



COVENANT NEWS

BUKÁS-LOÓB SA DIYÓS COVENANT COMMUNITY • ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK

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NEWS

BLD begins 2016 with a special Mass

The first BLD Friday-night celebration of 2016 was a truly special event. Not only was it the Salubungan Mass for the upcoming YLSS, but it also marked the return to BLD of a former member of BLD Newark's Youth Ministry, Fr. Joe Valle, who served as the main celebrant of the Mass.

Not too long ago, Fr. Joe was a teenager himself, just like the kids who were there for this year's YLSS. In his homespun homily, he recalled his own struggles in his search for Jesus during his BLD youth. Then he related how, after one particular Friday evening worship, the Lord answered his burning question: Jesus, what do You want me to do? He heard the call to become a priest. It was not the answer he was expecting, and getting used to the idea took a long time. After several years in seminary in Spain, Fr. Joe was ordained into the priesthood, the week before Christmas 2015.

As he talked during last Friday's Mass, he spoke of the honor and the thrill of being Jesus to others, especially as the one empowered by the Holy Spirit to transform bread and wine into Holy Eucharist. His return to BLD has now encouraged many, young and old alike, to ask the same question – "Lord, what do You want me to do for You?"

Let us all pray that each of us in our own way, will listen to and hear His answer.



COUNSELS

Jesus, the Wine Maker of Life

THEME: We find joy in the Light of God when we are obedient to pastoral authority

WORD : Is 62:1-5; Ps 96:1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 9-10; 1 Cor 12:4-11; Jn 2:1-11

ORDER: "Bow before him... serve him." (Ps 72:11)

REFLECTION:

In this story from the Gospel of John, I find three significant ways we may grasp the meaning of the events that took place during the wedding feast at Cana. The **first** is the importance of the Blessed Mary in the life of Jesus; the **second** is obedience to the will of God; and **third** is the existential meaning of transformation. And in its whole tri-context, significant also is what all these together mean to us.

We begin by looking at the first lesson we learn at Cana: the **importance of Mary** to her son. The story begins on the third day of the wedding feast, which would usually last for 7 days. As the merriment of the wedding is going on, Mary mentions to her Son Jesus that "they have no wine." The serving of wine is an essential ingredient of a Jewish wedding. To run out of wine is a great social disgrace and a big embarrassment. It is humiliating because of the passionate devotion of the Eastern people to hospitality, and also because of the shame it casts upon the wedded couple. When Mary, an observant householder and guest, says to Jesus "they ran out of wine," Jesus responds, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."

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Promise of the Week

"You shall be a glorious crown in the hand of the Lord." (Is 62:3)

HERE I AM LORD

Last Wednesday's Responsorial Psalm says, "Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will." What better answer can we give to the Lord when He calls us? Truly, we have each been called. By the grace of God and through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we have a desire to listen to the Lord and follow His will. As we read from 1 Samuel 3, we can reflect on our own experiences of listening to the Lord's calling.

As the passage begins, "*the word of the LORD was scarce and vision infrequent*" (1 Samuel 3:1b). This can be related to our personal periods of spiritual dryness, times when we find it difficult to feel God's presence or experience anything spiritually. Attempts at prayer can feel laborious and unrewarding. During these periods of spiritual desolation, we may find ourselves less likely to exercise the virtues granted by God and more prone to sin. We read how these consequences can take effect in the preceding chapters of the first book of Samuel, as the sons of the priest, Eli, have given in to debauchery, bringing shame upon his household (1 Samuel 2:22-24). We also see in Mark 14:38, where Jesus warns Peter of the dangers of spiritual complacency, when the Lord finds him sleeping in the Garden of Gethsemane: "*Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.*"

Jesus approaches Peter three times in the garden, only to find him sleeping all three times. Perhaps this harkens back to the Lord's threefold address to the slumbering Samuel, who repeatedly believes his master, Eli, has called him. In truth, Samuel's heavenly master had called him, but because the Lord's voice was unfamiliar to him, he instead turned to his earthly master. After being instructed by Eli, Samuel finally recognizes the Lord's voice on the 4th calling and responds, "*Speak, for your servant is listening*" (1 Samuel 3:10). Samuel's interpretations of the Lord's calling, first worldly, and finally spiritually, alludes to the nature of his ministry to the Israelites. Samuel was the last of the judges, who governed the Israelites with political and military power. Upon answering the Lord's call, Samuel began his mission to lead the Israelites spiritually, prophesying the words of the Lord. (1 Samuel 3:19)

Let us find hope in the story of the Lord calling to Samuel, especially those of us undergoing our own periods of spiritual desolation. We must remain vigilant, for though we may feel that worldly things are asking for our attention, it is always the Lord's calling that warrants our response of, "Here I am!" The Lord is truly the light shining in the darkness. Even during times of despair, when we think the Lord has gone silent and drawn away from us, we can always find His voice in the Sacred Scriptures and His presence in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Needing Jesus

"Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners." (Mark 2:17)

These were the words spoken by Jesus in response to the comment of the Pharisees "*Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?*" (Mark 2:16b) During biblical times, tax collectors were loathed because many of them profited from the excess taxes they collected. Hence, they were considered sinners. Levi, a tax collector, was drawn to answer Jesus' call to follow Him, even inviting Jesus to his home to share a meal. The Pharisees watched with dismay as Jesus ate with Levi and his fellow tax collectors, speaking with them in fellowship in the same way He related to those who considered themselves respectable.

As I reflect on this passage from the Gospel according to Mark, I am personally convicted for the times in my life when I considered myself upright, of good morals, and of better spiritual standing than others. I had followed the precepts of the Catholic faith, married in the sacrament of Matrimony, had our children baptized and confirmed, attended Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, received the sacraments, and lived as a law-abiding citizen. All these, I believed, made me a true Catholic.

When my wife and I attended the Marriage Encounter Weekend and Life in the Spirit Seminar almost fifteen years ago, I learned that being a true follower of Christ has a greater meaning and requires a greater commitment than I had originally thought. Listening to the worship prayers on Fridays, participating in the word sharing circles, and attending community teachings, retreats, and activities further enriched me in my faith. My relationship with the Father became so real and vibrant, that I knew in my heart and mind that I could really speak to Him in personal and conjugal prayers, and that He is truly ever-present and faithful in His love for me and for everyone.

My eyes were opened to recognize and wait on the leadings of the Holy Spirit as a very important aspect of daily life, so that my decisions are inspired by Him. Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior, and I understand that His death on the cross allows me to be able to go back to Him and ask for His forgiveness each time I sin. His selflessness is an example of how I have to lead my life, putting my full trust in His Providence and Mercy. He is my only Source of strength. I no longer consider myself better, blameless, and justified. I am a sinner who knows that I am forgiven if I seek real reconciliation and sincerely repent of my sins.

Dear Jesus, for the many times I have stumbled in following Your Ways, please forgive me and lead me back to the path of righteousness. I need You, Jesus, as only You can truly heal me of my brokenness and make me whole again. Amen.

One of Four

After reading the Gospel for Friday, January 15th, I suddenly remembered a retreat I was at back in high school (oh my, over 30 years ago already!). At the retreat, after reading from Mark about the episode in Capernaum involving the paralytic carried by four men, the priest moderator asked each of us in the class to put ourselves in the place of the paralytic needing healing. This seemed like an easy exercise at first; but he then also asked us to name four classmates who were to serve as the men to carry the mat we were to be lying in, and explain why.

When one thinks of that scene in Capernaum, it's easy to overlook the importance of the four men, and yet, it was probably their faith that was crucial too to the healing that was to follow. After carrying him there, they had to fight through the crowd that had gathered around Jesus's home; they had to break through the roof, and then had to lower him down. I imagine that they could have just easily given up, with ample excuses to choose from for why. But they persisted.

At that retreat, most of us in the class, myself included, named four close friends. This was very understandable since one would want four others whom one trusted; also, since it would have been a bit of an imposition, it seems natural to choose those who wouldn't refuse your being a burden. Imagine my surprise when someone I was not close to, chose me to be one of the four to carry him. Thirty plus years may have faded the accuracy of my memory, but I think he said that he selected me because he needed someone upright to show him how he should live. What I do know is that thirty years ago, I was far from upright, so, why me remains a mystery.

But the anecdote as well as the Gospel story itself have important aspects about the whole episode for all of us. Yes it shows how the Son of Man performed earthly miracles; and through that, that He had the authority to forgive sins. Thing is, upon reflection, it also points to the role we have to play for others – to be one of the four men to carry them to Jesus. It's a role that as members of BLD, we've actually signed up for and must live up to.

Today, sadly, there are still many moments when I am the man paralyzed by sin. But, thanks in large part to BLD, I am happy to say that I have many in Community to choose from, whom I could pick to be the four to carry me, and I think that they'd be willing to. My real role though, and it's virtually the same for all of us - just as it was thirty years ago when I wasn't even aware of it – is to be one of the four, being the example and bearing other's burdens, in order to bring them, friends, family and even strangers, to Jesus.

COUNSELS

(from page 1)

In the verses that follow, the glory of Christ as Divine is uncovered through the accomplishment of this sign, His first miracle in public, as the road leading to Calvary and to the cross begins.

In the Gospel, one can easily perceive the faith of Mary in the ability of Jesus to alleviate the problem, when she says to the servers, ***“Do whatever he tells you.”*** Mary is our intermediary to Jesus; she is the great mediator of our problems. Mary carries upon her shoulders our problems, our fears, troubles and concerns, and brings them to Jesus. Mary is not the Savior, but Mary brings us to the Savior. Mary did not require her Son to act in a definite way but rather she asked the servants to ***“do whatever he tells you.”*** She knows that there is only one Who can solve our problems or answer our needs, her Divine Son, Jesus. She is a willing and compassionate go-between, between us and her Son, Jesus, the True Source and Provider of all our needs.

The **second** significant aspect is **obedience**. No one knows Christ better than Mary; no one can introduce us to a profound knowledge of His mystery better than His Mother. So without any doubt, as if perceiving her Son's feelings, and anticipating His response, she summons the servants to ***“do whatever he tells you.”*** This also clearly signifies Mary's invitation for us to obey Him without hesitation. With the same maternal concern she showed at the wedding feast of Cana, Mary seems to say to us “do not waver; trust in the words of my Son.” Truly, just as Jesus was able to change water into wine at Cana, He turns bread and wine into His body and blood at every Eucharist. Through this mystery, He sets before all believers the living memorial of His Passover. Throughout His earthy life, Jesus's supreme care and desire was to follow the will of the Father. When we follow His commands, in the same way that the servants obeyed when they were asked to, ***“fill the jars with water,”*** we too are privileged to witness the miracles of God working in our everyday lives through great trust and obedience in Him.

Finally, the significance of **the transformation** of water into the finest wine: ***“And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now.”***

(John 2:9-10)

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COUNSELS

(Continued from page 3)

The miracle signifies the new creation that Jesus provides. The inherent energy of the new wine, powerful as it is because it comes from God, erases the old creation in us and transforms our fallen nature, our compulsions, addictions and sinfulness, into new creations by His divinity. In His hands, our sinful nature is like the water which He changed into wine at Cana, transformed by His touch like the blessed wine of the Mass, which is changed into His blood, the blood of His life and eternal salvation which unites us His children, in the divinity of our Heavenly Father.



NEWS

(Continued from page 1)

The Mass was concelebrated by Fr. Robert Lamirez and Fr. Joe Saltarin, with Deacon Serge Bernachez as the Deacon of the Mass. Fr Matthew Nobrega was a concelebrant as well; he, like Fr Valle, is also a priest-servant at the Home of the Mother in Spain.

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LORD'S PROVISION

PREVIOUS WEEK'S

Collections	Jan 8, 2016	FY 2015
Tithe & Love Offering	\$ 2,752	\$ 137,964
Mission Collections	\$ 401	\$ 8,083
Christmas Envelopes	\$ 450	\$ 1,001

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

Thank you for your continued support!

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Medical Mission

February 22-25, 2016

Tagbilaran, Bohol, Philippines

Contact Persons: Ramon/Leonie Mariazeta

rmariazeta@msn.com / lmariazeta@msn.com

bldmcoord@outlook.com



Friday, January 22, 2016

Contact Persons: Ray Salmo - raycsalmo@aol.com /

Cezar Calingo - cezar02459@yahoo.com

YLSS 21

March 4-6, 2015

Kristian Quevada: YLSS Youth Evangelization Coordinator | (732) 910-9924

Ronald and Dina Pangilinan: YCS, Adult Youth Evangelization Coordinators | (732) 581-9497

LSS 46

Registration is now open!

Salubungan/Aquaintance: March 4

Invocation Mass: April 8

LSS 46: April 9-10

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

TEACHING CALENDAR

Teachings for **Saturday, January 16:**
Prayer Leadership, CMP II - Part 1 & Encounter with Jesus

Date	Apostolate
Jan 22	Mission
Jan 29	Pastoral
Feb 5	Evangelization
Feb 12	Formation

Marshaling



Schedule