

## Our desire to have an evangelistic lifestyle

by Etchin Sumagang

I would like to greet everyone a blessed, joyful and prosperous new year. I also would like everyone to thank God for the tremendous individual and collective blessings He bestowed to all of us in the past year. We also thank Him for allowing us to overcome various challenges we encountered during the year.

For the past two years, we joyfully worked together to lay down the solid foundation of our BCBP Community in Canada. Everyone actively participated and savored the splendor of BCBP activities that many of us missed for years. God honored our heart's desires and allowed the elevation of our group into a full pledged BCBP Chapter. We really had lots of reasons to celebrate during our 2<sup>nd</sup> year anniversary last year.



However, our recognition as a new chapter is just the start of a much bigger task ahead. God gave us a much bigger mission area – the whole dominion of Canada - the 4<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world. Days after our elevation as a Chapter, BCBP Edmonton, Alberta Mission and BCBP Vancouver, British Columbia Mission were started. We now have three regular BCBP Breakfast venues to work on. We believe that God will add more within the next few months as He will definitely expand our territory.

Spreading the BCBP in this huge country is an enormous task. We need a lot of workers and logistics. With our numbers right now, we can easily justify that the task is really difficult to do and may not be sustainable. Fortunately, it is in this kind of situation that divine intervention happens. God will always show His presence and cover our weaknesses once we humbly submit to Him our human limitations in doing the task. We just have to offer our willingness to serve and our desire to help each other so that collectively, we can pursue our mission.

As we prepare ourselves for the big tasks ahead of us, we cannot avoid reflecting on the very reason why we are in the BCBP – that we are witnesses, evangelizers and triumphant warriors for Christ in the marketplace. We are "alter Christus" or the face of Christ to others.

We know that we can only become effective evangelizers once we consistently live out the BCBP way of life. Our actions, behaviors and spoken words should align with Christian values. Once we have this evangelistic lifestyle, we don't have to open our mouths or push people to enter in our community since our actions, behaviors and spoken words would already encourage people to join the BCBP.

Since our membership comes from different spectrums of society, living out the BCBP way of life could be a complicated endeavor. That is why our leaders recommended a very simple guide – by referring to our BCBP commitment cards regularly so we can constantly evaluate if what we are doing and behaving are the right way. Our Chapter will also provide spiritual formation programs that will help all of us achieve an evangelistic lifestyle.

We also need to remember that Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* taught us that evangelization is not complete if we will just invite a person to re-commit his life to Christ. Evangelization reaches its completion when that person is integrated into a Christian community, has been formed in the basics of Christian life and equipped to share in the mission of the Church through his community. We should therefore aim that our sponsored participants to the BCLPs will make their full commitment to the BCBP to complete the evangelization process.

All of us have different levels of struggles in our desire to live out the BCBP way of life. But if we work hard and help each other in our spiritual journey, we will be able to prepare ourselves individually and collectively as worthy evangelizers ready to spread BCBP all over Canada.

We will work on this together this year and beyond. No one should be left out. With God's promise in Isaiah 58:11 that He will guide us continually, we will surely be triumphant. God bless BCBP CANADA and all its missions!

## 2nd Anniversary highlights

The 2nd anniversary celebration started as early as Wednesday evening of October 22 when members welcomed our guests from the Philippines with a dinner at Etchin & Odit Sumagang's residence.



BCBP founder Fr. Herb Schneider, SJ and Fr. Bobby Cena concelebrated the Anniversary mass at the Good Shepherd Convent on Friday, October 24. BCBP national leaders used the occasion to pray over the entire BCBP Canada GTA governance team and prepare them for the service ahead.



BCBP President Manny and Reggie Jimenez shared their life testimony during the Anniversary Breakfast on Saturday, October 25 at Four Points by Sheraton in Mississauga.



## 2nd Anniversary highlights

After only two years as an outreach, BCBP Canada - Greater Toronto Area was elevated to a chapter on October 25.

During the chapter elevation ceremony, the governance team led by Etchin Sumagang as Chapter Head was also officially installed. It is the same team that has been serving the group since 2012.

The event took place after the 2nd Anniversary Breakfast. On hand to witness the historic occasion were Fr. Herb Schneider, SJ, current BCBP President Manny and Reggie Jimenez, incoming President Joey and Lulu Avellana, AMD Jun and Mina Obra, former President Louie Morales and Dito dela Cerna from Los Angeles Chapter.



The wild, colourful outfits from the 70's were out in full display as the newly-installed chapter celebrated with a dinner fellowship on October 25. The East and West Units entertained with their dance presentations, with special numbers from the BCBP National Leaders, BCBP Canada GTA governance team and the BCBP Pips (youth and kids).



## Christmas celebration

### Christmas party

Everyone had a good time at the Christmas party held at Sts. Martha & Mary Church Banquet Hall on December 13. It was a night full of fun, entertainment, games, singing and of course, lots of food. What a great way to end the year!



### Christmas gift drive

In lieu of exchange gifts, members brought food and other gift items to be given to the Good Shepherd Homeless Men's Shelter - the community's way of sharing with the less fortunate.



### Simbang gabi

For the second year, the community sponsored a simbang gabi at Sts. Peter & Paul Church. The ladies served dinner to churchgoers while the men serenaded with Christmas carols.



## After the confetti and firecrackers

by Gee Salazar

Happy New Year! Everybody was saying this to one another. Actually, what's the difference between December 31 and January 1<sup>st</sup>? Will it really change the present scenario? Will it really make a difference?

Some people with their superstitious beliefs lit firecrackers to release all their misfortunes in the air. With my new year's resolution, will I succeed with my ambition to lose some weight? I guess it's all up to me to pursue my goals. Frequent the gym and snob the buffet table.

All these are hopes that come with the new year. One thing I know for sure that comes with the new year would be one more year will be added to my age, one more year closer to my retirement and to be morbid, one more year closer to saying good bye to this world.

I can't help but ponder on the excitement of the New Year. Is it really the gateway to change or is it just a tradition of putting all our hopes and energy on the eve of January 1<sup>st</sup>? After all the confetti have fallen down on the ground, the firecrackers all lit up, we wake up on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the new year with a hangover and our old selves.

And then I came across a prayer book thanking God as to how our worries can strengthen our faith. How failure can bring joy to our hearts. How unanswered prayers can open our eyes of faith and how God was beside us all along during those difficult times when we thought God abandoned us. Really? Negative feelings can bring us closer to God?

I looked inside my heart and then I realized that yeah, that time when I was suffering, God knew with utmost perfection the sorrows I was going through and He allowed them to happen to me so that my faith will be strengthened. When I was frustrated because I could not get my heart's desires, it was then that I became aware that God has something far better for me because My Heavenly Father loves me more than I love myself. In fact, He already knew my needs even before I asked for them. That hate in my heart turned to forgiveness because as Fr. Bobby said, "pray for the offended and the offender".

Who needs firecrackers or confetti? Any day can be a new year.

## Other Chapter activities



### Christ the King celebration

The community gathered in praise and worship to give honour to Christ the King on November 23 at the Sts. Martha & Mary Church in Mississauga.



### Chapter planning

The expanded Governance team sat down to review the past year and plan for the 2015 activities. The overnight activity was held at the Sumagang residence on November 29-30.



## Breakfasts



### November

A relationship predestined through a chance encounter, strengthened by friendship that eventually blossomed into love and marriage - this was the story that Unit Leader Ricky and Cecile Nuguid shared during the November breakfast. Their sharing spoke of thanksgiving for God's blessings and victory over challenges in their family life. It was an inspiring testimony filled with laughter and wisdom that can only come from years of experience.



### December

BCBP Canada GTA got an early Christmas gift as our Chapter Head Etchin and Odit Sumagang finally shared their life testimony at the December breakfast. It was a story of how God called and prepared them for service in the community through the many trials and tests they experienced. But, as they witnessed, God is always victorious in the end. What a wonderful sharing of how God honours commitment and selfless service!

## The Lord of the Rings

by Jojo Odina

Come to think of it, the Christian calendar is arranged in such a way that the long break we have during the Christmas holiday season actually gives us the chance to prepare ourselves for the coming challenges of the New Year.

Over the holidays, my wife and I and our two youngest kids had a chance to engage in a movie marathon at home, to name a few: "Harry Potter" series, "Jason Bourne" series. After recently watching in the theatre the conclusion of "The Hobbits" based on the book written by JRR Tolkien, we had the urge to watch again the "Lord of the Rings".

The high fantasy story of the Lord of the Rings, the fight between Good and Evil, brings to the truth everyone's natural struggle – the fight against one's demon.

Some of us may have experienced tremendous struggles in life. The confusion of growing-up years. The hard drive to adulthood. The uncertainty of starting a family. And the disappointments of parenthood. All these unhappy memories may have deeply scarred our minds.

By way of self-preservation, we may have resorted to bad habits and wrong beliefs in order to survive the rigours of life. The moment we face a threat, we immediately push the button of self-preservation. Over time and repeated challenges, we cling to these bad habits and wrong beliefs which have already become so precious to us. We find strength in this "precious" as Gollum calls it.

As Sméagol was transformed to Gollum by the "precious" in the JRR Tolkien story, unknowingly we may have also been transformed by our very own "precious". It is easier to sweep things under the rug and forget our mistakes rather than be remorseful and help heal the hurts. It is more comfortable to cling to our "precious" than make amends.

As we usher in the New Year of 2015, may our GOD, the Creator of all, grant us wisdom and strength to win over our own personal demon – let go of our own "precious" and live our life in the manner of Frodo Baggins, or live our God given life as Gollum and forever be scorned.

*"A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."* Luke 6:45 (NIV)

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