

INTRODUCTION

We have been invited last week to have the same hope of Jesus as we move forward towards the future of our Verbum Dei family here in Cebu. The concrete step for this happened just this weekend as we did our first Local Assembly. It was a very fruitful experience for the whole family. It is best that one of the things we can do this week is to spend time to deepen and pray about them.

This week, we can open ourselves to the invitation of the Church here in Philippines concerning the Year of the Laity. The whole Church is calling everyone to take part actively in the work of evangelization. First of all, it is to recognize that the Gospel we are called to transmit, is a Gospel of joy. The Gospel that we are trying to live brings joy to our lives. This is the very reason why Jesus accompanied the disciples to the very end. He wants that our joy maybe complete when we encounter Him through his Word. ¹¹ *I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete. (John 15:11)*

And yet, life here in the Philippines, especially with all that happened the past year, don't look so joyful at all. A clear reality is the situation of poverty - materially and in all aspects of life. But there is a paradox here. There is a paradox of poverty and abundance. Poverty is the reality of life we are living and the life of the people around us. At the same time, another reality we can experience and see around us is the reality of abundance. Each one of us has an abundance of faith and joy. We are poor yet we know how to be joyful. We have an abundance of faith in the middle of our challenges and difficulties.

But the most important truth as Filipino Catholic Laity is not the poverty but the abundance of grace given to us by God to call us and make us members of His people. The greatest treasure we have is the dignity that we have as His children. This is our joy. He made us His. He made us take part in His divine work of Salvation.

This week and in all of our life, we can start to live fully and not just partially, our membership to the Family of God specifically our membership to the Verbum Dei family. Let us bring home the joy of the Gospel to fill the hearts and lives of so many people filled with sadness and darkness. Let us live to our calling that the Church is addressing to everyone especially the laity – to be saints, sent forth as heroes. Saints and heroes not because we have super powers or talents, but because we are willing to offer our lives in order to save many that are lost.

MONDAY

The joy of living the Gospel

⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, Announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation, and saying to Zion, "Your God is King!" ⁸ Hark! Your watchmen raise a cry, together they shout for joy, For they see directly, before their eyes, the LORD restoring Zion. ⁹ Break out together in song, O ruins of Jerusalem! For the LORD comforts his people, he redeems Jerusalem. ¹⁰ The LORD has bared his holy arm in the sight of all the nations; All the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God. *(Isaiah 52:7-10)*

⁵ Those who sow in tears will reap with cries of joy. ⁶ Those who go forth weeping, carrying sacks of seed, Will return with cries of joy, carrying their bundled sheaves. *(Psalm 126:5-6)*

Gospel means Good news and living the Gospel first of all brings joy to our lives. Even though we experience many times cries of sadness, the Gospel always return to us with cries of joy.

TUESDAY

The paradox of poverty and abundance

²¹ He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be placed under a bushel basket or under a bed, and not to be placed on a lampstand? ²² For there is nothing hidden except to be made visible; nothing is secret except to come to light. ²³

Anyone who has ears to hear ought to hear." ²⁴ He also told them, "Take care what you hear. The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you, and still more will be given to you. ²⁵ To the one who has, more will be given; from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away." *(Mark 4:21-25)*

²⁶ He said, "This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land ²⁷ and would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how. ²⁸ Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come." ³⁰ He said, "To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed that, when it is

sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. ³² But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade." *(Mark 4:26-34)*

Poverty in our country and in the lives of many people is one of the obvious reality we see around. We can see it every day and we experience it in our daily lives. But there is abundance in each one of us that many times are just hidden from view. There is so much we can give and when it is given it will become more obvious for the world to see. What is our richness as Filipino laity?

WEDNESDAY

The joy of living the greatness of our dignity

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

(1 John 3:1-2)

The specific elements that characterize the VDMFa are:

1. The fundamental equality in the baptismal consecration that makes us all sons and daughters of God, disciples of Christ and that establishes the intimate insertion in the life and mission of the universal Church. *(Statutes of VDMFa 6.1)*

Our Christian joy drinks of the wellspring of his brimming heart... In the Acts of the

Apostles we read that the first Christians “ate their food with glad and generous hearts” (2:46). Wherever the disciples went, “there was great joy” (8:8); even amid persecution they continued to be “filled with joy” (13:52)... Why should we not also enter into this great stream of joy? **(Evangelii Gaudium 5)**

The greatest truth we have is the abundance of grace given to us in our dignity as children of God. When we live our true dignity as His children, we enter into this great stream of joy that every child of God brings.

THURSDAY

The joy of the Gospel fills our hearts and bears fruit in plenty

¹⁴ The sower sows the word. ¹⁵ These are the ones on the path where the word is sown. As soon as they hear, Satan comes at once and takes away the word sown in them. ¹⁶ And these are the ones sown on rocky ground who, when they hear the word, receive it at once with joy. ¹⁷ But they have no root; they last only for a time. Then when tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ¹⁸ Those sown among thorns are another sort. They are the people who hear the word, ¹⁹ but worldly anxiety, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things intrude and choke the word, and it bears no fruit. ²⁰ But those sown on rich soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." **(Mark 4:10-20)**

The Gospel always fills our hearts with joy for it is born from our encounter with Jesus. When we allow the Word to

sink deep in our lives, He brings the Word to fruitfulness in plenty. We need a listening heart to let it bear much fruit as it should.

FRIDAY

Full membership to the people of God

³¹ Now his mother and his brothers arrived and, standing outside, sent in a message asking for him. ³² A crowd was sitting round him at the time the message was passed to him, 'Look, your mother and brothers and sisters are outside asking for you.' ³³ He replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' ³⁴ And looking at those sitting in a circle round him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. ³⁵ Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother.' **(Mark 3:31-35)**

⁹ But you are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises" of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were "no people" but now you are God's people; you "had not received mercy" but now you have received mercy. **(1 Peter 2:9-10)**

God has chosen us to be a member of His people. Today, we are invited to live fully our membership by being truly a brother and sister of Christ doing the Father's will. We can do this specifically by living fully our membership in the Verbum Dei family.

SATURDAY

Called to be saints-sent forth as heroes

²⁹ Now, Master, you are letting your servant go in peace as you promised; ³⁰ for my eyes have seen the salvation ³¹ which you have made ready in the sight of the nations; ³² a light of revelation for the gentiles and glory for your people Israel. ³³ As the child's father and mother were wondering at the things that were being said about him, ³⁴ Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Look, he is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed- ³⁵ and a sword will pierce your soul too -- so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.' **(Luke 2:27-35)**

The Gospel offers us the chance to live life on a higher plane, but with no less intensity: "Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others". When the Church summons Christians to take up the task of evangelization, she is simply pointing to the source of authentic personal fulfilment. For "here we discover a profound law of reality: that life is attained and matures in the measure that it is offered up in order to give life to others. This is certainly what mission means". **(Evangelii Gaudium 10)**

SUNDAY READINGS

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

First reading – **Malachi 3:1-4**
Responsorial psalm – **Psalms 24**
Second reading – **Hebrews 2:14-18**
Gospel – **Luke 2:22-40**

Verbum Dei

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. (Evangelii Gaudium 1)

January 27 – February 2, 2014



Objective of the week:

1. To be filled by the joy of living the Gospel.
2. To live out actively our membership of the people of God.