BLD Washington sponsors Marriage Encounter #19

BLD Washington conducted Marriage Encounter #19 at the Springhill Suites, Alexandria, Va on November 4-5, 2018 with Fr. Mike Semana as the Spiritual director. It was a very fruitful and spirit-filled weekend with a bountiful harvest of eight wonderful couples: Manny and Adell Adizas, Allan and Eugenia Clemente, Gerry and Agnes Rodriguez, Michael and Marietta Ramos, Mico and Valyn Ramos, Gem and Desiree Sicad, Ramiro and Gladys Sainz, Rommel and Faye Santos. Their class shepherd is Mike and Jing Aquino.

DECEMBER REFLECTION

Our Community Word for the month of December states: **Disciples of Christ prepare for His coming with joy.** As Christians, we are exhorted to make our hearts ready for His coming with great anticipation, excitement and happiness. Advent is concentrated on the two main comings of Christ: His Incarnation and His glorious coming at the end of time. For these two reasons Advent is markedly a time of pious and joyful expectation. At His first coming, Jesus assumed the lowliness of human flesh to fulfill God’s salvific design for mankind. He opened for us the way to eternal salvation. And when He comes again in glory and majesty, we who prepare and watch for that day may inherit the great promise for which we now dare to hope. As disciples of Christ we are asked to **“Be vigilant at all times and pray!”** (Lk 21:36), so as to ensure the readiness of our hearts to meet Him during our lifetime and at the end of time.

The Season of Advent brings us to a time of reflection about our readiness and vigilance for the coming of Jesus Christ thru the weekly scriptural readings.

**Community Word**

*Disciples of Christ prepare their hearts for His coming with joy.*

*ORDER*

*“Be vigilant at all times and pray!”* (Lk 21:36)

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Pray persistently, go to confession and receive Holy Communion regularly.
2. Do charitable works and share your blessings during the Season of Joy.

**READINGS**

- **December 2 - Jer 33: 14-16/Ps 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14/1Thes 3:12-4:2/ Lk 21:25-28, 34-36**
- **December 9 - Bar 51-9/Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6/Phil 1:4-6, 8-11/ Lk 3:1-6**
- **December 16 - Zep 3:14-18/Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6/Phil 4:4-7/Lk 3:10-18**
- **December 23 - Mi 5:1-4/Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19/Heb 10:5-10/Lk 1:39-45**
- **December 30 - Sir 3:2-6, 12-14/Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5/Col 3:12-21/Lk 2:41-52**

For the 1st Sunday of Advent our theme is – **We prepare for Christ coming when we persevere doing what is right and just.** God is telling us to persevere in righteousness and holiness no matter and whatever the situation we may have until the day of His coming. In the life of a disciple there are many obstacles and challenges that must be faced and overcome, and these difficulties must not affect or hinder us from doing what is right and just. We must stay on course and finish well. Jesus will always be there to help us as we rely on His promise, **“Good and upright is the Lord: thus He shows sinners the way,”**(Ps 25:8).
We prepare for Christ coming when we repent of our wrongdoings and seek forgiveness – is the theme for the 2nd Sunday of Advent. How can we prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ today, everyday and when He comes again to bring us finally into His everlasting Kingdom? The first step is conversion and repentance (cf. Mat 3:2, Lk 3:7). Conversion involves receiving God’s word in our heart and mind allowing His word to change our attitudes and wrong ways of thinking and doing. Repentance is the deliberate turning away from sin (wrongdoing) and turning to God to ask for His forgiveness, healing and strength to do what is good and reject what is wrong. We must depend on the loving mercy of God and believe in His promise that, “…the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus,” (Ps. 1:6).

The 3rd Sunday of Advent has this for our theme – We prepare for Christ coming when we gladly share our blessings with others. Consistently sharing our blessings with others is one of the ways to prepare for the coming of Jesus. Sharing our blessings especially when it pains us, requires much self-denial and self-sacrifice. Giving not only promotes God’s work through us, but also God’s work in us, our sanctification. As every act of giving weakens and breaks our sinful, selfish nature, God’s grace spreads into our hearts even more. Sharing in the right spirit is an act of worship; it is rendering God a tribute of praise. We can receive so much happiness when we see how much God is glorified in our sharing and when we see Him bless others with our giving. As we share our blessings as long as we live, God’s promise will manifest in us – “The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,” (Phi 4:7).

For the 4th Sunday of Advent our theme is – We prepare for Christ coming when we accept and obey the will of God in our lives. God does not force His will on us. He gives us the freedom to choose whether to follow Him or not. If we accept His will to follow Him, then we will receive much of His blessings. When we obey God, we don’t try to control our lives and the situations around us by our own human strength. Instead, we focus on the Lord by keeping Him and His word before our eyes, allowing Him to have His way and trusting that He fulfill His promises on us as we obey His commandments. Acceptance and obedience to God’s plan in our life assures us of the fulfillment of God’s promise, “Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord will be fulfilled,” (Lk 1:45).

Finally, for the 5th Sunday of Advent our theme is – We prepare for Christ coming when we let God to be the center of our family life. Trusting God, surrendering to Him as our Lord, and orienting all our personal and family relations towards Him, transforms the home as a little heaven on earth. The example of the Holy Family best teaches us how to build our own little “Nazareth” and raise saints to serve God and the world. Reflecting on the roles of Mary as mother, Joseph as father, and Jesus as child, gives us spiritual perspective that can shape our understanding of our own roles in our families. Emulating the love that exist among the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph brings us to God’s promise, “For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork, blessed shall you be and favored,” (Ps 128:2).

Prayer
God, our heavenly Father, teach us how to create a manger in our heart to receive Jesus with inner joy this Christmas. Help us to prepare inwardly by giving a deeper spiritual meaning of Bethlehem and of baby Jesus in our lives. Grant us also the grace to be always vigilant, persevering in holiness until His second coming. Amen.
Praise Ministry Coordinators host this year’s Praise Team’s Christmas party.

BLD Washington celebrates Thanksgiving

The BLD Community