



BLD WASHINGTON  
**BUKÁS-LOÓB SA DIYÓS**  
**COVENANT COMMUNITY**

SERVING THE WASHINGTON, D.C. AREA

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*Counsel*

**Christmas Recalls Our  
Noble Calling**

**Theme:** Spiritual preparedness is to obey our call to holiness.

**Word:** Walking in the light of the Lord requires spiritual preparedness.

**Order:** “Do everything in the name of Jesus.”  
(Col 3:17)

(BLD Global Community reflection for Dec. 2010)

**REFLECTION:**

Mary will bear a son and His name is Jesus.

Notwithstanding the controversy that may have surrounded Mary’s conception at a time she was awaiting her own wedding to Joseph upon whom she had been betrothed was in fact in accord with the Jewish custom. In order for us to grasp this reality, we need to understand the custom of the Jewish people. This custom has at least three steps leading to a Jewish wedding.

First is the engagement which is often made when the couple were still children and it was normally the parents or a professional match-maker who arranges the marriage without the couple having

even seen each other. The Jewish nation considers marriage as too serious a step that it should be left to the dictates of the human heart.

The second step is the betrothal. This is what the Jewish call the ratification of the engagement; but even at this point, the engagement can be broken if the girl is unwilling to go on with the betrothal. Once this second step is entered into, it then becomes binding. This period of betrothal lasts for one year and the couple is known as man and wife but without the rights of a married couple. This union can only be terminated by divorce; this was the procedure that Joseph might have mulled when he came to know that Mary was pregnant.

The third stage is the marriage proper which takes place at the end of the betrothal period. And if we are to follow the Jewish customs, then the relationships of Joseph and Mary are perfectly clear.

Joseph had no choice but to bow down to the will of God after he was told that Mary is to bear a child that is begotten by the Holy Spirit and that he must call the child Jesus which is the Greek form of Joshua (Joshua means Jehovah or Salvation). Joseph was also told that the child to be born would grow to be the Savior who would save the people of God from their sins. Like any other Jew, Joseph believed that the Holy Ghost (as the Jews call the Holy Spirit) not only brought God’s truth to men, but also enabled men to recognize that truth when they saw it. And by the power of the

Holy Spirit, Joseph knew that Jesus who is yet to be born is being sent to open men's eyes to the truth.

The Jews also relates the Spirit of God with the work of creation and it is through the Holy Spirit that God performed His work. The Spirit is the Creator of the World and the Giver of Life. Thus, it is through the birth of Jesus that God's life-giving and creating power will come into the world. That power which is to come is what will bring order to our disordered life. The power that will come with the birth of Jesus is what will breathe life into that which there was no life and this is the same power that will breathe life into our weaknesses and frustrations. The Jews also refers to the Spirit not only with the work of creation but with the work of re-creation. The Jews believe that when men are dead in sin and in lethargy, it is the Spirit of God which can waken them to life anew.

But what the Jews failed to grasp and which we Catholics and Christians alike now believe is that Jesus will come into the world with the power that can re-create life. The coming of Jesus can bring to life the soul which is dead in sin and only Jesus has the power to revive again the ideals that have died and, he can make strong again the will to goodness that has died among men who are surrounded by the world. Jesus can renew life when men have lost all that life means.

There is more to this passage than the fact that Jesus is to be born of a virgin mother. The essence of this Gospel of Matthew, particularly this passage, is that in the birth of Jesus, the Spirit of God will become operative like never before in this world. It is the Spirit of God who will bring God's truth to men and it is also the Spirit who will enable men to recognize the truth when they see it. In effect, it is the Spirit through the birth of Jesus who is going to be God's agent in the re-creation of the world since it is only the Spirit who alone can re-create the human soul when it has lost the life it ought to have.

The soon-coming birth of Jesus will enable us to see what God is, and what man ought to be. The coming of Jesus should open the eyes of our minds so that we can see the truth of God for us. Jesus is the recreating power who can release the souls of men from death in sin to life eternal. Now is the last chance to prepare ourselves for this great moment. Now is the last chance to repent of our sins with a sincerity of heart and to receive the Sacrament of Confession. As we come towards the end of the Advent Season, let us remember those who have not yet prepared themselves for the coming of the Lord. Let us ask the Spirit of Jesus to implant within their hearts the urgency of being and remaining in a state of grace. The salvation that comes with the coming of Jesus is what everyone should look forward to in this Advent Season.

**Directions:** Be holy and heed the call to belong to Jesus Christ

### *God's Promise for the week*

*"One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean...shall receive a blessing from the Lord, a reward from God his savior."*

(Ps 24: 4 & 5)

### *The Fourth Week of Advent*

The whole purpose of these Advent pages has been to help us find intimacy with God in the midst of our everyday lives. So we have focused on using the background times of our days to create an interior atmosphere that allows us to wait, to hope, to come into contact with our longing and our desire.

This year the Fourth Week of Advent is six days long. Friday evening is Christmas Eve and Saturday, Christmas.

Perhaps we can use these days to try to heighten our awareness of whatever is going on in our lives these days, and how that can bring us to Christmas. Some examples might help.

So many of us experience the ironic reality that Christmas can be the loneliest time of our lives. Some of these "mixed feelings" or "sad feelings" are difficult to recognize or name.

For some of us, the Christmas we will celebrate this year pales in comparison to wonderful Christmases of our past - perhaps because we were younger or more "innocent" then, perhaps because some of our loved ones who were central to our Christmas are no longer living or not where I am, perhaps because the burdens and struggles of my life or the changes in our world and the war have robbed this Christmas of something that was there before.

For some of us, Christmas will be just another day. Unable to get out to go to church to be with a faith community, and without family or friends to be with, Christmas will be a day we are tempted to ignore.

For some of us, Christmas inevitably means family conflicts. Facing the days ahead, whether it be the last few remaining parties, or conflicting demands of family and friends, or the friend or relative who drinks too much, or the experience I'm having that I drink too much and this season is an easy excuse.

For some of us, Christmas challenges us with terrible financial burdens. Children today become victims of the gross commercial exploitation of the day. For those of us struggling to make ends meet on a day to day basis, feeling the cultural pressure of buying for our children things which we can't afford, can lead us to put more debt on the credit card in ways that simply push us further and further behind.

Some of us, might be really looking forward to Christmas, and not be aware of these struggles with Christmas, yet feel that, in spite of our best efforts to make Advent different this year, there is

still something missing, and we still feel un-ready for Christmas.

For all of us, the story behind these days can draw us in, and invite us to bring our lives to the mystery of how Jesus came into this world and why. Our best preparation for the Holy Night ahead and the Joyful Morning to follow is for us to reflect upon how he came. He came in the midst of scandal and conflict. He came in poverty. He was rejected before he was born. He was born in a feed trough. He was hunted down. And he grew up in obscurity.

He did not shun our world and its poverty and conflict. He embraced it. And he desires to embrace us today, in this day. Right where we are. Right where we are feeling most distant. Right where we are feeling least "religious" or "ready." If we let him come into our hearts to be our Savior these challenging days, we will find ourselves entering the sacred night and morning of Christmas "joyful and triumphant" as never before.

*Come, Lord Jesus. Come and visit your people.  
We await your coming. Come, O Lord.*

Source: <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Advent/fourthweek.html>



## Christmas: A National Fiesta

Christmas in the Philippines is a mixture of Western and native Filipino traditions. Santa Claus, the Christmas tree, sending Christmas cards, and singing carols have all been inherited from the cultures of the West. However, these have all been adapted to fit the nature and personality of the Filipino people.

Christmas Eve in the Philippines is one of the traditions most families celebrate. It is a night without sleep and a continuous celebration moving right into Christmas Day. As December 24th dawns, the last Mass of *Simbang Gabi* is attended; then preparation begins for Noche Buena, which is a family feast that takes place after midnight.

The **Noche Buena** is very much like an open house celebration. Family, friends, relatives, and neighbors drop by to wish every family member "**Maligayang Pasko**" (Merry Christmas). Food is in abundance, often served in buffet style. Guests or visitors partake of the food prepared by the host family (even though they are already full or bloated!). Among the typical foods prepared in the Philippines during Christmas are: lechon (roasted pig), pancit, barbecue, rice, adobo, cakes (Western and native rice cakes), lumpia, etc. There is also an abundance of San Miguel beer, wine, and liquor, which makes the celebration of Christmas indeed intoxicating!

The streets are well lit and are full of activities. The children run in and out of the house to play, to eat, and to play again. The Christmas Eve gathering provides an opportunity for a reunion of immediate and distant family members. Some families may choose to exchange gifts at this time; others wait until Christmas day.

In general, the center of a family's Christmas gathering is always the **lola**, the endearing term used for a family matriarch or grandmother, who is deeply respected, highly revered, and always present. Filipinos remember how their lola had their children form a line and step up to receive a

small gift of some coins. The older the child, the more coins he or she receives.

Some families have a talent show during Christmas Eve celebration. Children are asked to perform. One might sing a Christmas song, others might play a musical instrument, or others may recite a poem or do a dance. The celebration continues until about 6 o'clock in the morning. Those who cannot attend Mass the night before will go to the morning Mass on Christmas day.

Christmas day is a popular day for children to visit their uncles, aunts, godmothers, and godfathers. At each home they are presented with a gift, usually candy, money, or a small toy. Food and drinks are also offered at each stop. It is a day of family closeness, and everyone wishes good cheer and glad tidings.



### Panunuluyan

Source: [http://www.seasite.niu.edu/Tagalog/Cynthia/festivals/philippine\\_christmas.htm](http://www.seasite.niu.edu/Tagalog/Cynthia/festivals/philippine_christmas.htm)

**Love Offering:**

November 19, 2010 \$1,183.00  
November 26, 2010 \$ 608.00  
December 03, 2010 \$ 706.60  
December 10, 2010 \$ 963.00

Thank you for your generosity!

**Reminder:**

Please sign in and wear your BLD IDs during  
Praise & Worship and Community functions.

**December Calendar:**

December 03 - First Friday Mass  
December 10 - Praise & Worship  
December 17 - Eucharistic Celebration  
Community Christmas Party  
OLGC - 7:00PM  
December 24 - No Praise & Worship  
December 31 - No Praise & Worship

*May Peace, Joy, Hope and Love be your gifts at Christmas  
and your blessings all year through!*