

To all SAP confreres, Happy Christmas and wonderful New Year 2014!

Dear Confrere,

Greetings from the Philippines. I received your email with pleasure and wonderful memories. I took a few moment of recollection remembering God's Love for me and the rest of Humanity as we prepare to celebrate the mystery of God's Incarnation. I felt encouraged, and indeed, strengthened after repeatedly going through your short, deep and touching letter.

Yes, I am settling well here in Masbate: living, listening, sharing and discovering so many things each day: one -day -at- a- time. Today afternoon I am giving formation class on the Holy Spirit for those preparing to become Lay Missionaries/Volunteers in the Future. Next week I shall teach about Mission to the Boys/Girls. This evening I shall have confessions and another Mass at the girl's farm. A mission/task requiring compassion, Reaching out and listening and giving direction/guidance to so many boys and girls, some under aged and too young to understand and discern about their lives and what to do. They have so many unanswered questions. My presence is seen and experienced, by most of them, as God's will and intervention in their life "...The Lord has visited his people"; the troubled, downtrodden, suffering and addicted and those who have lost HOPE in life's purpose. They see a compassionate father- figure, who has learnt suffering and by God's mercy lifted up for the sake of humanity. I am emptying myself so much here each day. Waking up daily with the boys at 05.00am, early breakfast. Daily Rosary and sharing the Word of Life. From 07.00am we start work-though me I am free to join or do whatever can keep me busy. We normally have Lunch together characterized by openness and spirit of reciprocal love. I do a lot of individual counselling-an area I am not competently qualified except from personal life experience. I have Masses daily at times, like today, twice as I am the only Priest around.

We are guided by the Word of God from the daily Gospel Readings - each day - Focolare and we try to put it into reality-Practical Charity.

I live in the Missionary House called Chiara. On the Farm we have St. Francis House for new comes, then St Joseph for older boys. Girls have their own House on the other side of the Farm about a kilometre apart but we normally have Sunday Mass together and other big celebrations. The Bishop of Masbate, Jose Bantolo, offered me his house on top of the Hill facing the Sea, but I thought it better living down together in a community of Formators, Coordinators and Missionaries. I shall be using it when I need silence and preparation for lectures or weekend rest. The welcome by the Bishop has overwhelmed me. The lay missionaries are so cooperative and compassionate.

My activities are not only restricted to the Farm but wherever I can offer my services and Witness about Missionaries of Africa. Actually it is some thought of Missionary Animation and awareness in its own way and what you are doing as Society. Here I have plenty of opportunity to meet the Youth, share with them. Many ask about Africa and pamphlets on requirement to join Missionaries of Africa. So far, through Facebook I am in contact with

so many. I am also slowly learning the Official Language here, Tagalog as some boys don't understand English. Most of the Sharing is in fact in Tagalog except for Mass.

There is plenty of work to do here, on a 200 hectares of land and enough space to walk, meditate and exercise, and help people-- just along the Sea Shore.

The Sisters-Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus- from Brazil-are indeed a blessing and they help me a lot not to forget my religious obligations and Charisms/Spirituality such as the Breviary, Holy Adoration twice a week with the boys or girls, our specific mission apostolate and missionary identities and the importance of Collaborative Ministry. I have time for my own spiritual Readings and Meditation etc. When times for relaxation and break comes, we fully do so, joyfully and healthily. Monday is our day off and Sunday afternoons. By the way many people from different places visit the Farm, coming to know and discover its spirituality. Thus I have opportunity to encounter so many people from different works of life, share and learn from them. Also I meet many families, Focolare people, Priests, Christians etc. Surely a very rich experience.

So far, I feel I have found my place and fulfilling apostolate. I am daily nourished, strengthened and given new energy and hope. I feel united with their struggles and am no stranger to their deepest desires and longing (Boys, Girls and adults facing various kinds of addictions, abuses, and related Issues). My sharing and homilies are so well adapted and contextualized to their situation and longing. Each day I open myself to new discoveries and God's love. I try to be well disposed to daily challenges and temptations not forgetting all the tools I have acquired in my long journey to Recovery and Sober life. Sometimes boys/girls come, giving up about Recovery, wanting to go back home, I have no compromise but to share with them the Joy and happiness awaiting them ahead when they have totally surrendered to God. That, once again, they see and experience fullness of life and an extraordinary deeper hope in Life and its goodness. We are called to be temples of the Holy Spirit radiating the gifts and fruits of the Spirit to others.

My message to the boys and girls and adults during this Advent is: "Believe in the impossible becoming possible. Now your redemption is near at hand. Repent and Change. Leave the life guided by fleshly desires (Gal 5:19ff) and embrace the life in the Spirit. Be ready to be moulded, born again, and re-created. "

For us Advent means a radical conversion and emptying ourselves for the new born Jesus to complete his Mission in us and the whole world.

Dear beloved confrere, Michel, I shall surely keep you updated and please your prayers. And thanks for your communication, concern and brotherly affection. May God also make you Happy and fulfilled in your Mission.

I wish you a Fruitful Advent Season and a Hopeful 2014. May this Year of Consecrated Life make us true and authentic Witnesses of the Good news of JOY.

United in the Same Mission of Christ- "...That all may experience life- fullness of Happiness and Joy..." Cf John 10:10

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