

WELCOME: May our latest good news fill you with Christmas cheer!

UNTIL CHRIST IS FORMED IN YOU!



Japan, China, Australia and Malaysia. It was three wonderful days filled with joy, excitement and most especially love for Christ.

The different formations and panel discussions can be summarized as how Christ can be formed in us and how to accompany others towards Christ. The community agrees that having Christ in our lives give us true joy and this joy brings fire for us to share him to the people around us. The urgency of “mission” was also stressed that as Verbum Dei Family we are not just called to be receivers of spiritual food but also to transmit the good message to the people around us.

Christ continues to transform us each day and allows to also accompany others to be closer to him because that is part of our mission as human beings and also as Verbum Dei, not just to be hearers but also doers of the Word of God - who is no other than Christ himself.

Last October 23-25, 2015 around 272 participants from Verbum Dei Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao gathered as one family at the 4th Verbum Dei National Family Encounter that was held at Sto. Niño Spirituality Center in Cebu with the theme “Until Christ is Formed in You.” The event was also graced by participants from

HANDS FOR THE LORD



For several years now, Verbum Dei Missionaries had been invited by the Miriam College-Southeast Asian Institute for the Deaf (MC-SAID) to facilitate their Faculty and Staff Retreat. Last November 17-19, 2015, Fr. James McTavish and Fr. Michael Cheong, together with 20 hearing and deaf individuals from MC-SAID, trooped to the St. Michael Retreat House in Antipolo, Rizal to spend a short, but meaningful respite and devote that time of renewal with the Lord.

“Hands for the Lord,” the theme of this 3-day retreat, invited everyone not just to witness the work of Jesus in their lives, but instead be co-workers in His ministry. One of the highlights of the retreat was a Living Rosary that included powerful videos that brought some to tears. Another was the Fiesta on the second night where everyone had fun, without disconnecting themselves from the groove of the retreat. As expected, the daily masses and the confession were the other favorite moments. In the end, everyone went home with rekindled spirits, an appetite for spiritual sustenance, and a few extra pounds...because of the wonderful nourishment served by the excellent kitchen staff.

PCNC EVALUATION

“Friends of Verbum Dei,” recently had an evaluation by the PCNC accreditors.

With the hoped for PCNC status, Friends of Verbum Dei can receive donations tax free. This will help us to better fund our mission.



HARANA KAY MARIA



Last November 13 was a special day for the Verbum Dei Youth Music Ministry, as we participated in a Marian concert organized by the Malate Catholic Church. Our Music Ministry is composed by around 15 youth disciples of Verbum Dei, under the guidance of Kim Sarmiento, a piano student of the UST Conservatory of Music, supported also by sister Adriana Haro, a Verbum Dei missionary.

Our participation in the said event was significant for us, first of all to express our love to Mary, our Mother, and also because it gave us the opportunity to sing some original compositions of Verbum Dei: Magnificat (by Teresa Malave) and Waiting with Mary (by Jason Baguia). Moreover, we are convinced that through our music we are contributing to Verbum Dei's evangelizing mission, and working together we are witnessing to other youths that giving our time and talents at the service of the mission is not only fun, but it's worth it because through music the Word touches the heart of so many people.

SIGNING OF CONTRACT

It has been an action packed few months of work for our Pasig apostolate center.

The contract for the center was signed and here we are together at the historic moment. Thanks to all who have supported this project so far! On January 10, 2016, Bishop Mylo Vergara will bless the site. Please join us!



“BUILD A HOME”



One with the Synod of families, “Build a Home” was the theme of the recollection given to 62 employees of a group of five companies by the Verbum Dei Formation course and Fr. Filipe last November 5-7, 2015 in Verbum Dei Retreat House, Tagaytay. It was through the initiative of Cynthia Rodriguez, one of the owners, and a collaborator of Verbum Dei, that the recollection was made possible. She and her employees desired that they be given spiritual

nourishment and be able to ponder on their realities especially of their homes.

It highlighted the importance to build their lives and homes on the best foundation – God’s love. At the end of the weekend recollection, they expressed their desire to live out and share to their families their experiences as well as to persevere in their prayer life.

FORMATION ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING & PROSTITUTION

Globally an estimated 30 million people are trafficked annually. On World peace day (Jan 1, 2015) Pope Francis said “I think also of *persons forced into prostitution*, many of whom are minors, as well as *male and female sex slaves*... Often, when considering the reality of human trafficking, illegal trafficking of migrants and other acknowledged or unacknowledged forms of slavery, one has the impression that they occur within a context of general indifference...This immense task, which calls for courage, patience and perseverance, deserves the appreciation of the whole Church and society.”



Fr James gave a formation on this topic in the Philippines’ context to 60 young religious from 15 different congregations. He touched biblical and moral aspects of prostitution as well as citing the Church teaching underlining the need to denounce the “demand side.” He invited Sr Joy of the MQHM missionaries who gave a powerful testimony of her outreach experiences to bar girls in the area of Pasig.

WE ARE GLAD YOU ARE BACK SOL!



Sol, a Filipina Verbum Dei missionary from Cebu was assigned as a missionary in England from March 2012 to March 2014. She then went to Honduras from March 2014 to September 2015. She wrote the following short testimony about her experience in Honduras *“Many things can be said about Honduras, Central America – violent, poor, backward, there’s an atmosphere of distrust and no confidence yet it’s a home to me. Coming from England then, these were the notions I also had but these were changed when I began living and interacting with the people. Behind all these evident realities there’s still warmth, simplicity, hospitality and generosity among the people. It was a slow process of finding the treasure in them and not just being conformed to the first impressions I had. My stay there has been a learning experience that has marked me in my missionary life. More and more I’m convinced that we can never judge a culture. It has its reasons and a long history for being so. One can just be open to observe and discover its beauty, learn from its goodness and the humility to be enriched by the people and enrich them with yourself and difference.”*

Thanks so much Sr Sol and we are so glad to have you with us. You are in our prayers!

CHRISTMAS FUNDRAISING CONCERT



On December 5 we had a very successful concert with Jose Mari Chan. The evening was dedicated to raises funds for our building project in Pasig. It began with an anticipated mass followed by a sumptuous buffet style dinner before proceeding to the concert hall. It was a packed house in the little theater of Miriam college, all excited to listen to the enchanting voice of a Filipino singing icon. Jo Mari Chan kept us all entertained with his vast repertoire of songs (and jokes!) We as Verbum Dei are very grateful to the kindness and generosity of Mr Chan and also to Liza, his lovely daughter, who also sang for us.



V DEI ADVENT SILENT RETREAT



Over the last weekend of November, Verbum Dei conducted an Advent retreat, in much appreciated silence! A time to prepare the way of the Lord - not only to prepare gifts, food, outfits, the lights - but to prepare the manger of our hearts for the coming of the Lord. The theme was inspired by the year of mercy (which began on Dec 8 and will

run until the Feast of Christ the King 2016) and talks were given to deepen on the topic. Sr Luisa shared about *“how mercy overcomes all barriers. God became man. He broke all the barriers between God and man. Mercy became nearness and closeness. No distance!”* Other talks were given by Sr Adriana who deepened on how Jesus is the mercy of God made flesh and Fr Iwao gave the homilies.

Lani, a young Doctor (a member of our TGIF – Thank God it’s Friday group of Young professionals) who participated in the retreat (with her husband and her mom!) said *“The weeks leading up to Christmas are often marked by a surge in activities: gifts need to be bought and wrapped, there are family reunions to attend, and parties with every imaginable social circle and group of friends. With everything going on, the spirit of advent all too easily gets buried in the flurry of excitement. This is why the Verbum Dei Advent retreat is so important to me and my family. The retreat ushers us into the joyous season with prayer and reflection, renewing an often fatigued mind and spirit and reminding us about what matters most. Aptly given the theme “A Time of Mercy,” this year’s retreat heralded the opening of the Jubilee Year of Mercy.*

The talks echoed and drew inspiration from Pope Francis’ teachings on mercy. As someone who does not always have access to the Pope’s homilies and writings, I found this extremely enriching. Putting this historic year into context, it ignited a desire to strive for the lifestyle of mercy. While I equally treasured the silence and beautiful scenery, I felt the highlight of the retreat were the sacraments. After a day of learning, sharing and reflecting, being able to punctuate that with the Holy Eucharist and confession is an unexplainable and precious experience. Two weeks later, I still feel the flicker of joy hope, inspiration and gratitude from my weekend in Tagaytay. As a new year approaches, I hope to fan that flame into a blazing fire.”

EVERYONE CAN LIVE THE MISSION!

Emily with Luksuhin High School teachers' SOW



We believe that everyone can participate in the mission: ***“Go and make disciples of all peoples”*** and reach out to many through the SOW’s (School of the Word) which we opened lately this year with the disciples: in VPC Poultry Farm and in Luksuhin National High School. A mother disciple provided the car and driver for the SOW in the farm which is 4km from the VD Center. Many times, the driver brings 2-4 companions convincing them: **“Come, we will eat abundant food: the Word of God.”** And we need the Word to be well nourished. As the body needs food so the soul need the Word of God. As our Lord reminded us, we cannot live on bread (or rice!) alone but on every Word that comes from the mouth of God.

Some sharings were:

“Through this SOW, I find a meaningful way of spending my vacation as well as the direction of my life: Mission” (Adrian, a young seaman)

“I believe that the SOW will answer the needs of my co-teachers. And true enough after a few meetings I see some of the fruits in them: eagerness to read and pray daily the Word of God, being guided and strengthened in their struggles.” Alice Salamatin (disciple)

SMILES FROM TAYUMAN

On November 20, we were asked by the Missionaries of Charity (of Mother Teresa) to give a recollection to their youth from poor areas. We did not have so much time to prepare it, but still we said “yes” to the challenge! They were 91 overall, mainly High school students.



The team that facilitated the recollection was led by Fr. Filipe Pardal and 7 people from our youth groups. The theme of the day was “I thirst” and the inspiration was drawn from a Tagalog song called “Sabik sa iyo” about a teenager who leaves behind a life of vice and discovers Jesus as a friend who fills his heart. “Sabik sa iyo” means “I long for you” which expresses our desire for the infinite God but also his desire for us. We focused on the passage of Zacchaeus, how he was longing to know Jesus, but in the end, Jesus was the one longing more to meet him. The beautiful smiles of the youth, even amidst poverty and various hardships, left a deep impression on us all.

“I’M BACK!”



With great joy, we were able to welcome the return of Jojo from his time in Spain. Br Jojo spent one year finishing his Philosophy studies in Loeches, our Verbum Dei Institute of Theology, near Madrid.

When asked about his experience he said it was “muy bien” but he is also glad to be back here in the Philippines and we are glad to see him again. He will continue his Theology studies at LST, Ateneo. We will be praying for you Br Jojo!

A CHRISTMAS GIFT TO THE WORLD – A MISSIONARY FAMILY!



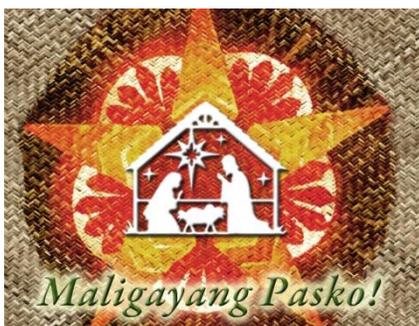
It's Christmas time once again! It is one of the happiest celebrations of the year when we commemorate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Last December 13, 2015, Verbum Dei Community Luzon had its Christmas Family Day at Verbum Dei House of Prayer, Tagaytay. The different communities in Luzon namely Quezon City, Pandacan and Tagaytay gathered as one family to celebrate the birth of our saviour. The event started with a Holy Mass followed by various activities that were enjoyed by the Verbum Dei Family: food, games, exchange of gifts. It was a time also for the different communities to be with each other and to share the cheerful spirit of the season.

Each one of the participants went home happy not just because of the gifts that they received but by the gift of each other. Christmas is about sharing and loving and it is wonderful to share it as one family. The Verbum Dei Family, Luzon is now heading for a happy Christmas carrying Jesus in their hearts who is the real star of the event.

TGIF CHRISTMAS PARTY



Our TGIF (Thank God It's Friday) enjoyed to celebrate its Christmas party. The evening began in front of the reason for this season – Jesus – in a moment of adoration where we reflected on Luke 2:6-10 “While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” This was followed by Christmas games, a sumptuous dinner and exchange of gifts. Thanks for the perseverance of all the Young Professional's! Bring on 2016!



Merry Christmas
to all!