



January 2009

願天主聖三生活在我們和眾人心中

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A Word from the Provincial

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

“Merry Christmas” is a deceptively easy greeting. Yet if it is true that the second person of the trinity, the Divine Word, became one of us, then the whole of human history has changed. All Christians, but especially we as missionaries of the Divine Word, have both the privilege and the burden of sharing the good news of God’s presence among us. As members of the China Province we are involved in all aspects of the mission of the Church in greater China—direct evangelization, dialogue with believers of the religious and secular traditions of China, pastoral work, social work and education from kindergarten to university. The first thing I noticed when becoming provincial was the wide variety of ways the members of our province witness to the Word. Each of us brings our own strengths, and of course limitations, to this task. It is the responsibility of each individual, and even more so superiors, to maximize those strengths and help coordinate efforts so that our work as a community is really more than simply the sum of the individual parts.

During these first six months as provincial, I am gradually learning how to effectively deal with the many routine administrative tasks of province administration. I have had the opportunity to visit, even if briefly, the various regions of our large and varied province. Especially important have been visits to the formation communities in each district. This is our future. I hope in the New Year to have the opportunity to visit each of our places of work and understand better each individual’s unique way of witnessing to the Word. As witnesses to the Word, we must ourselves be believers in the Word and doers of the Word. Without a life of prayer our witness to the Word will be hollow. The Eucharist is central. If the Eucharist is what we believe it



to be, the presence of God in Word and Sacrament among us; then, the Eucharist has to be the mainstay in our lives as Divine Word Missionaries. In Catholic Christianity there are a wide variety of ways of prayer and devotional practices. This variety will be reflected in the lives of our SVD confreres of different ages, backgrounds and temperaments. But whatever our particular style, a life of prayer, individually, as a religious community and as members of the larger Christian community has to be central to our lives.

May the darkness of sin and the night of unbelief vanish before the light of the Word and the Spirit of grace; and may the heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all.

Frank Budenholzer SVD

When *Christmas* Comes Again

Lorz Estomo SVD

Christmas is a very natural celebration for all of us in the Philippines. There is a very special atmosphere this season. And, literally, out of the narrative story from the Bible, especially Luke's version, comes many stories of Christmas. These stories include shopping, gift giving, singing carols, novena masses called "Simbang Gabi," family reunions, reconciliations, so on and so forth. As I belong to this culture, I understand that Christmas is a season wherein love, in its redemptive sense or in the sense of "the Word was made Flesh," becomes real. I call this "Christmas love." Looking back, Christmas love is manifested through three major aspects: enduring piety, family/relationships, and familiar places. These three factors make Christmas special for me.

Nevertheless, the purpose of writing this short essay is neither to talk of my past Christmases, nor compare my recent Christmases with the old. This is my second Christmas in Taiwan. My goal is to critically explore what has become of my Christmas when all the three elements are no longer there as they used to be, or are at a distance of two hours away by plane. I would like to share my experience of Christmas in a foreign land.

Honestly, I missed home, friends, and the usual places where I once was. There was a longing to return to the past wherein comfort and familiarity were abundant. But to be fair, the first year here was wonderful too. Christmas here is cooler; the temperature can go down to 12 degrees Celsius. And seeing and hearing new things fascinates or even entertains me. The second year, this year of 2008, was different. The site of the 101 building flowering with fireworks during the New Year no longer sustained my great desire for the Christmas love I mentioned above. What followed was a strong restlessness that the mind even now fails to understand, but my heart can only summarize as sadness.



Fr. Lorz with his flock

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Trying to weigh and ponder the three elements, I could hardly do anything about family/relationships and familiar places. These things I could not revive except by going home. I almost thought I was without “Christmas love.” But not when it dawned on me that one thing remained: piety. I am surprised that, indeed, this could not be taken away from me.

To cite an example, I was blessed to celebrate

In a bird’s eye view, is it not that Christmas is about a Jesus who brings hope and salvation? When hope is a hard thing to recall, Christmas always remains an inspiration. This reminds me of the words of Fr. Antonio Pernia SVD, the superior general, in his 2008 Christmas message: “And yet Christmas has never

That is why Christmas is celebrated every year. For Christmas is a feast which never becomes stale, never grows old, never fades. It contains a truth which touches the depths of our life, the essence of our being, the foundations of our history. Fr. A. Pernia SVD

Vigil Masses with the migrants, my fellow Filipinos, and it was gratifying. Thanks to them, I realized that I am better off because Christmas is tougher for them when all the three elements mentioned are not the only ones in dire absence. Not only have the workers left home, but some have even lost work. Recently, hundreds of workers have been sent home because of the present global economic crisis.

Ironically, being aware of the flight of the migrants makes me feel blessed that Christmas is still here, despite its incompleteness. The manger is an incompleteness in itself because of the hardships the Holy Family experienced. However, the manger is also complete because of the savior in our midst. Thus the site of the manger spells hope. Nevertheless, while in the pulpit addressing the migrant workers, and while looking at their facial expressions, the message of hope has been a struggle not only to convey to them, but also even within myself. As I experienced Christmas away from home, I too needed the gift of Christmas hope.

lost its charm. The gospel story continues to warm our hearts. The narrative of that night in Bethlehem does not cease to make us marvel even now.” It seems that I have to shift my mind a bit and say, “Here in Taiwan, Christmas is real!”

I am always mystified by the wonders of Christmas. And I also wonder how my other 12 Yobel-SVD-young-priest-classmates experienced Christmas who, like me, are also assigned somewhere in different parts of the globe. For me here in Taiwan, I tried to be hopeful about establishing Christmas love once more.

As a conclusion, in a foreign land Christmas may appear to be incomplete, but definitely it is never absent.

Taiwan NEWS

Celebration, Profession, Mission

On the occasion of the birth of Mary, Father Provincial Francis Budenholzer SVD celebrated the Eucharist in Tapinglin Parish. The Mass began at 5:30 PM, with about 20 SVD priests and 150 people from the Holy Spirit Sisters, the Holy Family Sisters and parishioners from Tapinglin, Shulin and Linkou and other friends from many places. A dinner at the One World Center followed the ceremony.

At the mass Father Provincial also received the profession of vows of Frater Liu Zheng-yan (Peter), and the renewed vows of Bro. Ye, Rong-zhe (Bobby), Frater Chen, Hong-sheng (Peter), Frater Lin Ruo-wang (John) and Frater Trn Nhat Huu (Dominic).

Frater Peter Liu was born in Miaoli, Hsinchu Diocese Taiwan. He graduated from the Fu Jen Theologate in 2007, and finished his novitiate year on September 8 of this year at Shulin Parish.

January 10 2009.

Rev. Anthony Trong Quang Phan SVD was ordained to the priesthood by the Most Rev. Archbishop of Taipei, John Hung.

Fr. Anthony was born in Vietnam. He joined the SVD in 1994 and professed his first vows in the year 2000. In 2002, he joined the Taiwan OTP and continued his theological studies. In July 5, 2008 Anthony was ordained to the Diaconate. Congratulations!



Rev. Fr. Anthony Trong Quang Phan SVD

As witnesses to the Word, we must ourselves be believers in the Word and doers of the Word. Without a life of prayer our witness to the Word will be hollow. Fr. Frank Budenholzer SVD