

Christmas Message

from Fr. James McTavish



It's Christmas time again! That time when we are busy, put on some unnecessary kilos and discover once again that Christmas is more fun in the Philippines!

In this festive season, let us once again refresh the living experience of a God who loved us so much that he came among us as a little baby. Only love would make a mighty God do something so crazy! The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Pope Benedict described it as God becoming so small for us that he could fit into a little manger. I am always moved to consider a God who makes himself small and is happy to dwell in the manger of my heart - a heart that is sometimes a bit messy, and a bit disordered at times.

Lord, help me to be aware of your coming. When you come I hope I will be there. May we make space in the busy Christmas schedule to welcome you! Help us prepare the manger of our hearts for your coming.

I pray for all our Advent and Christmas activities. We will have retreats, recollections, schools of the Word and even a mission trip to Vietnam. As a missionary community we can enjoy to share the Word made flesh to many people. And may our evangelizing mission bring the joy and peace of the infant King to many waiting hearts, Amen.

National Communications Camp *“Shout from the rooftops” (Luke 12:3)*



On the weekend of Nov 2-3, 2018, a group of 21 intrepid correspondents gathered in Davao City, Mindanao for the 2nd Verbum Dei National

Communications Camp. Representatives from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao participated, with ages ranging from 16 years old to mid-lifers. The purpose was to deepen their knowledge on social media and the different communication platforms, with the view to evangelize the so-called “6th continent”, where the vast millions especially the youth, are connected and “live” in this global village.

Activities included prayer guidelines, the Holy Eucharist, sharing of prayer, formations on Church teaching on mass media and how to respond as Verbum Dei, team building games, recreation and moments of bonding especially eating meals as one family.

Church Teaching on Communications

The Church teaches that the means of communication “when



put at the service of the Gospel, are capable of increasing almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God is heard; they enable the Good News to reach millions of people. The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims 'from the housetops' (Cf. Mt 10:27; Lk 12:3) the message of which she is the depositary. In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit." (Evangelii nuntiandi, no. 45).



Pope Francis said, "The digital world – the social networks that are so pervasive and readily available – dissolves borders, eliminates distances and reduces differences. Everything appears within reach, so close and immediate. And yet lacking the sincere gift of our lives, we could well have countless contacts but never share in a true communion of life. To share in the mission to the ends of the earth, demands the gift of oneself in the vocation that God, who has placed us on this earth, chooses to give us (cf. Lk 9:23-25)." (Pope Francis, Message for World Mission Sunday, 2018)

God Loves a Cheerful Giver!

1st Verbum Dei Missionary Festival in Cebu



The October 21 “Missionary Festival” was the first fund raising activity of its kind organized by Verbum Dei in the country. It kicked off with the Holy Mass in which Fr. Filipe Vaz Pardal, FMVD, invited the

assembly to pray not only for the success of the event, but for missionaries around the world, who face all sorts of hardships in trying to announce Christ.

The Mass was followed by a fun-filled program conducted by members of the VD Family, including the performance of the “Catalyst” teenage-band, an international fashion show by the Verbum Dei Kids, as well as a Mexican dance and Zumba, where everyone was invited to participate.

All throughout the event several booths offered local and international food; videoke, games and services such as reflexology, massage, face painting and many more were offered, creating a festive and enjoyable atmosphere for all the families who attended.

The fund raising activity was first and foremost a gathering of all members, families and friends who are happy collaborating





and supporting the mission of Verbum Dei. The money gathered from the event will be used to support Verbum Dei's missionary work of evangelization and the different needs of the missionaries in Cebu.

Sr. Mico reminded us all the relevance of supporting missionary work, "The work of evangelization is very important in our time. Our people nowadays need to have a fresh encounter with the Word of Life. Only the Word of Life can give us the hope, meaning, and courage to face the different challenges of our present situation," she said.



We Need to Share our Faith!

(A testimony from the Married Couple
“standard recollection”)



A great day to all of us! We are Kris and Elena, one of the married couples in the Formation couples from Cebu, Philippines.

Last October 25-29, 2018 we had a standard recollection, a moment to share the various talks of the Verbum Dei theme set or called “Temario” in Spanish. The talks included God the Father, Eternal Life, Mystical Body among others. Each couple was assigned a different talk to preach. It was a very fruitful experience and full of surprises. Our fruits from the recollection were love, obedience and trust. Making the talk was not easy as it entailed prayer, self-giving and sacrifices. With all the difficulties in integrating the formation course with family and work, adjustment in our daily schedule and challenges that come along the way; it gradually became clear that the formation course is a priority to us. The past weeks were dedicated to making our talks, spending many hours in prayer with sleepless nights. We lifted everything to God and allowed the Holy Spirit to guide us.

After giving the talk, however, we received great joy! There is always joy in giving, as the psalms tell us “those who sow in tears will reap with joy!” Listening to the other talks of the Temario, we felt deeply how the Verbum Dei Charism is a great gift to all and how urgently important to share this charism to others. We also realized that making and giving the talks from the Temario was not an obligation but a form of self-giving and loving others like Jesus did. In doing the mission, we not only transmit the Word of God but also shared our life and the life of Jesus to others. We also grew in humility during the school of talks, learning how to accept comments and suggestions from others to improve our talk and be more effective to the listeners.

We ended the recollection full of joy and love. We are so thankful to God for our formators, who truly gave their lives for each of us in the formation course. We give thanks also to our beloved Mother Mary, who is always faithful in guiding us in our journey and for constantly interceding in our prayers.

Getting-to-know the... LCMs



The Lay Consecrated Missionaries (LCMs) are members of the Verbum Dei Missionary Family (VDMFa) who have felt a call from God to live a consecrated life with affinity to the spiritual paths of the VDMFa, that is contemplative and missionary. It is a chosen state of life that as laity, they live their consecration in the midst of their current realities, seeking to create personal ties and build fraternal environments based on the values of the Gospel. Moving daily in their jobs, studies and families with clear missionary awareness focused on the Word of God, they are called to be open to the “signs of times” and to be an answer to the realities around them.

LCM as a state of life is a voluntary and joyful response to the invitation of God and to belong to him in love. Everyone who feels the desire to belong to God in a secular world is welcome to consider this call given that you are 25 years old and above, have at least two years experience of the VDMFa spirituality and actively living the charism, and importantly exercise the freedom to respond to God in representing his mission to those around you in everyday life.

Like any vocation in life, perseverance is a constant challenge everyone needs to face. Amy Hernandez, the current formator of the LCMs in the Philippines, takes care of their continuous formation. Each LCM actively takes part in the annual LCM spiritual exercises, daily practice of prayer, quarterly retreat and formation, monthly revision of life and spiritual direction. Sharing of faith through the different apostolates is also an important part of growing spiritually, where they in turn give prayer guidelines, give talks to retreats and recollections and also serve in the different realities of the VDMFa in the local community where they belong.



It is a joy to let the whole VDMFa Philippines know that the LCM is now growing in number with Aida Carpela (Cebu) with perpetual promise, three with temporal promises - namely Luisa Valenzuela (Tagaytay), Marivic Umaman and Gams Gallego (CDO), another three in formation course from CDO,



and another five in the discernment course from Cebu. We join them in prayer that more people in the secular world will respond to the option of sharing the experience of the joy of the Gospel which brings love and hope in the midst of many difficult situations in the world around us. Let us give God's plan a chance and be amazed!!

Let's Explore to the Other Side

A day of fun, friendship and prayer took place at Philip's Sanctuary when over 50 participants from Luzon gathered together in the Youth Outdoor Recollection entitled "Explore to the Other Side," last October 27, 2018.

The youth participated in different team building activities that tested not only their physical energy but their sportsmanship as well. They were also given a moment of reflection on what the fruits of the activities had on them. The event aimed to unleash the potential of the young people and to encourage them to embrace the big role they have to play in the world today. It was also a reminder for them that in every journey they take, there is someone who is always with them as a true friend, Jesus. The day's activity was culminated with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, as a thanksgiving for the love and friendship God has given us all.



50 - 50



Two of our Verbum Dei priests, Filipe Vaz Pardal and James McTavish, had a joint fundraising 50th birthday celebration on November 5. The night was suitably entitled “50-50” and celebrated 100 years of life.

The celebration fittingly began with the Eucharist, concelebrated also by Fr Iwao Ikegami and Fr Luciano Felloni. In the homily, Fr James thanked Jesus for the gift of life. The gospel was about the feast and who to invite. The sponsors were thanked as they generously supported the costs of the venue and catering and the missionaries, as the poor invited guests, can only repay at the resurrection of the righteous!

Some remarkable hidden talents emerged in the fiesta - the



ABBA styled dance number of the dancing and “Sowing Queens” of CTK parish as well as the “all-star performance” from Fr Filipe in his rendition of “Manila” and other entertaining numbers.

An AVP of James and Filipe showed their life, from cute babies to (still cute) missionary priests. Michael Golez, the one man



band, with a wide repertoire of songs got the guests dancing away into the evening.

Here's to the next 50 years! Cheers!

We hope you have enjoyed our 2nd National newsletter.
God bless all our readers!