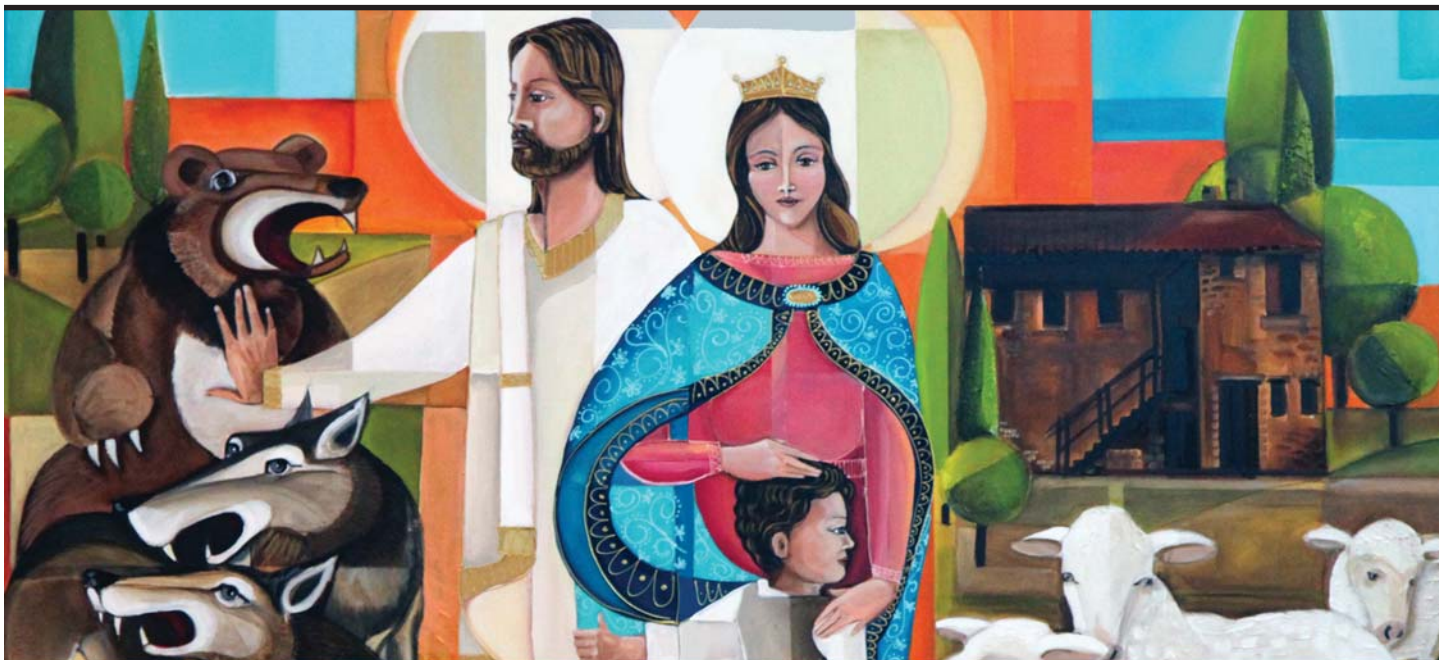


SIMBAHAY

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF ST. JOHN BOSCO PARISH CHURCH, MAKATI CITY, PHILIPPINES

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2012



LET US MAKE THE YOUNG OUR LIFE'S MISSION
BY COMING TO KNOW AND IMITATE DON BOSCO



by Fr. Ting Miciano, SDB

This is the strenna of the Rector Major for the members of the Salesian Family for this year. The "strenna" is basically a single-sentence quotation formulated every year by the General Superior of the Salesians of Don Bosco worldwide to focus on a particular theme to be studied and lived by the Salesians and the other members of the Salesian Family. This practice was started by Don Bosco himself.

This year's strenna by our Rector Major, Fr. Pascual Chavez, SDB, is part of the three-year preparation for the bicentennial celebrations of the birth of St. John Bosco (August 16, 2015). For this year, the focus is "to know the story of Don Bosco"! This simple phrase is an invitation to study in depth his life and times, in order to rebuild his image today and perpetuate the mission entrusted to him by God: the education and evangelization of young people. Moreover, a "critical study" of Don Bosco, which the Rector Major is inspiring us to do, will and should enable us to know him "as an educator and pastor, founder, guide and legislator." Only by such intimate and comprehensive knowledge of our beloved saint will we be led to love and imitate him! These are the main goals of the strenna.

This journey into Don Bosco is not meant only as a nostalgic and sentimental journey. Rather, owing to the urgent need to be relevant to the modern times, our study of Don Bosco will take on "appropriate methods of historical research", if only to discover the context and history of the times that he lived in, thus enabling

us to fully appreciate "his human and Christian greatness, his practical brilliance, his skills as an educator and initiator of a worldwide movement, his mastery of youth spirituality, and personal holiness."

Once we are aware of his personal life's experience, we can know the responses Don Bosco gave to the needs of young people. "In this way, we can better consider the responses that we have already put in place and what others still need to be created." Knowing Don Bosco isn't just for knowing's sake: we try to know him better so we can recommit ourselves more fully to the work of the young.

"To be true to Don Bosco means going and staying with the young, in affection and selfless love; it means responding to their most pressing and deepest needs; it means helping them seek meaning in their lives by offering sound proposals for them to follow as they make their choices in life and experience happiness and seek their future; and above all it is offering a way for growth in knowledge and friendship with the Lord Jesus, in the experience of a living Church, in real commitment to experiencing their lives as vocation."

The Rector Major's discourse on the strenna ends with a recounting of John Bosco's famous Dream at Nine and a modern fable about the music that continues even after the death of the player. The Rector Major challenges and beckons us to continue playing good music for the Lord so that the young may continue to dance the Dance of Life!



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SCHEDULE OF MASSES

Monday to Friday:

6:30am • 7:30am • 12:15pm • 6:00pm

Holy Hour every Thursday after the
6:00 pm Mass

Saturday:

6:30am • 7:30am
6:00pm (Anticipated Mass)

Sunday:

6:00am • 7:15am • 8:30am • 10:00am*
11:15am • 12:30pm • 4:00pm • 5:30pm
7:00pm • 8:30pm

*with sign language interpreters

Confessions are available during all
the Masses

Adoration Chapel - open daily from
7:00am to 8:00pm

PARISH OFFICE & RELIGIOUS STORE HOURS

Monday to Friday (except Thursday)
8:00am - 11:30am • 12:30pm - 6:00pm

Thursday:
8:00am - 11:30am • 12:30pm - 4:00pm

Saturday:
8:00am - 12:00pm • 1:00pm - 5:00pm

JANUARY 15 - THE FEAST OF THE HOLY CHILD

The Philippines is the only country which has a liturgical feast for the Holy Child granted by the Vatican in recognition of the devotion of the Filipinos to the Sto. Niño which is unmatched in piety and gaiety throughout the world.



STO. NIÑO DE PANDACAN PARISH: 300 YEARS OF FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

Condensed from articles by: Tercentennial Commission

In the early 1600's, a black image of the Holy Child was found by little children playing in a field surrounded by pandan (fragrant screw pine) plants. The place was then called **Pandan** (*pandan plantation*), but the Spanish colonizers mispronounced the name as **Pandacan**, which remains to this day.

A century later, the barrio elders and Franciscan priests of the Parish of Sampaloc, to which Pandacan then belonged, decided to build a Visita to enshrine the Sto. Niño on the spot where it was found. A spring of clear, running water was unearthed and later made into a well called, "The Well of the Holy Child".

Since then, many healing miracles have been attributed not only to its miraculous waters but to the Holy Child of Pandacan. In 1712, the Parish of Pandacan was established. The construction of the first stone church started in 1732 and was completed thirty years later.

As they celebrate their 300th anniversary, the Parish of Pandacan through its Tercentennial Commission, has lined up several events from 2011- 2012, including last November's Lakbay-Dalagin of 150 parishioners to Cebu and Bohol which brought together the images of the Sto. Niño de Pandacan and the Sto. Niño de Cebu in a historic "salubong" with the Pandaqueños matching their Buling-Buling with their Cebuano hosts' Sinulog in a joyful dance of shared celebration.

The year-long festivities will be highlighted by two main events: the "PandaCandle Lighting" on November 23 at 10 p.m which hopes to establish A Guinness Book record for the number of candles lit by the devotees and the GRAND BULING-BULING 2012 on November 24, featuring contingents from each of the 30 Pandacan Barangays performing to the music of marching bands, Pandacan's traditional dance to the Sto. Niño (from "buling-buli" or polished in the vernacular) .

All are invited to come! Viva Sto. Niño de Pandacan!

FULL CIRCLE

Condensed from an unpublished story by Maris San Juan-Katigbak

"One dollar for the doll, you want a discount?", asked the lady somewhat impatiently. I wasn't sure if I should feel happy or aghast that this was all she was asking for the beautiful 16-inch statue of the Holy Child Jesus of Prague. Earlier, I had decided to buy the statue at any cost when I saw it while I was idly browsing for interesting items among the tables of a New Jersey rummage sale in the summer of 1981. The image was standing incongruously under the sun, almost forlorn in its finery amidst used pots and pans, odds and ends, someone's castoffs and leavings. I settled for "happy", gave the dollar, and carefully hand-carried my precious find all the way home to the Philippines.

Thus began our family's special devotion to the



Holy Child. Come Christmas, upon learning of our Sto. Niño's journey from across many miles, my cousin, Rene Katigbak, a Bedan, suggested that I enroll my children in the Confraternity of the Child Jesus in the Benedictine Abbey (San Beda) in Mendiola where an image of the Sto. Niño was enthroned in 1926.

On the third Sunday of January, 1982, I brought my three boys, Noel, Carlo and Angelo, for the first time to San Beda for the Children's Mass in honor of the feast of the Sto. Niño, followed by the Abbot's special blessings for the family. Little did I know then, that by the next year, I would be bringing for her first blessing the daughter I had been praying for, for so long. Anabel, is truly the answer to a mother's prayers, whispered in confidence to a little image of a limitless God.

More than thirty years since the Sto. Niño first came to our home, my family's devotion to the Holy Child has deepened and flowed to the next generation. Not only have my grown-up children (now five, with our youngest, Enzo) continued going to the Abbey every third Sunday of January for their yearly blessings, they now bring their own children with them. Life and blessings have come full circle.

January 31

Feast of St. John Bosco, priest

IT'S MORE FUN WITH DON BOSCOby **Lucas Abad Mangulabnan**4th Year, Section 5 Bl. Artemide Zatti (4-5)

Industrial Drafting Technology

Editor-in-Chief of the *Bosconian Journal*

"It's more fun with Don Bosco". I think if the original boys of the oratory in Valdocco would have a slogan, this would have to be it. It was Don Bosco's lightheartedness and cheerful disposition in everyday life which attracted boys who were led astray back into the light. He personally played, laughed, won, and lost with the children. He didn't just talk to them about God. He made God's presence felt among them by playing with them and becoming one with them in the playground. It then became easy for him to convince them to pray and to learn catechism.

His joyful spirit resonates to this day in the halls of the institutions founded by the Salesians. His unwavering faith and spirituality have been shared by millions of his 'boys' around the world and has solidified the faith of the youth through education. When I first stepped into Don Bosco Makati, I could hardly believe what I saw: a priest clad in a white polo was shooting hoops with the Seniors. "Priests mingling with the kids?", I thought, astonished. It turned out to be a regular, everyday thing in Don Bosco. A priest was no longer what I imagined to be - the stern,

authoritative figure who commanded silence and discipline. It turns out that a Salesian, like Don Bosco, is a father, teacher, and friend.

Don Bosco's method of teaching knew nothing of punishment. Observance of rules was obtained by instilling a true sense of duty, by removing all occasions for disobedience, and by allowing no effort towards virtue, no matter how trivial, to pass unappreciated. He held that the teacher should be father, adviser, and friend, and he was the first to adopt the preventive method.

This set him apart from the educators of his day. He recognized that gentleness and persuasion alone were not enough to promote education. He thoroughly believed in play as a means of arousing childish curiosity - more than this, he places it among his first recommendations, and for the rest he adopted St. Philip Neri's words, "Do as you wish, I do not care so long as you do not sin."

Don Bosco's method of teaching is more relevant than ever in today's youth. His unique style has drawn me closer to God without me knowing it. My four years as a Bosconian have quietly yet deeply instilled in me that being a Christian is a full-time effort, not a once-a-week, Mass-on-Sunday



experience. Christ's love and our faith in that love should pervade everything we do - work, study and, yes, play. Don Bosco has enabled young people to search for and find Christ in everything we do, letting His love lead us to life everlasting.

THE SJB FAMILY AND LIFE MINISTRYBy **Dominicanis**

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines has been tireless in promoting the development of the Catholic family with the Holy Family of Nazareth as their model, through its Commission on Family and Life. At St. John Bosco Parish, the Family and Life Ministry is headed by Bert and Violy Magsakay.

In November 1991, Bert began serving St. John Bosco Parish as a Lay Minister. A year later, in 1992, he joined the transparochial Marriage Encounter Foundation of the Philippines with his wife, Violy. It was in ME where they learned the value and truth behind the saying "the family that prays together, stays together". Take family arguments, while disagreements are unavoidable, being with ME has taught Bert and Violy the importance of peacefully settling disagreements, thus shielding their children: Viobera, Oliver and Benigno (who passed away at the age of 11), from the trauma of seeing their parents quarreling. Once, inspired by their ME seminars, Bert

remembers initiating a heart-to-heart talk with his children, and even apologizing for any hurts he may have caused them. Their family has grown even closer, since.

In 1993, seven couples including Bert and Violy Magsakay, established the Don Marriage Encounter Foundation which under the guidance of their spiritual director, Fr. Noel "Bong" Osial SDB, now boasts of a hundred active couples. In 2007, Bert and Violy were invited by then Parish Priest, Fr. Manny Domingo to head the complementary Family and Life Ministry. Seeing how effective and dependable they were, Fr. Ting Miciano once again invited the couple to head the Ministry in 2009.

SJB Family and Life Ministry has been actively promoting family oriented projects like Mass Weddings, pre-Cana Seminars, seminars on Natural Family Planning, pregnancy crisis, post-abortion trauma counseling and feeding programs. Above all, the Family Life Ministry teaches families and future families to grow closer to each other in the love of God. Indeed it is a Ministry of Love.



The Magsakay family

SUNDAY MASS REFLECTIONS

Simbahay features the Sunday Mass Readings' themes from Fr. Sal Putzu's *"Exploring God's Word"*.

These themes are part of a systematic approach to study and have a good knowledge of the Biblical passages which will be used in the coming Sunday Masses and to relate these readings to our lives.

Visit www.sjbmakati.com for more detailed excerpts of the study notes for each week.

Listen to Fr. Salvatore Putzu, SDB (General Manager and Editor, Word and Life) at *Bisperas sa Veritas* 846 AM, 5pm Saturday.



3RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B)

January 22, 2012 Readings

*Jon 3:1-5.10 – The city of Niniveh repents at the preaching of Jonah and is spared.

*1 Cor 7:29-31 – An appeal to be detached from the things of this world

*Mk 1:14-20 – Jesus begins his ministry and calls his first disciples.

Theme: JESUS: THE FISHER OF MEN

Christ was **the first missionary of the Gospel**. Sent by the Father to preach the Good News of the Kingdom, He accomplished His mission with perfect faithfulness, making the Kingdom He preached present in His person and in His actions. But since His mission was limited in space and time, while the Kingdom was to be proclaimed to all nations, He called others to share in His mission and to continue it after His ascension. Today we hear the account of the call of the first four "special disciples" who would, eventually, become "apostles."

Since then, Christ has not stopped calling innumerable others to share in His mission to be **heralds and builders of God's Kingdom on earth**. And generous souls,

like the fishermen on the lakeshore of Gennesareth, continue to answer His calls. They leave behind every other aspiration and dream, in order to be the ambassadors of the eternal King.



FEAST OF ST. JOHN BOSCO

January 29, 2012 Readings

*Sir 1:1-23;2:1-6.10-11 – Trust God and make straight your ways.

*Phil 4:4-9 – Fill your minds with everything that is holy.

*Mt 18:1-5 – Whoever welcomes a child for my sake welcomes me.

Born in Turin in Northern Italy, on August 16, 1815, St. John Bosco exemplified himself by caring for the young people of his time. Don Bosco grew in a poor family and decided to become a priest at the age of 9.

As a young man, John Bosco learned tricks from circus performers and repeated the homily he hears from church before young people. This combination of play and teaching served him well to attract the youth as industrialization set in Europe which brought with it the problems of theft and abandoned children.

John Bosco saw that even the worse of these boys, the filthiest, the hardened thief is still God's child. He talked to them and taught them about God. He also taught them skills for livelihood. He founded the Salesians of Don Bosco, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) and later a lay movement called the Salesian Cooperators.

Today, as in St. John Bosco's time, may we foster the love and care for our neighbor especially the youth in our community by way of gentle kindness that they be brought closer to God through Mary, and thus live out St. John Bosco's motto - "Give me souls take away the rest."

— condensed from the Proper of Masses of the Salesian Family



5TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B)

Pro-Life Sunday

February 5, 2012 Readings

*Job 7:1-4.6-7 – Job's reflections on the meaning of human life

*1 Cor 9:16-19.22-23 – Paul's total commitment to bring the Gospel to as many people as possible

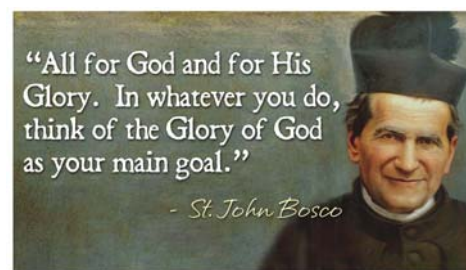
*Mk 1:29-39 – Jesus preaches the Good News and makes it present through the miracles he performs.

Theme: HEALED AND HEALERS IN THE POWER OF CHRIST'S LOVE

In a world full of suffering in the most diverse forms, Jesus was the most powerful and welcome healer. He leaned mercifully over the afflicted and made them rise, renewed in body and heart. The presence of Jesus spelled hope and salvation for all the afflicted, even as it spelled defeat and terror for the Evil One.

The "healing journey" which began on the trail of the proclamation of the Gospel two thousand years ago around the Lake of Galilee, continues today in the whole world. Christ, the compassionate Healer, continues his mission through the Church and all those who believe in the power of love.

Wherever human beings feel compassion for the pains of their neighbor and do their best to relieve them, Christ is present through those who have become the instruments of his healing care.



WINNERS AND THEIR ENTRIES IN THE 1ST SJPB CHRISTMAS ART AND WRITING COMPETITION

1ST PRIZE - Writing Contest

Angeni Kirsten M.

Miranda, 16

1st year college, Centro
Escolar University, Makati



CHRIST'S GIFT OF LIFE

He suffered so much to save me from sin,
I can never imagine all the pain He had been,
He died on the cross for me to live,
That's why to Him I'll always believe.

He gave me family to be my guide,
He gave me friends to be on my side,
Through ups and downs they are always
there,
They are the greatest, nothing can compare.

When I feel like I'm the weakest among all,
He is always there to catch me when I fall,
My life with Him would be the best,
I'm willing to give up myself and all the rest.

He will always be the "best" that I have,
for what binds us is unconditional love,
from the moment I lived, 'til the day that I
die,
God will be forever on my side.

I can never thank Him enough for all that He
has done,
without these gifts I would be considered
"none",
I'm so happy with what I came to be
What a wonderful life God has given me.

2ND PRIZE - Writing Contest

Akisha Abella, 14

2nd Year,

Colegio de San Agustin



GREATEST GIFT OF ALL

"It is more blessed to give than to receive."
(Acts 20:35), is a famous bible verse
associated with generosity, selflessness and
Christmas. But do we truly understand this?

Adam and Eve were the first people created
by God. They have done most of man's
firsts: the first to eat, to drink, to think and
most importantly, the first to sin. It is normal
for man to commit sin; you wouldn't be
human if you didn't. But God is forgiving, He
is caring, and He understands. He loves us
so much that He arranged for His only Son
to be the Savior of mankind, the one to take
punishment and die for our sins.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of
God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
(Rom 6:23). Eternal Life is knowing God and
having a close relationship with Him.
Believers will always have a place in heaven.
From the moment we die, our spirit and our
soul go to be with the Lord forever. It is the

mission of Jesus to be the Savior of all
mankind. We must be able to accept Him,
allowing Him to do what He has come to do.
Just like Jesus, we have a mission,
something we have yet to discover, but are
already unknowingly fulfilling.

Christ's Gift of Life is better than any material
thing. It consists of love and sacrifice and is
free for everyone. It's just our choice to
accept it - accept His gift to us.

Yesterday was history, tomorrow a mystery,
and today a gift, that's why it is called
present.

3RD PRIZE - Writing Contest

John Eduard

Fernandez, 16

1st year college, Polytechnic
University of the Philippines



THE HUNT FOR HAPPINESS

The Carolers I hear singing in joy
While I simply wish, begging for a toy
Oh How I pray Jesus would grant
In this simple but meaningful chant

My father If only he had a job
So he won't seek a bank to rob
A crime he will do would make me sad
For this coming Christmas, I won't have a
Dad

A buffet, a treat just for three
A simple gift under the tree
Money to buy clothes or anything I desire
Hoping our house won't get on fire.
I'm wandering off with a question in my mind

Christ's gift this Christmas, where shall I find.
Then I look up to the sky I saw
Colorful lights, I admired with awe.

Colorful lanterns, beautiful lights
A big Belen displayed in heights
There I saw baby Jesus in the Belen smiling
At last I stopped from my endless wandering.

Jesus gave me the best gift in life
Happiness and smiles, without strife
I may not have new clothes or a toy.
But with my family and Christ, I'm truly in
joy.



1ST PRIZE - Art Contest

Jeanelle Zablan, 19

2nd year college, Centro
Escolar University Makati



*My drawing represents Christ's gift. The Gift is
the child. Everyone deserves to live and we should
thank God for giving us life. Life should be cared
for. Jesus protects the family. The family
represents the world. The child represents us. We
are a gift from God.*

2ND PRIZE - Art Contest

Cris Angelo

Rodriguez, 11

Gr 6, Bangkulasi
Elementary School



***Baby and Family.** A new born baby is the gift for
every family from our God. It gives happiness and
strengthens relationships. Its every smile gives
new life and new hope.*

*Let us always pray together and thank Him for all
blessings that He gives us.*

3RD PRIZE - Art Contest

Angela Luz Rodriguez

Gr 5, Bangkulasi
Elementary School



***Candle Light.** CHRIST suffered and saved us
from our sins. He always protects us, gives us
"light" to live a new life and hope for everyday
living.*

*So we can always smile and thank Him for every
gift that He gives.*

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PARISH FIESTA - JANUARY 2012**NOVENA MASSES - 6:00PM**

General Theme: **Knowing and Imitating Don Bosco**

- 20 Fri Don Bosco is the Educator of the Youth Fr. Renato de Guzman, SDB
- 21 Sat Don Bosco is the Priest of the Eucharist Fr. Alex Garces, SDB
- 22 Sun 5:30PM Don Bosco is the Priest of Confession Fr. Eligio Santos, SDB
- 23 Mon Don Bosco is the Faithful Servant of the Church Fr. Favié Faldas, SDB
- 24 Tue Don Bosco is a Man of Prayer Fr. Jose Antonio Paras, SDB
- 25 Wed Don Bosco is a Builder of Churches & Communities Fr. Salvatore Putzu, SDB
- 26 Thu Don Bosco is a True Devotee & Promoter of Mary Fr. Rene Lagaya, SDB
- 27 Fri Don Bosco is a Statesman: A Man of Peace Fr. Noel Osial, SDB
- 28 Sat Don Bosco is a Saint Fr. Gregorio Bicomong Jr., SDB
- 28 Sat Procession in honor of St. John Bosco after the 6PM Mass
- 29 Sun Parish Fiesta Mass 5:30PM - Bishop Patrick Buzon, SDB, DD from the Diocese of Kabankalan, Negros Occidental (celebrant)
- Installation of 2012 Parish Pastoral Council Officers
- 31 Tue Solemnity of St. John Bosco

FEBRUARY 2012 CALENDAR

- 02 Thu Feast of the Presentation of the Lord / World Day of Consecrated Life
- 05 Sun 5th Sunday in O.T. / Pro-Life Sunday
- 11 Sat Our Lady of Lourdes / World Day of the Sick
- 12 Sun 6th Sunday in O.T./ Confirmation - Bishop Broderick Pabillo, DD
- 14 Tue Mass Wedding
- 19 Sun 7th Sunday in O.T.
- 22 Wed **ASH WEDNESDAY Masses** (Beginning of the Lenten Season) 6:30, 7:30, 10:00AM, 12:15, 4:30, 6:00, 7:30PM
- 24 Fri Way of the Cross after 6PM Mass
- 26 Sun 1st Sunday of Lent

Sick Visitation – Thursdays 9AM

Holy Hour – Thursdays 6:30PM

Medical & Dental – Sundays 2:00PM

Street Mass – Saturdays 7:30PM

Visit our website for the complete Jan. & Feb. 2012 Calendars
<http://sjbmakati.com/parish-events.html>

FEBRUARY 2 - FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

On February 2, Christians celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of the Infant Jesus, the fourth joyful mystery of the Holy Rosary. After observing the traditional 40-day purification period for mothers after the birth of a male firstborn, the Blessed Mother presented Jesus to God at the temple in Jerusalem. There, a devout Jewish man named Simeon, proclaimed the Infant as "a light of revelation to the Gentiles". Because of this, candles are central to this feast which is also known as Candlemas, or *Candelaria*, in Spanish.

During the feast of *Candelaria*, candles are blessed and a short procession inside the Church follows. The blessed candles are used by the faithful for many purposes including the blessing of the throat during the Feast of St. Blaise on the following day, cemetery visits and home altars.



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NEWS BRIEFS

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES DAY

by Mike Rodriguez

The Sick, Elderly and Differently Abled (SEDA) Ministry headed by Ms. Annie Angeles organized the Persons with Disabilities Day last December 4, 2011. The two main events of the celebration were "PINOYTISM", a seminar on Autism awareness, and a talent show with gift-giving.

PINOYTISM guest speaker, Ms. Rosalyn Sorongon, director of Autism Society, shared her theory on Autism Spectrum Disorder conditions, signs and detections with representatives from youth groups, parents and teachers. She mentioned that autism is a lifelong developmental disability with no medical detection or cure. It affects how a

person relates to others and how they make sense of the world around them. About 1 in 11 children are born autistic, mostly boys.

Some 200 members of the SEDA Ministries of SJB Parish and the San Ildefonso Parish enjoyed the talent show which featured dance numbers by the deaf community, rondalla music, song numbers and a surprise number with the Jollibee mascot dancing with special children. Fr. Manny Domingo, SDB, who started the SEDA Ministry in SJBP gave the invocation and opening remarks and



gamely posed for photos with the participants afterwards.



As we join our Fil-Chi brothers and sisters in welcoming the Lunar New Year of the Water Dragon, we feature a short reflection of Loudette Zaragoza-Banson during her recent visit to China.

Kung Hei Fat Choi!

THE LISTENING QUEEN MOTHER

I spent the feast of All Saint's last year in Xiamen, China visiting the grave of my husband's great grandfather who was born and buried in China but who lived most of his adult life in Hagonoy, Bulacan.

It was interesting and at the same time disconcerting to be in a land where you understand nothing of the spoken or written language. Yet, when we visited a Buddhist Temple, I finally connected with the heart of my Chinese brethren. As I stood there trying to take in with all my senses the sights, sounds, smells of this sacred ground, something within me stirred. I seemed to understand what each devotee was saying to Buddha. From the exterior courtyard, where incense sticks were burned and shaken in respectful homage and supplication to the enlightened one, I could tell each one of the locals there had a fervent

wish in his or her heart. They were focused and absorbed in their connection with a Higher Being.

Right above the interior courtyard, the tour guide drew our attention to an image. From a distance, I could but glimpse an imposing figure of several feet high. The tour guide simply identified the image as Guan Yin - a goddess that the people had created because some could not relate to the male embodiment of Buddha.

I inched my way as reverently as possible through the stone steps and weaved through the devotees kneeling before this imposing image of Guan Yin. I sheepishly stood behind the intricately carved wooden enclosure to come as close as possible to Guan Yin. There I saw the statue of a female goddess with a thousand arms, each with an eye and holding an implement used for daily living.

But with my heart, I was reminded of someone else, I saw the representation of every human longing: a loving Mother who listens to all of humankind's concerns. I was swept by a wave of intense gratitude that



God, Our Loving Father had given us a Mother, whom we call Mary who truly listens to our needs but looks every inch like us: with a gentle pair of eyes and a loving pair of arms. I feel that all our concerns have a place in this Blessed Mother's heart. She listens. She cares. Ave Maria. Viva Madre Mia!

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