

H O P E



Christmas : Gift From The Trinity

Put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with Him is full redemption *Psalm 119:76*



Foreword by Vicar Apostolic of Brunei, RIGHT REVEREND BISHOP CORNELIUS SIM



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is that time of the year when we once again contemplate the great gift of the incarnation of the Son of God, who chose to express his great love for us in a unique and unheard of manner. He did this by becoming one of us and taking on our human likeness.

In doing so, Our Lord "emptied himself" (Phil 2:7), choosing to limit himself, he who is without limitation, and embracing all our weaknesses and opened himself to suffering and every human condition except he did not sin (2 Cor 5:21). This is a mystery in the fullest sense of the word.

Yet complicated theological explanations somehow do not say it as well as the sight of a little baby in a feed box, attended to by a lowly virgin and a humble carpenter. A picture is indeed worth a thousand words. We can touch God and come close to the One who dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim 6:16).

As we approach the feast of Christmas, having spent Advent contemplating God's word in order to receive this wonderful

revelation anew, let us prepare our hearts to celebrate the feast of Christmas with awe and wonder. "Emmanuel", "God with us", the hitherto unimaginable has become a reality.

In our parishes, Christmas takes on many faces. For so many of us, what would Christmas be without the midnight mass and the carols before the service? The annual Migrants' Party, where we meet Jesus in those far away from home, has quickly become a cherished tradition.

However, let us also take some time to ponder the remarkable tenderness of our God who makes himself small for our sake in order that we should not fear to come close to him. The angelic host invited the shepherds to "Come and See" and they stayed in order to worship. I pray that our meditations this Christmas also lead us to "Come and Adore Him, Christ the Lord!"

May I wish all of you and your families a very Happy and Holy Christmas.

+ Bishop Cornelius Sim



We three kings of Orient are, Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, Following yonder star





Editorial Notes by HOPE Editor-In-Chief REVEREND FATHER ROBERT LEONG

Dear People of HOPE,

Christmas is just around the corner and it is time for GIVING!

HOPE has grown up quite a bit since it first started. And with every new issue, it seems to grow not just in size but in variety of news, clips, short stories and lessons of our faith. And so in this Christmas issue we are GIVING you more to SHARE with others this Christmas, while deepening your own understandings on all things CATHOLIC.

We also know that you love to see and read about what is going on in our Vicariate and so our writers and photographers have been very busy capturing those special moments and celebrations in our parishes. Unfortunately, there are a lot more captured than we could possibly publish in this issue.

You will also see refreshing expressions of our parishioners, young and the not so young, showing the depth of their joys, gratitude, hopes, love, and peace while being, serving and worshiping the Lord. **While some of the Sunday School's** children may be wishing for many earthly things this Christmas, they certainly do know what or rather, who is most important in their life and what the Lord has taught them to do – to love God and to care for others. The Youth and Young Adults have also shown that even if there

are much out there in the world, God and Church are very much part of their life. The leadership workshop, East Timor mission trip, regular LifeNite, Singles Conference, and the CHOICE weekend before the end of the year, has given these young men and ladies many wonderful opportunities to encounter the Lord directly and through one another.

As we have received much, we are expected too, to give much of our time, talent and treasure back. I would like all our HOPE readers to think about GIVING your time, talent or treasure to God. Our parishes are always in need of members and leaders in the various parish ministries. The Social Communication Ministry itself would like you to become part of it, and to be contributors to the HOPE Newsletter and other media work. Your time and talent are most needed in order to spread the good news far and wide.

I would like to wish all our HOPE readers a very blessed and a wonderful Christmas. May the joy of this Christmas season unite you and your family closer to each other and with Jesus. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

+ Father Robert Leong





Scripture Study - A God Who Speaks



BY BISHOP CORNELIUS SIM

The Uniqueness of the Jesus' Preaching

What is it about the preaching of Jesus that puts it in a class all its own in comparison with those who also spoke God's word before him?

- There is a difference in the way that the Word of God is introduced. The prophets begin their oracle with the introductory formula: *Thus says the Lord*; or the *Oracle of the Lord* (Isa 37:33). Jesus however boldly asserts: *I say to you* or *Amen, Amen, I say to you* (Mt 5:21-22). He speaks in the first person, with the authority of God himself. Indeed, he is speaking on His own account.
- Jesus shows his independence of any other authority. He puts himself above the Old Testament Scriptures. He does not just comment on spiritual matters like the scribes and the Pharisees. He even modifies and improves on the revealed word in Scripture: *You have heard it said But I say to you* (Mt 5:21).
- There is a note of authority evident to those who heard him speak. Those who see him deliver a man with an evil spirit in a synagogue in Capernaum simply by his word exclaim: *a new teaching with authority* (Mk 1:22). In John 7:46 the Temple guards marvel: *No one ever spoke like this man*.
- Yet he does not disregard what has been revealed previously. He maintains a continuity with what has gone before. At the Feast of Tabernacles, he remarks: *My teaching is not my own but is from the one who sent me* (Jn 7:16). In Jn 14:24, he says: *The word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me*.

“The Father and I are one”

John 10:30



In short, there is a tension to be found in the teaching and preaching of Jesus!! On the one hand, he is like the prophets. On the other hand, he is above the prophets.

In response to the Jews who ask: *Are you the Messiah?* Jesus replies: *The Father and I are one* (Jn 10:30).

In Jesus, God speaks to us in person for the Son is himself God.

Did You Know ?

The shamrock is a tiny weed, member of the clover family, which was used by St Patrick of Ireland to explain the mystery of the Trinity, the three leaves of the shamrock representing the Trinity (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit).



The Content of Jesus' Preaching

Jesus' preaching is also unique in its content: in the sense of the revelation Jesus brings to the whole plan of God. Jesus reveals the hidden depths of God. The mystery of the Trinity is not something we could have stumbled upon on our own. **Jesus' preaching is unique not only because it stands head and shoulders above the rest in terms of its depth and power.** It is necessary in order to fully understand and appropriate the central act of all of Salvation History: the Paschal Mystery of the suffering, death, resurrection of Jesus and its implications for believers.



St Paul refers to the *scandal of the cross* (1Co 1: 23-24), a stumbling block for Jews and foolishness for Greeks. **Without the revelation which Jesus' preaching brings, the cross is simply a tragic end to the career of a good man who came up against the system and lost.**

Consider the two bewildered disciples on that fateful Sunday morning making their way to Emmaus (Lk 24: 25-27). Jesus addresses the confusion of the two men about the events of his crucifixion and death by referring them back to Scripture:

Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures.

These two disciples experience their hearts on fire as Jesus speaks to them and reveals to them the true reality behind the events of Good Friday. This experience culminates in their eyes being opened and recognising Jesus as he breaks bread with them at the evening meal.

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Lk 24:32

Editorial Note

This is the second of five segments taken from a talk presented by Bishop Cornelius Sim for the Regional Biblical Commission "Meet the People" session 2009, which was mainly referenced from Father Raniero Cantalamessa's book "The Mystery of God's Word."

Join us again for the third segment in our next issue of HOPE in February!

Question for Reflection

The Latin dictum "Non nova sed nove" can be translated as "Not new things but in a new way."

How can we apply this to God's way of speaking to us in the Scriptures today?



Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.



HOW TO DEFEND THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

Jason Evert



1. If the Bible teaches that there is one God, why do Catholics teach that that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all God? That's three Gods.

Perhaps the most common objection to the Trinity is that the numbers don't seem to add up. Those who don't accept the idea of a Trinity are usually under the impression that Catholics are content to say that the difficulty can be resolved by taking refuge in the "God is a mystery" argument.

Believing in a mystery does not mean believing in something that is unreasonable or illogical but rather in something you do not have the capacity to ever know completely—such as God. It isn't something you can't know anything about; it is something you can't know everything about.

You'll still need to demonstrate that the idea of three Persons and one God is not illogical. To begin, explain the difference between being and person. Being answers the question "What?" and person answers the question "Who?" For example, pointing to my mother, the question "What is she?" is answered with, "A human being." The question of "Who is she?" is answered with, "Janie."

All persons are beings, but not all beings are persons. For example, you are one being and one person. But a dog is one being and zero persons. With regard to the Trinity, there is one being, which is God, yet there are three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is not illogical. If one were to say that there is one God and three Gods, or one Person and three Persons—that would be illogical. But one Being and three Persons is not a contradiction.

2. Some people say that Trinity was one divine Person using three different modes. Is that sort of what Catholics teach?

This is an ancient heresy that has resurfaced in recent years in the Oneness Pentecostal denomination, so you'll need to be on the lookout for it in your discussions. Originally, this idea was known as modalism, sabellianism, or patripassianism. The Church rejected the concept, since Scripture is clear in demonstrating that the three Persons of the Trinity are distinct. For example, when Jesus prayed to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, it is clear that he was not talking to himself. When Jesus told the apostles that he was leaving them to go to the Father in order to send the Holy Spirit, it becomes very confusing if there was only one person playing three roles. If Jesus was the Father, why would he have to go somewhere to be with himself, and if Jesus is the Spirit, why would he have to leave in order to send himself?

3. If the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all God, why didn't the Jews know that? Their great prayer was, "Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God!"

There are two things to look at here: Why didn't the Jews know of the Trinity, and where is there a Triune God in the Old Testament?

Jesus did not stand in the manger and announce his divinity, and neither did God stand on Mount Sinai and give Moses a theological exposition of the three distinct Persons who are one in being and nature, existing consubstantially and eternally. The Lord is like a good teacher who reveals his truth by slowly planting seeds and then evoking the truth of the conclusions from his students. His revelation to the Jews was a gradual process, and so there is no problem if he wished to reveal more of himself to humanity as time progressed. As Jesus said, "I have many things yet to say to you, but you are not able to bear them at present" (John 16:12).

Similarly, Jesus revealed that his kingdom would be like a mustard seed that grows into the largest of shrubs. There is an organic development in understanding that takes place over time. This is not a mutation or contradiction of a prior understanding, but the natural flowering of truth.

Where are the Old Testament seeds of the Trinity? In Deuteronomy 6:4, one finds the Shema, the Jewish expression of monotheism: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD." There are two words in Hebrew for one. Yachid means only one. Echod means a compound unity or a united one—as in Genesis: "evening and morning . . . one day" or "husband and wife . . . one flesh." This second word, echod, which describes a unity of beings, is the one used to speak of God, who is not by essence a solitude, but a unity of three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Other implicit references to the Trinity in the Old Testament include Gen. 1:26, which reads, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness." Since God was alone at the time of creation (Isa. 44:24, Neh. 9:6) with no other gods, this expression of plurality must refer to God himself. At the Tower of Babel God says, "Let us go down," yet no one else comes down with him (Gen. 11:7).

Still, the Jews did not have an understanding of the Trinity. It was only in Christ that God the Father revealed he had a Son, and that this Son was to send the Spirit. Monotheism was unheard of at the time of ancient Israel, and if Yahweh tried to announce that he was one God in three Persons, it would have seemed to be tritheism (worshiping three gods) to the polytheistic people of the day. God waited for the Christian era to reveal his true nature.



O Come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord





The doctrine on the Holy Trinity is central to the Christian Faith. It is one doctrine that is often questioned by other faiths. In the words of Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J. - The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the most fundamental of our faith. On it everything else depends and from it everything else derives. Hence the Church's constant concern to safeguard the revealed truth that God is One in nature and Three in Persons.



There are many articles that explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity. But we have chosen an article entitled "**How to Defend the Doctrine of the Trinity**" which are written by Jason Evert that was published in the magazine *This Rock*, Volume 12, Number 1 January 2001. It is available on line at <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/2001/0101sbs.asp>. The article is intended to be a starting point for understanding the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Suggested readings :

Catholic Doctrine on the Holy Trinity at http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Trinity/Trinity_001.htm

The Blessed Trinity at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15047a.htm>

Catechism of the Catholic Church: Articles 232 – 267 at <http://www.usccb.org/catechism/text/pt1sect2chpt1art1p2.shtml>, and 290 - 292 at <http://www.usccb.org/catechism/text/pt1sect2chpt1art1p4.shtml>

BOY

4. I have no problem believing in God the Father, but where does Jesus claim to be God?

Who created the world, forgives sins, gives eternal life, answers prayers, and is worthy of worship? Few would argue that anyone but God is capable of these things. But the Bible teaches that Jesus does them all (Heb. 1:10; Matt. 9:6; John 10:28; John 14:13; Rev. 5:13–14, respectively).

In John 8:58, Jesus takes this sacred name of God (cf. Ex. 3:14), and applies it to himself: "Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM." Only God may use this title of himself without blaspheming (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11), and the punishment for misusing his name is **death by stoning (Lev. 24:16)**. Thus Jesus' good Jewish audience immediately recognized the sacred name, and as a result they picked up stones to kill him when he applied that name to himself (John 8:59).

John 1:1 reads, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". John begins his Gospel by proclaiming the divinity of Christ. Aquinas noted in his Sermon-Conferences on the Apostles Creed that John 1:1 refutes three major Christological heresies in one swipe. By saying, "In the beginning was the Word," the heresy of Photinus (Jesus was a created being) is destroyed. When John says, "and the Word was with God" he refutes the heresy of Sabellius (Jesus was the Father). Lastly, when John says that the "Word was God," the Arian heresy (Jesus was not God) also collapses.

Another compelling verse to consider is John 20:28, where the apostle Thomas says to Jesus, "My Lord and my God." In the Greek, this sentence reads literally, "The Lord of me and the God of me." It would be nothing short of blasphemy for Jesus not to rebuke Thomas if he were wrong. Jesus does nothing of the sort, but in fact he accepts Thomas' profession of his identity as God in the next verse.



5. What evidence is there that the Holy Spirit is equal to God?

Those who deny the Trinity usually do not think that the Holy Spirit is a Person, let alone God. For this reason you will probably have to deal with both issues.

Begin with the personhood of the Spirit. In Acts 13:2, the Holy Spirit says, "Set Barnabas and Saul apart for me for the work to which I have called them". This is a clear reference to the Holy Spirit as a personal being, not some kind of impersonal force.

John 16 refers to the Holy Spirit as a "he" ten times in a single chapter. Scripture also reveals that the Holy Spirit can be lied to (Acts 5:3), can speak (Acts 8:29; 10:19, 20; 13:2), hear (John 16:13–15), teach (John 14:26), reprove (John 16:8-11), pray and intercede (Rom. 8:26), love (Rom. 15:30), be grieved (Eph. 4:30), and be blasphemed (Mark 3:29). Only a person is capable of these attributes and abilities, and only God can be blasphemed.

Some argue that since the Holy Spirit is a Spirit, he is not a person. But God is a spirit. Satan is a spirit. Angels and demons are spirits—and all of these are persons. The classic definition of a person is an individual substance of a rational nature. The Holy Spirit is obviously an individual substance, and the above verses confirm that he is of a rational nature.

This should demonstrate sufficiently that the Holy Spirit is a personal being, and so now one must prove that he is God. Any number of biblical passages can be used to support this. Acts 5:1–4 explains that a lie to the Holy Spirit is a lie to God himself. (To see verses where the Holy Spirit is equal to God, compare Isa. 44:24 and Mal. 2:10 with Job 33:4, and Ps. 104:30. Also worth comparing is Ex. 17:2 with Heb. 3:9 and Jer. 31:33 with Heb 10:15–16.)

The Bible contains a number of other passages where the Holy Spirit is on par with God. For example, the Holy Spirit is everlasting (Heb. 9:14), all knowing (1 Cor. 2:10) and omnipresent (Ps. 139:7)—attributes that only God has. Only the Catholic understanding of the Trinity can reconcile these passages.





Scripture Study - Reflection on Papacy



There are monarchies that boast a royal lineage dating back hundreds of years all over the world, but it is the apostolic succession that links the current Pope to St. Peter that I have always found the most fascinating, and I was very interested when Peter was revealed to be the next Biblical figure our parish would have a study on in our weekly Monday sessions.

Early church history lauds Peter as a leading figure, along with Paul. It was pleasing to put ourselves back in time and see the Sea of Galilee in the videos and imagine Peter, being called to active apostleship, so simply leaving behind everything he knew as a fisherman, to follow Jesus for the entire three years of his ministry.

It was also this bible study session that strengthened my knowledge about the papacy. The original Aramaic (the language of those times) proclaims in the famous speech in Matthew 16:18 where Jesus said, "You are *Kepha*, and on this *kepha* I will **build my Church.**" Peter was not always a rock, however, and his thrice denial of the Lord and his argument with Paul (Gal. 2:11-14) showed that his zeal could run hot and cold. But Paul always turned to Peter and obeyed him. It was Peter who preached on Pentecost, who was instrumental in the spread of the gospel, who opened the door to the Gentiles with his witness to Cornelius, and who gave strong support to the Lord from the very beginning. Peter was clearly a rock on which the early church depended.

Peter's life was completely ordinary until Jesus came along. Likewise, I too felt that my life had only begun to come alive when I finally let Jesus in. And Peter had no idea what he was getting himself into when he followed Jesus, but I am certain he never expected to be the leading member of the Twelve, or even to be called upon to be the rock on which the Catholic Church was built. This authority of Peter has been passed down for 2000 years by means of the papacy.



I used to underestimate this holy office, and it was only in recent years that I have found a longing to know more. With pride in Catholicism, the papacy is a link of my faith to clear tangible history. That we Catholics are able to trace our history (and even the lineage of our Bishops, all of whom were ordained by a Bishop whom was ordained by a Bishop –well you get where I am going here – whom can be traced back to the apostles!) back to the time of Jesus speaks volumes of the foundations on which our faith is built on.

I am already excited for the next Monday Bible study and I hope next week, you can join us too!

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JOIN OUR BIBLE STUDY WEEKLY @ 730PM

MON	PARISH HALL, COLA & SJC - ENGLISH
TUE	CONF. ROOM, COOL - BAHASA
THU	LIBRARY, COOL - CHINESE
THU	PARISH HALL, COOL - ENGLISH

"The Pope ... is the bishop of Rome and the Vicar of Christ on earth. He is the visible head of the whole Catholic Church ..."

Who was the first Pope?

St. Peter, who was made Pope by Jesus Christ Himself ...

Did Peter's authority die with him?

No, it was handed down to a man named Linus, and after he died, it was handed down to another, and so on, during the past 2000 years ...

Does Jesus require us to follow the Pope in matters of religion?

Yes, because obedience and loyalty to the Pope are among the chief requirements of the Lord's plan for unity in His church"

(A Catechism for Adults, by William Cogan, 1975 ed., pp. 55,56).

From the Vatican

Pope album joins race for Christmas number one

By Rachel Helyer Donaldson
FIRST POSTED JULY 31, 2009

The annual battle for the Christmas Number One is already shaping up to be a battle between rapper Jay-Z, former Take That frontman Robbie Williams, Britain's Got Talent spinster singer Susan Boyle - and the Pope.

Benedict XVI is to release an album on November 30, just in time for the end-of-year sales charts. The eight-track album *Alma Mater* is being released by Geffen, the record label whose artists have included Nirvana, Guns 'n' Roses and Donna Summer. Geffen UK president Colin Barlow said listeners would be "shocked" by the Pontiff's "incredible" voice. "The great thing about the Pope is that he's got a fantastic tone, very soothing but commanding," Barlow added.

Pope Benedict did not go into the studio however. The Vatican supplied recordings by the Pontiff, made while at official services and from speeches he gave on foreign visits. The Choir of the Philharmonic Academy of Rome, who also appear on the album, recorded their parts in St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, while the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra recorded a classical backing track in London's Abbey Road Studios.

Barlow said the Pope was pleased with the progress of the recording. "We've had a letter from the Vatican saying that he's heard the music so far and **he's very happy with what he's heard.**" Proceeds from album sales will be used to provide music education for underprivileged children around the world.

Benedict XVI is not the first pontiff to release an album. In 1982, John Paul II reached number 71 in the charts with *The Pilgrim Pope*, and, in 1994, his recording of *The Rosary* peaked at number 50.

"We will be able to listen to one track in particular where the Pope is singing the Regina Coeli along with a choir from the beginning to the end"

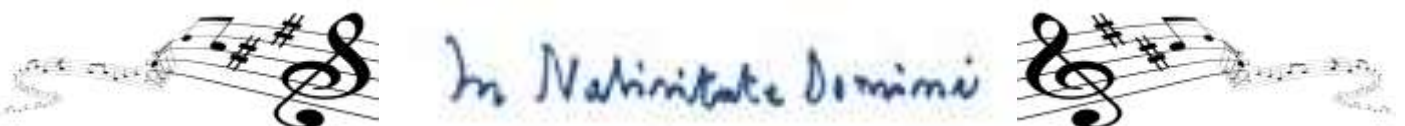
Vincent Messina (Producer)

Tue Sep 29, 9:36 pm ET

ROME (Reuters) – A Muslim, a Catholic and an agnostic composer have contributed music to an album featuring Pope Benedict singing and reciting prayers, which is due for release in November.

Producer Vincent Messina said his choice of composers, Nour Eddine (a Muslim), Stefano Mainetti (a Catholic) and Simon Boswell (who describes himself as "undeclared") reflected "our aim to produce an album that has universal **appeal to all those who love beautiful music...** I certainly didn't intend to select or hire composers on the basis of their faith."

"These three composers, I have known them for many, many years and they are all some great film **composers,**" Messina told Reuters.





From Bishop's Diary - Living in the Word Retreat

I was invited to give a weekend retreat to members of the Bible Apostolate of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Kota Kinabalu, from 23rd to 25th October 2009.

The subject of the retreat was drawn from two books by the late Father Henri Nouwen, specifically "The Life of the Beloved" and "In the Name of Jesus". The retreat focused on the three temptations Christian leaders experience which draw us away from truly being the servant

-leaders Jesus wants us to be. This can only be realised by experiencing our belovedness in the same way Jesus experienced this in a powerful way at his baptism by John at the Jordan and subsequently throughout his whole life.

The retreat was held at the Franciscan Sisters' retreat house Pace Bene, in Papar, where the last two Joint Vicariate Confirmation retreats were also held. About 60 participants attended the retreat.



Bishop and participants of Life in the Word retreat, Pace Bene, Papar



I'm dreaming of a white Christmas, Just like the ones I used to know
Where the treetops glisten, and children listen, To hear sleigh bells in the snow



From Bishop's Diary - IXth FABC Plenary Assembly



Every four years the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences has a plenary assembly. This year the 9th Plenary Assembly was held from 11 - 16th August in the Pius XII Catholic Center in Manila, Philippines. Some 120 delegates and participants attended, representing the 18 member-**bishops' conferences of the Federation** and 11 associate members.

The Opening Mass was celebrated in Manila Cathedral with the Special Envoy of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Francis Arinze presiding. Cardinal Arinze is the Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. The cardinal concelebrated with 6 cardinals and some 100 bishops and priests.

The theme of the Assembly "Living the Eucharist in Asia" was actively explored and discussed by the delegates. After that, all the insights gained in the discussions were compiled resulting in a statement which was issued at the close of the Plenary. The sessions provided a wonderful opportunity to hear from the delegates how Asian Catholics live out their Eucharistic faith in their often very challenging and difficult communal situations. A much more comprehensive document would be forthcoming at a later date.

Right : Bishop C. Sim with Cardinal Francis Arinze, Special Envoy of His Holiness to 9th FABC Plenary Assembly



*Below : National Shrine to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Baclaran.
L-R: Bishop C. Sim (Brunei), Bishop (Indonesia), Archbishop Nicholas (Singapore), Bishop (Philippines) & Bishop John (Taiwan)*



Hark! the herald angels sing, Glory to the new-born King,
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled





One of the highlights of the experience was participation of the delegates in a Saturday evening Eucharistic celebration at one of 12 parishes within Metro Manila to expose them to living the Eucharist in a local church. Among the parishes they visited were the Chapel of the Eucharistic Lord in SM Megamall, Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Baclaran, the Black Nazarene Basilica in Quiapo, St. Joseph Parish in Las Pinas, the Holy Rosary Parish of University of Santo Tomas, and some parishes in depressed areas of the Metropolis.

I was assigned to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Baclaran where I was informed that each Wednesday there have at least a dozen Novena services throughout the day and that at least 10,000 devotees attend each Novena service! It proved to be a very meaningful and beautiful evening for me personally for I met Father Frank Pigeon CSSR who had visited Brunei in 1991 when I was the only priest serving here. After the Mass, I was especially moved by a short skit performed by street urchins cared for by the Redemptorist Fathers.



Plenary Session in Progress



What child is this, who laid to rest, on Mary's lap, is sleeping?



The closing statement urges Asian Catholics to give priority to fostering a personal and intimate relationship with Christ by way of renewed fervor at Mass. In the context of our own humble efforts to promote the reading and study of Scripture the bishops and delegates called the faithful to become "contemplative listeners and ponderers of the Word," following the example of the Virgin Mary.

"Our brothers and sisters of other religions in Asia have great devotion to their sacred books, and they chant and interiorize the Word," the prelates recalled. "This culture of listening is a further invitation to become men and women who cherish and devote themselves to the Word and to the breaking of the bread."

It was a very edifying and rich experience for me personally to have participated in this Plenary Assembly and I look forward to sharing the insights I received with my brother priests and the faithful in our Vicariate.



Above & Below - Performances in Baclaran



Left - National Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Baclaran



Mary's boy child Jesus Christ was born on Christmas Day
And man will live for evermore because of Christmas Day





World Mission Sunday



Children learning to give to the needy ... World Mission Sunday 2009 @ COOL

Christmas Reflections



The prayers of the Christmas Mass (Mass of Christ) describe the beginning of our redemption. It was the Second Person of the Trinity taking to Himself a human nature that began what is amazingly completed in a certain way on the cross and in the tomb, and the Holy One rises in splendor.

(Hence) how much more should we offer Him gifts, not of gold and frankincense and myrrh, but the one gift that really excites Him, the gift of our hearts laid at the foot of His throne? Today the grace that rests on this day is not surprisingly the grace of deeper union with the person of Jesus Himself, a deeper awareness and experience of His sacred humanity and of His sacred divinity, that Jesus would be more real to us as we celebrate the wonder of His birth.

“If you seek Me with all your heart, you will find Me.” If our hearts are seeking everything else, then how much of Him we will find will be limited to the extent that He is not the focus. But on this Christmas Day let us plead with Him for the grace to seek Him with all our hearts. The love and the joy and the peace that each one of us longs for is only perfectly accomplished when we give ourselves unreservedly in union with Jesus Himself. And so, on this holy Christmas morning, let us stand and offer ourselves to the Christ who is our Greatest Gift.

<http://www.rc.net/lansing/ctk/homilies/homily12-25-02.htm>

Christmas is a celebration of three comings of Christ. First, we celebrate the historical coming of Christ. The readings in the Church proclaim the story of Jesus' birth to a young virgin. We are reminded of his lineage, the conditions of his birth in the poverty of a manger, the angelic proclamation to the shepherds, his presentation at the temple, and the visit of the three wise men.

Second, we celebrate the presence of Christ come among us today. Christians believe that the Spirit of God is always active in the world, gently guiding us and prodding us toward conversion. God's grace surrounds us all **the time. Christmas celebrates God's** coming into our everyday lives - our work, our family, and our friendships.

Third, we celebrate the hope for the day when Christ will come in glory to gather the saints. One day, all who are being saved will be with the Lord in paradise, for eternity with our God!

<http://liberalcatholicxmas.blogspot.com/>

Exodus Games - COLA 40th Anniversary (World Mission Sunday)



Previously in HOPE, the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption (COLA) celebrates her 40th year in Brunei Darussalam....

With 40 being a significant number as seen in the book of Exodus, COLA's 40th Anniversary is a year-long celebration with several events lined up for it. One of it was the Exodus Games held in COLA on World Mission Sunday, 18th October 2009.

There were 6 games and the parishioners of COLA were divided into 12 tribes based on the 12 sons of Jacob, the 12 tribes of Israel. The games were Pyramid-Building, Eating the Manna, Filling the Red Sea, the Chariot Race, the Exodus Picture Puzzle and the "Dress like Moses and Family". The following are snippets from the esteemed 12 tribes and these are their own Exodus reflections: IZ

REUBEN

The area around the Church had an atmosphere of sunny gaiety promising us a very good day and the compound of St. George's school and car park was well suited for this event. It started off with the introductions as participants gathered in their tribes, mainly colour coded. Everyone was very merry and enthusiastic as their tribe names were called out. A Bible Quiz on Exodus was also passed to the tribes to complete while the games were ongoing. It was fair enough to challenge the wits of a daily reader of the Bible. It was quite a brain wrecker in the middle of the heat though.

Overall, the Exodus Games was great and the whole team is already looking forward to the next event- AC

LEVI

"Winning or losing, it doesn't matter. Just have fun during the games," said Father Arin, who was dressed in a green, red and yellow-coloured robe, as the rest of the team members of Tribe of Levi gathered around him. All twelve members of the team – six men, five women and a little girl, our cute little mascot, were all filled with as much enthusiasm as everyone else. Father Arin, our tribe leader, chose purple as our tribe colour as it was a priestly colour and that of royalty. At the end of the day, our tribe managed to win two prizes: the Picture Puzzle and an award for the "Best Dressed Tribe Leader". Overall, it was an excellent event as the smiles and laughter on everyone's faces at the end of the day was just amazing, making this event one of the most memorable in our lives.- ST

JOSEPH

Exodus Games, the first time ever conducted in our parish, had achieved its goals and objectives. As a group, we, the Malayalam Prayer Community saw it as an occasion for all of us to come to know one another and to draw us closer to the Church although we belonged to diverse countries and cultures. Exodus Games had made it possible for us to know a few more persons and a few more groups, than we did previously. We were slowly getting rid of our feelings of 'I', 'me', 'my group' and putting on the nature of Christ Jesus who taught us the importance of 'we', 'us', 'our church'. It was interesting to note how God-chosen persons, such as Moses, Zipporah, Aaron, Joshua and other Biblical figures, came alive right in front of our eyes with so much expression and life.

It was no exaggeration that we could experience the presence of the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY moving around in our COLA community, just like HE did in the company of his beloved anointed ones such as Moses, Aaron and others. May we have more opportunities of such spiritual and heavenly scenes such as this one and may GOD ALMIGHTY walk the length and breadth of our COLA. - TKK



DAN

Dan was our group name, with yellow as our tribal colour!

Altogether, there were 6 games, and the first game was stacking the cups into a pyramid. In this game, it was a race against time and the wind. The second game was filling the Red Sea. It was quite hard because we had to fill in the bottle by passing the sponge. The next game was the pita eating competition. A kid, a woman and a man were needed to finish eating the bread as fast as possible.

The rest of the games were the chariot race, puzzle competition and finally reenactment of the crossing of the Red Sea. Even though we did not win any awards, the prizes we gained were the memories and experience that we went through and the bond of friendship and family as brothers and sisters in Christ that we shared. - MKA

JUDAH

'Exodus game' atau dalam Bahasa Melayunya ialah 'Permainan Keluaran' yang dipetik dari kitab Perjanjian Lama, di mana Nabi Musa memimpin kaum Israel menyeberangi Lautan Merah ke tanah seberang yang dijanjikan Tuhan. Acara ini bertujuan menyatu dan mengeratkan pertalian kekeluargaan di antara semua dalam Kristus, dan ia diadakan di gereja COLA, Bandar Seri Begawan.

Antara permainan yang diadakan adalah mengikut sejarah yang berlaku seperti menyusun cawan plastik seperti pembinaan piramid, memakan roti kebab selaku roti manna, dan seterusnya. Biskop kita mengatakan di dalam ucapannya di mana pada tahun yang akan datang besarlah harapannya acara sebegini diadakan lagi dan menjemput COOL dan St John untuk memeriahkan lagi suasana. - VA



GAD

It was an exhilarating day of parish bonding. We are excited to have another day of such events and have our eyes on that cup! More than that however, we got to know members of COLA so much better! - CM

ZEBULUN

The main purpose of the Exodus Games was to be able to put our petty differences aside and work together as a church and move forward, away from the barren desert towards our Heavenly Father, to be able to look at each other in the eye and say "I love you brother, I love you sister" and for us as parish to unite from our "12 tribes" and to become one people, one nation, God's children. The Exodus Games was a true success in terms of foreshadowing of greater things to come and that we can do anything in Him who gives us strength. Therefore, we should thank Our Heavenly Father for giving us His Spirit to be able to do so as without it, we would be nothing but dusts on dirt. Moreover, the same God who watched over Moses and His people also watched over COLA as we crossed our 40th milestone in Brunei with Bishop Sim, Fr. Paul, Fr. Robert and Fr. Arin as our "Moses" today, and as the representatives of Christ Himself leading us Catholics out of dry land to new heights and to the Glory of the Trinity. - NJ



Dashing through the snow, in a one-horse open sleigh,,



ISSACHAR

Issachar was led by supportive tribe leaders who gave us free lunch and yummy ice cream! Everyone enjoyed all the games especially the "eating the manna" in which we won! We made new friends and it was fun being with such happy and **loving people. The kids' enthusiasm** was so contagious, everyone had a good laugh. With transparent joy on our faces and loving spirit in our hearts, we are further inspired to continue building relationships with one another. Exodus games were a blast! - XC

SIMEON

The Exodus Games went well and we all had fun. Our Trinity Prayer Group (Tamil) was delighted to participate in this event and were very thankful to our Bishop and Fr. Arin for having organized such a wonderful and memorable day in the history of Brunei Church. Hope to see you all with renewed spirit next year! - VA

ASHER

"From north to south and east to west, Asher, Asher is the best!" So goes our tribal chant. Who is Asher anyway? Well, there is very little account on what he or his tribe might have looked like **although we're pretty sure they** were not pink-clad like how we were dressed up during the Exodus games. Days before, we were frantically organizing the team who would compete in the 6 events comprising the Exodus Games. Lucky for us, all our members turned up, with many more reserve players in tow! In the end, though we did not win a prize, the fun and the tan were well worth it. Once again, the COLA parishioners proved that there could indeed be unity in diversity. We are one family after all.- AF

BENJAMIN

When the youth & young adults first invited me to join their tribe in the Exodus Games, I honestly did not know what to expect. But as the event drew closer, there was more and more excitement brewing up in our tribe as each of us was entrusted with certain tasks to do. Then on the day itself, we all came dressed in our red tribal uniforms, chanting **"Go!Go! Benja!... Go!Go!Go!BenjaWin!"**. As for the games, some of them were, in fact, quite tricky despite their initial appearances. And just as we thought we did not win anything, an unexpected victory came to us. But it was not this victory that bore the highest significance at the end of the day. Rather, it was the friendships that were formed and the optimistic team spirit that dwelled within us. - VC

NAPHTALI

It wasn't only about winning, but it was about having fun and learning about the Exodus as we were having our own exodus from Tribalism to being what we really are – One United Catholic Community! I felt that **we were indeed Catholics...universal and for all. It was a wonderful** experience to see people from various cultures and nationalities come together to enjoy a day full of fun, games and excitement, treating the World Mission Sunday as a family day out. We cheered for one another and even for other tribes, showing the spirit uniquely Catholic. An event that served its purpose well, thanks to the organizing committee for the efforts given. Naphtali Tribe looks forward to the next game, a year waiting is too long, let us have a **musical next time...**- RV

In conclusion, the Exodus Games was more than just fun and games, but it was a journey of faith for all of us – not just as a person, or a tribe, but as a Church with Christ as its head.-MC





Celebration of Oneness, Celebration of Freedom



On 16 August the Indian Christian Community of the Vicariate gathered to celebrate the Holy Eucharist in conjunction with the 63rd commemoration of Indian Independence Day. Although the exact date was 15 August, since this was the feast of Our Blessed Mother, the celebration was deferred to the following day.

The Holy Mass began at 5.30pm as usual. The **'Thalam bearers'** (Indian women dressed in traditional costume, each gracefully holding a silver bowl with a lighted candle in its centre, surrounded by flower petals) solemnly, traditionally and gracefully ushered in the celebrant – Rev. Fr. Arin Sugit. They **then placed the 'thalam' around the outline map of India**, beautifully and colourfully drawn just at the foot of the statue of Mother Mary. The chosen lectors read the first reading in Malayalam and English followed by the second reading in Tamil and English.

In his short and sweet homily, Rev. Fr. Arin emphasized the need for unity in the church. He said **"Just as we partake in the one body and blood of Jesus, we are united in the church no matter what community or country we come from."**



During the intercessory prayer, the whole community prayed for India in a very special manner. The offertory was a poignant moment for everyone present, when many believers, dressed in their traditional state attire, representing as many Indian states as possible, offered various gifts to the Lord. After the Holy Communion, just before the final blessing, Rev. Fr. Arin invited His Excellency the Indian High Commissioner to Brunei, Mr. Riewad V Warjri, to address the congregation.

Immediately after the Holy Mass, there was a short prayer meeting and a fellowship meal arranged in the Parish Hall. His Excellency the High Commissioner, Rev. Fr. Arin, the Chairman of the Pastoral Council, the leaders and representatives from the various spiritual groups of the parish and the Indian Christian Community attended the function.

This program conducted by the Malayalam and Tamil prayer groups of the parish was the first of its kind ever conducted at the Parish by the Indian Catholic community. This event has certainly showcased the themes of unity and integration of COLA almost immediately after the launch of the 40th Anniversary. Events such as this always highlight the universality and the traditional cultural diversity of the Catholic Church, of which we are truly proud to belong as a family in Christ.

TKK



Liturgy Formation



Combined Prayer Meeting @ COOL, 05 Oct



Angels we have heard on high, Singing sweetly through the night ...





El Shaddai

The El Shaddai DWXI Prayer Partners Foundation International was started in the Philippines in 1984 in **testimony and thanksgiving to God's power and miracle** in the life of its founder, Bro Mike Z Velarde. Now, it has spread in more than 50 countries all over the world. The El Shaddai group is under the umbrella of the Roman Catholic Church and is recognized by the Vatican as one of the most significant charismatic prayer groups in the church.

The ultimate aim of the Foundation is to spread the Good News of our Salvation and in this manner, bear **witness to God's greatness, faithfulness, power, supremacy, goodness, mercy and love**. Through the preaching and study of the Word of God, those who **are burdened with life's troubles and suffering from loneliness, depression and misery** caused by problems and trials may attain peace of mind and serenity in their hearts as they encounter the Lord in their lives.



“El Shaddai” is one of the Hebrew covenant names of God, which means ‘God’ (El) ‘Almighty’ (Shaddai), or the God who is more than enough. For truly, as testified by millions of prayer partners all over the world who came upon El Shaddai through this Ministry, God has done so many wonders in their **lives and they are happy to share and testify God's goodness to everybody they meet.**

This Ministry has been, for many years, used by the Lord to alleviate those who are suffering from sickness, both physical and spiritual, from their distressing state of life. Most important of all, the El Shaddai DWXI Prayer Partners Foundation **International's objective is to get everybody to accept the Salvation that God has offered through His only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.**



The El Shaddai Prayer Meeting in Brunei was started in Bandar Seri Begawan in February 2001 and in Seria on 7th September 2007 with the approval of Parish Pastoral Council.

The Seria Chapter recently celebrated its second anniversary last 13th September 2009, which was attended by more than 250 participants, including the members from Bandar Chapter, Filipino friends from Miri, and also Filipino parishioners from Kuala Belait & Seria.

The prayer meetings in Seria chapter are regularly held in Fr Chiang Hall at the Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Seria every Sunday from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. and for Bandar chapter, from 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm at the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption. The members also frequently serve as choir for Sunday Mass.



For those who joined as members in the Philippines but are not active now, or those who may be interested to join the Ministry, please contact the respective Parish Offices.

If you would like your ministry to be showcased in HOPE, please contact any Editorial Member or clic.hope@gmail.com





Chinese Life in Spirit Seminar

The Chinese LSS event was held from 7th to 9th August 2009 in the Parish Hall, Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Seria. There were more than one hundred Chinese speaking participants from parishioners of COOL, COLA and SJC.

Thanks be to God's blessing, the FZYA evangelization group was given the opportunity to visit Seria for the first time, to organize this charismatic seminar, which was enthusiastically welcomed by the Chinese-speaking Prayer Group at COOL.

The programme began on Friday 7th August 7.30 pm with an hour of Eucharistic Adoration (Holy Hour). The first lecture was based on Gen 1:31, where it was explained that God created man in His image **with body, soul and spirit "which was good"**. The body is explained as a symbol of the temple of God, the soul as a symbol of the sanctuary and the spirit as a symbol of the inner sanctuary or Holy of Holies.

On Saturday 8th August, the event resumed at 2pm to 9.30pm. It began with the worship song based on Luke 21:33 - *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away* After that, the speaker led the prayer to Jesus with **"only say the word, and we shall be healed"** and **"rebirth in the Holy Spirit, let the Precious Blood was over us and cleanse us"**. He also explained the verse John 5:24 **"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life"** and I Corinthians 6:19 **"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?"**

The speaker emphasized that with the Lord's grace, we should always endeavour to renounce sin and keep our lives pure to serve the Lord as taught in Ezekiel 36:26 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh".



On the importance of joy in our lives, the speaker encouraged the participants to rejoice in the Lord based on the passages from Psalms 19:8 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16.

The Saturday session ended with a joyful praise and worship song **"My soul thirsts for the Lord"**.

After Sunday Mass on 9th August, the praise and worship leader led the participants in singing **"The Love of the Lord Conquers All."** The final part of the seminar was a praying over session for healing and deliverance.

The seminar ended with the speaker's advice to the participants - have a prayerful life, study the Scripture and be witnesses to the Lord with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

HBW

Joy to the world! the Lord is come; Let earth receive her King





CHINESE PRAYER GROUP 27TH ANNIVERSARY



JOIN US
7.45 PM
EVERY THU
@ LIBRARY,
COOL SERIA

BIBLE STUDY IN CHINESE





Iban Healing Seminar

Iban Healing Seminar was conducted on 18th to 20th September 2009 in COOL Parish Hall. This seminar was one of the most successful activities of the Iban Group and was attended by more than 120 parishioners from various Iban prayer communities. It was one of the annual Iban prayer group activities and also as a response to one of the 6 Vicariate priorities (Faith Formation).

We began with praise and worship followed by Holy Hour in the church. The talk started at 8:45 pm and ended at 10pm with a closing prayer. The following morning the parishioners started with confession and counseling sessions. The retreat continued in the afternoon after lunch.

A good learning point from the talk given by one of the catechist is to be more active in the Holy Mass. This topic was added so that our Iban parishioners could have full understanding on the importance of the Holy Mass and the Eucharistic celebration.

During the pray over, more than 20 parishioners were touched by the Holy Spirit. The seminar was closed on the night of 20th September with sharing on various **parishioners' experiences and cutting of the cake to mark** the 26th anniversary of the Iban Prayer Group and the 24th Anniversary of the Iban Ladies Cell Group.

More seminars have been planned for the coming years and we hope for continuous increase in encouraging response from all the Iban community. God Bless! *CL*



O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!



Seminar Pengayaan Pengalaman Perkahwinan



Bagi para peserta seminar, muka yang muram pada mulanya menjadi cerah setelah mengikuti seminar selama empat hari (8-11 Okt 2009).

Para peserta merupakan pasangan suami isteri yang datang dari tiga paroki: Bandar Seri Begawan, Seria dan Kuala Belait. Para penceramah ternyata telah berjaya menambat hati para peserta di sepanjang seminar tersebut, dan para peserta berbesar hati menerima ajaran para penceramah.



Hasil usaha Bishop Cornelius Sim, beliau berharap satu seminar perkahwinan diadakan untuk mengatasi masalah rumah tangga di kalangan keluarga Katolik yang baru-baru ini kurang menggalakkan. Apatah lagi setiap masalah rumah tangga akan berakhir ke paderi-paderi dan bishop sebagai tempat penyelesaian konflik. Jika masalah seperti ini dapat ditangani melalui kesedaran suami-isteri, nescaya beban yang diletakkan pada bahu paderi-paderi dan bishop dapatlah dikurangkan.

Seminar ini adalah wajar dan memang tepat pada waktunya diadakan. Ini dapat dilihat dari pandangan para peserta. Bukan sedikit bilangan suami dan isteri yang menyatakan bahawa hubungan mereka kini jarang sekali rapat sebagai teman kerana keintiman itu sudah tiada. Tambahan lagi selisih faham saling berganti sehingga mengakibatkan kacau-bilau dalam keluarga dan membawa penderitaan terutamanya kepada anak-anak.

Susunan seminar merupakan format yang sudah diatur oleh kumpulan penceramah ini, iaitu bermula pada jam 7:30 malam, diisi dengan ajaran disegi spiritualitas perkahwinan. Disusuli dengan perkongsian dan tayangan wayang gambar yang mengesahkan konflik keluarga orang Kristian.

Spiritualitas perkahwinan memfokus kepada sakramen perkahwinan di mana para peserta dikejutkan dengan pengertian perkahwinan dari kaca mata gereja. Misalannya kenapa umat Katolik tidak dibenarkan bercerai, Trinitas di

dalam perkahwinan dan keluarga, serta tanggungjawab pasangan apabila menyatakan ikrar perkahwinan di hadapan paderi yang selama ini tidak begitu diambil berat.

Dalam bahagian perkongsian para peserta diberi peluang untuk berkongsi mengenai realiti kehidupan mereka suami isteri. Perkongsian itu begitu menyentuh hati sehingga ada yang tidak segan-segan menangis kerana apa yang disampaikan semuanya membongkar kembali pengalaman pahit yang dialami hingga hampir menggoncang keharmonian rumah tangga.

Aspek-aspek penting dalam mempertahankan kerukunan rumah tangga seperti komunikasi, seksualiti, keibubapaan kristian, krisis dalam keluarga dan perdamaian juga telah mengambil tempat di hati para peserta. Semua ini juga disentuh dalam pertukaran surat antara pasangan sehinggakan ada yang merasa terharu apabila membaca surat dari pasangan masing-masing. Ini menunjukkan betapa aspek-aspek ini harus diberi perhatian yang serius.

Keseluruhan seminar ini sangat berjaya walaupun pada awalnya jawatankuasa amat kluatir tentang sambutan dari peserta, namun di saat-saat akhir borang penyertaan berterusan datang. Hampir semua peserta bersetuju bahawa seminar ini menolong mereka untuk memperbaharui hubungan suami-isteri dan bertekad untuk bekerja keras untuk memperbaiki suasana bekeluarga.

RK



I'll be home for Christmas;



You can count on me.





COOL Sunday School Special -

Udo, 5



Beatrice, 6



Odelia, 5



Clarissa, 7



Thomas, 6



Christmas Day is the day Baby Jesus is born on 25th December. It is also the day we get presents!!

Michael, 9

A laptop and the "best day" with my family.



Judelle, 9

My family to have a happy day on Christmas ... and a laptop!



Adriana, 6

A puppy toy! And blessings on my family



Cassandra, 9
An I-phone!



Nonso, 7

I want a Wii Game and my brothers not to call me names anymore!



Victoria, 8

A cartoon book, I pray for mummy and daddy....



Victoria, 8
A new dress!



Carlisha, 8
Cinderella storybook, blessings for my family & friends



Michelle, 9

Storybooks 'coz I love to read!

Julian, 11
A computer ...



Emmanuel, 7
A drum set ...



Chukwudi, 7
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Storm!!



Babby Selvey, 10
A computer ...



Joseph, 10
A laptop & \$1000 ...



Monica, 9
A new stationery set - file, pencil box etc.



Angela, 11
A Barney book!



Aubrey, 8
Go to Australia with my family!



Agnes, 10
I want a teddy bear for me and a bag for mummy...



Sylvester, 8
Toys! And a guitar for my sister!



All We Hope For Christmas



Sybillina, 9
a mobile phone,
roses for my
parents & a puppy
for my siblings



Marsherey, 10
Ipod touch!



Angelo, 10
drums for me, new car for mum,
tennis shoes for dad, bracelets for sisters



Charles, 11
I have a secret wish,
and I want my family
to be happy.....



Kevin, 10
Gateway MV laptop, \$100 for my
parents & storybooks for my sisters



Darren, 11
\$50 please...



Isabel, 10
I want a Ipod Nano, and my
mummy and friends to be healthy



Valentine, 13
teddy bears for
me and my sister



Uche, 9
Dell XPS2 latest laptop
and 50% of my parents'
money :P



Gabriel, 11
a bike for me, watches for my
brothers and a necklace for
mum!



Myra, 11
I want new slippers, and
a new guitar for dad,
my a new dress for
mum and my sis to



Johanes, 13
A guitar for me, a keyboard for dad



Lucas, 11
new guitar & shoes, new car for bro,
\$50 for mum and 5As in PSR for
my friends!!



Anjali, 9
Ipod touch for me, Dolce &
Gabana perfume for mummy
and a Ferrari for daddy!!

Joel, 9
PS2, iphone for
mummy and money
to help those in



Exel, 9
PSP Gold, new dress for mum,
my brother passes his college
exams and my sister to be



Anna, 9
Ipod touch too!



Anastasia, 12
A laptop and 5As in PSR, and
my parents love us more....



Steven, 11
A PSP Silver and
food for the poor



Teresa, 11
I want a new guitar and
all my friends to have
Me 2 U bears...





COOL Sunday School Family Day



Then He smiled at me, pa rum pum pum



me and my drum



Anime Night

The movie-watching event was held on 29th August @ the Church of Our Lady of Immaculate Conception, Seria; exactly a **week after the Vicariate Youth of Brunei's 5th Life Nite**. And one can only assume that the hype generated by such Vicariate Youth **gathering spurred a number of COLA's** participants to immediately sign up for Anime Night as well.

It was held in the parish's conference room where most of COLA's representative movie-viewers settled down on the mats with pillows right in front and the Japanese animated film – Ponyo, could finally begin.

Centering the plot on a goldfish named Ponyo, the movie saw her befriend Sosuke, a five-year-old human boy living in a small fishing town. It was through this friendship she decided that she wanted to become a human girl, against the will of her human father Fujimoto, who held a deep grudge against the human race. As the story panned out, Ponyo cited her love for Sosuke as her reason to change into a human, something that Fujimoto attempts to thwart. After Ponyo and Sosuke prevailed through trials with their courage and sacrifice for others, Fujimoto finally **allowed his daughter's desire to become human and to stay with Sosuke**.

The Japanese theme continued even after the movie as all those who attended the event had the opportunity to enjoy sushi and **Ponyo's favourite ham sandwiches**.

Overall, a night full of anime and sushi was enjoyed by everyone who partook in the proceedings and there is no doubt that the majority of the vicariate are looking forward to similar events in the near future!

- NNA





3rd Confirmation Retreat '09 - Life's Turning Point

The 3rd & last Vicariate Confirmation Retreat for this year's batch of confirmandiis was held last 14th to 18th September 2009 at Pace Bene, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, East Malaysia. And it was indeed a turning point in my life...

The retreat was good in many different ways - It did not only strengthen my faith but it also changed the way I see life. It also gave us - the confirmandiis from all over the vicariate - an opportunity to get much closer to one another regardless which parish we are from. And it was very comforting to know that each person in the retreat was there to help one another and one would not get ridiculed no matter the situation. We also appreciated the kind hospitality given by the nuns during the retreat.

Moreover, it was a "retreat of many chances"... It gave me a chance, for a moment, to rise above the storms of life and get away from our daily habits.

This is also a chance to just concentrate on learning more about God and having a closer relationship with Him; I started to pray more through the rosary, especially, and learned how to rely on God when things do not happen according to our human plans. The retreat also provided something that we rarely get in our modern life --- silence.

During the retreat, I realized that no matter how messed up our lives are, God is always with us, helping us, and guiding us. It made me see that it is not what I have done in the past, it is where I am going to from now on that really counts.

Three retreats, three different venues but more than just three mundane events. For it did not matter where the retreat was held, there was always something new to learn... Those were definitely life-changing experiences for all of us confirmandiis!

- AT



Youth - LifeNite in KB



A Life Nite gathering is where the youths of the three churches of Brunei Darussalam, the Church of **Our Lady (Seria), St John's Church (KB) and the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption (Bandar)** come together for another night of offering Heavenly worship to our God and Savior Jesus Christ. KB was the host for the Life Nite held on the 22nd August 2009.

The purpose of any Life Nite is to generally bring the church to the Catholic youths in Brunei, to foster friendly relations between parishes and not to forget, **to praise and glorify God's name together as one.** This is because only if we are one in Christ, we can win the battle of good versus evil and eventually have **eternal rest in our Heavenly Father's arms.**

Based on the reading of the day, 22nd August 2009, **we had a skit with the theme "Set-Free"; set-free from all bondages that we as youth in this generation encounter daily.**

This skit spoke of the "enemy" chaining us, personified by the youth in the skit, down with his face against the floor. But then, a white light appears, the face of Jesus Christ shone out brightly and with His out-stretched arm, He saved the youth and cast the "enemy" away. This scene thus showed the youth hope; hope that would lead him (and us!) out of the many worldly temptations, hope of a new life in Christ, and hope of eternal salvation with our Heavenly Father. This theme was received with enthusiasm by the youths who attended that Life Nite and by the look on their faces, the message resonated well with them.

The highlight in the Life Nite program is always the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in which silence is the atmosphere; the power and light of God touches **every youth's heart (through the exposition) and heals us of any anxiety and worries of everyday situations. In this Our Heavenly Father tells us "Son, do not worry. I am always here for you. I love you." Even such simple words from our Heavenly Father clear all troubles and heartaches. Life Nite is truly and night for only you and God. This was beautifully done, as always!**

Thus without the Life Nite, where will the youths go? What will their Saturday nights be? What will become of them without Christ in their hearts?

Finally, we the youth, praise and thank God for giving us the courage to go to Life Nite and to be able to see the wonders that He can do for us, to see how He can change our lives with uncomplicated words, words of encouragement and peace, words of Hope and Everlasting Love. Amen Indeed.

NJ



Jingle bell, jingle bell, jingle bell rock

Jingle bells swing and jingle bells ring





Vicariate Catholic Singles Conference

Catholic single adults from all over Brunei Darussalam gathered together at the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption (COLA) in Bandar Seri Begawan last August 29 – 30, 2009 to experience the true ICON.... JESUS CHRIST.

This assembly was definitely not only about sitting in your chair and listening to the speaker all throughout the night. Kicking off with the Praise Parade, each group showed off their creativity and talents through their different interpretations of the song “Move” which had the audience wildly cheering for the performances of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

The first session was named “in Christ...this is the LIFE”; a life of revelations, a life of conversion, a life of healing & forgiveness, a life of mission & sacrifice and a life of promises fulfilled. The second session was about forgetting what lies behind. In this session we learned that like us, Jesus Christ did not live in a perfect conditions, He experienced temptations, betrayals, scourging and was seemingly forsaken. Despite the trials and sufferings Jesus never gave up and He never questioned the Father whether He deserved the passion he underwent. We also learned that we should let go of the heavy loads of pain and bitterness **on our backs and replace it with God’s love** – a love that cost the life of Jesus Christ in exchange for our salvation.

The third session was about setting out hearts on the prize - Jesus Christ, our ICON. In this journey we encountered difficulties, pain and failures but those should not hinder us to seek and run towards Him. Instead those trials should pave a way for us to receive Jesus in our lives and to allow Him to touch our hearts with His love.

The assembly also had light hearted moments. After Bishop Cornelius Sim led us in Benediction, the organizers must have considered how boring it would be to listen to the talk after lunch, so they threw in games to keep our minds awake. The first contest gave the groups a task to build their own churches with the materials given and the second contest was a freeze frame to re-enact a particular biblical scene. After that, there was a workshop about Sacraments, to educate us on the importance of receiving the Sacraments in our lives and debunking the common misconception of people towards the Sacraments. In line with this workshop the speaker asked each group to present a skit based on the problem that they provided.

The fourth Session was about experiencing the True ICON, Jesus Christ in our everyday life, and it ended with the Praise festival on the last night of the conference. It was a night filled with the presence of God showcased in all the participants **singing our hearts out through everyone’s own unique way** in glorifying, praising and worshipping the Lord.

Overall, the conference was a great success because our eyes which were blinded by worldly things had now been opened to welcome Jesus Christ, the true ICON in our lives, lives wherein we are no longer deaf to His call. Indeed we have been shown the infinite beauty possible if only we place Him firmly in the centre of our lives, with us feeling, **hearing and seeing him day to day and everyday...** not just Sundays!
RF



VYA Leadership Workshop



On 7th September 2009, making optimum use of the public holiday as always, there was a Leadership Workshop held in COLA. The 8-hour workshop was conducted by our very own COLA-PPC Chairman, VL assisted by his lovely “girlfriend” OL and of course, our beloved Bishop. The workshop was held to aid and train the current and potential future youth and young adult leaders within the Vicariate to become better leaders in their ministries. Participating in the workshop were those serving in the COOL and COLA Social Communications, Vicariate Confirmation Retreat in KK, Vicariate Young Adults (VYA) and various other ministries within the Vicariate.



It was not just any normal leadership workshop either. It was an enlightening workshop with Christ at the centre of it. Among the sessions were extracts from PKD Lee’s “**Christian Leadership**”, Stephen Covey’s “**7 Habits of Highly Effective People**” and “**Building Trust**” and Michael Zigarelli’s “**Influencing like Jesus-15 Biblical Principles of Persuasion**”. We discovered that the Key Attributes of Leadership are Wisdom, Courage, Strength and Motivation and that the height of wisdom is to “**fear God and keep his commandments**” (Ecclesiastes 12:13) as this will make us do the right things publicly or privately. There was also an interesting session on Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and how EQ plays a role as a key for leadership.



“Say what you mean, mean what you say, and do not be mean when you say it”
Meryl Runion, communication expert.



Overall, it was an informative workshop and a fun one too, with group dynamics and discussions as well as interactive sessions between the speakers and the participants. Those who participated in the workshop not only benefited from the experience of learning (and laughing) together, they also grew together as a wholesome group of young people ready and willing to do their part in their service, individually or as a whole, for the Church and for one another.

—MC



Movie & Book Review www.wikipedia.com

A Christmas Carol is a 2009 film adaptation of Charles Dicken's 1843 story of the same name. The film is written and directed by Robert Zemeckis, and stars Jim Carrey in a multitude of roles, including Ebenezer Scrooge as a young, middle-aged, and old man, and the three ghosts who haunt Scrooge. *A Christmas Carol* began filming in February 2008, and will be released on November 6, 2009 by Walt Disney Pictures. It will receive its world premiere in London, coinciding with the switching on of the annual Oxford Street and Regent Street Christmas lights, which in 2009 will have a Dickens theme.

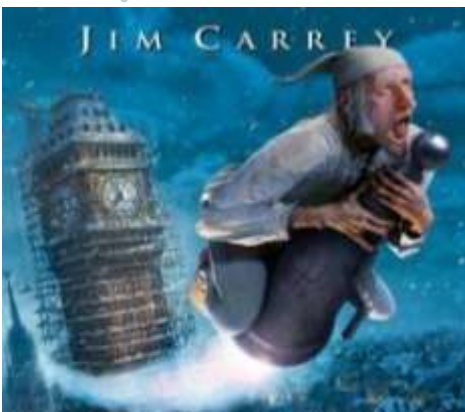


“We were very true to the book. It's beautiful. It's an incredible film!” *Jim Carrey*

A Victorian tale of an old and bitter miser, Ebenezer Scrooge (Jim Carrey), he undergoes a profound experience of redemption over the course of one night. Mr. Scrooge is a financier/money-changer who has devoted his life to the accumulation of wealth. He holds anything other than money in contempt, including friendship, love and the Christmas season. But an encounter with the ghostly figure of Jacob Marley (Gary Oldman) sets the stage for a mysterious and magical encounter with three phantasmic beings to help him realize the true magic of Christmas.

Quotes from
A Christmas Carol, Book Review
© Jeannie Delahunt (Nov 19, 2008)

The humility of the Savior's message is exemplified through Dicken's popular tale of transformation. His novels and humanitarian spirit helped to bring change to the plight of the less fortunate, thus extolling compassion--the Christmas Spirit.



Old, bitter, resentful Scrooge. ... How many times can Scrooge fail at just being human? He seems talented at it. Ah, but there is hope. He is visited by four spirits, all compelled to motivate change.

(First was Jacob Marley's ghost who) raised a cry and shook its chains and wrung its shadowy hands. "I wear the chain I forged in life... I made it link by link, and yard by yard."

Who has not failed at something and yearned for another opportunity? Who has not made a fool of oneself at least once and longed to erase it? Who has not hurt someone, somehow, and not yearned to be forgiven? Scrooge represents fallen humanity in desperate need of a savior and salvation.

Message of the The First Christmas

Matthew : 21-23: "...He will save his people from their sins...and they shall call his name, Emmanuel, which translated means, God is with us."

Silent night, holy night, All is calm, all is bright



East Timor Mission Trip



Background on East Timor

East Timor or Timor Leste is one of only two countries in South East Asia whose population is predominantly made up of Catholics, the other country being the Philippines. Located on the eastern part of the island of Timor, it is a small country but one that has been through much political turmoil and violence. Just ten days after gaining independence from the Portuguese in 1975, East Timor was forcefully occupied by the Indonesians and in the following two decades, many civilians lost their lives, their homes and their freedom. Finally in 2002, after much intervention from the UN, East Timor finally regained its independence, but the effects of those long suffering years still lingers, though slowly fading in pace with the growing development of the country.

The Mission Trip Kicks Off

So on 19th September 2009, a small team comprised of **Fr Arin and 4 'young' ladies set out on their journey** from Brunei by first flying to Kuala Lumpur and then to Bali, where we spent a restless night thinking of the journey ahead. There was a great feeling of anticipation, excitement and anxiety as we thought of finally reaching our destination which we had only heard of and seen in the photographs shared by our young priest.

We finally touched down in Dili on 20th September and were met immediately by Anthony, a missionary from the Philippines who had been living in East Timor for the past few years with his wife, Tina and two young children. He drove us to a Salesian seminary in Comoro where we stayed the night.



Recollection of the Brave Priests

There, we met many priests and seminarians and we listened to them recall an event from the Indonesian occupation. It was at the height of the violence and extremely dangerous in the capital. The Indonesian army had come in full force and forced many people onto the streets. There were civilians running away from the army and they had no safe place to run to. However, as the gates of the Don Bosco compound were opened and word soon went round that it was, hundreds of people ran there for safety.

The Salesian priests formed a barricade at the entrance of the compound, and in their hands they held their rosaries, civilians were running in with the army hot on their trails but the priests stood their ground and continued praying the rosary. Their prayers proved to be stronger than the might of the soldiers for they stopped at the gate. They somehow could not and would not enter the compound. It was then finally, the civilians could find some respite from the violence. Their recollection of the story, the extent of their belief and faith truly inspired and moved us. We were told that close to a thousand refugees lived within the compound area for some months, the area of land being smaller than a normal football field.

Yet, despite all the past violence and pain, the people of East Timor were extremely hospitable and kind. They welcomed us openly and it was a pleasure to see their smiles so open and sincere. It was wonderful to see their eyes light up when a **'malae'** (foreigner) greeted them in Tetum, their language.

Meeting Fr. Jojo

We spent a night in the seminary and as we prepared ourselves for bed, we suddenly heard voices outside our rooms. It was Fr. Arin talking to Fr. Jojo who had just arrived from Laga. He was to drive us up to Baguia, the focal point of our visit.

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old





East Timor Mission Trip

Baguia – Day 1- The reason for our visit

For some of us, the next few days in Baguia would forever be etched onto our memories as it was an experience that opened our eyes to so many unexpected things. It was pervasive enough to change the way we looked at everyday life. Meeting the orphans in Baguia and seeing how they struggled to live and take care of each other, even if they were lacking in some aspects, was a truly remarkable experience.

It took six hours to drive up to Baguia, along the way we stopped to have lunch at Fr. Jojo's parish in Laga, the views on the way up was breathtaking. We drove past stretches of clear blue water, little traditional villages, rocky mountain sides and vast plains of land.

When we got to the orphanage in Baguia, there was already a group of children there waiting for us. As soon as they saw us, they arranged themselves in neat little lines and sang us a welcome song in English, which they had just learnt the day before.

We spent the rest of the day getting to know the children and playing games with them. In the evening, when the power was turned on and after dinner, the DVD player was taken out and all of us watched 'Ice Age 3'. After the movie, we proceeded to our guesthouse; it was a three bedroom house with a very minimalist toilet. It took us city folks awhile to get used to the cold baths. Some of us hardly slept that night as we were not accustomed to the sounds of the night in the village. The 'tukeh-tukeh' of the gecko which could grow up to 10 inches and the squealing of the pigs behind the house took some getting used to.

Baguia – Day 2 -

On the second day in Baguia, we awoke early and attended a Tetum mass celebrated by Fr. Arin; it was another unforgettable event as he said the whole mass in flawless Tetum. The children sang without any aid of musical instruments and we tried our best to keep up in our barely intelligible Tetum which got a few giggles out of the younger ones.



The First Noel, the Angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay



Our efforts proved worthy as it helped to break the ice between us. After mass, we had breakfast and Tita L offered to cook something for the children.

An evening with the children

So off we went to the market to look for ingredients. We bought bananas, pumpkins, luncheon meat and eggs. The last two were a luxury for the children. We were informed by Fr. Jojo that although food donations were sufficient for the children, they lacked protein and fat in their diet.

Cooking was an adventure; there was only a firewood stove and no dial to control the ferocity of the fire. The kitchen was a tiny dank room at the back of the orphanage with no sinks for washing and no proper lighting. We were shooed out of the kitchen while Tita L battled to produce pumpkin soup and caramelised banana fritters to the delight of the children. While Tita L was slaving away in front of the hot stove, the rest of us spent time with the children. We taught them some new games and how to make 'friendship bracelets' with thread bought from the market. It was an incredible feeling to sit with the children and spend time with them and we only hoped that they enjoyed it too. They really appreciated our efforts but it only made us feel guilty that we had not prepared enough for them. After the activities, the children went off to have their afternoon siesta and the rest of us sat outside Fr. Jojo's office and reflected on the day. Later in the afternoon, we went wandering around the village and meeting the other children.

In the evening, after a hearty dinner we moved again to the TV room where we were treated to a folk dance and a touching song performed by the children. Fr. Jojo translated the song into English for us and we were all left in tears. It was then that we learnt that not all the children there were orphans, some came from very impoverished families and the orphanage was the only place that could provide them with decent food, lodgings and an education. We finished the evening by teaching them a song and watching 'Narnia' which they really enjoyed.

East Timor Mission Trip



The Pumpkin Soup Surprise

We left very early the next day and it was during our car ride back that we found out that pumpkin was not normally used in cooking and was considered pig-feed! We finally understood why the villagers were staring and pointing at us as we carried back the two pumpkins we bought from the market. They probably thought we were crazy for serving the children 'pig food'! (Ed: Ooops!!)

Back to Dili

The way back felt a lot shorter because it was downhill all the way to Dili. As we had left Baguia early in the morning, we arrived in Dili mid-afternoon. Fr. Arin decided that we should pay a visit to the western part of East Timor, so after freshening up, we spent the next hour driving up to Relaco to visit the Sisters of Saint Vincent De Paul. The sisters were extremely friendly and hoped that we would stay longer in future.

After Relaco, we drove back to Dili to have dinner with the missionaries. At dinner, we managed to chat to another missionary, Karen who has worked in East Timor for three years. She said that it was not easy living there but it was worth it because she was doing something she loved.

After we had finished eating, Fr. Arin handed over the donations to Fr. Jojo who thanked the sponsors very much for their care and generosity.

Last Reflections:

On our last day in East Timor before flying off, we joined hundreds of East Timorese youth in a morning mass celebrated by their Bishop. He gave us a blessing and asked that we passed on his well wishes to our Bishop in Brunei.

The trip has certainly opened our eyes to many things; we were inspired by the faith and courage of the people who continue to help the East Timorese rebuild their lives, whose tenacity and passion has left us feeling that we should do more. The children in Baguia taught us to look at things for what they are and to appreciate the simplicities of life.

We went thinking there that we could teach them things but came out of the trip learning from them instead. It was indeed a humbling experience. We look forward to next year's trip and next time round, we will be more prepared. JL



Ding dong merrily on high,
In heav'n the bells are ringing





Vocation - St Nicholas

Saint Nicholas was born in Lycia, Asia Minor, about the middle of the third century, of devout and wealthy parents who provided him with a Christian upbringing and education. He was orphaned at an early age. Later he was ordained a priest, and when the bishop of his district died, he was made Bishop of Myra of Lycia.

Saint Nicholas is distinguished for his great faith and especially for his charity. His faith was so great, that with his prayer he calmed a stormy sea while on a trip to the Holy Lands. For this reason sailors

He is particularly well known for his charity and his love for children. He used his great wealth to assist all who were in need: poor families, widows, and especially orphans and poor children. As Bishop, he established a poorhouse and a hospital.

St. Nicholas died in 352. His relics are still preserved in the church of San Nicola in Bari; up to the present day an oily substance, known as Manna di San Nicola, which is highly valued for its medicinal powers, is said to flow from them.

catholicfire.blogspot.com/2008/12/st-nicholas-bishop.html

ORIGIN OF THE NAME "SANTA CLAUS"

The date of St Nicholas' death, December 6th, was commemorated with an annual feast, which gradually came to mark the beginning of the medieval Christmas season. On St. Nicholas' Eve, youngsters would set out food for the saint, straw for his horses and schnapps for his attendant. The next morning, obedient children awoke to find their gifts replaced with sweets and toys, found their offering untouched, along with a rod or a bundle of switched. St. Nicholas' Day is still observed in many countries, and gifts are exchanged in honor of the spirit of brotherhood and charity that he embodied.

(As time passed,) the festivities of St. Nicholas' Day were merged with Christmas celebrations, and although the gift-bearer took on new, **non-religious forms, he still reflected the saint's generous spirit.**

In the 1600's, the Dutch presented Sinterklaas (meaning St. Nicholas) to America. In their excitement, many English-speaking children uttered the name so quickly that the name evolved into Santa Claus.

<http://www.northpolesantaclaus.com/santahistory.htm>



The fairy tale of Santa Claus will not be abolished easily, despite the efforts of well-meaning people. Nor does it seem necessary. Children do like fairy tales, and Santa Claus is one of the most charming of them. Catholic parents might use it without harm, provided they apply some safeguards to avoid an undue over stressing of the Santa Claus figure.

Keep the Santa tale in its simple, appealing form and shun the corruptions introduced by commercial managers. Never allow the figure of Santa Claus to dominate the child's mind. The Child Jesus must be the main figure in all his Christmas thinking. Picture to him Santa as merely a servant and delivery man, delightful but not very important. Santa does not give the presents; he only delivers what the Lord sends.

Based on the book RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS, by Fr. Weiser, S.J.

God rest ye merry, gentlemen,



Let nothing you dismay

THE STORY OF THE REAL "SANTA CLAUS"



It was the night before Christmas in the great castle of a famous nobleman who had just lost his entire fortune. All was dark and cold and desolate. The owner of the castle sat before the empty fireplace in the dining hall, his head sunk in his hands. Upstairs, his three young daughters had gone supperless to bed.

"What will become of my three poor little girls?" he said to himself sadly. Lost in his gloomy meditations, his head sank on his chest and he fell asleep.

Suddenly he was awakened at midnight by a strange sound. Someone had hurled something down the chimney. The mysterious package lay on the empty hearth before him. After a while his curiosity overcame his fright and he cautiously reached out and picked up the object. It was a large ball, securely tied. Quickly he untied the string and emptied the contents of the ball. Imagine his astonishment and delight when he saw a pile of gold pieces!

For a long time the nobleman wondered who could have done such a kind deed to him and his daughters. But he was unable to discover the identity of the unknown benefactor. In the meantime his eldest daughter had married and he had been able to provide her with a suitable dowry from the ball of gold.

Again it was Christmas Eve and the nobleman had come once more to the end of his money. His daughter's marriage had taken the greater portion of the mysterious gift and now he was faced with the same hopeless prospects as before. Again he remained before the cheerless, empty fireplace until sleep overcame him.

Then a remarkable thing took place. Exactly at the stroke of midnight another Christmas parcel was thrown through the chimney and landed on the hearth. The nobleman jumped up, wide awake, and picked it out of the ashes. He could hardly believe his senses when he found that it was another ball of gold pieces.

This time the count made careful inquiries and discovered that he was not the only person who shared the charity of the unknown benefactor. Many other people who needed help, especially the little children of the poor, had received mysterious presents while they were asleep on Christmas Eve. But nobody knew who it was that remembered them so generously.

The following Christmas the nobleman again sat before the empty hearth in the castle dining hall but this time he did not fall asleep. He was determined to discover who the mysterious benefactor really was.

He was not disappointed. With a loud thump another heavy ball of gold came down the chimney. He did not wait to pick it up but ran as fast as he could out into the street.

"Bishop Nicholas!" exclaimed the nobleman, falling on his knees. "So, it was you. I might have guessed it could be none other. How can I ever thank you?"

"Say no more, my dear son," said the Sainly bishop, who was overcome with confusion because his good deed had been discovered.

"Promise me on your honor never to reveal what you have found out tonight. Tomorrow is the Birthday of the Lord," said Saint Nicholas. **"Accept the gold as a gift for His sake, Who for our sakes became poor."**

For many years Saint Nicholas continued his Christmas Eve custom, and not until after he had died and gone to Heaven was the secret revealed. Is it any wonder that he has come to be looked upon as "Santa Claus," who is the symbol of Christmas giving and the Christmas spirit? As the Patron Saint of Children, Saint Nicholas has always been and always will be loved by countless little folks everywhere.

Saint Nicholas had a special love for the small ones of his flock, who in turn loved him dearly. His great love of the Divine Babe of Bethlehem inspired them with a like devotion. He looked upon his wealth as a gift from God, freely bestowed upon him to be used for others rather than himself. His example has come to us through the ages as the perfect model of Christmas giving. His gifts were made for the sweet sake of the infant Savior Who came down from Heaven on Christmas morn to bestow upon us the priceless gift of Himself.

*Based on articles by:
Rev. H. J. Heagney, Litt. D.
Norman Griffin
Fr. Frances Weiser, S.J.*

*Introduction and Compilation by
Pauly Fongemie*



Deck the halls with boughs of holly, Fa la la la la, la la



“Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to His people on earth”



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At Christmas we contemplate God made man, divine glory hidden beneath the poverty of a Child wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger; the Creator of the Universe reduced to the helplessness of an infant. Once we accept this paradox, we discover the Truth that sets us free and the Love that transforms our lives. On Bethlehem Night, the Redeemer becomes one of us, our companion along the precarious paths of history. Let us take the hand which he stretches out to us: it is a hand which seeks to take nothing from us, but only to give.

1st Christmas Message by Pope Benedict XVI, Christmas 2005

WRITE TO US

We welcome all your comments, opinions and suggestions, as well as contributions and materials (articles & photographs). Our next issue of HOPE newsletter shall be available in February 2010.

Thank you & enjoy reading!!!

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