



Missionary Benedictine Sisters
ST. SCHOLASTICA'S PRIORY
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MALATE, MANILA, PHILIPPINES

COMMON LETTER NO. 196

DECEMBER 24, 2011

PEACE AND JOY!

DEAR SISTERS ALL OVER THE PRIORY AND OVERSEAS,

Once again we find ourselves in this joyful season. So I wish each and every one of you and your communities

A BLESSED CHRISTMAS



Isn't it awesome that the central figure of the celebration of Christmas all over the world and throughout the centuries is a CHILD- A BABY? A baby has nothing, has not yet done anything. God could have chosen to be incarnated as a virile person, full of power and might, like a superman. Would a prince living in luxurious palaces choose to live in a nipa hut? Would a billionaire choose to be a pauper? Would an all powerful person choose to be helpless like a newborn baby? But this is what Christmas is all about. It is what incarnation is all about. We read:

“Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (1 phil.2)

This mystery has given me the occasion to reflect on the three aspects that give value to a human being: HAVING, DOING, BEING.

HAVING- In our consumeristic society, this is what makes a person feel important and it is what makes people think gives importance –having wealth (lands, houses, latest models of cars, successful business enterprises, etc, etc.) But it is not only material things that we people can possess. One can also have power, important positions, prestige, social standing, celebrity status, etc. And when people lose these possessions then they can go into depression, despair and even commit suicide because they no longer feel important. And it is remarkable how people live as if these will last forever. But as the present situation shows power does not last forever. The most powerful person of the land can find herself asking permission just to come out to have a bit of sunning. The Lehman brothers went from billionaires to paupers almost overnight. Michael Jackson with all his wealth and popularity died like anybody else. Even Princess Diana mourned as very few people have been universally mourned is virtually forgotten today.

As religious we have less of material goods that people outside so we are not regarded important because of them and I think no one of us derives her self esteem from them. But we do have status, symbolic capital, yes prestige, position and even power. And this is what can be deceptive if we identify ourselves with them instead of roles we have to play. That is the reason why after 2 terms of being Superior, we give them one year of being with the rank and file. Of course the catch here is that they do not really become rank and file because they can still be administrators. Even for us religious it is not easy to give up positions, or the prestige and power these give us. That is why it is good on Christmas day to look at the CHILD in the manger who has nothing and who is the embodiment of KENOSIS, of emptying , of surrender, of detachment.

DOING- Next to having and perhaps for some persons foremost in value is what one has achieved, what one has done. The other day, I was just talking to Jun Lozada and he tells me that he feels this time of his life is a drought—fruitlessness compared to what good he felt he had done when he had position and power and money to help people. And yet we have just come from a public event where every one still wanted to take pictures with him, who called him kuya, who expressed recognition and support. And I told him you, know, now when you think you are so helpless and so powerless to help, maybe these times are just the times when you are helping people have hope , be inspired, wanting to do what is right, getting courage also to witness to the truth without your knowing it.

We also being human as we are derive a feeling of satisfaction when we have done admirable things—put up buildings in spite of difficulties, succeeded in having our schools accredited or re-accredited, earned good interest for our investments, received awards for outstanding performance in whatever field, etc. etc. And yet there will come a time when we can no longer do things, when we can no longer launch new ventures, when putting the spoon to our lips would be the achievement of the day. What then? Do we become lesser human beings? Again it is so easy to talk when one is not yet in that state. And so again we look on THE CHILD IN THE MANGER, who has not done anything yet, not even able to walk or to speak and pray that we may continue to be steeped in divine contentment when we can no longer do anything.

BEING- In reality, we cannot separate BEING, DOING, and HAVING. These are the three modes of existence of every person. As Eric Cohen quoting Sagee puts it:

The main difference between the three modes lies in the direction of the individual's tendency and the manner in which he/she invests his/her energy. While the energetic orientation of the Being mode is mainly directed at the individual's cultivation and development of his/her personality, the energetic orientation of the Having mode is directed at acquiring control over external things such as people, material things, and different types of knowledge. The fundamental orientation of the Doing mode is expressed in the perception of the principal aim of life as accomplishing things mainly for the good of both the individual and society

Our reflection is to clarify what could be the basic mode which would orient the person's attitude to the other modes. Taking the cue of THE CHILD IN THE MANGER, I claim here that the basic mode of existence is our BEING. Our efforts then should be towards greater and greater self knowledge and self acceptance and towards a genuine understanding of what it means to be a child of God made to the divine image and likeness. These efforts will form the unshakeable bedrock of a healthy self-esteem. And depending on our understanding and in the successful development of the dynamics of our being, we can then develop a positive attitude towards DOING and HAVING that would lead to the enhancement of our BEING. And when this happens, we remain self-actualized, blessed, happy, and contented people even when we have reached the situation when the other two modes of existence no longer hold for us.

AS WE KISS THE FEET OF THE CHILD AFTER MIDNIGHT MASS, LET US FERVENTLY PRAY THAT HE GIVE US THE GRACE TO BE "LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN" IN HIS IMAGE AND LIKENESS.

AGAIN A VERY BLESSED CHRISTMAS TO ALL!

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR RE-APPOINTED AND OUR NEWLY APPOINTED SUPERIORS.

REAPPOINTED FOR A SECOND TERM



Sr. Ezechiel Fernandez, OSB
San Fernando



Sr. Michaela Manalang, OSB
Legazpi

APPOINTED FOR A FIRST TERM



Sr. Baptista Busmente, OSB
Tacloban School
(Sr. Rosario Obiniana remains President)



Sr. Mary James Mular, OSB
Marihatag

FIRST TRANSFER LIST

SISTER	FROM	TO
1, Sr. Baptista Busmente, OSB	Priory House	Tacloban School
2. Sr. Roberta Ilumin, OSB	Tabunok	San Fernando
3. Sr. Consilio Napi, OSB	San Fernando	Marikina
4. Sr. Rosalie Mular, OSB	Bacolod	Marikina
5. Sr. Rita Tullao, OSB	Angeles	Priory House
6. Sr. Consorcia Rodela, OSB	Manila	Angeles
7. Sr. Roseve Balagat, OSB	Marikina	Tagaytay
8. Sr. Mary Ignatius Aquino, OSB	Tacloban School	Priory House
9. Sr. Angela Bingan, OSB	Bacolod	Taal
10. Sr. Josefa Martinez, OSB	Tacloban School	Bacolod

11. Sr. Imaya Calingayan, OSB	Tacloban School	Mati
12. Sr. Aurora Bravo, OSB	Ormoc	Marihatag
13. Sr. Stella Matutina, OSB	Mati	Marihatag
14. Sr. Joanne Ungay, OSB	.Marihatag	Samar (Pambujan)
15. Sr. Felicity Boy, OSB	Marihatag	Legazpi
16. Sr. Reginalda Cortez, OSB	Legazpi	San Fernando
16. Sr. Judith Diaz, OSB	Priory House	Taal

❖ CHRISTMAS VISITS

I was happy to be able to visit the Women’s Correctional and the Pasay City Jail. I have written an article in the Priory Bulletin about our visit to the Women’s Correctional so I will not repeat it here. Unlike in the correctional the Pasay City jail is crowded, has no grounds and is truly dismal in appearance. It is just like an accesoria. Anyway the residents as they are called gave us a really wonderful program in the men’s sections. They really got talent. We distributed some food and I was asked to say a few words. And I pinpointed pagibig, pagpapatawad , and pag-asa as the three virtues I wanted them to think about during Christmas. They were so attentive and so hungry for spiritual nourishment. In the women’ section when I said something about they should also have pagsisisi, one woman simply shouted aloud “ Hindi na po ako mandurukot!” One man I interviewed said he stole a cellphone. The penalty for this when convicted is 6 months in prison. He is already 2 years in prison and his case has no decision yet. One gay who is more beautiful than a woman and a great dancer confessed that he was instrumental in trafficking more than a hundred children. He said he was sorry for having done that. In the women’s section there was an NBI agent who was arrested for accompanying someone in the airport. She said now she understands the people she used to arrest, what they feel and what they experience. Another girl looking like a colegiala was also arrested for drug pushing.

Last December 17, we invited the street families of Bagong Tuluyan to have lunch with us in Subiaco. I sat with three mothers. One mother who used to be in a squatter area in Maligaya for 38 years has already 4 teen -aged daughters and they sleep in two tricycles, imagine? That is where they eat, sleep change clothes, etc. The other two mothers were her neighbors there. Their homes were demolished when a condominium was built there. They sell candies, cigarettes, soft drinks etc in the pavements and their store is just a table and a big umbrella. When a police is coming, they fold their umbrella and hide their wares. I was appalled when they told me they have to pay “tara” of twenty pesos every week . If not, their trycicle would be confiscated and they would have to redeem it at the precinct for 200 pesos! My goodness, I thought, how corruption has really permeated all levels of life from top to bottom. Imagine extorting money from street families who have nothing?

All these experiences made Advent so real to me because all these people are longing for salvation, for liberation, for the coming of the reign of God in a very real and immediate sense!

❖ **AGELESS PASSION MUSICAL**

On December 20, Sr. Mary Placid and I were invited to the 75th birthday concert of former Chief Justice Art Panganiban whose wife Leny Carpio is our alumna and her sister Linda was my classmate. I thought I will sit through a boring program but it was a fabulous Broadway musical on the life of the Chief Justice with the MYSO orchestra, Supreme Court Choir, Choir of Lawyers, dances by his grandchildren etc. with original lyrics of the songs sang by artists like Chit Villongco. Every number was warmly applauded especially the piano concert rendered by his only son Archie who is a businessman but performed the Rachmaninoff Concerto n0.2, 3rd movement with the orchestra. It was really very edifying –the words of the song showing how a supreme court can truly render justice and work for prosperity in the country etc. And the audience was like Manila’s 500—Two ex-presidents, FVR and Erap, Jojo Binay who gave a wonderful tribute, Archbishop Chito Tagle who did the invocation, Senators, congress people, cabinet members, tycoons, big media people like the Prietos, GMA 7, etc. Pnoy was about to come but he went to Cagayan de Oro instead. It was a beautiful way of celebrating one’s 75th birthday, indeed!

❖ **COURTESY CALL ON ARCHBISHOP TAGLE**

Today, December 21, some members of the AMRSP board did a courtesy call to Archbishop Tagle who remains his simple, unceremonious, truly funny self. We spent one and a half hour of laughing, regaling the group with our comments on the concert of Art Panganiban. But we were able to touch also on subjects of corruption, the travails of those in prison, of street families, of the lack of vocations, etc. etc. He said he has still to learn all the protocols and to live with guards in the property and to deal with politicians, diplomats, etc. etc. Even at the concert he was only in a long sleeved barong and pants with a pectoral cross—no red trimmings. I hope and pray that he remains as he is and even tried to make mano (!!!) to us.

This is all for now. All other events will be reported by our Priory Newsletter.
AGAIN A VERY BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND A NEW YEAR OF PEACE AND JOY TO EVERYONE.

Lovingly yours,



Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB
Prioress