



COVENANT NEWS

BUKÁS-LOÓB SA DIYÓS COVENANT COMMUNITY • ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK

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NEWS

COUNSELS

BLD Newark Singles attend March for Life

... So who's afraid of a little snow ☺?

In spite of the threat of historic blizzard Jonas, hundreds of thousands of people across the United States still came together to defend the right to life of all human beings, especially the unborn, marching in the annual March for Life, held in Washington DC last Friday, January 22nd. Among the people there was a small group from BLD Newark's Singles Ministry, who arrived in Washington DC the night before, and were fortunate to be able to join the March's Opening Mass - National Prayer Vigil for Life at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Fr. Frank Pavone of the Priests for Life delivered the opening talk, with his Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan, the Archbishop of New York, as the principal celebrant. In his homily, Cardinal Dolan called on the faithful to see Christ's face in the unborn. Listening to their messages was this group from BLD Newark:



Danah Alburo (SE#20), Diane Alburo (SE#25), Lilibeth Zanduetta (SE#1), Alyssa Sta. Ana (SE#16), Lita Alfaro (SE#4), Enrico Cairme (SE#5), Joshua Noel Cruz (SE#20), Rashed Philip Espejon (SE#19), and Renato Frondoza Andoy (SE#34). A couple of friends from Priests for Life (Jed Belaguas and Brigette Villuga) were also there among the volunteer workers for the event.

At their hotel, after the vigil, the group was able to attend another pro-life gathering where there were inspiring testimonies, life sharings, praise music and more prayers. As one of the BLD participants described it, "What an awesome encounter!"

The next day also started with Holy Mass. At the 22nd Annual National Memorial for the Pre-born and Their Mothers and Fathers at Constitution Hall in Washington DC, more speakers were featured, including Fr. Frank Pavone, Kansas Governor Sam Brownback (the first governor to enact the Unborn Child Protection from ...Continued on page 4

Love in Truth of Heart

THEME: We find joy in the Light of God when we are willing to stand up and be witnesses to the Truth.

WORD: Jer 1:4-5, 17-19 ~ Ps 71:1-2,3-4,5-6,15-17
1 Cor 12:31-13:13 ~ Lk 4:21-30

ORDER: *Stand up and tell them all that I command you.*

REFLECTION:

This Sunday's readings for the 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time reflects two themes – to live God-centered lives, and to love in a way that is perhaps, somewhat foreign to our secular and romanticized concept of love. Jesus Christ was asked consistently throughout the Holy Scripture what one must do to get to Heaven, to achieve holiness and grace. His many answers could be summarized in one word – Love.

In the first reading, our Lord God spoke to Jeremiah and chose him to be a prophet. Like many of the prophets before him, he was a bit reluctant. But God told him these very touching words, *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you"* (Jer 1:5), meaning, that God already knew beforehand that he, Jeremiah, could do the job that he was asked to do. Consequently, we all know that he became one of the great prophets, with remarkable insights that later inspired generations to admire him.

While we are not called to be prophets, we also have been set aside for a divine service and calling. That calling, as revealed to us through His Son, Jesus Christ, is to adore the Lord God, to obey His commandments, to share the Good News to all, and most importantly, to shine in love towards others, while serving them, all for the glory of God.

St. Paul's description of love in the 2nd reading is one of the most beautiful, poetic descriptions of love that we have, and it is commonly chosen by spouses for their weddings. But also, in this same particular reading, if we read more into his words, he challenges us to a mature and sacrificial love. In 1st Corinthians 13:13, it says: *"So faith, hope, love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love."* Paul knew that the Corinthians were enamored with spiritual gifts, just as many of us are. However, at the forefront of every ...Continued on page 3

Promise of the Week

"They will fight against you, but not prevail over you, for I am with you to deliver you" (Jer 1:19)

The Power of Parables



appears in all three of the synoptic Gospels. Also right after that, in Mark, Matthew and Luke, is a short discussion between Jesus and the Twelve about the purpose of parables, which at first seems confusing. Jesus said, *“The mystery of the kingdom of God has been granted to you. But to those outside everything comes in parables”* (Mk 4:11)

In this day and age when social media demands that communications be short, direct, and to the point, parables don't seem to have a place. For many, religion itself has been supplanted by the allure of almost instant gratification. But, as is explained in the Bible footnotes to Matthew's account of their discussion, we miss so much in rushing past parables; the footnote states that, “Since a parable is figurative speech that demands reflection for understanding, only those prepared to explore its meaning can come to know it.”

Jesus could have simply said to those listening to Him to be prepared for God's Word, but in using the imagery of sowing and harvesting in the Parable of the Sower, He made it easier to grasp the cause and effect of actually accepting that Word. Yet only those who are willing, and to whom faith has been granted, will really understand. Many will remain “outside,” treating the parables as simple anecdotes, rendering themselves incapable of discovering the parables' true meanings.

But truly, treasures and rich harvests await those who reflect upon God's Word, and life becomes more beautiful.

Whenever I try to talk to most of my non-BLD friends and family about our Community, the initial response is cynicism. Invitations to join us are often met with weak smiles and assurances of “No thanks... I'm good.” And they very well could already be good, which I shouldn't doubt... but could things be better?

As we in Rahway, delve into God's Word every Friday, and for a lot of us, even every day, doesn't life have a brighter light when reflections upon Scripture continue to deliver those “Aha – moments” when we actually do get it? True that life would have gone on with or without Christ's parables, but (and I pray that you agree with me) life gets much better armed with the lessons learned from rich reflections and deeper understanding of what He really meant by them.

Despite non-BLD friends' and families' benign refusals to join us, we must always leave that door open for all to partake of the riches of His Word. For us in the Community, the task is to continue to think about God, and be ready to help anyone who turns to Him too.

Proclaiming Praise

“Praise is the form of prayer which recognizes most immediately that God is God. It lauds God for his own sake and gives him glory, simply because HE IS. It shares in the blessed happiness of the pure of heart that loves God in faith before seeing him in glory. By praise, the Spirit is joined to our spirits to bear witness that we are children of God, testifying to the only Son in whom we are adopted and by whom we glorify the Father. Praise embraces the other forms of prayer and carries them toward him who is its source and goal: the ‘one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist.’” (CCC2639)

We exist for God and are adopted by God through His only Son's passion, death and resurrection. Jesus, by His passion freed us by taking our place. On the feast of the Passover, Jesus Christ allowed and willingly allowed Himself to take the place of Barabbas (literal meaning in Hebrew "son of the father"). When I recognize the Barabbas in me, I see a prisoner of sin. Jesus Christ took my place and died for me, died for all of us; and thus we became beloved children of God. As children of God, we are now able to reconcile with Him through the Sacrament of Penance when we humble ourselves, confess our sins and ask the Father for forgiveness for our wrongdoings. *“Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will exalt you”* (Jas 4:10)

“Let everything that has breath give praise to the LORD” (Psalm 150:6). In praise, we bring ourselves closer to God. For all of us, there is nothing more rewarding than living a life in Jesus Christ Who is God's Word, and we rightly desire to praise and give glory to God for all the graces and blessings we receive. We praise Him in tough times. We offer to Him our worries and fears, and completely surrender to God's divine will. Only then do we feel genuine calm and peace of mind.

We praise and give thanks when we experience His love and generosity. Oftentimes we feel an overwhelming joy that we all know only comes from His goodness. We praise Him anytime, anywhere: in our car driving to work, in our bedroom, inside a closet, behind closed doors, as well as at Mass and in Community. We are especially blessed knowing that our whole family is together in our Community, singing praises, giving thanks and worshiping the Lord. As one Community unified, we wholeheartedly give glory to God in His Greatness and Majesty. Sometimes at the highest peak of our songs, worship and praise, my tears flow freely, knowing He is listening. I feel His Grace and His Presence, the touch of the Holy Spirit upon us. Emmanuel, God is with us!

I pray that even with my last breath, Lord You will open my lips; and my mouth would proclaim Your praise:

**Blessed be the Lord, Glory to God,
Hallelujah!!!**

More on the March for Life

“Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win.”

(1 Cor 9:24)

This past weekend, BLD members bravely marched with hundreds of thousands of other pro-life advocates in defense of the lives of the unborn children in the womb who have been endangered by the abortion industry since 1973 when the Roe v Wade decision was made. No matter which way you look at it, it is us against them. We are part of the Body of Christ, and the abortion industry is destroying the most innocent bodies in God's creations and selling the parts for blood money, further funding the evil of abortion and the other industries attached to it.

At this time, we are seeing political campaigns promoting candidates for the presidency of the greatest country in the world, our country. As I have been privileged to be working with Priests for Life for the past year, I've learned the importance of participating in elections by exercising the right to vote. I now know the importance of our God-given human dignity, and the power we hold with our choice. The enemy is working tirelessly to prevail in this war between good and evil; they are running in this race too. For our unborn brothers and sisters lives, and all future generations, we must have such a sense of urgency in this cause to make us stop everything we are currently doing, halt any plans and goals we have, in order to right this wrong and call for justice in the name of Jesus Christ.

We ran in that very race this past weekend, and what we saw was just a portion of the Body of which we are all members. We can end the on-going evil sooner, rather than later, by educating, enabling, and mobilizing our people worldwide, since BLD is a global Community.

Despite the major snowstorm that was on its way up the East Coast this past weekend, several members of the BLD Newark Singles Ministry braved the storm and made it to the March for Life last Friday, January 22. I can imagine the impact we would have if all in our Community participated. In California, there were various events that took place where our West Coast BLD brethren could have joined in. The same goes for Chicago and many other places across the nation.

It is important to note that, with the powerful tool of social media, we can each play a part in the Pro-Life movement by merely liking, commenting, and sharing posts to spread the message that needs to be heard, especially since mainstream media refuses to publicize these issues to the degree that they truly deserve. We should be ashamed that we've let this evil go on for the 43+ years since it became legal to take the lives of innocents.

When it's our time and we meet our maker, how will we respond when we are asked, *“What have you accomplished for My people in your time with them on Earth?”*

I pray that we all will have the proper answer.

COUNSELS

(from page 1)

gift is one thing – love. He is reminding us that faith and hope will have fulfilled their purpose but love is never-ending and will continue to grow throughout eternity. St. Paul's point, quite simply, is that all these gifts are meaningless without love.

In this reading, another reminder to us from St. Paul is that love must be united in truth. But what is truth? The truth is that we have choices every day of our lives. First is to do good service to others out of love. The second choice is to grow closer to God in doing service to and for Him, or to grow away from Him. Unfortunately, we are faced with many distortions of love today. In many ways, the opposite of love is not hate, but indifference. In today's society, obsession with tolerance is much closer to indifference than it is to love. The starting point is, to be very clear about what love is and what love is not. To love someone, stranger or otherwise, is to want the best for them, and to be willing to act on their behalf.

We must have the courage to love and serve, matched with prudence and humility, to speak the truth and do good, out of love. Even if it is uncomfortable and asks too much of us. To be of service to others is a profound form of loving them.

Now let's go back to St. Paul's word on love again. In 1st Corinthians 13:1, he says, ***“If I speak in human and angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal.”*** There is a caveat somewhere in this passage. What it simply means is that our effectiveness in our work and service to others, in the name of our Lord, will amount to nothing if we do not have love. It is love that will enable us to be compassionate, understanding, patient, forgiving and accepting of others. Love sustains us with courage, with power to endure, and carries us confidently through every challenge.

Each and every one of us needs to find the service that will fill our hearts with joy as we express God's love through our actions. Loving and giving...just for the pure joy of loving and giving, feeds our souls. We can truly love God by loving His children and serving them in any way we can.

The two themes mentioned earlier, as you may recall – living God-centered lives and loving each other the way God loves us, are brought together in the Gospel from Luke. We are able to perceive how God manifested His divine love in a very personal way. He sent Jesus to dwell among us. As the prophets of the Old Testament were rejected in their hometown, Jesus also found rejection among His people. He did not meet their standards. He was nothing special to them. Nevertheless, He confronts opposition and even derision, and His response is worth noting. He did not respond with anger for anger's sake, but with love despite the anger. In the face of resistance and hostility, His only real reaction is love.

My brothers and sisters let us look at ourselves and assess our own personal status in this world, in our BLD community, in our apostolate or even in our ministries. Are we gladly serving, or are we demanding service? Are we at the giving end of charity, or are we taking advantage of receiving it? Are we giving love, or are we always expecting to receive it? ...Continued on page 4

COUNSELS

(from page 3)

Love, pure love; it is sacrificial, giving and unconditional. It has little to do with emotion, and everything to do with living out the love God feels for us. It is stewardship.

Directions:

1. Love unconditionally.
2. Be involved in the Catholic Church's Social Justice Advocacy Programs.

NEWS

BLD Newark Singles attend ...

(from page 1)

Dismemberment Abortion Act), and singer Tony Melendez (who due to a birth defect was born without arms but is able to play guitar with his feet!). After the Prayer Service, the group then joined the March to the Supreme Court.

About the March, one of the BLD marchers wrote this:

As a first time March-for-Lifer, I wasn't expecting the number of kids participating- middle school students, high schoolers, college students - they might have even outnumbered the adults. And of course during the actual March the majority of groups present were students clad in matching-colored scarves, hats, and hoodies. It was uplifting to see all the young people acknowledging the need for abortion to become illegal, and standing up as a voice for the unborn. The slogan used by Students for Life for this year was even so aptly entitled: "We are the Pro-Life Generation."

...Then there was the snowstorm last Saturday, about which, the same BLD marcher continued:

God certainly works in mysterious ways, and the timing of snowstorm Jonas was no exception. To start off, Jonas' light flurries started falling as soon as the March began. Pro-lifers showed perseverance and conviction as we trekked on, the snow coming down harder and harder. What happened the next day blew me away even more. Thanks to Jonas, all residents at our hotel were stranded there. Since we were already volunteering for Priests for Life during our stay in DC, my group and I took part in all their activities and events. The organization's coordinators found a high school group from Illinois with two priests at the same hotel, and soon an impromptu event developed. Women from Silent No More, who work with Priests for Life, openly shared their testimonies with these high schoolers. They talked about their abortions and how they found God and His forgiveness and healing power. They educated the students on why abortion is wrong, its consequences, and how to handle situations if they, or a friend, find themselves pregnant. The kids inquisitively asked the women many questions and then broke into groups for further discussion. Mass followed the mini-retreat, celebrated by the two priests who were with them.

The afternoon's events were not in anyone's plans for the day, but they certainly were in God's. No doubt about it, the Holy Spirit filled that room and all who were present, especially at the conclusion of the Holy Mass. I am sure that around Washington DC and around this nation, which was founded on the principles of Christianity – while thousands and thousands of



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LORD'S PROVISION

PREVIOUS WEEK'S

Collections	Prior Week	YTD
Tithe & Love Offering	\$ 1,442	\$ 6,714
Mission Collections	\$ 33	\$ 707

Financial details are available to all members through treasury@bldnewark.com

Thank you for your continued support!

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Medical Mission

February 22-25, 2016 Tagbilaran, Bohol, Philippines

Contact Persons: Ramon/Leonie Mariazeta

rmariazeta@msn.com / lmariazeta@msn.com / bldmmcoord@outlook.com

YLSS 21

March 4-6, 2015

Kristian Quevada: YLSS Youth Evangelization Coordinator | (732) 910-9924
 Ronald and Dina Pangilinan: YCS, Adult Youth Evangelization Coordinators | (732) 581-9497

LSS 46 – Registration is now open!

Salubungan/Aquaintance: March 4

Invocation Mass: April 8

LSS 46: April 9-10

Contact: Lito/Gigi Vibar~ litogigi@vibar.com

TEACHING CALENDAR

Teachings for **Friday, February 19, after Worship:**

LSS orientation – the Four Basic Truths

Teachings for **Saturday, February 20:**

9 am to 6 pm - Singles

1 to 6 pm:

- CMP II Part II – Christian Suffering / Christian Giving / Christian Witnessing / Christian Discernment LSS 1-43
- Christian Parenting – ME 46
- Shepherd's Training

Marshaling	Schedule	Date	Apostolate
		Feb 5	Evangelization
		Feb 12	Formation
		Feb 19	Management
		Feb 26	Mission

→→ people prayed fervently for the dignity of human life from conception to natural death, other similar unplanned events took place. I am sure too that many seeds were planted, eyes opened and hearts changed. Our efforts in abolishing this ungodly injustice have not been in vain. Perhaps we just don't always see it.

Another member of the BLD Singles group had this exhortation:

As we remember Jesus Christ, we pray that the mercy and grace of God will help our innocent unborn brothers and sisters who are in most need of our prayers from the BLD community. We are grateful to have had an opportunity to help and pray, and give thanks to the Priests for Life Committee (special thanks to Fr. Frank Pavone, Janet Morana, Enric Cairme, Mark Valonzo. Rashed Espejon and Joshua Noel Cruz) for giving us the chance to serve with them.