

Newsletter 9 - Iljo de Keijzer

Manilla, October 2006

Milenyo

That was the name of the typhoon that kept us busy these last days and also reached the Dutch newspapers.

More than three days without electricity, 5 days without telephone and 2 days without mobile masts and some even also without water all that time. So there has been a considerable breaching of the candle-stock and we had a true feast, because everything from the freezer had to be prepared. Furthermore we appreciate our ventilators again a lot, because without is it rather warm.... But we are especially very grateful that the number of victims has remained relatively limited and there have not broken out too many fires because of all the candles in the inflammable slums. Slowly life here takes its course again... most schools have started again today (Monday after the storm). But then I speak concerning Manilla. In the east - yes in the neighbourhood of where the people have just returned after the evacuation for the volcano Mayon, who was about to erupt - few houses are still standing on their places. We had contact with one of the municipalities and they said that none of their members still had something what resembled a house. Everything was flat and now 5 days after the hurricane, still no evacuation centre has been set up...



Leave!

Still far away, but really coming closer. The 4th of April 2007 I hope to arrive in the Netherlands for 2.5 months, to tell about my work here, to rest and to enjoy family and friends (and to meet the new world citizens, that were born in the time that I was gone).

In September we, as missionaries, had a good preparatory training here of the leave time. Mentally we thought of how we have changed by living here and how differently it is in the Netherlands, events where everyone talks about, but that we have missed in one or another way etc... Reversed culture shock scientists call it; furthermore we have spent time on how we could best show and tell about living here. An instructive and busy time thus! But slowly I feel more and more like meeting everyone and not just via mail and telephone.

Language study

Besides my work I am still busy with understanding the language more and I hope to wind up section III this month. Then I must do one more section and the formal study is finished, although I will have to continue to learn, but no longer with so many books. Still, every so many months I must do an examination to monitor progress. Language and culture study are very important for OMF, sometimes we become bored of studying, but at the same time we see the fruit of well understanding language and culture in

many dense relations with Filipinos, compared to people who only speak a couple of words!

Short term missionaries

Thomas, fortunately, is back to work, albeit only for 50%. He is recovering well of his heart attack and has resumed work. So now I can concentrate again on the language and the work in the slums. But was a special experience to be allowed to do his work a while, certainly also because I am only a short time in the field.

Bukang Liwayway

Each Sunday we come together in one of the 3 houses of the most active members, to praise God and study His Word. Coming Sunday we have a meeting concerning the progress of the church. Are we on the right way, must things change, when will it be time to begin; who are the speakers, what will we do with the offerings? What do we do with people, who all of a sudden do not come any more, will we visit them? All kinds of questions for a new, young municipality to ponder.

Disciple ring Welfareville

Every Saturday night until late we come together with the leaders to study the Bible, to learn more about leadership and to pray together for the work and personal points.

Everyone has a personal history, but together we want to praise God!

Last weekend we sat here with little candles - no electricity because of the hurricane - and two Bibles, in the meantime knocking rats, cockroaches and mosquitoes off our legs and started with a song to the honour of God. Immediately the window of the the neighbours was crowded with people. You saw the question on their face: What is going on with those people, just after a typhoon, no light and ventilator and they sing gaily to their God? Do you know the secret?

A look behind the scenes of culture.

Earlier this week, I was in the Divisoria with my house mate - a large market where you can buy everything cheap - we were addressed by two salesmen. They had a gift for us, that we on could obtain in their "shop". There we got a sales talk about their products and afterwards were allowed to scramble for a chance of a price or discount on their products. We were already greatly amused by their passion and for me it was an acquaintance with another part of Philippine culture. But when I kind of like drew the first prize, a great commotion arose. I appeared to have won two of their products (a huge pan set and a movable airco). Everyone was in ecstasy, they rang the head office to verify if it was all right and everyone came to congratulate me and asked me how I obtained so much suwerte (another word for luck). Then the viper below the grass appeared... ...I had drawn the lot myself, was above 21, now all I had to do, was buy one of their products... the cheapest was 35,000 peso, approximately ₱ 550,- and if we did that, we would also get a free water vacuum cleaner. Terrific deal therefore, but thank you no. We explain that we did not have so much money, that we were missionaries and all that luxury was terrific, but not really necessary in our lives. They did not understand it: how we could we leave such a change, how could we turn down the luck which headed our way... could we not get money at our friends or did have we a creditcard?

I do not believe that they entirely understood it, but we have tried to make them clear that living does not depend on luck and aircos. They will certainly still talk about that crazy white hair and her girlfriend, let us pray that they some day will also think about the real purpose in their life...

(Ab) normally:)

As a part of my language and culture study, I have work in two schools for a day, to examine the educational system. On the one hand a private school and on the other hand a government school in the middle of a slum (Welfareville; the district where I work). When I was in the last mentioned school, the teacher of the class where I would observe turned out to be sick. The teacher of the preceding hour then said to me that I could teach them. I thought that I must have understood something wrong, but it seemed that she was serious because she left the class and left me behind with 58 (!) third class, secondary school children, looking expectantly at me. In the Philippines the teachers change classes and the students remain in their classroom. I just walked forward and asked what kind of subject they were having. It turned out to be Tagalog... we then have done a culture and language lesson in which they had to tell about the Philippine heroes, government, language and national anthem and I did the same about the Netherlands. We had a good time together and now, where ever I go, there are always some teenagers who recognise me from my visit to the school. That is the advantage of large classes.

Birthday!

Part of a Philippine birthday is a group photograph, furthermore a very baby pale blue birthday cake, that one cuts directly before dinner and afterwards eats as a dessert. We do games even with adults and eat spaghetti (long trails to wish a long life to the person whose birthday it is). It was a special day and with my parents this time!



Holiday with my parents

It was very special to have my have parents here and to see the Philippines through their eyes. For them it was good to see how well at home already I feel myself and to see and taste something of the life here.

They asked questions about things which are already "normal" to me. One of the nicest things was that my mother remarked that I should have answered a man who asked a question, instead of chatting with her; yes we had a lot of catching up to do. The Philippines are however a very non-verbal culture, therefore much happens without speaking. I had therefore answered him, but with my mouth and eyes and not with words. For me this was so normal that I did not understand what my mother meant, who had to be answered...



Future...
November
Project Timothy III

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