

Liwanag - Tanglaw

International

Gift-Giving

We give each other presents at Christmas knowing little, if any, how the practice of gift-giving came about. Christians today say it's an expression of love for one another but some scholars believe the practice was borrowed from the ancient Romans.

Before Rome came to power around 200 BC, it first had to deal with a greater power, Carthage. (Carthage is located on the northern tip of Africa in Tunisia.) Rome eventually conquered Carthage but in one battle where Rome suffered a devastating defeat, Rome was prompted to institute an annual festival to boost its citizens' morale.

The festival was called "Saturnalia" in honor of the Roman god, Saturn. For one week, food and drink were abundant, schools and businesses closed, and social or-

der was reversed so that slaves became masters. It was held around Winter Solstice from December 17th to the 23rd. During the festival, citizens reveled and exchanged gifts. The gifts were simple and usually in the form of food or twigs taken from sacred groves.

With the formation of Christianity, Christmas, the day of Christ's birth, was observed. Since gift-giving was already a prevalent year-end tradition, Christians adopted it and gave one another gifts, too. Eventually, after so many centuries have passed, they



even came up with a figure to symbolize gift-giving—Santa Claus.

Santa Claus most likely originated from an actual bishop, Saint Nicholas, who was among 300 bishops that compiled the New Testament in the 4th Century. Saint Nicholas was known for his secret gift-giving—placing coins in the shoes of those who left them out for him, for example—and so became the inspiration for Santa Claus. He probably looked nothing like the Santa Claus we know today, usually depicted as being jolly and plump, having a long white beard, and wearing a red winter coat, but that's because, over time, other fictional gift-giving characters in Europe were combined with Saint Nicholas to form the Santa Claus we know today. These

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Altruism

Caring for one another, it is sometimes said, is what makes us human. Anything less and we might as well be animals.

But scientists are finding that altruism—the act of giving kindness to strangers—is present not only in humans but among animals as well.

There are monkeys, for ex-

ample, where if a predator is sighted, one monkey alerts the others by giving out alarm calls. The monkey puts itself in danger by drawing the predator's attention yet it tries to save others instead of simply fleeing.

In a colony of ants, each ant performs a specific task. Some ants acquire food while others become soldiers. Still others

serve only the Queen. An individual ant does not look after itself but works for the colony's good.

A male baboon is intensely protective of an infant baboon even when the infant baboon is not his own.

Wolves share the kill with other wolves that were not

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East Coast

Next Sesyon:

**December 24 –
Saturday, 1:00 p.m.**

Pagdiriwang ng pag-silang sa laman ng Jesus, ang Kristo, at pag-gunita sa pag-alis sa laman o pag-silang sa mundo ng Espiritu ng Gran Supermo.

Gaganapin sa tahanan nina Bro. Regie at Sis. Lina Lopez.

160-15 12th Avenue,
Whitestone, NY 11357
Tel. (718) 746-3123

West Coast:

Maaring tumawag kina:

- Bro. Louie & family:
(619) 264-4251
- Sis. Fia Zabat Swartz:
(619) 656-3138
- Sis. Amor &
Bro. Salvador Pia:
(619) *82-656-0325,
or Fax (619) 421-5240.

A Moment of Silence**Bro. Luceo Zabat**

Bro. Luceo Zabat, “Manong Lucing” to family, was the second of seven children of Bro. Viteotope (Tio Toping) Zabat, brother of Dr. Vicente Zabat, and Tia Rosy.

Manong Lucing became “padre de familia” to the clan since Tio Toping died. He was single but did not live like a typical bachelor. Instead, he took his brothers and their families under his wing and raised and provided for them.

Manong Lucing was and always will be regarded highly and deeply as being one who knew the meaning of self-sacrifice.

Manong Lucing passed away on November 20, 2011. He was 69.

Sis. Madrelia Jacinto Diego

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of one of our well-respected and beloved members from Caloocan and Templo Sol, Sis. Madrelia Jacinto Diego of Gapan, Nueva Ecija. She was the wife of Bro. Peladio (Tio Adio) Diego, who passed away years ago. She was the mother of the late Bro. Verceo, Sis. Lulu Chua, Sis. Lucita Camposagrado, Sis. Isabelita Perez, and Bro. Peladio (Boy) Diego, Jr. Sis. Madrelia passed away on September 5, 2011. She was 92.

Coming Sesyons**Marso 3–Sabado.**

Pag-diriwang at pag-galaala sa pag-silang sa laman ng KGG na Gran Supermo, Don Casimiro Peña. Maaaring tumawag kay Bro. Lito Santos para sa lugar at oras: (304) 267-7248.

Abril 28–Sabado.

Ang pagkapako (pagkamatay) ng Jesus, ang Kristo. Gaganapin ito sa tahanan ni Sis. Dulcinea Batao sa 196 Plainfield Ave, Jersey City, NJ 07306.

This issue's contributor

Sis. Grace Zabat

This issue is also available at:

<http://www.billycarpio.com/LTI/newsletters/1112.pdf>

Congratulations...

...to **Bro. Cody Carpio** on his graduation from Pine Bush High School in Pine Bush, New York. He is now enrolled at Orange County Community College for an eventual degree in Computer Graphics and Design. Bro. Cody is the son of Bro. Virgelio and Sis. Vi Carpio.

...to **Bro. Meidine Figueras** on his graduation from Ferrish High School in Jersey City, New Jersey. He is taking business courses at Rutgers University in Newark, NJ with plans to eventually take up Aerospace Engineering. Bro. Meidine is the son of Bro. Manuel and Sis. Neadina Figueras.

Gift-Giving

other European fictional characters included the English “Father Christmas” and the Germanic god, Odin.

Nowadays, there are some who say that Santa Claus has become more the central figure of Christmas instead of Jesus. The season has become commercialized because everyone goes shopping for presents with hardly a thought about the Christ Child.

But that may simply be a sign of the times. Just as the early Christians adopted the Roman practice of gift-giving and made it their own, today’s commercially-driven world with its abundance of goods might naturally lend itself to gift-giving around Christmastime.

...to **Bro. Joseph Roman** for completing his B.S. degree in Mathematics at Kean University in Union, New Jersey. He is now pursuing his master’s degree in math. Bro. Joseph is the son of Bro. Luzminio and Sis. Dena Roman.

...to **Sis. Geri Silverio** on her graduation from the College of Mount Saint Vincent in Riverdale, New York. She holds a B.A. degree in Communication. She is presently a dental assistant working towards obtaining her dental X-ray license. Sis. Geri is the daughter of Bro. Vid and Sis. Beth Silverio.

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Although moderation may still be needed such that we don’t go overboard with giving each other lavish presents, with no one asking and everyone giving at around the time Jesus was born, we might hardly need do anything more in keeping the spirit in Christmas.

References:

- “Christmas.” 2011. *The History Channel website*. Nov 21 2011, 4:09 <<http://www.history.com/topics/christmas>>.
- “Gift Giving Tradition.” *Essortment Articles: Free Online Articles on Health, Science, Education & More...* Web. 21 Nov. 2011. <<http://www.essortment.com/gift-giving-tradition-42680.html>>.

The Newsletter is hungry for your contributions!

Essays, poems, photos of your garden or other peaceful place especially those that touch on spirituality are welcome. Announcements of birth, death, wedding, education, and others are welcome, too.

Please send them to:

- Bro. Billy Carpio billy@billycarpio.com
- Sis. Gwen Ciego gwenciego@yahoo.com
- Sis. Fiely Novilla fielynovilla@gmail.com
- Sis. Fiel Zabat fielzabat@netzero.net

We look forward to hearing from you!



Bro. Lito and Sis. Grace Santos' garden in Martinsburg, West Virginia.

Overheard...

An Invisible Guide

By Bro. Vid Silverio

With the help of my aunt, Ate Celia, who was already in the U.S. at the time, I was able to come to America. But even before I left the Philippines, I always felt that I was receiving help from another source, that someone unseen was guiding me.

On the day of my visa application, I had one of my sisters go to the US embassy in Manila early in the morning so that she can stand in line for me. I was coming from Laguna by bus where I ran a furniture and upholstery business and I didn't know what time I would make it.

When I arrived at the embassy I took my sister's place and stood in line. While standing there I watched applicants walk out of the embassy after, many looking dejected, some in tears, apparently after their U.S. entry visa applications were denied.

When my turn came, a consul behind a glass window motioned me to come forward. I walked toward him and—feeling Lola's presence—I felt calm. Without so much as a cross-examination, my request for a U.S. visa was immediately granted.

I packed two suits and a few long-sleeved shirts for the trip. But I didn't have a jacket on when I boarded the plane. When I arrived in Seattle, I was separated by immigration officials from the other passengers.

"Lola, tulong," ("Lola, help,") were the words that went through my mind.

The first question that the immigration officer asked was why I didn't have a jacket on. "It will soon be winter," she added.

I said that I was on a business trip and did not intend to stay long. Friends will lend me a jacket since I won't need it

when I returned to the Philippines. I was calm when I said this, in the same way that I was calm during the interview at the U.S. embassy in Manila. I felt that someone, perhaps my unseen guide, was telling me what questions will be asked.

A second immigration officer then came and asked me the birth dates of my children. I saw the other immigration officer look at her computer seemingly to find the answers. I was poor with dates and although I knew the months and days of my children's birth dates, I was not certain about the years. I knew I would mess up my answers.

So I told the immigration officer about my uncertainty and added, "But I can tell you the days of the week they were born."

He said, "How can you tell us the day of the week when you do not know the exact year?"

I ignored this question and simply recited the names and days of the week my children were born—all four of them.

As I was giving my answers I glanced at the lady in front of the computer. She looked surprised perhaps because my answers were all correct. Little did she know that in our church, the names given to us begin with the first letter of the day of the week we were born. So those born on Monday which is "Lunes" in Spanish would have a name beginning with "L", those born on Tuesday which is "Martes"

in Spanish would have a name beginning with "M", and so on.

Having passed this test, they then inspected my luggage. One immigration officer saw Lola's picture.

"Who is she?" she asked.

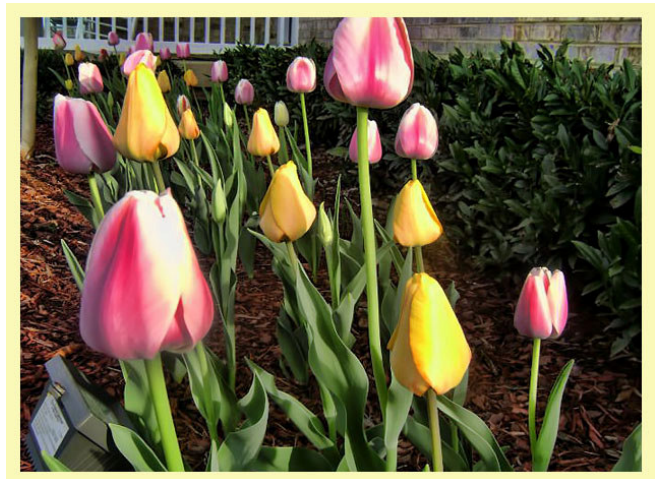
"My grandmother," I said.

They let me through.

Because of the stop at immigration, I missed my connecting flight. But I was not concerned. Before my turn at immigration, two passengers ahead of me—a minister and a Chinese man—were denied entry.

The same could easily have been my fate. I could have been sent back to the Philippines and never have set foot in America.

But that did not happen. And, somehow, I knew. I felt Lola was with me then, as I do now. I am in America, the land of many a childhood dream, and I feel blessed that Lola, along with her teachings and practices—our invisible guide if you will—will always be with me to instill calm wherever I may go especially at times when my spirit needs it the most.



Sis. Imelda Lacson's garden in Culpeper, Virginia.

Beauty Surrounds Us in Nature

By Sis. Videlfia P. Carpio

The butterfly
fluttering in the air
dancing
to a cheerful song.

The noble frog
gleaming emerald
in the radiant sun,
staring across
the lake
into an endless horizon.

Can you hear the wind
whisper between the trees?
Or the waterfalls trickling
beneath the arching bridge?

Have you noticed above
the white swirls painted
on light blue canvas
blending with the fiery orange
lining the horizon?

Then,
of course,
there is the sun.
Its golden light
slowly fading
behind the sloping hills
as it makes way
for the majestic moon.

There is much to enjoy
in Nature.

May each of us
in our lifetimes
cherish such beauty.

What better way
to express gratitude
than to admire that
which is given
so generously.



Photo by Sis. Vi P. Carpio

Altruism

present in the attack, and vampire bats regurgitate blood to share with other bats that were unable to find a meal.

Caterpillars taste awful. A bird would take one chomp out of one caterpillar, decide it doesn't taste good, and fly away to find other prey. A caterpillar's body evolved to acquire an unpalatable taste for this particular reason—so that birds would not eat caterpillars. But what of the lone caterpillar that the bird took a sample from? Surely one bite would kill it. The scientific consensus today is that the well-known adage, "survival of the fittest", applies not only in individuals but in groups as well. Through the process of evolution, a caterpillar would sacrifice its own body in order for the group to survive. From the perspective of the individual, this would be a noble act of altruism.

These are just some examples of altruism in the wild. From whales to gazelles to amoebas, kindness to strangers seems to be the norm rather than the exception. Studies are being done and theories abound as to why animals look after fellow animals.

One theory talks about kin. An animal will protect a family member to ensure the family's survival. The cell, which is the basic building block of life, is programmed to replicate. Since all living things are made up of cells, it follows then that each organism will want to propagate its kind. An animal protecting a family member is merely enforcing one of nature's laws: reproduction.

Another theory talks about genes. Genes of one living thing may somehow be able to detect the presence of similar genes in another living thing. As with the theory about cells and family, an animal may be driven by its genes to allow other animals having similar genes—even those from different species—to survive in order to ensure the gene's survival.

A third theory called "group theory" says altruism evolved when animals began cooperating to survive. Although the phrase, "survival of the fittest", is often used to refer to an individual organism's fitness to survive—being able to outrun a predator or sneak behind a prey undetected, for example—the phrase may also be used to refer to a group's fitness to survive. A monkey at the rear of a tribe, for example, would engage an attacking predator in battle, in effect sacrific-

ing itself, so that others may flee to safety. As with the caterpillar mentioned earlier, an animal might sacrifice itself for the group to survive.

Among early humans, cooperation may have been key to our survival. Our bipedalism—the condition of using two feet for walking—is actually a disadvantage for our species. With two feet, we cannot outrun a predator or climb trees fast enough. Standing on two feet also made the human birth canal narrower which meant that human babies will have to be born prematurely in order to pass through. Being born prematurely, a long time of nursing is required before the human infant can function on its own. In short, humans are easy prey for lions, tigers, snakes, bears, gorillas, and just about every predator out there. To survive, our ancestors must have cooperated.

There are other theories but no single theory can explain all forms of altruism found in Nature. The theories suggest, however, that altruism—or kindness to strangers—might have evolved naturally without the participants being conscious about it.

So where does that leave us when we tell ourselves that in order to progress spiritually we must learn compassion? Nature through evolution by natural selection seems to force us into acquiring our moral sense without us even trying since we, like all the animals around us, need to survive.

The answer to that question may be found within ourselves. Lest we forget, we are also capable of malice, contempt, cruelty, and remorse—traits that animals are not known to harbor. Nature may lead the way and kindness may or may not need to be conscious acts but what we choose to do with our lives is up to us. Kindness to others may not be what sets us apart from animals, but the freedom to choose between right and wrong—and choose incorrectly at times at that—may in the end be what defines us as being human.

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