

Newsletter 6 - Gjo de Keijzer

December 2005

Back in time

Ending the year always asks for a review. It has been a year in which a lot has happened. I started off as a youth worker in Wezep and hope to end it here in Manilla as a student of language. It's a time difference of 7 hours, 28 degrees and a totally different culture, but underneath the same sun and blessings of the Lord. Thanks for the phone calls, prayers, cards, e-mails, Dutch magazines, treacle-wafers and licorice. They helped me to make me feel at home here and not miss you all too much! Every Tuesday I look out for mail from Holland!

My health is doing better, although I have to be careful and not to bite off more than I can chew. I'm able to take the right medicine whenever needed.

Halloween, the holy of Holies, All Souls' Day

While In Holland these feasts are nothing more then a way to make good money, here they are of importance. Many people go back to their roots, visit their relatives and pay a visit to the tombs of the once that passed away. The tombs are cleaned and the rest of the day gets spend around the graveyard. The favorite dish of the deceased is eaten. To us it looks more like a feast ground than a graveyard. Rows of traffic filled with food and tents on the side of the road. Salesmen are doing great these days.

(Not) normal

Last week I walked outside thinking how my parents would react if they'd walk here beside me. What have I gone to find normal already, but isn't really to westerners.

Traffic was the first thing that came to mind. Crossing an 8-lane road without using any traffic lights is one of the things I haven't done much in Holland. Out here it's sometimes the only way to get to where you want to go. Fortunately there will be build bridges especially for pedestrians which go over the road. Food. Two weeks ago I had delicious sour soup made out of a fish's head with stirred ferns. Next I see people walking with fried chicken guts. (Have never tried it) Food is very different here, but once you've tried it, it's usually very good.

Amerikano. All 'white' people are called Amerikano. And when I say that I'm from Holland the first thing they ask is where that is in America! Just as many people in Holland try to get a tan, Filipino's always find ways to get whiter. At the hairdresser this week all employees wanted to touch my hair. Although I'm able to speak the language a bit better now, I'll always be the 'white' stranger. However communicating in the same language breaks away lot of barriers.

Industry

When I still worked at ATO in Holland, appointments were always planned ahead of time. Well it's a different matter here. Because of some national hero the president of the firm decided to change our day off from Wednesday to Monday. All appointments, lesson plans, meetings had to be re-scheduled. But that's really no problem!

Religion

While religion in Holland is more a private matter so that other religions aren't trampled down. Out here religion is something you can talk about on the bus. Before we went on the ferry from Batangas to Calapan a prayer was spoken and projected on TV screens. At the moment SEA-games are being held (kind of Olympic games). After introducing the most important contestants a prayer is said for good games. That's while most joining countries are Muslim or Buddhist.

My congregation

My congregation is a 3-minute walk from my house, above a garage. We have to go to the back of the garage, go up the stairs to the roof. On the roof there is build a new roof so that we can still meet when it rains. It's a small congregation. We are all pretty much family to each other. Every last Sunday of the month, everybody takes homemade goodies along and we eat together after church. The ceremonies are in tagalog and sometimes we sing some English songs. In January we hope to go camping in Bataan; a small peninsula close by Manilla. Great times for me to get to know people more practice tagalog and learn more about the history of the Philippines.

Study of language

I did well at my exams! All honor to God! In spite of all physical setbacks I took the exam a lot sooner than I expected. Another exam is planned before Christmas.

I wanted to tell in tagalog that I couldn't get any money because the bank was closed, instead I said that the bank was broken. My teacher looked very surprised and it took a while for me to understand that I had switched around 2 letters!

I understand a lot more and if people have patience with me I can hold a conversation. I continue practicing the language and see some progression every month.

Project Timothy

Timothy, a student of the famous apostle Paul. Paul taught him to give guidance. That's how I want to help future leaders to become good leaders. During a time of 18 months a group of people will meet 4 times a week. In the meantime homework assignments have to be done, shortly a very intensive project. The first week went well. During the course we will focus on setting goals and how to realize them and teamwork within an organization. The group is open and we are really trying to bond with each other.

Roommates

Here a picture of us. The cockroaches are missing, because Jeanette didn't want to hold them in front of the camera. Naomi is from England (adopted from Korea) and Jeanette is from the Philippines. She helps us with language and culture. Naomi is also a student of language just like myself. Together we have a good laugh about our language mistakes. The dog and cat are living in war and peace. In the picture I look very tall, by Filipino standards I am tall and most people have to look up to me. They find it hard to believe that I am one of the shorter people in Holland.



Mindoro

Since my last letter I have been twice on this island to get acquainted with the Mangyan' leaders. I also visited the Bible school where I hope to start working eventually. I've been at a board meeting of mountain men church organization.

Furthermore I visited the Bible school in the lower lands and visited a few projects where people are able to make some money by creating cards or other things what will get sold in Europe or Japan. I had a really great time and noticing that nobody speaks English I really have to improve my tagalong.

Future

I hope to celebrate New-Year's eve in Calapan. It will be a short break for me because the school will be closed.

Iljo de Keijzer

