

Liwanag - Tanglaw

International



Celebrating Christmas

Christmas was not always celebrated in history. In fact, there were times when Christmas was outlawed. To understand why, we would need to go back to ancient times, long before Jesus was born.

The end of the year was always a dangerous time for ancient peoples. Their survival depended on crops harvested in the summer. When summer did not produce enough food as when a drought occurred, people did not last the winter and died.

With the cold months ahead, the ancient peoples drew courage from the fact that come Winter Solstice—the shortest day of the year falling on December 21st or 22nd—the days will start getting longer and the nights shorter. From about eight hours of daylight in England, for example, daytime will lengthen to sixteen hours by summer—twice the amount

of sunlight. Winter Solstice—the astronomical event caused by the earth's tilt on its axis as it orbits around the sun—brought promise to ancient peoples worldwide that the coming year will not bring starvation and death but instead be prosperous.

With guarded optimism, the ancient peoples celebrated. So that cattle will not be fed during the winter, they were slaughtered. People feasted on the meat for several days. Merrymaking became the



Gumamela (hibiscus) flower in Sis. Aleli V. Carpio's garden in Dasmariñas, Cavite.
Photo by Bro. Allan Crisostomo

order of the day and fun, new traditions were invented. Gifts were exchanged, homes were decorated, and gods were honored. The jolly atmosphere, they hoped, will please the gods that they will be provided with bountiful harvests next planting season. In time, however, the festivities took a turn for mischief and drinking and gambling became common.

It was during this time of year that Jesus was born.

In the early days of Christianity, the Christians did not participate in the revelry. Winter Solstice was a pagan tradition that had nothing to do with their religion. Being Jewish in origin, early Christianity placed emphasis on Easter and not the birth of Christ.

Over time, however, the Christians embraced the merrymaking. After evening mass on the night of Christ's birth

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**East Coast
Next Sesyon:**

**December 22 –
Saturday**

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.

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Belief's Immensity

By Bro. Tom Gale

As a six or seven year-old in 1939/40 I lived in Portland, Oregon on a block that confined my activities. I wanted more freedom. I loved to visit cousins who lived in Hillsboro, a small town known for its walnut groves and apple orchards. I visited often. Hillsboro was only an hour's drive west of Portland. I loved to play with the cousins in a

nearby apple orchard. It had a meadow with a railroad track running through a corner of the orchard below the apple trees. That spot of track was at the culmination of long slopes on either side. Trains chugged loudly and slowly up one slope in the morning, the other in the afternoon. Men would jump from boxcars to encamp for the night in the meadow.

The men would have packs on their backs and/or bags in their hands. My aunt would escort us to the orchard to be sure the men had decamped on the morning trains. She would leave us and come to collect us from the orchard when she heard the first afternoon train whistle.

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A Moment of Silence

Sis. Vicelia Aguilar, Dakilang Ina

Ni Sis. Lhea Escover

Si Sis. Vicelia Geronimo Aguilar, o "Nanay Celiang" sa kamag-anakan, ay pumanaw noong ika-18 ng Oktubre, 2012 sa Sabang, Dasmariñas, Cavite. Siya ay walumpu't limang (85) taong gulang. Ipinanganak siya noong ika-27 ng Mayo 1927 at siya ay inihatid sa kanyang huling hantungan noong ika-23 ng Oktubre, 2012.

Si Nanay Celiang ay isa sa mga nakatatandang kaanib. Anak siya nina Ceverina De Guzman at Marcos Geronimo, kapuwa matatandang kaanib ng kapisanan.

Si Nanay Celiang ang nagmulat sa kanyang apat na supling at nag-akay sa kanila sa ating katuruan. Ang kanyang apat na anak naman ang siyang nag-akay sa aming kanyang mga apo.

Dahil maaga siyang nahihalay sa kaniyang naging kabiyak, si Bro. Zeidife Aguilar, mag-isa niyang itinaguyod ang kanyang apat na anak. Siya din ang aming naging gabay na kanyang mga apo sa aming paglaki—iniruga niya kaming tulad ng kanyang mga anak. Si Nanay Celiang ay isang dakilang ina.

Ang apat na anak ni Nanay Celiang ay sina Sis. Jardea "Dayang" Aguilar-Kalugdan, Sis. Miafelia "Fely" Aguilar-Cañares, Sis. Merelia "May" Aguilar-Escover, at Bro. Magneo "Agneng" Aguilar. Kasalukuyan silang mga kaanib na naninirahan sa ibang bansa.

Bagama't makikilala siya sa pagiging tahas sa pagsalita, ito ay kaparaanan lamang upang maihayag niya ang kanyang pagmamahal sa bawat isa sa amin at sa lahat ng taong nakapaligid sa kanya.

Sa aking alaala ay madalas niyang sabihin sa aming kanyang mga apo na maging mabuti kami sa aming kapwa, huwag mag-aagrabyado ng iba, at sa pagsapit ng Linggo ay ilaan ang aming sarili sa pagpunta sa Templo.

Iyan po ay ilan lamang sa kanyang mga pangaral at tagubilin sa amin.

Hindi ka namin malilimutan, Nanay Celiang. Maraming salamat po sa pagmamahal at pag-aaruga ninyo sa amin at sa lahat ng mga pangaral na iniiwan niyo sa amin. Mamahalin po namin kayo hangang sa muli nating pagkikita.—Sis. Lhea Escover

Have a Pleasant Journey, Sis. Carmen Legarda-Nibungco

Sis. Carmen Nibungco passed away last June 25th at 4 PM Manila time at the Heart Center in Manila. Sis. Carmen faithfully attended all sessions in the East Coast—New York, New Jersey, Virginia, and West Virginia during earlier times—always at Bro. Jimmy's side before the illness which prompted them to return to Manila. Most remembered will be her wit, pleasant disposition, and lovely smile.

Sis. Carmen is survived by her spouse, Bro. Jimmy Nibungco, and the Legarda family (Sis. Carmen's family).

Sis. Ellen Roman-Bunag

Sis. Ellen Roman Buñag passed away on November 23, 2012. She was the sister of Bro. Sixto, Bro. Luzminio, Sis. Grace, Sis. Gloria, and Bro. Mardy. She and her husband, Robert, attended last year's October sesyon in West Virginia where she entertained us with her singing and dancing with other members. She was the mother of Joel and Jonathan and beloved grandmother of two.

Bro. Alfonso Cantada

Bro. Alfonso Cantada, 99 years of age, passed away peacefully at his home in June, 2012. He is survived by his children: Bro. Efren Cantada, Bro. Esme Cantada, Sis. Levy Kamia, Sis. Lolita Diana, Sis. Ester Reeves, Bro. Francis Cantada, Bro. Eddie Cantada, and Bro. Totie Cantada.

Belief's Immensity

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One day a man jumped from the train with a cloth sack tied to the end of a stick slung over his shoulder. He was a character straight from illustrations in my story books. I stood in awe of the man as he walked up the meadow toward the apple trees. The man was tall and straight in easy motion. He did not seem to notice us until he reached for the high apples we could not harvest. With fluid motion the man picked the high, shiny apples and tossed them to us. My aunt snatched us away before I adjusted to the sight of the man.

My aunt filled us that night with the story of the Great Depression. We were in it and waiting to be out of it. Desperate men were searching for jobs that would get them out of it. She told us they might be dangerous or maybe they were not. She was certain they were desperate. That night, I dreamed the man as a noble figure walking out of the Depression into the world waiting. His smile grew against my aunt's story of human difficulty.

I have consistently dreamed the character for 70 years. He brings the dream in difficult times. I wake from the dream when the character walks through my dream scene and turns his smile on me. I lie in bed and let the unraveled world be contained in the cloth sack at the end of the stick slung over the shoulder of the character that originated in the precious storybooks of my childhood. What he carries in his sack I must deal with. In that his smile is upon me, I muster confidence.

In cross reference, I share my storybook character with cousins and friends who share with me their character of Jesus from the gospel stories. As teenagers, the sharing of particular character in stories was immense delight. The sharing was revealing of our characters. We shared epiphanies. As adults we cope with the

immensities of responsibility. Our characters are divided in divinity and humanity. I project the division of cellular epiphany (my cousins, friends, and I). We deal in our populations as adults. I respect the afterlife (divine) aspects of stories projected from live, coping infinities. I claim respect for my particular stories as a live, coping representative of humanity.

I believe immensity means no boundaries to belief. That is my core and my share of everyone's story. I stand on that particularly on mountain top outlooks with companions in their own stories enjoying the views of boundless feelings to our lives beside us.

This feeling, I believe, is beyond the boundary of prose. This poem I propose, a ten second rhetoric with ethos unbounded and (its sentimental couplet enclosed in alpha and omega rhyme) standing in pathos and logos:

The act humanity gives voice is
wail against its bonds.

Birth of life to dignity

Is certain resource filling life with
earth.

Bro. Tom Gale is a mathematician and retired civil rights advocate. He attends services at Cragmoor Stone Church in Cragmoor, NY. Bro. Tom lives atop the Shawangunk Ridge in the Town of Wawarsing, NY.



Lemongrass plant in Bro. Nel and Sis. Juvy Clemeña's garden in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Message on

The Widow's Offering

By Sis. Vi P. Carpio

As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 'Truly I tell you,' he said, 'this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gift out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty in all she had to live on.

Luke 21:1-4

The widow, in giving all that she had to help others, may not have anything left for her self. She may not know how to feed or fend for herself the following week. The wealthy people on the other hand after giving their gifts do not have anything to worry about. They still have their riches when they come home.

Although the wealthy and the poor are both good people in that both give to the temple, I find the widow and her total selflessness much more admirable.

But does that mean that we should follow the widow's example? Should we give all of our money to church? And what if you wanted to give but have no money? Surely there must be other ways of giving.

For example, we can do volunteer work at churches or homeless shelters. We can guide children by participating in their outdoor activities like sports. When we're feeling strong and energetic we might seek others who need cheering up. We can help an old woman carry her groceries. If we have a moment to spare—and who doesn't?—we can hold the door open for the person behind us.

Or, we can simply pray for the sick.

All these are good deeds. And good deeds do not require money.

I, myself, was a recipient of a good deed not too long ago.

One winter late in the day during a heavy snow storm, our son, Cody, and I went outside to shovel the snow from our driveway. We wanted to clear the driveway enough so that when Billy comes home, he can pull his car into our driveway safely.

But the snow was thick especially at our driveway's entrance where it was knee-deep. The snow was also packed. The municipal plow trucks that drove by pushed snow to the sidewalk which then blocked our driveway. It was impossible for me and Cody to clear our driveway in time if at all.

Then a commercial plow truck appeared. At first, the plow truck drove past our house. It then backed up and made a turn for our driveway. At first I thought the driver was just going to use our driveway to make a U-turn. But instead, he drove right through our driveway and plowed it clear of snow. After that he drove off and left.

I did not know the driver. He was a complete stranger to me. And Cody and I, I'm sure, were complete strangers to him.

I imagined he was probably driving around the neighborhood looking for customers. Homeowners will pay for his services during this heavy snowstorm. But since he did not have any calls at the

moment he drove past our house, and perhaps seeing that we and our shovels were no match for the heavy snow, he stopped and lent us a helping hand.

The plow truck's driver did not make any sacrifices. Plowing our driveway required a small effort on his part. But it saved us a lot of hardship. For that we are grateful.

In doing good deeds, we not only help others but we also inspire others to do the same. Before we know it, those that we help will "pay forward" the good deeds they receive and start helping others, too.

When Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you," many people wondered and even struggled to know what that meant. Maybe, when all of mankind is doing acts of kindness to one another—expressing love in other words—then we may know that heaven is indeed and always has been within us. We just have to let heaven happen here on Earth.



Bro. Jim and Sis. Fe Mamaril-Fauni's garden in Cypress, California.

Coming Sesyons

Marso 9–Sabado.

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

Abril.

Makipag-alam kay Bro. Lito Santos para sa lugar at oras: (304) 267-7248.

The Newsletter is hungry for your contributions!

Essays, poems, announcements (birth, death, wedding, educational attainments, etc.), and photos of your garden or places you frequent for reflection and meditation are welcome. Please send them to:

• Bro. Billy Carpio
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This issue's contributor:

- Sis. Grace Zabab

This issue is also available at:

<http://www.billycarpio.com/LTI>

ENVY

By Bro. Jose Y. Batao

Some people ask themselves and wonder
why they're poor
Why they are less smart and not that bright
at all;
In vain, a good answer others try to search
for
Why on earth they're ugly while others,
beautiful.

Others are tall or short, and some are fair
or dark
Some are young, some are old, and others
good or bad;
Others have gifts of tongue, and some are
just tongue-tied
Some are really honest, others an untrust-
worthy lot.

Trees have their own measures of growth,
as well as height
Animals, too, differ in their strengths and
might;
The fishes down the sea in different ways
thrive
And the birds in the sky all vary in their
flight.

It is pretty obvious that we're all different
Not any two of us have a similar fate;
If others are lucky, some are unfortunate
It is life's verity that you and I can't change.

If God so made the world with all things
similar
Biological balance would be farce exem-
plar;
The world would be clones-filled; life would
be so humdrum
Life's color would be naught, excitement
would be gone.

God so designed the world that creatures
are unlike
This we should all accept since we believe
He's just;
In His Grand Plan all fit as its essential parts
To make sure that there is continuum in this
life.

But we should guard against comparing
ourselves
With the rest of the world in one or other
terms;
If we do we'll end up utterly disgusted
For there will always be better men in our
midst.

Suffice it to know that in God's own Grand
Design
We have our own niche and a Life Eternal;
If we toil with faith in Spirit Divine
Our reward we shall reap in God's ap-
pointed time.

Celebrating Christmas

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which later came to be called “Christmas”, the Christians celebrated. They partied. They frolicked. Perhaps they gambled and drank, too. With no official directive from the Church, the carnival-like atmosphere became a Christian tradition, too.

This went on for centuries until in 17th Century England when the ruling Puritans, those who believed that worship should be done in simplicity, opposed the immorality of the celebrations and abolished Christmas. Later, the Pilgrims who were even more orthodox in their belief of simple worship, outlawed Christmas when they immigrated to Boston in the New World. Anyone seen exhibiting the Christmas Spirit was fined.

When America gained independence in the 18th Century, anything British started to lose favor. The Americans wanted their own identity. Being heavily imbued with British traditions, Christmas was not made a public holiday in America until 1870, nearly 100 years after independence.

Even then, the Americans did not go out on the streets to celebrate. They instead turned to their homes and transformed Christmas from what was once an occasion for kings and queens to host lavish parties into a quiet, family-centric affair. Presents were exchanged among family members, children were rewarded by Santa, and songs of being or away from home became popular. This family-centered celebration of Christmas spread throughout the world where even non-Christians today are galvanized into awaiting the com-

ing of Christmas with great anticipation.

Today, because we shop for presents, children expect toys from Santa, and fresh money is printed as if to underscore the season's materialistic bent, some say that Christmas has become commercialized. Lost is the meaning of Christmas. The birth of Jesus is forgotten.

Looking back in history, however, such concern is nothing new. Christmas is a joyous occasion and Christians celebrated in accordance with the times holding nothing back. Nevertheless, excessive merrymaking had on occasion been met with extreme measures.

From ancient to present times, celebrating Christmas has gone through iterations the last of which we may yet see. Indeed had it not been for Winter Solstice, we may not be giving Christmas much thought at all. Our religious endeavors would center on Easter and Christmas may well be a happy but sacred and solemn event.

But it happened that Christmas is celebrated today and—thanks to the Winter Solstice—in a big way at that. Over the years it acquired a rich set of traditions the majority of which—Santa Claus, reindeers, mistletoes, Christmas Trees, etc.—have nothing to do with the birth of Jesus. The traditions are so far-removed that some today might clamor for yet another change to a Christmas that is more spiritual in nature.

Perhaps. But one thing is sure. Year after year when we receive the love we give on Christmas Day, through

gift-giving or otherwise—indeed when we use the occasion to forget past grievances and turn old enemies into brothers and sisters once again—we feel enthralled by the experience that we long for a time when every day would be like Christmas Day. Yet year after year, despite the benevolence from our hearts, come Christmas Day, this somehow remains a wish.

Maybe then the change that is needed is not on how we celebrate Christmas. Rather, the change is for us to continually remember this wish and conduct ourselves accordingly so that year after year we may show love for others as Jesus taught, and generate peace and harmony throughout the world, not just on this one particular day, but day after day through the remainder of the year.

From the Newsletter staff—“*A blessed Christmas to all and a New Year filled with love!*”

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Bro. Jim and Sis. Fe Mamaril-Fauni's garden in Cypress, California.