



COVENANT NEWS

BUKÁS-LOÓB SA DIYÓS COVENANT COMMUNITY • ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK

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Bulletin Edition

March 4, 2016

BLD Newark Shares God's Love in Tagbilaran, Bohol

"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."
(Matthew 25:40)

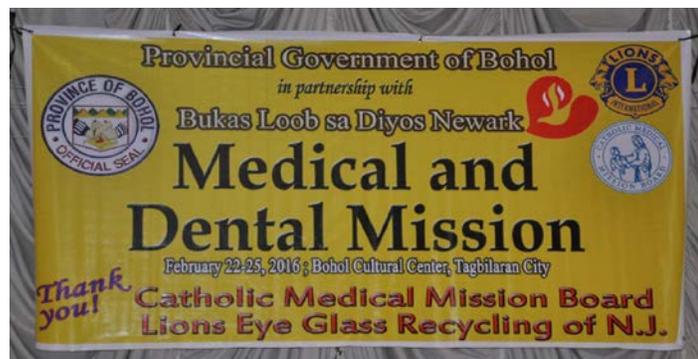
In every mission we undertake, there are always memories that we can cherish forever. It is rather difficult to choose one that stands out because all can outlast the test of time.

There is one common denominator among all, and that is the feeling of joy from realizing that what we have done is a manifestation that we are a loving and caring community. This joy is further enhanced by the prayers, love and support of our BLD global community, including but not limited to our ECSL and BLD Tagbilaran, and the cooperation and support of the provincial and city governments of Bohol and the capital city of Tagbilaran.

The selfless love and humility as exemplified by our volunteers are truly behind the harmony that is prevalent in the overall conduct of the mission. It is almost impossible to mention names of those who served. Suffice it to say that our volunteers worked as one body in Christ.

As in every mission, there are also struggles and difficulties that we have to overcome. But we believe that we made it through because God is truly with us.

"I will never forsake you or abandon you."
(Hebrews 13:5)



COUNSELS

Lent: A Time For Reconciliation

THEME: We live a life of holiness when we repent of our wrongdoings and are reconciled with God and with one another.

WORD: Jos 5:9, 10-12; Ps 34:2-7; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

ORDER: *"Be reconciled to God."* (2 Cor 5:20)

REFLECTION:

As we are more than halfway through Lent, our readings give us something that we can rejoice over. In the 1st reading, after 40 long years, the Israelites finally make it into the Promised Land. The responsorial Psalm challenges us to taste and see the goodness of the Lord. In St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians, we are reminded that we are a new creation in Christ, and that this should lead us to rejoice. And in the Gospel, we see how a loving father throws a joy-filled welcome party for his prodigal son.

In the book of Joshua, we see the Israelites enter into the Promised Land. No longer will they be eating the manna that God provided during their desert experience, but will now rejoice as they transition from their repentant pilgrimage to the place God has given them – a land flowing with milk and honey. The Psalm echoes the feelings of the Israelites. God has heard their cry and has taken action. The hard and difficult times are now behind them. *"I sought the Lord, and he answered me, delivered me from all my fears."* (Ps 34: 5) They can rejoice and at the same time, bless the Lord for all that He has done.

In the second reading, St. Paul declares God's reconciling love for all, *"And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ..."* (2 Cor 5:18) Since God has made things new and different, we now have *Continued on page 3*

Promise of the Week

"You are here with me always, everything I have is yours." (Luke 15:31)

Ignorance of the Bible is ignorance of Christ. Read your Bible daily!

Forgiveness is NOT an Option

We all come into community, weary and wounded from the battles of life. We are constantly under attack from relationships at home, in community, with our friends, and at our workplaces. At the same time we also attack consciously or unconsciously those around us with our thoughts, words and actions. Our interaction with our brethren in the journey of life is fraught with the threat of sinful, hurting, damaging reaction from us and to us.

What is it in us that causes us to injure others and ourselves, spiritually, emotionally and psychologically? That despite the teachings we have gone through, the daily readings, reflections and retreats we still conduct ourselves like soldiers in an army ready to kill, maim and wound in defense of our ideas, our feelings of self-righteousness, our turf and territory. If we are in a subservient position, then we feel victimized, hurt, and resentful.

In any encounter, the other person only brings 50% to the table. 50% of goodness, wisdom, love or 50% of anger, pride, and judgment or a mix of both. We bring the other 50%. We can only blame 50% of the outcome to the other, for the other 50% is our responsibility. So in our relationships, our spouses, children, parents, family, brethren, co-workers and others, a very big percentage of how we react is not the fault of the other. We can rant and rail against the character and behavior of others but the bottom line is how we handled our half of the equation. Our judgments are our own and our sins are our own. We can be fully certain of the sinfulness of our brethren, we can enumerate all their faults and shortcomings, in the end regardless of what we think, it does not eliminate the fact that we are responsible for our own reactions and God clearly sees that.

The Lord invests in us so much love and care, unconditional, bottomless mercy to nurture in us a character that bears witness to His goodness. In Matthew 18: 21-35, Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven with a King who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. The king showed mercy and forgave the loan of a servant who owed him much. Yet, when the servant was asked to extend similar mercy to a fellow servant who is indebted to him, he refused. The king then handed the unforgiving servant to the torturers until he pays back his whole debt.

Our God is first and foremost a God of Love, Mercy and Forgiveness but He is also a God of Righteousness and Justice. *Continued on page 4*

Mitzvot & Teshuva

So how do you feel about being a graft-on? For that is what we are. The tap root is Israel, the nation sovereignly chosen by God to be His people and among whom He chose to dwell. And how do we relate to them? All through history they have been a controversial issue. Naaman, the leper, held them in contempt until he finally swallowed his pride and was healed. And we know the turbulent history of the Jewish people, who when with God, flourished but when they departed from His ways, tragedy ensued.

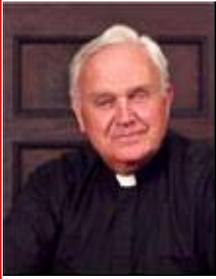
But they are His chosen people, peculiarly His own. They have been ostracized, ghettoized and persecuted to the point of near annihilation; yet they have survived and today are returning home to Israel in droves because the specter of anti-Semitism is raising its ugly head once again. And in the nation of His choosing, amazing things are happening.

There are friends of Israel, praying for them, supporting them, and yes, even converting those who seek Him. There was Dr. Mike Evans (bestselling author, journalist, commentator and minister), who had a mission from God over 30 years ago to go to Israel and meet with Prime Minister Menachem Begin; he went even though he did not know anyone in Israel, let alone the Prime Minister. Divine intervention opened the door; but even he did not know why he was there, only that God told him to go. When he said that to Mr. Begin, the Prime Minister burst out in laughter and said to his secretary, "Shake his hand. We've finally met an honest man."

They talked, but after a while, Mr. Begin told him to come back when he had a clearer vision of God's plan. He returned 2 days later with the hope to be a bridge of love and understanding between Jews and Christians, and a wish that there be a way for Christians to stand in the gap for the Jewish people. From this was born the Friends of Zion Heritage Center right near the Temple Mount. Today, Christians and Jews flock to the museum and many are touched by the mutual love and support.

This is mitzvot to an extreme decree...acts of kindness as outlined in Jewish Torah. It is obvious how needed this is in a nation that is being threatened on all sides...again. It is also obvious that this is a spiritual battle with the evil one, and prayer forces are being mobilized around the world for this ministry, to stand in the gap for Israel.

There is also the story of *Continued on page 4*



Fr. Paul Speaks

Holy Season of LENT

This holy season of LENT is viewed by most of us a personal challenge to conform our wills more carefully to that of Jesus' will for us. And that is quite admirable. This is the ultimate goal of the Christian life, "to put on Jesus Christ and the power of his rising." The additional time given to prayer and "giving up" of some legitimate pleasure are all part of the discipline of this holy season. The definition of a Christian is someone who has accepted Jesus as personal Lord. That means that Jesus runs our lives and is in charge of everything we do. In our honest moments we admit this is not happening as it should. We do some religious practices well, but we know there must be more. We have not totally surrendered. A Christian also recognizes that Jesus is our Savior. Do we really understand the challenges of being truly repentant and allowing Jesus to forgive us either in the Sacrament of Penance or privately in our prayerful moments of Scripture contemplation? These are the special moments in which the Spirit challenges us to look more within.

There is another dimension to the season of Lent. It could be called the ecclesial dimension. Lent is for the whole church as a community as well as for the individual's personal contact with Jesus. Admittedly the communal dimension depends upon the personal and to some degree on the private spiritual life of the individual Christian. But especially in the liturgies of holy Week do we see and reenact and make present now the moments when Jesus died and rose. These are more than drama reenactments. They give us a chance as the Body of Christ to experience these moments in Jesus' life as if we were physically present. We approach them with our brothers and sisters either in BLD or in our parish communities. We hopefully recognize that we are incomplete without one another. We worship as a body of believers striving to grow in intimacy with Jesus, and through him with the Father. Liturgy is a primary source of evangelization. We are nourished at these liturgies by the Word and the Eucharist. When we might be personally moved by the drama of the events of Holy Week, try to recall that we are also doing this together. Truly then Lent is THE time to realize the reality of the Church, the Body of Christ, who each year dies to its selfishness and rises to a new and more risen Christ life.

Prayer. Fasting. Almsgiving.

COUNSELS

(from page 1)

A renewed and improved relationship with Him which requires us to live our gift of faith. And this we can do by turning away from the sinfulness of our former lives, and living out God's love.

A beautiful story unfolds in the Gospel when the prodigal son comes to a realization of his waywardness. Not only does his loving father forgive him, but truly rejoices over his return. **"... this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found"** (Lk 15: 24).

In our faith journey as Christian disciples, we are called to always be joyful in the Lord. It is inevitable that we should undergo much trial and difficulty, but however long these trials may take, we should remain steadfast in hope and joy. This sense of delight should be both personal and communal. Our personal joy should be part of our experience with God's love. It should also come from knowing that God has not only given us the gift of life on earth, but also a share in everlasting life. He is not only willing to restore us to an even more exalted position, but will welcome us with an even larger celebration than the one in the Gospel reading.

Our rejoicing should also be communal in that, unlike the elder brother who resented the father's welcome for his prodigal younger brother, we should find joy whenever one of our brothers in the Lord returns and seeks to be reconciled with God. We should not be jealous even when we see ourselves, like the older brother, to have been more faithful and obedient than the wayward brother. We are called to celebrate the reunion of one who repents with our ever-loving God. That is why, the Theme for the week aptly says, *"We live a life of holiness when we repent of our wrongdoings and are reconciled with God and with one another."*

Lastly, like St. Paul who is an ambassador for God, we are to share this joy with others and be living examples of joy to others. Who knows, if we may be the only person who can reach out and touch the life of a particular person, that he too may experience the joy that God is offering him. Others should sense in us the delight in following God, which likewise allows us to experience a deep sense of joy as we proclaim the Good News.

DIRECTIONS

1. Go to confession regularly and receive communion as often as possible.
2. Read, reflect and live your commitment and covenant pledges as a faithful disciple in BLD.

Forgiveness is NOT an Option (from page 2)

The sin of unforgiveness is a crime against God and justice demands a penalty. The sacrifice of our beloved Savior on the Cross is the penalty demanded by God the Father for the sinfulness of man.

Let each one of us keep watch over our hearts that unforgiveness may not lodge in it. We pray that at the time of judgment, we may be found forgiving and merciful, that we too may be granted forgiveness and mercy.

Mitzvot & Teshuva (from page 2)

the 15 year old secular Jewish boy with no religious training, who had a near death experience on Sept. 28, 2015 (if interested, in the internet, search for "Israeli youth has near death experience"); he returned to tell of things that he could never have known on his own. He was interviewed in the synagogue and his prophetic visions for the near future are startling. He kept insisting on the need for teshuva, Hebrew for repentance.

Our Jewish brethren are our elders in the faith, and we need to bless and support them; for as long as we do, we too are blessed. So beware because it is too easy for us to drift away from that. As Gen 12:3 says in no uncertain terms: I will bless those who bless you (Israel) and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you. Be grateful that we are a graft-on to His chosen people for from this people came the Messiah. They are not only peculiarly His own...they are the apple of His eye.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Prayer Healing 1

Saturday, March 12, 2016 – 7 am to 8 pm

Sunday, March 13, 2016 – 7 am to 7 pm

Contact Persons: Sam/Rory Olaso - samrory@ymail.com

LSS 46

Invocation Mass: April 8

LSS 46: April 9-10

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

Disciples' Assembly

Saturday, April 23, 2016

TEACHING CALENDAR

Teachings for **Saturday, March 19** - 1 to 5 pm:

- Advanced Intercession / Orientation to Spiritual Warfare (LSS 1-43)
- Encounter with Jesus:

The Gospels of Matthew & Mark (LSS 1-45)

COMMUNITY TEACHING, **Saturday, April 2**

Eucharist: Source of Mercy

Please notify Word Ministry if you have not been receiving your soft copies by emailing: word@bldnewark.com

LORD'S PROVISION PREVIOUS WEEK'S

Collections	Prior Week	YTD
Tithe/Love Offering	\$ 2,620	\$ 21,402
Mission Collections	\$ -	\$ 2,603

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

Thank you for your continued support!

Stewardship - It's a way of life!

Marshaling		Schedule	Date	Apostolate
			Mar 11	Evangelization
			Mar 18	Formation
			Apr 1	Management
			Apr 8	Mission

Be a Living Word

BLD VISION

- We are a community of disciples inspired by the Holy Spirit to be living witnesses for transformation in Christ to bring about a world of justice, human development and true peace

BLD MISSION

In response to the challenges of our particular place, time and culture:

For our families:

- We will evangelize families and build communities of faith through encounters, Life in the Spirit Seminars and discipleship formation.
- We will give formation on personal and family prayer, pro-life values, Catholic social teachings and stewardship.

For our communities:

- We will actively participate in the life and mission of the Church in accord with our God-given gifts.

For our country:

- We will work on poverty alleviation through scholarships, housing for the poor and advocacies for life, environment and good governance.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for inviting us to always be reconciled with You. We are truly sorry for the times we squandered the gifts You have given us. Help us to be genuinely repentant, and to amend our ways in response to Your call for us to live a life of holiness. Thank You that You always rejoice when we come back to You.