

Month of December

WORD: *Advent assures us that Christ dwells in us.*

READINGS

- Dec 2** Is 2:1-5
 Ps 122:1-9/
 Rm 13:11-14
 Mt 24:37-44
- Dec 9** Is 11:1-10
 Ps 72:1-2,7-8,12-13,17
 Rm 15:4-9
 Mt 3:1-12
- Dec 16** Is 35:1-6a,10
 Ps 146:6-10
 Jm 5:7-10
 Mt 11:2-11
- Dec 23** Is 7:10-14
 Ps 24:1-6
 Rm 1:1-7
 Mt 1:18-24
- Dec 30** Sr 3:2-6,12-14
 Ps 125:1-5
 Col 3:12-21
 Mt 2:13-15,19-23

DIRECTIONS (BLD GLOBAL):

1. *Reconcile with God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, that you can be nourished by His Body & Blood in the Eucharist.*
2. *Wait & listen to God, persevere and trust in prayer.*
3. *Seek & live by the word of God that you may have peace within you & with one another.*

PROPHECIES (BLD GLOBAL):

1. *Stay awake and be vigilant for I will come to save you. Therefore, rejoice & be glad.*
2. *Prepare your hearts to do my work that I may come.*

ORDER (BLD GLOBAL):

“Stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come” (Matthew 24:42)

REFLECTION FOR DECEMBER

The virtue of Advent is hope. Charles Peguy, a poet who died in the First World War, wrote that faith is strong and powerful, motivating people to suffer and to die rather than abandon God and his Church. He wrote that charity is beautiful and warm, moves people to do heroic things out of love for God and his people. But hope in most of us, he felt, is still in its infancy. This Advent is the season for the growth of hope in each one of us.

St Paul tells us that *“hope is not hope when its object is seen. We hope for what we do not see”* (Romans 8:24). And yet this virtue is not blind. It is not without foundation. Hope looks to the future but always with an eye on the past. Our hope for what God will do for us is based on what God has done for us, hence the Word received by the Executive Council of Servant Leaders while waiting on the Lord is - **Advent assures us that Christ dwells in us.** It is our prayer then, for each disciple of the Community, that this Word will be the basis of our hope, as we look forward to the second coming of Christ, to that great day when he will right all wrongs and when he will establish everywhere and for all time his kingdom of justice, love and peace. *“According to God’s promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells”* (2 Pet 3:13). The biblical message is - what God has done is what God will do. We can trust God. He is consistent. The only surprise will be, not that God has abandoned His loving way of dealing with His people, but that He will surpass in the future all that He has done in the past.

As we look forward to the second coming of the Lord in glory, we always look back to His first coming among us at His birth in Bethlehem. We acknowledge that *“in times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through his Son”* (Hebrews 1:1). At the same time, God gave the ECSL this Order for the BLD Community: *“Stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come”* (Matthew 24:42).

Therefore, on one hand, the faithful look back, reflect upon, and are encouraged to celebrate the anniversary of the Lord’s first coming into this world. We ponder again the great mystery of the incarnation when our Lord humbled Himself, was born of a virgin, and entered into our time and space to free us from sin. Advent admonishes us specifically:

- To prepare ourselves to be worthy to celebrate the anniversary of the Lord’s coming into the world as the incarnate God of Love,
 - To make our souls fitting abodes for the Redeemer coming to us in Holy Communion and through grace, and
- To make ourselves ready for His final coming as our Judge, upon our death and at the end of the world.

As a way of preparing the BLD Community to mark the Advent of our Lord, the ECSL proposes the following Themes and Promises to guide us, in addition to the weekly exhortations of our Church, as we partake of the Eucharistic Celebration in our respective parishes this month:

Dec 2 (Week 1) Theme: **Christ is in us when we walk in His light [Hope].**
 Promise: *“Come let us climb the Lord’s mountain that he may instruct us in his ways and we walk in his paths”* (Isa 2:3). *Continued in page 3...*



BLD Community Welcomes M.E. #7

With joyous and open hearts, the BLD Phoenix community welcomes ME #7 graduates and their families. The encounter was held on Nov. 9-11, 2007 at the Living Waters Retreat Center in Cornville, Arizona.

The Pastoral Team was composed of Fr. Pete Literal as the Spiritual Director. BLD Phoenix is blessed to have emerged another home-grown sharer couple in Joseph and Milrose Kodumal. Joseph & Milrose, who were from BLD Long Island, moved to the Valley of the Sun three years ago. Another couple sharer from Phoenix, Jess & Ning Laforteza, completed the Pastoral Team.

The ME #7 graduates are: Mike & Villa Sandstedt, Ariel & Judy Bautista, Rollie & Justice Tabora, Ramon & Helen Gutierrez, Lito & Norma Caguioa, Cal & Amor Obispo, Pino & Edith Ceniza, Tony & Venus Fuentes, and Joel & Chay Maravillas.

We hope and pray that the ME #7 class will be like the trees planted near stream of living water, that they will yield their fruit in season. Their



leaves will never wither and whatever they do will prosper all for the glory of God. Thank you very much to the sponsoring class ME #6, shepherds, auxies, friends & families for their prayers and for unselfishly giving their time, talent and treasure to make this weekend another victory for the Lord. To God be the Glory for the things He had wonderfully and powerfully done for us!

DIP Shepherds Message: **Uncertainty or Peace? - A Time for Watching and Waiting**

“So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come (Mt 24:44).”

We just celebrated the First Sunday of Advent and we soon realize that Christmas is but a few weeks away. We are fast approaching the end of the 2007 calendar year and yet we are also beginning the new Liturgical Year. The weather is getting colder as the onset of winter is upon us and yet we can also look forward to what the coming spring will bring us. It seems that we are always in a state of change - - a time for watching and waiting.

Our Lord reminds us to always be ready and prepared. We can, however, also apply His exhortation to our beloved BLD community. As members of God’s community, are we ready to follow Him wherever He will take us? Are we prepared to accept the tasks and challenges that He will give us? Are we willing to be used by Him as His hands and His feet as we carry His message of love to others?

Only by God’s grace and our cooperation with His plans for us are we able to accomplish anything for His kingdom. He has called each one of us to the BLD Phoenix community for a purpose. He has rescued us from our fears and anxieties and has straightened out and re-ordered our crooked paths. He is slowly clearing the way for this community to be able to bear much fruit. Despite the past periods of uncertainty and chaos in our community affairs, He has now brought peace and stability. Although He has led us to achieve much in the past two years, He is no way done with us and we have a lot more to learn and to carry out. We simply need to obey Him in faith. We need to trust that He can use our frail and fallen natures and our imperfect community for something greater than all of us put together.

With humble and servant hearts, let us get ready, people! Let us accept His challenge to **“be prepared.”** Jesus is coming! May you and your families have a Blessed and Merry Christmas and a Joyous and Exciting New Year!

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel!”

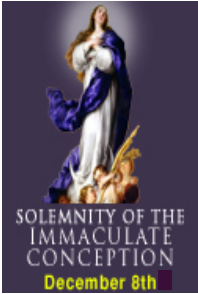
BLD Phoenix Year-End Reflections...The Lord has blessed this community in so many ways this year. The *BLD Golf Tournament* that started in 2006 made its way to a second time around in 2007- making this officially an annual event . This year was joyously opened with a good round of golf in January and followed with the *6th Marriage Encounter* in February. ME 6 also came with a bonus: blessing the community its 1st home-grown ME couple sharers. As a community, we strive as well to bring the youth into the light of Christ as they are the future of the Church. The *Mark 10 Ministry* was established. The *3rd Youth Encounter* was held in May with the *2nd Youth Life in the Spirit Seminar* following in July. The YLSS brought about home-grown youth sharers as well. In August, the *2nd Solo Parents Encounter* materialized. Totally ignoring the scorching Arizona heat, the community fully welcomed the fire enkindled by the Holy Spirit on September by holding its *5th Life in the Spirit Seminar*. A first-time event for the community then occurred in October: the *Aspirants’ Retreat*. “*In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures*” Jm 1:18. Discipling is now underway. God’s vineyard here on earth truly needs more workers and by God’s grace, more workers were sent. In God’s mighty power, BLD Phoenix for the first time held two Marriage Encounters in the same year and testifying to the works of God in this day of age, this also brought about a 2nd home-grown ME couple sharer. *ME #7* came about in November. Growing pains may have been felt but as the saying goes, “no pain, no gain”. Both pain & gain are for the glory of our loving and merciful God. Thank You, Lord and thank You for community!

BLD Phoenix Community Calendar 2008

January 19 - 3rd Annual Golf Tournament
February 8-10 - Singles Encounter #2
May 16-18 - Life in the Spirit Seminar #6
June 6-8 - Marriage Encounter #8
July 25-27 - Youth Encounter #4
October 3-5 - Life in the Spirit Seminar #7

Mary's Immaculate Conception

In teaching that Mary was conceived immaculate, the Catholic Church teaches that from the very moment of her conception, the Blessed Virgin Mary was free from all stain of original sin. This simply means that from the beginning, she was in a state of grace, sharing in God's own life, and that she was free from the sinful inclinations which have beset human nature after the fall. During this Season of Advent, we are called to make preparations spiritually that we may be ready to welcome the coming of our Savior. Our human nature does not free us of sinful inclinations but this season also is here to give us hope that we can put ourselves in the state of grace. Our Blessed Mother has always been an inspiration for us in preparing and hoping for holiness. December 8 is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and is a Holy Day of Obligation.



An Answered Prayer...

They are just but one of the many couples (not just in the BLD Community) hoping and praying for the gift of a child. Gerry & Gladdine Bautista of M.E. 2 Phoenix already has a pretty 6-year-old daughter, Liann. Expressing their wish of having another child, they sought the help of the BLD community to pray for them and with them that their wish will be granted. For less than a year of fervent prayers together with the Intercessory Ministry of BLD Phoenix, Gerry & Gladdine are witnesses to the goodness of our Lord when they welcomed another angel, Alexis Theresa, into their family on Oct. 12. To Gerry & Gladdine, congratulations and God bless you from your BLD family!

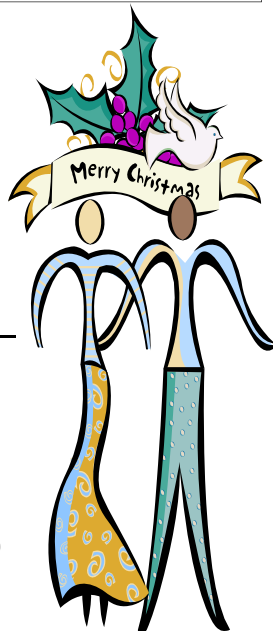


BIRTHDAYS

1-Lito Caguioa (ME 7)
2-Evee Tejada (SE 1)
6-Fr. Joshua Alvero
7-Lulu Lam (ME 2 Newark)
13-Eunice Lureñana (ME 1)
20-Maria Hilary Cassano (ME 5)
26-Eva Ward (ME 4)
30-Judy Bautista (ME 7)

ANNIVERSARIES

20-Ramon & Fe Querol (ME 4)
21-Rollie & Justice Tabora (ME 7)
22-Lee & Arlene Junia (ME 2)
22-Ariel & Judy Bautista (ME 7)
25-Simon & Lulu Lam (ME 2 Newark)
25-Jun & Lina Saguid (ME6)
30-Pedro & Cita Rivera (ME 3)



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Reflections continued from page 1...From this Sunday's First Reading (Isaiah 2:1-5), the prophet Isaiah tells us that all nations will seek instruction and wisdom from the Lord, how to live in justice and peace with one another in the universal peace of his Kingdom, with all basking in the Light that is Christ. The virtue we want to live this week is Hope, hope that is based on our own experiences of God, not only in the past, but on how God's exhortations relate to us daily in our prayer time, during visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and most of all, in our daily encounter through prayer, meditation and reflection on His Word, which are the solid ground on which we anchor our hope of His Second Coming.

Dec 9 (Week 2) Theme: Christ is in us when we manifest the fruit of the Holy Spirit [Righteousness]. Promise: *"The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of knowledge and of fear of the Lord"* (Isa 11:2).

The greatest of the prophets prepares God's people for the Coming One. John the Baptist is his herald, announcing the coming of the King and demanding that the roads be made straight. John is asking us, symbolically, to straighten our crooked ways and purify our hearts. We accomplished this once before, as we prepared for our baptism in the Holy Spirit, an event marked by metanoia, or interior change of heart and disposition. The virtue we are asked to reinforce is Righteousness, *"to be holy as our God is holy."*

Dec16 (Week 3) Theme: Christ is in us when we patiently endure the difficulties of [Perseverance]. Promise: *"You must be patient. Make your hearts firm, because the Coming of the Lord is at hand"* (James 5:8).

James reminds us that the present era is one of patient waiting in preparation for the Lord's Coming. Daily trials and even persecutions are to be borne patiently, after the example of the ancient prophets, if we are to merit reward. James also reminds us that all impatient grumbling and complaining will be subject to retribution. That is why the ECSL exhorts us to exercise the virtue of Perseverance, in waiting for His coming and living out our daily struggles and difficulties without grumbling and complaining.

Dec 23 (Week 4) Theme: Christ is in us when we practice obedient faith. Promise: *"He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, a reward from God his savior"* (Ps 24:5).

The main thrust of the Gospel points to Joseph's paternal role toward the Child of Mary. The child is not from the union of the marriage of Mary and Joseph (Mt. 16, 18 & 25). Yet He is born within the married union of Mary and Joseph. Because of Joseph's obedient faith, he obeys God's plan for his life. Joseph has a unique relationship to Jesus, and will even use his paternal right to name Him, and to provide the Davidic origin of Jesus. The obedient faith of Joseph paved the way for God's intervention in the salvation of mankind. The ECSL asks us likewise to practice our obedient Faith this week. Let us give God a chance to work in our lives by obeying Him, even during those moments when we do not understand what He is asking of us!

Dec 30 - Filipino Sunday Mass at 5 pm
at Our Lady of the Valley
(Sponsored by BLD Phoenix)



Simbang Gabi 2007

Dec. 15-23, 2007 7 PM @ OLV
Dec. 21: BLD-Sponsored Mass

Ministry Announcements

Intercessory Ministry:

- ◆ Please update petitions monthly for continuous prayers and/or update Intercessory ministry heads for answered prayers. You may please make/update prayer requests through a link in the website or e-mail ministry heads: Denny & Nina Custodio at dennyc1220@cox.net.

IDLC:

- ◆ To all DCS and Ministry Heads (and all those involved in handling minors) please take the Safety Environment Training for Ministries offered by local parishes. Please check the Diocese website for training Schedule <http://safeenvironmenttraining.org/index.php>

Secretariat

- ◆ Please wear your community I.D. If you do not have one contact Evan & Joie Pangilinan directly or e-mail: evanjoie@yahoo.com.

Word:

- ◆ Share your walk/faith/transformation in the Lord or an answered prayer with the community thru an article (350 words max). E-mail to eunex@aol.com.

Reflections *continued...* Dec 30 (Week 5 – This is the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas, The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph) Theme: **Christ is in us when He reigns in our home and family [Unity].** Promise: *“Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways! For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork; happy shall you be, and favored”* (Ps 128:1-2)

Colossians 3:12-21 is a particularly rich passage. St. Paul describes the believing community as one in Christ and in the Spirit. They are the new Israel, chosen and holy (ex 19:5f) and beloved (Hos2:21), blossoming with all those Christian virtues that mark the life of Christ on earth. This is what Jesus reminds his followers to do as parents in their households and as members of their Community. In like manner, Paul also exhorts us that Love, the acme of perfection, should be the bond to bring all things together. Special mention is made of sharing one another’s insights in the Word of God, and also of community singing. Gratitude is emphasized, thrice, as an important binding force of Unity in a Community.

THE LORD’S PROVISIONS

Cash flow as of November 2007

Receipts	\$ 2,883.00
Disbursements	\$ 2,157.83
Surplus (Deficits)	\$ 725.17

See Treasury Logbook for details-available at Registration Area or see Treasury Ministry Heads Pedro & Cita Rivera

Thank you for your generosity!

CHRISTMAS τ i d b i τ s

The word **Christmas** was derived from the Old English *Cristes Maesse* or "Mass of Christmas." Over the centuries it has become a comprehensive word including both the religious traditions and the secular traditions. In North America, the early immigrants brought their different Christmas traditions. The Germans brought the Christmas tree, the Irish contributed the lights in windows of homes, Catholic immigrants brought Midnight Mass and everyone had their own Christmas carols.



The Lights of Christmas

The most obvious symbol of Christmas are lights – Christmas candles, window lights, luminaries, lights on the Advent Wreath and Christmas tree. All signifying that Jesus Christ is the Light of the world.



Christmas Candle

The Christmas candle is an ancient tradition. It is usually placed in the center of the Advent Wreath to complete the removal of darkness and sin by the Coming of Christ.



Window Lights

Lights placed inside window sills depict a beacon to light the way for Mary, Joseph, and the coming of the Christ Child.



Christmas Tree

Christmas trees can be found almost anywhere, any size. For many people, the Christmas tree is only a seasonal decoration. To Christians it symbolizes the green of hope at a time of dying, the burning light of Christ at a time of spiritual darkness and the fruits of paradise. Its origin as a Christian symbol may trace to an historical event. When St. Boniface evangelized the Germanic tribes he chopped down their sacred oak to prove the impotence of their god. Just as Patrick used the shamrock as a symbol of the Trinity, Boniface used the evergreen as a symbol of the eternity of the true God.



Holly

The appearance of holly is representative of the burning bush of Moses and Mary’s burning love of for God. The red berries and prickly points are symbolic of the crown of thorns and the bloody death that the Christ Child would eventually suffer.



Poinsettia

Poinsettias are associated with Christmas as the lily is with Easter. In Mexico it blooms at Christmas time and is called the "Flower of the Holy Night." Its name is from the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico, Dr. Joel Poinsett.

BLD Phoenix Christmas Carolling 2007

Dec. 9 - Practice at Victory Home Care Office
(to follow after lunch at Boracay Grill at 12 NN)

Dec. 15 - West Valley (3 PM-8:30PM)

Dec. 16 - East Valley (1PM-7:30PM)

*Please see Denny & Nina Custodio for more details.