

Sept-Dec 2014

A Regular Publication of the Family of Faith Community, New Jersey, USA



Tambuli Newsletter

"So then while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all, but especially to those who belong to the family of the faith." (Galatians 6:10)



FOF 21st Anniversary Celebration

On October 12, 2014, the Family of Faith Community celebrated its 21st Anniversary at the gymnasium of the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish in Linden, New Jersey. The 21st year marks changes in a person's life. At 21, a person living in the US finally receives all of the privileges of a full-fledged adult, signified by a horizontal license. Perhaps the biggest change of all is the coming of age; the blossoming of a child into an adult. In the past 21 years, the Family of Faith has found that one thing remains unchanged above all else: God. The theme of the anniversary was the Lord's unchanging faithfulness, because it is only through God's faithfulness that the community has remained a bulwark for so long.

During the anniversary celebration, Gregory Floyd, the Senior Coordinator of the People of Hope, a sister community also based in New Jersey, gave an inspirational talk to the FOF community. He spoke about digging deeper into our lives as Christians. He mentioned that if we face the tough questions and mend any strained relationships, then we will have deeper healing as brothers and sisters. He also touched on the "come and see" approach in evangelization; that is, let us invite others



to come and see our way of life, to always be a witness to the love of Jesus Christ. Finally, he spoke of living in gratitude because God has blessed us with the gift of faith, community and His Holy Spirit.

Cecil Penson, the Senior Coordinator of the Family of Faith also gave an exhortation for everyone to continue to respond to God's call to mission.

As the community experiences changes and continues to grow, we can hold fast to our mission knowing that God does not change, His love does not change, and He always keeps His promises.

New Theme for 2015

The highlight of our annual community planning weekend has always been the discernment for the following year's theme. It was not different this year. The participants were excited to come together before the Lord to ask, "What is your word for us for 2015?" Initially, the words we received seem not to gel together and not centered on a complete message. But not to be outdone in faithfulness, the Lord blessed the brothers and sisters with grace; they who were tasked to listen even more and finalize the words that will guide us next year.

For 2015 the Lord exhorts us with these words: **"I am the Lord your God. Come, Follow Me and Live."** Together, we will prayerfully ask God to guide our community in every facet of community life and activities. Together, let us pray for humble hearts with the willingness to be taught, changed, and transformed through the message of our theme. Then, hope-filled and with eager expectation, we will gather together the fruit of God's blessing in 2015.

Praise God!

Life in the Spirit Seminar

This year's Life in the Spirit Seminar (LSS) was held last October 10 through November 17 at the family room of St. Elizabeth of Hungary in Linden, NJ. In collaboration with St Elizabeth of Hungary parish, the Family of Faith opened the LSS to the parishioners. Our community welcomed participants who responded to experience the LSS including family and friends of community members.

Twelve participants completed the talks: God's Love, Salvation, New Life, receiving God's gift, Baptism in the Holy Spirit and Christian Growth and Transformation. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit through this seminar.



The LSS Seminar was led by Arnold Alday

"In the same way, let your light shine upon others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

-Matthew 5:16

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18-25, 2015)

Jan. 18-25, 2015 is designated as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This week is an annual eight-day observance or "octave" of prayer. Its main focus is to pray for church unity. It has been this way from the beginnings of this international movement in 1908 and is observed by Christians around the world. The Family Of Faith, together with the Sword of the Spirit, joins all Christians (Catholics and Non-Catholics) around the world in the annual observance of this octave of prayer for unity. The theme for 2015 is from **John 4:7 "Jesus said to her: 'Give me to drink.'"** There are prayer materials that contain a set of eight daily scripture readings, a short commentary on the readings

...continued on next page....

.....

Leaders' Planning Weekend (September 20-21, 2014)

The annual Leaders' Planning Weekend was held last Sept 20-21, 2014 at the Family Room of Sts. Mary and Elizabeth School in Linden, NJ. Present were the Community Council, Women's Leadership Team, pastoral leaders and service ministry heads. As in the previous years, this was a time to come together before God as His servants and discern His direction for the Community for the coming year. The main objectives of the annual planning sessions were to discern the Community theme, Community Action Plan, and schedule of activities for 2015. The participants were divided into five groups to discuss the different aspects of Community life: Handling Community Growth, Having a Stable Community Pattern of Life, Strengthening Our Way of Life, Children and Youth, Government and Fulfilling SOS's Underway B Requirements for FOF. The weekend was spent in prayers, group discussions, as well as fun fellowship activities and games organized by Corinne Yorobe, Eric and Bheng De Jesus. Kuya Cecil Penson also gave a talk on being bold in service and love for one another. There was the Lord's Day celebration followed by meal and fellowship highlighting the Saturday evening. Thank you to the brothers and sisters who worked behind the scenes and served by providing food throughout the Planning weekend – Tet Guevarra, Roy and Kathy Alcalde, Jhing and Steph Villena.



Covenanted Members Meeting (October 4, 2014)



Thirty-five publicly committed (covenanted) members of the Family Of Faith, in their meeting last Oct 4, 2014, voted to ratify Cecil Penson as Senior Coordinator of the Community for a new 5-year term. They also confirmed the appointment of Eric De Jesus as new Temporary Coordinator and re-confirmed the current Council positions for Nilo Natural as Permanent Coordinator, Dan Farrales and Medel Guevarra as Temporary Coordinators and Ed De Guzman as Coordinator-in-Training. The votes were all unanimous for all the Council positions. The day ended with some fun games, Lord's Day celebration and meal afterwards.

and a prayer. These materials were developed by a group of ecumenical scholars living in Brazil and have been sanctioned by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. These readings and prayers are intended to be prayed in common by all those participating in the Week of Prayer around the world.

You can find more info of these materials on Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on the following sites:

<http://www.swordofthespirit.net/bulwark/december2014p11.htm>

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/weeks-prayer-doc/

Men's Retreat (September 2014)

This year, 13 FOF brothers joined the men's retreat hosted by the People of Hope Community. It was held in Camp Tecumseh in Pittstown, NJ, and around 150 men were in attendance. The retreat theme was the "Joy of the Gospel", based on Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, of which the opening line reads: "The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus." Jim Kolar was the speaker during the retreat. Jim served as Senior Coordinator of Christ the Redeemer Community in St. Paul, Minnesota. He continues to serve as a Coordinator for this community.



Reflection by Eric de Jesus

It was a Friday night and after a grueling week at work, it was a "joy" to take a drive with two brothers to Camp Tecumseh in Pittstown, New Jersey. There were many things that I brought home from the talks. "Quid novit?", in English translates to "What's new?". Year after year, the Lord never ceases to surprise me. There is always more that we can learn about Jesus Christ than what we already know. Jim spoke about the high cost of discipleship that often casts a shadow on our joy. That is why sometimes we wonder quietly and ask ourselves if we even have this joy of knowing the Lord. Jim said that it is all about the reward and not the cost. It is about the object of our love that makes all the sacrifices worthwhile. At the end of day, we all want to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Come share your master's joy."

Jim also touched on divinizing the material wealth, knowledge, fame and

even our child's college education. Sad to say, sometimes this is our default setting and we are wired to think this way and we are not even aware that we "divinize" such things. "Top button, top hole", was Jim's exact words. Like putting on a shirt with buttons, the top button goes into the top hole. Put God first and everything will follow. Do otherwise and everything else seems out of place. Jim also mentioned that every day we have our encounters with God. It is only up to us to recognize and acknowledge Him in these encounters. Each encounter reveals the Lord and who He is, but also reveals who we are.

It was refreshing to spend hours upon hours of worship and adoration of the Lord. We were broken down to discussion groups and it is always enlightening to hear insight from a different perspective. Saturday afternoon was free time on the schedule and we got to play hoops with some younger POH

"Put God first and everything will follow. Do otherwise and everything else seems out of place."

brothers while other brothers decided to get some horizontal meditation (aka sleep). Of course, there was Lord's Day on Saturday evening and we were treated to a sumptuous Thanksgiving-like dinner with Turkey and cranberry sauce. After dinner, our souls were nourished by brothers giving short testimonies about how the retreat has touched them so far. The fellowship and laughter is always amazing among brothers as we took a late night walk after dinner. This weekend was truly a joyful encounter with the Lord.

To God be the glory!



Women's Retreat (October 2014)



This year, around 42 participants joined the Family of Faith Women's retreat held at the Villa Pauline Retreat House in Mendham, NJ. The event was held last October 17-19, 2014. The theme of the retreat was "My Heart searches restlessly and finds no rest till it rests in Thee". The speaker was Father Manolo Punzalan.

Reflection by Evelyn Wan

The short 3 days were amazing. Aside from being treated to a beautiful landscape, comfortable accommodation and all the delicious food, my eyes widened and my heart dwelled on the wisdom from Father Manolo's talks, the meditation guides from Corinne and Christina, and the intimacy shared by all the sisters.

What struck me most were the talks of Father Manolo. They were wake up calls for me that I have not been praying properly; that I need to re-examine the quantity & quality of my prayers.

The **Quantity** is how often I pray. Father Manolo talked about how we live our lives as Martha. I am one of those people rushing to get things done, going from one place to another. I never stop. Oftentimes, I do not find time to

rest, let alone pray to God. Like Father Manolo said, "Slow down and let the soul catch up with us." I realized that God is there whenever I need Him but I forget about Him when life is good. I need to spend more time in prayer if I want to build a relationship with Him.

Besides spending more time in prayer, I learned that I need to work on building prayers of good **Quality**. That has always been my problem when I pray. I pray to ask for petitions. When I pray, I should start by praising our God. I should confess to the Lord any wrongdoing and unreconciled relationship. Then I can give thanks to what he has given me and my family, being mindful of what he sacrificed for us.

I was encouraged to pray without ceasing. Amen is not the end of prayer. It

*"Amen is not the end of prayer.
It is the beginning of my action."*

is the beginning of my action. If I ask to be a good mother, then I have to take care of my children, console them when they are not happy, spend time to listen to them and to love them.

After the retreat, I felt that I have been convicted by God. I can decide on how close I want to be with Him and act on it.

God always listens to us and stays in our hearts. He is good. All the time!



An Advent Message by Father Ed Jocson

Entering the Season of Advent in Hopeful Anticipation of Salvation:

Pope Francis, in his address to the people during the Angelus of December 1, 2013, had this to say: *“The season of Advent, which we begin again today, restores this horizon of hope, a hope which does not disappoint because it is founded on God’s Word. A hope which does not disappoint, simply because the Lord never disappoints! He is faithful!”*

There are two temptations we can fall into when we think about anticipating the promise fulfillment of salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ. One is to presume that since we have been waiting

for so long the Second Coming will not be anytime soon and that we have more than enough time to get ready. Another is to assume the Second Coming is imminent and to live in fearful predictions of the end of days. As followers of our ever-faithful Lord, Jesus Christ, we do not wish to fall into either of these temptations. Rather, we use the opportunities in our everyday life to grow in our relationship with God, while still being aware that this world we live in now is not our final home. The season of Advent calls us to live in the present while looking forward to

the future. We both celebrate the season of waiting while anticipating the happiness that the birth of the promised Messiah we celebrate every year at Christmas.

May this year’s Advent season be a new beginning of our hope in the Lord’s promises and an encouragement for our daily challenges in life as we prepare our hearts and homes for the coming of Emmanuel, God-with-us, our Lord Jesus Christ.

God be with us always!

Bob Tedesco’s Community Visit (Nov 20-22)

Bob Tedesco (FOF’s Regional Missionary Coordinator) and his wife Bobbie visited the Community last November 20-22. Bob sat down with the Community Council and discussed with them several aspects of our Community life, while Bobbie met with the Women’s Leadership Team.

In the Community Gathering last Nov 22, Bob gave a talk on Our Mission. He reminded us of our identity - that as a community of disciples on Mission and as part of the Sword of the Spirit network of communities, we are called to live, work and strive, by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that others might have true life in Christ, now and forever. He discussed that fulfilling this mission involves two main aspects of our Call:

1) TO BE: a **bulwark** that defends people in this time of spiritual warfare and

an instrument for God’s work, a **prophetic people** that lives the Christian call radically as disciples so that the world might know that God has sent Jesus Christ, and a **servant people** to serve church and society by working to stem the tide of evil and promote holiness in the daily circumstances of our lives.

2) TO DO: to **proclaim** the Kingdom of God, to **gather** people into our communities and movements, to **leaven** the places and situations we are in by living our Christian life confidently, and to **defend** Christian truth and morality in church and in society.

Bob also emphasized the importance of



evangelizing our children first. After Bob’s talk, the community members divided themselves into their respective Men’s and Women’s groups to discuss and share their reflections on Our Mission.

(Bob Tedesco is past President of the North American Region of the Sword of the Spirit, a founder of the People of God community in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and has been one of its key leaders for the past 40 years.)



Youth Corner—A Personal Sharing by Ivan Yorobe

I praise and thank God for blessing me with musical talents. I play the guitar and a few other instruments. Recently, I have been learning to sing. I have a friend in school named Megh. He can sing really well, and we performed a song in our school's talent show and got 2nd place. Later, we started a YouTube channel for sharing our music, and so far we have two videos with more than 100 views each. Last week, Megh came to my house and we were deciding on what song to do for our next video. We decided on the song Breakeven by the Script, which has a line that goes "just praying to a god I don't believe in."

We practiced the song countless times. Once we finished recording, I uploaded the song and Megh left. As I had some time to myself (the rest of my family

was at the LSS), the guilt in my heart grew heavier. I showed the video to Papa and after he had watched it, we had a very long discussion.

It was during this time that all the guilt flowed in because I realized that I had not only said something I did not mean, but I had actually sinned against God. I had deliberately said I did not believe in Him, and whether I had meant the words or not, that is a terrible sin. My actions were comparable to that of Peter, who denied Jesus three times. I, however, had denied Him more than three times.

I spent an entire night reconciling with God. The next day I asked Megh if I could remove the video. Megh is not Christian so I was surprised when he agreed and said that he was not even

"No matter what my talent is, it is necessary to use it to build the kingdom of God here on Earth."

mad at me.

From this experience, I realized the power of words. Words, whether sincere or not, have powerful effects. I learned to watch how I use the talents God gave me. God gave me a voice to sing with. And the main purpose of my voice is to sing praises to the Lord, to give back to Him. No matter what my talent is, it is necessary to use it to build the kingdom of God here on Earth. There is no better reason to sing than to show my gratitude to, not the God we don't believe in, but the God that we do believe in.



Upcoming Activities/Events for January

Jan 11	Filipino Mass
Jan 11	Community Gathering
Jan 16-17	Youth Boy's Retreat
Jan 17	Teaching Course (for Affiliate/Underway members)
Jan 24	Community Conference
Jan 25	Soup Kitchen
Jan 30-31	Youth Boys Retreat
Jan 31	Men's Breakfast



Upcoming Activities/Events for February

Feb 8	Filipino Mass
Feb 8	Community Gathering
Feb 18	ASH Wednesday
Feb 20	Youth Night
Feb 21	Community Gathering
Feb 21	Parents and Post HS Children
Feb 22	Soup Kitchen
Feb 28	Men's Conference

Please check the 2015 Community Calendar for more details

In Memory of Mommy Lydia Sardea

My Mom, Lydia by Debbie Sardea

My mom, Lydia Sardea, was an English elementary teacher, who later rose up the ranks to become a principal in a public school. She had 5 sisters & 4 brothers, was married to the late Vicente, who was a teacher himself, and had three children – myself, my twin sister Diane, and my late brother David.

After her retirement, she just stayed home and was a loving grandmother to my brother's three children. Mom had been visiting me and my relatives in Canada for some time until she migrated permanently to the US in 2004. She got her US citizenship in 2009.

She enjoyed watching the news and game shows and reading her pocket books during the weekdays. Since she was in the house the whole time on weekdays, I made it a point to take her out on weekends. Although a homebody, Mom also liked to shop and eat out. When she liked a type of food, she would always want to eat it until she got tired of it. Attending and enjoying being part of Single Women's events & activities, she became the 'mom' of the group. When there was no community gathering on a Saturday, it was routine to start the day with breakfast and be on 'Skype' with the family back in the Philippines. Blessed with good memory even at old age, phone calls with Diane from Canada would always in-

clude a recap of what we did during the week.

She attended the Life in the Spirit Seminar in 2012 and became a very visible member since then. She enjoyed being in the community and felt she belonged to a group of people who loves God and likes to be of service to Him.

Mom always followed doctor's orders. Before last year's Christmas season, after being given clearance to travel, we were able to visit relatives in Canada, not knowing that that will be the last time that they would see her. When January came, she needed to get 24/7 oxygen supply. Her bed was moved downstairs. She did not want to go out much, only to doctors' appointments and check-ups. She could not even go to church so I would just bring her the Holy Eucharist after I've gone to mass. Most of the time, she just prayed and read her novenas and watched mass on television. She was also grateful to Monsignor Puleo, our



*We will miss you, Mommy Lydia
We love you.*

parish priest, who visited her, gave her anointing of the sick and talked to her about praying constantly. Before going to sleep, she had to have her beads (rosary) in her hands.

I will always remember the times we shared, especially those when life was good for her. Thanks to all. The support and kindness relatives and friends have shown gave her the strength to fight her battle even though she was really getting tired. Mom's struggle with her sickness is over and she is now in a better place - home, in God's loving care.

