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Davao Church Launches Handmade Flower Card Program

In an effort to help church members help themselves financially, Davao City church pastor Edmond Macaraeg motivated the members of the local congregation to start and spearhead the production of handmade flower cards through a series of seminar-workshops held every Sunday, beginning November 16 at their residence. This activity is being envisioned as a home-based livelihood program for our membership.

This program was first promoted as a nationwide livelihood church project in the early '90s. Members who then acquired knowledge and experience in handmade paper production technology and skill in the art of flower card production have been tapped to

assist in the workshops.

In the midst of difficult employment opportunities for our members—who may also lack the skills and capital needed to put up competitive

businesses—Mr. Macaraeg pointed out that this livelihood program could help alleviate their economic difficulties as long as they do their part.

Some of the outstanding features of this program are:

- The basic raw materials do not have to be imported, but is free for the picking in their home gardens, neighborhood, or nearby fields. The only two chemicals which need to be purchased regularly are caustic soda and chlorine powder.
- The project does not require expensive specialized equipment or tools, but common things at home. The

only things that need to be initially purchased as equipment are silkscreen material and welded wire mesh. These are



Pastor of Davao church, Edmond Macaraeg, introduces the Flower Card Program to participating members (top); Members pour raw pulp mixture for making paper card (left); Below are product samples of the handmade flower cards.



mounted on wooden frames constructed according to specifications. Also needed are several pieces of plain galvanized iron sheets cut into two specific dimensions for drying the paper pulp.

- Participants in the program can do the work in their own homes, at their own pace, and in their convenient times. Thus, they do not have to leave their household duties and responsibilities, nor do they need



to be away from their homes and children. In this manner, they will also have no conflict with Sabbath rest day or the festivals.

The Davao congregation has already shipped to the US an initial 138 handmade flower cards, and produced the first volume catalog containing 48 flower card designs. This first order was sent to the Mortier family in Wisconsin, who also attended the Feast here.

With this series of seminar-workshops, we hope to train more individuals who wish to be involved and benefit from this livelihood program, which we pray God will bless. **UNP**

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Editorial

by David Baker, *Philippine Senior Pastor*

Coming Boldly Before God

We live in a world where relationships are important. Many individuals put great value on their relationships with those in powerful positions. In fact some are willing to pay considerable sums of money in order to have access to the “movers and shapers” of society. How much would someone pay for access to the most powerful being in the universe?

God has granted members of His church the tremendous privilege of developing a close intimate relationship with Him. In fact we are called His children (Romans 8:14-16), which implies a close, loving relationship. God has granted us the privilege of appearing before His throne any time we choose. We are given a glimpse of that throne in Revelation 4:2-11. In this passage John describes a vision he was given of God’s glorious throne and the honor and glory the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders give Him. And yet we are encouraged to “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). Our prayers are described as incense before God’s throne (Revelation 5:8). We didn’t have to pay for this privilege, God granted us access to His throne through grace.

We also live in societies where many people pray to God on a regular basis. For example, according to a survey conducted by Barna Research in 2001, eighty-two per cent of adults surveyed indicated that they pray during a typical week. But does God listen to any and every prayer? King David stated in Psalm 66:18, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” God inspired Isaiah to record “When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood” (Isaiah 1:15). These are just two verses that indicate God does not listen to every prayer offered to Him.

How do we know that God hears us? Certain conditions have to be met. As we have just seen, God does not listen to those who live their lives in rebellion to Him (Isaiah 59:1-2). Therefore one condition of answered prayer is obedience. The apostle John was inspired to write, “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (I John 3:22).

Another condition to answered prayer is faith.

We must pray to God in faith in order to please Him. Hebrews 11:6 states, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” As we communicate with our Creator, we must do so through faith and sincerity. God does not answer faithless prayers (James 1:5-7). Christ instructed His disciples, “whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them” (Mark 11:24).

When we pray, we are instructed to ask in Christ’s name. As we make our requests to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ, we are recognizing Christ’s authority as our High Priest. Christ instructed His disciples, “And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13). Making our requests in the name of Jesus Christ implies that our prayers are in harmony with Christ’s will. We have the responsibility to continually study God’s word in order to understand His will. Once we understand God’s will, we can make our requests with great confidence. The apostle John wrote, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” (I John 5:14-15).

As we strive to be obedient, seeking God in faith, we can approach our Heavenly Father, the Creator of the universe, through the office of our High Priest, Jesus Christ. We can ask anything according to God’s will knowing with confidence that He hears us and will grant our requests. This is the most valuable relationship that I can imagine! Let’s continue to develop and strengthen that relationship by walking and talking with God on a daily basis. ■



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Davao Church Spends Day at the Beach

by Cheryl Lynn Macaraeg

The Davao congregation held a relaxing and enjoyable “day-out” at the white-sand, peaceful atmosphere of the Samal Beach Park last November 2, 2003. It was highlighted by a potluck lunch at the seashore, swimming until you get tanned, Filipino style football, and the all-time “shaggidy” action game.

The “shaggidy” action game was for all the young people, but



it was still graced by the young-at-heart church pastor, Edmond Macaraeg. It is a game where everyone stands in a circle and everyone follows the action of the person to your right. One person has to make up all actions for the group. The person to the left of the originator of the action should copy exactly what the action is since the next one would copy likewise. So every next person is responsible for transmitting it down to the very last member of the circle to have that domino effect of a very hilarious action game. It’s supposed to be fun and indeed it was! For those who made mistakes, a nice, cool piece of charcoal awaited them. According to one young girl, “The more charcoal streaks you get, the happier you will be,” as you can see the evidence of the smiling girls in the picture above. It was some sort of “punishment” but all done in the spirit of fun. It seems that nothing can dampen the spirits of those who are truly positive to make an event fun-filled and meaningful, no matter how outlandish you can get.

The guys tore themselves out into the more rugged Filipino football game. It’s like “tackle-until-you-all-get-wet!” Indeed, they were all running up and down the shoreline and would just finish it all off with a grand splash on the water, bodies piling on top of one another

trying to grab the football. It was really fun but at the same time, an aching sight.

The rest of the day was spent fellowshiping, eating, swimming, taking pictures, and just relaxing. You would see some reading a good book, singing on the karaoke, or just chatting away. After lunch, the Church leadership and parents got together to discuss some pertinent issues

concerning church plans and projects and the welfare of the children. It was iron sharpening iron, strengthening and building up one another, bonding families together.

It was a happy “day-out” to be made hopefully more often. It served as a rewarding time of relaxation and reflection after a very successful Feast of Tabernacles! ■



Two Baptisms in Dagupan City

by Serizalino Dizon

Mr. Benjamin Malbog and his wife Milagros were baptized last November 12 in the historic Lingayen Gulf.

Both of them have been attending with the United Church of God for almost two years now. They have six children, two grandchildren—all attending services as well. The couple had been baptized before by a former minister of the WCG. After sometime, they chose to attend with the UCG. Later on, they counseled individually and decided to be re-baptized.

The Malbogs have their own small family business and Mrs. Mila Malbog also contributes to their family income by engaging in processing and reselling fish.

Our brethren here are all elated at their baptism and extend a very warm welcome to them. ■



Milagros and Benjamin Malbog

Christian Accomplishment

by Florante Siopan

If we will look back in history, we will find people who have committed their lives to various ideas and causes—some even to the great extent of altering the course of world history.

Unfortunately, some of these men—instead of harnessing their talents for the benefit of their fellowmen—have done a great disservice upon mankind through deception. Take the example of Charles Darwin. Darwin developed the theory of evolution, and nearly all of modern education is based on that unproven and unfounded premise. Adolf Hitler bathed Europe and Africa with blood during the Second World War. Karl Marx hatched the idea of communism. Each of these men and many others effected great changes that will haunt mankind for years to come.

But is it possible for a man or woman to do a great deal of good in today's troubled and overpopulated world? As former US President Richard Nixon once wrote: "A man who has never lost himself in a cause bigger than himself has missed one of life's mountaintop experiences." To experience real joy in life, we must be invested in a cause outside ourselves.

How does the great God view the effort of a single individual? What is His perspective? You see, there were times when God was willing to pardon the sin of a whole city if He could only find one righteous man somewhere in its environs (Jeremiah 5:1). Our Creator, the One who made all things, tells us that He has at times sought such a man but failed to find him.

Of course, this is not always the case, because, anciently, He found Noah in the pre-flood world. Noah alone found favor in the eyes of God. That's why when the ark was finished, God told Noah, "Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation." Only one man—but as a result, you and I exist today.

Later, God found Moses among his own people, without whom the twelve tribes of Israel would not exist today. In Deuteronomy 9, God wanted to destroy the entire nation of Israel for their rebellion. But that one man, Moses—who had his whole heart in the work of God—prayed in behalf of the people. And he was able to obtain mercy from God for the people, so the nation Israel was preserved to this day.

Well, maybe you might say that is because Moses and Noah are not ordinary men. Maybe they are faultless. No. They are not faultless and they are not supermen, for they were just flesh and blood like you and me, and they made mistakes as well.

For instance, Noah got drunk and we know what happened in that occasion. Moses at first refused the call of God for a job. In his anger, he even broke the tablets of stone where the Ten Commandments of God were written. But both Noah and Moses repented and overcame. They

dedicated their lives to the work of God in their day. Both had lost themselves in a cause greater than themselves. Their achievements will always be remembered not only in this present world, but in world to come as well.

The Work of God Today

How about us? What greater cause can we get involved in? There's only one, and the greatest work we can do is to involve ourselves into the work of God today.

As in Noah's day, the work of God today is a life-and-death activity. It's all or nothing. And unless God's work is performed in this end time—unless there is an elect actually doing God's work—the Scripture says there won't be a man, woman, or child left alive on the face of this earth (Matthew 24:22).

But let's be happy for there is an elect, and there is an organization performing the work of God today. And you and I are a part of that. We should realize that to be a part of God's work is already an achievement bigger than anything else. Through our involvement—whether through our prayer, our time, or our money—we can have a big part in saving mankind.

So whether you are a businessman, a blue-collar worker, a housewife, a student, or a widow, YOU can become a part of a great transcendental cause—the work of God. Believe it or not, no activity on the face of the earth today is more urgent and more important than that of preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom. As Christ said in John 9:4, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work." Here, Christ is speaking of time. In effect, He is saying, "I will do the work of the Father while there is still time, for the time shall come that his work will be cut off." So here we are, we still have time

to do God's work and to lose ourselves in a cause greater than everything and anything. That is what we have been called for—not only to be given eternal life in the future, but to do a certain work in this age.

What rewards are in store for us? Well, we don't know for sure, but take a look at the New Testament personalities, whose lives had been involved in the service of the work of God. Cornelius was a Roman centurion who led over a hundred men. He was not even a Jew, but his prayers and gifts to the poor came up for a memorial before God. As a result, God chose him and his family to be the first gentiles to receive the Holy Spirit. Simeon was an old man, but he was just and devout. At his age, he should have been dead already, but because of his dedication to God's work, God allowed him to see the Savior Jesus Christ before he died (Luke 1:25-26).

The privilege to accomplish and how much will depend upon us. While Darwin, Hitler, and others accomplished much for the destruction of men, ours will be for the benefit of all if we do it for God's glory through our involvement in His work. ■



PERSPECTIVES in CHRISTIAN LIVING

What Is Modern Idolatry?

Why did God give this command? Are you sure you are not also guilty?

by Edmond Macaraeg

Idolatry is known by many to be condemned in the Bible. It is the second commanded prohibition in the Ten Commandments directly connected with the very first one about not having any other gods before (or in place of) the true God.

Most people who read their Bibles are careful not to be found worshipping, bowing to, or praying before pictures or images—whether made of stone, wood, or other materials. Knowing this, they feel happy to have then obeyed the commandment. Also, this world and Satan would like us to believe that that is all there is to that command. Period.

However, it is important for us to understand that there is much more to God's command than simply not bowing to images. It is time we understand the *spirit and principle* behind it. This command using 93 words in the KJV is just next to the Sabbath with 97 words used. It is surprising that while these two are the longest among the Ten Commandments, yet they are perhaps the most ignored and violated.

Various dictionaries define the word **idolatry** not only in terms of worshipping idols, but also that of blind or excessive devotion to something or someone (other than God).

Notice the great number of religious people (both pagans and professing Christians) who insist on some type of object in their worship. Also, while some will not allow an image in their worship, they would devotedly substitute it for a piece of crossed object or image, not only in their places of worship and homes, but in their person as well. On television, we see great masses of people manifesting fervent devotion in front of their human religious leaders—men and women raising up both arms in worship before him. Then on the secular aspect, we also see scenario of those who adore their human idols: sports heroes, entertainment personalities, or political leaders. They even complete it with their pictures on their walls.

How about God's people? Are we guiltless?

The spiritual principle is that once we equate, substitute, or give more importance to something or someone else more than God, we fall into the same condemnation. How can we tell? We simply ask the question. Is something or someone more interesting to us in this life than God? Is something or someone occupying our mental and/or emotional focus more

than God? Compared to pursuing our hobbies and personal interests, do we have more time for this than for God? Do we also misappropriate our tithes to God for these?

The spirit of the second commandment touches on the very fabric and basic foundational aspect in our life. It directs our focus, our goal, our purpose, and how we are moving into that direction and achieving it. No wonder its effect goes into either blessings or cursings down into our descendants.

We are forced by God to make a choice on this command.

Like Adam and Eve, we have to individually produce an answer. For example, while we know that there is God and that He is our Creator, the question still remains to be answered. In a matter of simple or difficult choices, whom do we fear and obey: God or Satan?

Of course to make it less threatening, but more appealing and justifiable (like the forbidden fruit), Satan would present

his offers through well-reasoned and pleasing human beings with tempting material advantages and benefits. Sometimes, resisting his offer brings on very serious consequences—like the case of Joseph with Potiphar's wife.

This scenario can be applied in many aspects of our life. Like whether we will obey God's Sabbath command or not. Great benefits may occur if we violate God's command, while serious consequences (like losing a very good job) will come if we obey God. In the final analysis, the ultimate question still is: Whom, or whose command did we obey? Things in this life and/or persons involved are just the forefront "images." We still have to answer the basic question behind the forefront image or issue: Whom did we fear and worship?

What is God's purpose in all these choices?

Our daily answers in our mind, and reflected as actions in our life are

registered in our spirit to form **God's spiritual image** or *character* in us. Where will this spiritual exercise eventually bring us? And meanwhile, why do we find many difficulties in this life?

The answers to this and the whole plan and purpose of God is comfortingly reflected in Paul's letter to the Church of God in Rome. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be conformed to the image of His Son*, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." (Romans 8:29-30)

The question is: Whose image did we worship and follow? If it was material and perishable we perish with it. If it is eternal, we will eternally be glorified with Him!

Therefore, be on guard against the blinding effect of modern idolatry! ■



Many believe that simply not bowing down to or worshipping any graven image sets us free from breaking the Second Commandment. But is that all there is to keeping it?

The Two Sides of Love

by Daniel Roy Macaraeg

One of the most beautiful objects in God's creation is a rose. It has from earliest of times been a symbol of love, devotion, and other deep emotions. It's soft, delicate, and velvety petals beg to be touched and treated with utmost tenderness. But God knew that the very softness which makes it a thing of splendor renders it extremely vulnerable to creatures that would destroy its beauty. So along with the softness of its petals, He provided the hardness of its thorns.

What is true in the realm of nature is also true in the world of relationships.

Love has two sides: the soft side and the hard side. In order to love completely the way God wants us to love, we have to balance both the tender side of love with the tough side as well. As imperfect human beings, we tend to favor one over the other.

Authors Gary Smalley and John Trent define hard-side love as "doing what's best for another person regardless of the cost. Held in balance, it's the ability to be consistent, to discipline, to protect, to challenge and to correct" (Gary Smalley and John Trent, Ph.D., *The Two Sides of Love*, 1990, p. 9). It's the strength that's required for a mother to discipline her two-year old instead of allowing him to run around and be disruptive during Sabbath services. It's the courage needed by a father in confronting his teenage daughter about her welcoming the advances of a man outside the Church. It's the power required by an elderly husband who honors his commitment and cares for his paralyzed wife every day—instead of giving up and walking away. But without a healthy balance of soft-side love, it can cause unhealthy fear, alienation, and distance.

They also define soft-side love as "a tenderness that grows to be the same color as unconditional love. When held in balance, it manifests characteristics like compassion, sensitivity, patience and understanding." It's the tenderness of a mother who sends an encouraging greeting card in the mail just in time for her son's board exam. It's the sensitivity of a husband who takes the time to really listen to his wife without criticizing, advising, or interrupting. It's the ability of a father to genuinely apologize to his wife and children—to say "I'm sorry, I was wrong." But at the same time, without a healthy balance of hard-side love, it can be smothering, permissive, and spineless.

When we examine the way God dealt with the people in the Bible, we see God's two sides of love in perfect

balance. A scripture which shows God's two sides is Isaiah 40:10-11. We read: "Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him; Behold His reward is with Him, And His work before Him." A strong hand. His arm ruling for Him. This passage describes the tough, protective side of God's love.

Then we read the very next verse (11): "He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young." Gently. Feeding, gathering them with His arm, and carrying them in His bosom. On this very next verse, a description of God's tender, compassionate side is presented.

When we look at the example of Jesus Christ, we see that He was tender with people, but tough on their problems. God in the human flesh—out of zeal for His Father's house—ordered the money changers out of the temple, overturning their tables. In another scene, he stands with the woman caught in the act of adultery against her accusers ready to cast stones at her. This was the same Jesus Christ who tells Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah..." and then later says to him: "Get behind Me, Satan!"

God's two sides of love is most clearly seen in the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. Even when His beloved Son, prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me,"

His perfect tough love would not let sin go unpunished. Someone had to pay the penalty! His righteousness, holiness, and justice was only satisfied with the brutal, excruciatingly painful death of Jesus Christ. Why did God allow His Son to suffer and die? Because that was the only way to save us! And why does God allow His people to suffer now? Because that is the only way to perfect us! God does what is best for us, not matter the cost. God knows we will enjoy life better without having all the trials, persecutions, poverty, and sicknesses. But God also knows that it's the *only* way to bring out the spiritual diamond in us. Still, God doesn't leave us as spiritual orphans. That's why He gave us His Holy Spirit, the Comforter (Greek *parakletos*), God's tender love that comes alongside us to help us in our prayers and in our day-to-day problems as we struggle on the narrow road to the Kingdom of God.

How can you and I love more completely? The secret to wholehearted love is learning how God loves us. God loves us with a perfect love. He is both tough and tender with us. He disciplines us because He loves us (Hebrews 12:6). But then he forgives us and comforts us when we turn to him in repentance (1 John 1:9). Let's thank God for being both tough and tender with us. May we also exercise a balanced approach in loving one other. ■

