parish. Taking as its inspiration the song, "Live the Dream", the concert encapsulated special elements that night: music, church, community, God.

GREAT MUSIC, GREAT TALENT

No less than the country's leading orchestra, the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra provided the background for this musical tour-de-force. Under the baton of Maestro Herminigildo Ranera, the PPO enthralled the audience with a repertoire ranging from the opera's "Barber of Seville Overture" by G. Rossini to classical-styled pop tunes such as "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" and Christmas OPM's "Munting Sanggol."

The soloists were equally stellar. Capturing raw and powerful emotions while

singing renditions of "Pie Jesu," "Ave Maria," "Panis Angelicus" and "Isang Taong Lumipas," international Filipino Baritone Andrew Fernando, conductor and tenor Vince Olandesca and SJB Parish priest and lyric baritone, Fr. Ting Miciano repeatedly brought the house down with enthusiastic applause and standing ovations after their ensembles.

And who can miss the angelic voices of homegrown talent – SJB Parish Chorale and those of the Lighter Side Movement from San Felipe Neri Parish in Mandaluyong and the Second Chronicle Singers from Our Lady of Sorrows in Pasay? These multi-awarded choirs joined forces for breathtaking performances of the Triumphal Chorus from "Aida" and "Gloria in Excelsis Deo". Their rendition of Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" together with the soloists was heaven on earth.

Finally, host Boots Anson-Roa's loveliness and simplicity imparted an aura of refined graciousness and elegance to the whole affair.

BEAUTIFUL CHURCH, INSPIRED COMMUNITY

Such wonderful music benefited the SJB Parish community in other ways.

Part of the proceeds will be used to install beautiful stained glass panels above the glass doors of the physical church of Don Bosco, to speak silently to the heart of the real Church-its community of faithful.

It will help sustain the weekly feeding and Catechism classes for children. It will provide much needed supplies for the free Sunday medical and dental clinics.

In a surprise announcement Fr. Ting pledged 100 thousand pesos of the concert's proceeds to Caritas for victims of typhoon Yolanda – a testament to the community's generous spirit.

"Live the Dream" brought together the entire community for a worthwhile cause and a magical celebration. True to the Christmas spirit, it was a memorable night that filled hearts-young and old-with joy, song and praise to the Child who fulfilled mankind's dream of a Savior.

"Live the Dream" – The Official Theme Song of the Visit of the Relic of Saint John Bosco to the Philippines.



ACROSS

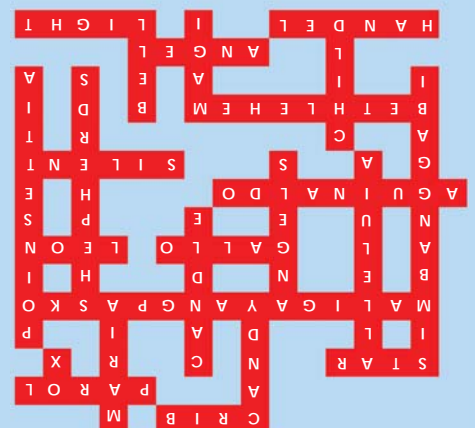
1. Where the newborn Jesus laid. It was improvised from a manger, the feeding box of animals in a stable. Its remnants are kept in St. Mary Major's Basilica in Rome, Italy.
3. Most popular Filipino symbol of the Star of Bethlehem which led the three wise men to the Baby Jesus.
5. The shape of 3 Across
8. The showy (usually) scarlet flowers associated with Christmas, when they bloom at their peak.
9. Merry Christmas!
11. Misa de _____ or literally the "Mass of the Rooster", in Spanish. Often mistaken for the Dawn Novena Masses, it is actually the Mass celebrated around midnight of Christmas Eve, a.k.a., the Mass of the Shepherds.
12. The First _____, spelled backwards. A French word, based on the Latin, nasci, to be born. It is repeated 29 times in one of the most popular Christmas carols extolling the greatest birth of all time.
13. The Misa de _____ (literally, the Gift Mass, recalling the Magi's gifts to baby Jesus) is the term used by the Universal Church for the Dawn or Evening pre-Christmas Masses which originated in Mexico in 1587.

14. _____ Night, the most popular Christmas carol of all time, by _____
16. The little town in Israel where Jesus was born.
19. Spiritual beings sent as attendants or messengers of God.
20. Composer of the English voice and orchestral oratorio, "Messiah", whose grand Hallelujah Chorus is often sang in Christmas and Easter celebrations.
21. In the prophecy referring to Jesus, Isaiah wrote, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great _____." (Is 9:1)

DOWN

1. _____ Cane, both a Christmas treat and decoration, shaped in the letter "J" for Jesus, it also recalls the shepherds' staff.
2. Our Blessed Mother's name in Filipino
4. In 1232, St. Francis created the first Belen, by placing this, an ass and a carved figure of the Baby Jesus in a cave in the village of Greccio, Italy.
5. Literally, (Mass at night), it is the devotional novena of Pre-Christmas Masses celebrated at night or dawn by Filipino Catholics. In the 16th Century, Pope Sixtus V ruled that in the Philippines, these dawn masses would start on December 16.
6. Praise the Lord!

7. Made of wax, a source of light always found in the Church's celebrations, they figure prominently as symbols of the "Light of Christ" during Masses for Easter, Christmas and sacraments.
10. The first people to whom the angel announced the good news of the birth of the Savior of the world.
15. "For a _____ is born to us, a son is given to us". (Is 9:5)
17. In the Gospel, three wise men brought the Child gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Mt 2:11)
18. "High in the towers, suspended between heaven and earth, a ringing _____ represents communication between God and His people."





Bro. Elmer with some Ampons and Ampans during the 2013 Lectors & Commentators' Guild Christmas Party

By Errol Palaci

Our patron saint, Don Bosco, is known for his love and concern for the youth. There are many Salesian programs in and around the Parish, which focus on the youth, but one of their lesser known programs is the **Ampon ni Don Bosco**, or simply *Ampon at Ampan*.

Founded in 1988 by Bro. Elmer Rodriguez, SDB, the program gathers youth from ages 17 to 30 in a 15 month program that nourishes the mind and the heart, and prepares its beneficiaries to make a better life for themselves and their families. Male members, called "*Ampons*", live in one of four dormitories, while the female members, or "*Ampans*", are divided among three dormitories within the Parish.

Largely due to the financial constraints of the program, the total number of *Ampons* and *Ampans* do not exceed 250 at any one time. They are provided (almost entirely from donations) free board – with very frugal meals, lodging and tuition for vocational training. Volunteers, including the Salesian Cooperators, who are in charge of the *Ampans*, assist Bro. Elmer and other Salesians in running the program by helping provide psycho-spiritual formation and support for the young people.

The *Ampon* and *Ampan* ni Don Bosco go through two semesters at the Don Bosco

Technical Institute's Technical Vocational Educational & Training Center (TVET), after which, they are placed in companies for a five-month on-the-job training. After they "graduate" from the program and start to live independent lives, some stay in touch regularly, others less so. Still, most of those who have found work, even share their earnings with the program.

WHO ARE SOME OF THESE YOUNG PEOPLE?

NERILYN

Nerilyn comes from a big family of 13 children, including step-siblings. She was lucky to have finished high school, but her dream of a college education had to be put on hold due to the lack of finances. She found her way to *Ampon ni Don Bosco*, and is completing the Fitter Machinist course, happy that a strong sense of gender equality at *Ampon* allows her to pursue her desired course.

Being an "*Ampan*" has brought significant changes in her, she says. First, it has brought her closer to God, with her daily prayers and regular masses. She has also become independent compared to the past when she relied too much on her mother. Finally, she has discovered a new interest in writing as she creates poems and essays, if not in her head, then in the little

pieces of paper that she is able to save up.

Nerilyn continues to dream of becoming a flight attendant, to fulfil her wish of travelling to see various countries, interact with different peoples and learn about their cultures. In the immediate future, she plans to provide the same *Ampon* opportunities to her siblings. At *Ampon*, she is safe and positive. At *Ampon*, she knows that a brighter future lies in store for her and her family.





AMPONS IN PORSCHE SERVICE MECHATRONICS TRAINING PROGRAM

a better attitude and a more generous heart. Recently he was surprised to discover that he was entitled to 13th month pay from his employer, rather than set this money aside for his family, he decided to give it to someone who was devastated by Typhoon Yolanda. As soon as his friend thankfully agreed, Mark called his friend's mother, wished her a Merry Christmas and told her to expect to receive a cash gift from him. Mark sent her his entire 13th month pay! When he informed his own mother, an OFW, about this, she fully supported his decision, and through tears, she said, "You have changed for the better." In the short term, Mark looks forward to spending Christmas with his siblings in Laguna. Then in June 2014, his mother will be returning home to the Philippines for good; she and Mark have

MICHAEL

A natural calamity and tragedy brought Michael all the way from Iligan City in Mindanao to *Ampon ni Don Bosco*. During the onslaught of Typhoon Sendong in December 2011, Michael and his family moved from one neighbor's house to another to seek shelter. They stayed on the roof of one their neighbours, but even that concrete house gave way to the strong current caused by the typhoon. In the end, they were all separated and when the floodwaters had subsided, Michael found himself alone.

Michael stayed with his *tita*, under whose care he finished high school. With the help of Don Bosco diocesan sisters, he found his way to a retreat house in Bulacan, then later to *Ampon ni Don Bosco*. He chose the automotive course as his stepping stone to later become a seaman.



Michael

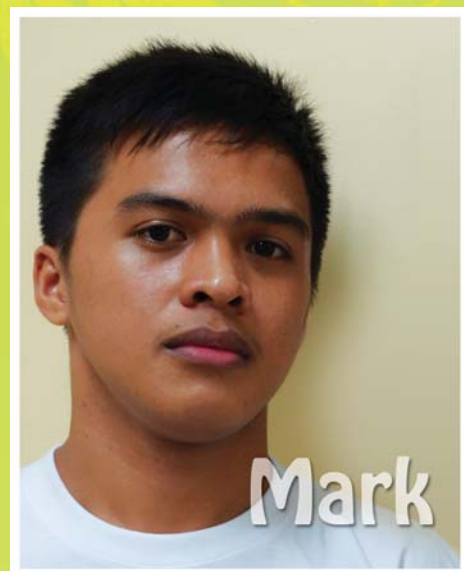
That typhoon happened almost 2 Christmases ago, but on many nights Michael still has vivid dreams of his family. In those dreams, he is sitting among his parents and two siblings, and he feels safe and comfortable with them. But he wakes up only to realize that that scene didn't happen and he will never see them again. This time though, Michael knows that he is not alone. His stay at *Ampon* made him see that he has God, a new family and friends, his fellow *Ampons*, who are with him. He says that life is difficult, but it can be, and is, a happy one.

MARK

A strong desire to pursue a college degree brought Mark to *Ampon ni Don Bosco*. After graduating from high school, Mark took several scholarships and college entrance examinations. However, without a full scholarship, a college degree seemed impossible to achieve. So he worked as caretaker of children in the neighborhood. He was later referred to *Ampon ni Don Bosco*, but at only 16 years of age, he had to wait until he met the age qualification.

Today, Mark is working, under a two-year contract with his employer, after having finished the Fitter Machinist course at the TVET. He has not lost his desire to complete a college degree and this time around, he will be better equipped. He knows that there will be opportunities for scholarships for him in the field of engineering.

Mark attributes his much deeper spirituality and an improved prayer life to his stay as an *Ampon*. This has translated into



Mark

decided together that she will no longer have to return abroad to work. They will live as a family again, weaving a better future together.

Each *Ampon* and *Ampan* has a story, which is as varied as their personalities are different. All of them have dreams, and beginning on the first day when they joined the program, they know that their dreams are being fulfilled and that in the process they are becoming, skilled workers and empowered citizens and more important, better Christian men and women.

You can help fulfill the dream of an *Ampon* or *Ampan* by supporting the program. Please contact Bro. Elmer Rodriguez at 892.0101 to 09 local 606, text him at 0917-4748104 or email him at broelmer@yahoo.com.