



Manila, January 2011

Wishing you all a warm 2011, from Manila! I could not help to laugh this week, while watching the weather forecast: "with the cold wind coming from the east, it can feel like less than 20 degrees. So be sure you wear a warm sweater and jacket if you go outside!" Yes, the Philippines 20 degrees is very cold! So I decided to sleep under double blanket last night.



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In this newsletter I would like to take you along back in time. Remember still, 2 years ago, when I was assigned in Quezon province as church planter? Just before Christmas I had a chance to spend a weekend there and meet old and new friends!

Candelaria

I was invited to speak here in their Christmas celebration in church. Saturday morning, I get in the bus in Manila. After waiting for 40 minutes... we finally left. The main road through Manila, was very busy already with people leaving for family in the province, so it took a while, before we could leave the city behind us. Then we hit the expressway, in between rice fields, next to mountains and a volcano. While driving on this so familiar road, my mind travels back in time... How would it be in the churches? Is there growth in numbers or depth? How would Susan's adopted baby be? Time flies and I would almost go passed where I have to get off. As usually I am the only "white" person in the bus and the conductor already wakes me up to ask where I have to get off in Candelaria and helps me with my luggage. In this Christmas time I have to bring gifts for my godchildren*.

I get off the bus and take a tricycle to Monica's house. She is my Taiwanese colleague. The driver misheard me, where to get off (there are 2 areas in this village with almost the same name). But after a nice detour we do end up in the right area, without street signs and house numbers... So we

just ask around where the Chinese with the long hair lives and are nicely guided to her place!

When I arrive, there are lots of people. The women of 2 villages and the youth are celebrating Christmas together. I did not expect the welcome to be so warm... I had to time to put down my bag even, as all people came to greet me. One of the games being played is how well mother and youngest child know each other. Camille is disappointed, since her mother is leading the game she cannot participate. So I volunteer to be her adoptive mother for the game. A big smile is my reward, and we even reach 3rd place in the game! After singing of Christmas songs and eating of spaghetti, people go home, and Monica and I can finally catch up!



Sunday at 9am; the service in a "separate" room of a house is supposed to start... but there are no people yet. Something that takes a while to get used to as a foreigner!

Around 9.30 we decide to start, even if there are not yet too many people... God is there, even where 2-3 are gathered in His name. People hearing the real meaning of Christmas. I was disappointed in the numbers attending, but am glad Monica is around to help this church plant grow... she is amazing in making contact with new people and share God's good news!

The Filipino team was disillusioned since so many people left the church and so few remained, but now there is a new strength to reach out..



After the service I am introduced to my newest godchild. Then we have to rush to attend the dedication of twins, of whom we are godmothers in a neighboring village. After 30 minutes in a bus and 20 in a trysikel we just make it in time...

Tayabas

All "second parents" are asked to come upfront and have to answer questions about raising these children, just like the parents. A couple, that could not get children themselves, now suddenly have twins!... the 9th and 10th child of his sister will be raised now by this couple. Big changes, but an amazing way of caring for family. I enjoy to remain involved with them through this relation.

After another meal together, it is time to leave again. Monica goed by our former helper in Lucena, and I will travel to Sariaya, the villege I used to live for a time of fellowship.

Sariaya

As soon as the kids notice I am driving in the street, they all come running towards me for a hug and blessing. I bring my bag to the family I will be sleeping with. I share a bed with one lady. 3 sleep in other bedroom and three in the living room under a mosquitonet. The principle "always room for one more" still applies in the philippines.

Around 6, the long looked forward to "coffee fellowship" starts... A tradition once started when I was there, to have an informal way of establishing friendships within the church and now only happens whenever I can visit. An great time of fellowship and sharing 1-on-1. A few minutes after start so comes sit next to me and starts sharing what happend in her life the past year, while crying. Many bad things happened, but through it she can to know Jesus! And is sharing to students and coworkers at her not christian highscool.

Than one of my godchildren comes to sit on my lap and laughs and plays with me.

So special to see how thework has continues when I left the place. Many people are leading Bible studies now, the church building is painted, there are elders and new worship leaders. Praise God for sustaining grace. Special is also the relationship between youth and adults. Very close!



PS. My language exam went very well! Thanks for praying. The examiners were very pleased with the progress I made in culture and language!



* Godmother; sort of second mother. You promise to be involved in raising the child, the child can always come to you for help and advice. In the Philippines you can have up to 10+! Godparents...Meter = soort van tweede moeder. So responsibility is shared.

* Pare/Mare is the word you use for the father/mother of your godchild. With this you almost become part of the family.

Agenda:

28-31 jan.: Albay, Bicol. OT-training

5 febr.: leiderschips training Manila

12-13 febr.: Rosario; teaching and preaching

14-18 febr.: National assembly of ABCCOP churches in Batangas

25-27 febr.: womans conferentie

17-19 mrt.: meeting for servant leadership class in april

jan- March; planning and admini. Visiting schools and helping leaders with their admin. Planning training for new teachers.

Warm greetings!

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