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A New Door Is Opening in the Visayas ...

by Florante Siopan

In the afternoon of one Sabbath in February 2005, after the Sabbath service and Bible Study, Catherine Castellano was baptized in Tacloban City. Cathy, as her family fondly calls her, is the granddaughter of Cesar Adona and the late Rosenda Adona, both members in Tacloban congregation.

One important event in the Visayas for the month of March took place when we were invited to go to Badian and Moalboal towns in Cebu province. These two towns are three hours of travel south from the city of Cebu.

With my wife and I on this trip were Mr. and Mrs. Edmond Macaraeg, pastor of Davao and Mindanao congregations, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Cebrian, of the northern Mindanao congregation and Mr. Heracleo Gempero, a member from Butuan City.

As we arranged, we all met in Cebu City after lunch on Friday, March 18. Then we got a bus for our trip to Badian and Moalboal, the two towns of our destinations. Upon reaching Badian after almost a three-hour trip, we were welcomed by Mr. Timoteo Duque, the owner of the resort where we checked in, and also the place where we were supposed to meet with other people the next day.

Sabbath afternoon of May 19 at 2:00 p.m., we met the group calling themselves *Bible Believers Christian Fellowship*. The group consisted of different faiths meeting together every Sabbath afternoon of the month discussing their faith based on the Scriptures. In the group were Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, Roman Catholics, Assembly of God, Seventh Day Adventists, United Church of Christ in the Philippines and some other observers.



Mr. Paul Cebrian and wife Merlen, Mr. Heracleo Gempero, Mr. Florante Siopan and wife Lina around the table with Mrs. Lorna Macaraeg (not in picture) during their visit in Cebu last March 2005 (photo by Edmond Macaraeg)

After a brief introduction from each one, I presented the subject on Jesus' statement in Matthew 12:39-40, the three days and three nights of His stay in the grave until He was resurrected, which I supposed the group didn't believe since they practice the Good Friday and Easter Sunday celebrations. Reaction from the group varied, some were attentive and were taking notes during the presentation, while others didn't even pay attention.

The presentation was followed by the question and answer portion, which Mr. Macaraeg and Mr. Cebrian ably answered. This lasted until 6:00 p.m. The following day, Sunday, we proceeded to Moalboal to meet with another group. Moalboal is a town about ten kilometers north from Badian.

The attitude of this group was different from the group we met in Badian, since they were very attentive and receptive to the presentation given

by Mr. Macaraeg. We can see on their faces and attitude the willingness to listen and learn. They also participated in the discussion as they were given the opportunity to read the scriptures to answer their inquiries.

We have seen in this group a potential for establishing a Bible Study in the area since they asked if we could visit them in the future. I told them we would make a schedule for this purpose.

Overall, we were able to plant the seed of the gospel and the truth. God-willing, this seed will grow, blossom and finally bear fruit for the glory of God. It is His doing and we believe He is opening the door for His work in that area. ■

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Editorial

by David Baker, *Philippine Senior Pastor*

The Passover Season

Greetings from India! I am writing this brief message as I travel through India and Sri Lanka visiting some of our members and *Good News* subscribers. I arrived in Mumbai last night (March 21st) and will return home on April 13th. I am looking forward to meeting some of our subscribers and even counseling a few for baptism.

Last year I had the pleasure of observing the Passover in northern Mindanao and this year I will be observing the Passover with the brethren in New York. Each year at Passover we are reminded that the body of Christ, the church, is composed of many members scattered around the world. The apostle Paul wrote, “For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:17 NKJV). It is a real honor and privilege to have the opportunity to travel and meet some of the members of that body living in Asia.

At Passover we are also reminded of the incredible love of the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. The apostle John wrote, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16-17 NKJV). Through the willing sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we have been redeemed from death—the penalty of sin. What a wonderful blessing God has given unto us! We have earned the wages of sin which is death, but through His grace we have been redeemed from that death penalty through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. How should we respond to this awesome gift? We realize that we cannot earn our salvation but how should we respond to it? The apostle John gives us the answer, “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent


His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:9-11 NKJV). We respond to God’s love by extending that love to others.

During the final discourse with His disciples Jesus commands them, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:12-13 NKJV). Jesus tells us that we should respond to His love by extending that love to others—willingly “laying down our life for others.” Our life consists of our time, our thoughts and our energy. We can lay down our life for others by serving them when we are given the opportunity to do so. We can extend a helping hand, we can visit and pray for someone as they are experiencing a trial, and we can call them or send an encouraging card or letter. The possibilities of extending love to others are endless. As we extend that love to fellow members of God’s church, the body of

Christ, we will grow in unity. Though we are many members scattered around the world, we will truly become one in the body of Christ.

I hope you have a very meaningful and inspiring Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. My thoughts and prayers are with you! ■





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Have You Heard About “Spring Cleaning”?

by Edmond D. Macaraeg

Modern nations which trace their ancestry from ancient Israel have an on-going tradition of “Spring Cleaning” activity. What is this all about? Where did it come from? Are there benefits and lessons which we can derive from such practice? Please read on.

As we approach the spring festivals (Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread), and being Gentiles by race, it would be good and appropriate for us to look into an annual practice observed by nations of Israelite descent, and learn something beneficial for us.

It is said that, “Cleanliness is next to godliness.” While this statement is not an actual verse from the Bible, the principle is biblical. The ancient patriarchs lived their lives in accordance with God’s revealed way of life and laws. And when the nation of Israel was born, God taught this people noble and wise practices that hopefully will set them as good example for all the nations of this earth to follow.

At the first month of the Hebrew calendar year which is at springtime (in the month of Abib or Nisan, Exodus 12:2; 13:4), God commanded the Passover to be observed on the 14th, followed by the Days of Unleavened Bread (DUB). This festival of Unleavened Bread is preceded by a cleaning of their homes to remove any leavening ingredients or leavened products found therein (Exodus 13:7; Deuteronomy 16:4a).

Following this command therefore, the Israelites prepared meticulously for the DUB by cleaning every corner in their homes, getting rid of any leavening product. Eventually, this became a yearly practice. Since this general cleaning activity occurred at springtime every year, it eventually became known as the “Spring Cleaning” season or activity. In our present age of computers, entering the search words “Spring Cleaning” in the Internet brings up many references and helpful tips to this practice among Israelitish descendants. It has become a common custom.

Among such nations, the standard practice is to conduct a once-a-year general cleaning of homes from ceiling to floor and from corner to corner, removing all dirt and dust which has accumulated through the year. Not only that, every drawer, closet, and cabinet has to also be cleaned and inspected for any item which are no longer needed.

What to do with such items which are no longer needed? This is where “rummage” or “garage sales” came into play. Other people may still have need for shoes and clothes outgrown by members of one family, or school books which are no longer needed because the children have moved on to higher grades. Of course, there are many other miscellaneous items which are no longer useful to a certain family, but which may still be useful to another. Some of these can be sold, given away, or donated to charity. The more one can unload or remove useless item, the lighter and cleaner one’s mind and feelings becomes.

In our age of computers, it would also be a good time to delete files which are no longer needed. Those who use computers know that when useless files are deleted, the computer works faster and more efficiently. This should also be a reflection of our personal lives.

The Spiritual Principle

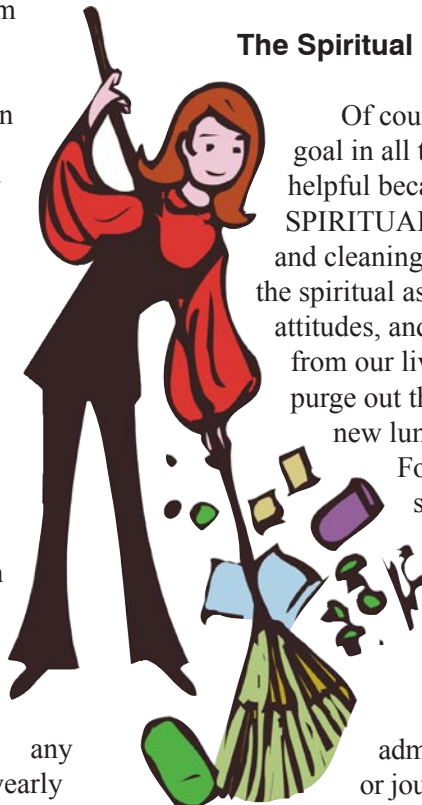
Of course, for us church members, the ultimate goal in all these physical practices (which are helpful because we are still physical) are the SPIRITUAL aspects. Such activities as giving and cleaning should eventually be directed toward the spiritual aspect of everyone’s life. Bad habits, attitudes, and practices should also be rooted out from our lives. As the apostle Paul said, “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened.

For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

Furthermore in this regard, Scriptures admonishes us concerning our spiritual race or journey, “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside EVERY WEIGHT, and the SIN which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

As we practice the physical aspects of unleavening, serving, and giving, we also develop in us the more important spiritual principles as well. Such are some of the great lessons in the observance of the Days of Unleavened Bread in the New Testament setting. ■

[Note: In our affiliation with the Church of God for about 40 years now, we have to some extent followed this “Spring Cleaning” custom, having initially learned about it from the assigned regional directors to the Philippines.]



Comments from Our Good News Readers



The Good News

... I am so much thankful because out of the thousands who are studying in Baguio Colleges Foundation, I am one of those students who is fortunate enough to read your magazines.

I was just passing by the lobby when a lady gave me this magazine. When I read the front page, it's all about "Parenting". Upon reading, my heart was filled with joy because these are the topics I love the most.

At first, I had doubts if you'll respond to the card I mailed. But with great astonishment, I received one and so on. It continues until now. Thank you very much and God bless!

M.G.P., Baguio City

Your magazine has helped me a lot in understanding how important it is to read the Bible. Your magazine also stirred me to give a very good look on where my life is heading, as well as my relationship with God.

Your January-February 2005 issue "Winning The War Against Family" has helped me a lot in understanding how great is the responsibility of a parent. As a young mother of 25, your articles made me realize how important is my fellowship with the Lord in my children's upbringing. I have learned a lot also on how to deal with the worldly forces that could affect my children's moral upbringing.

A.T.B., Pangasinan

Thank you for sending me and renewing my subscription to your wonderful magazine. I am a retired government employee and I'm reading your magazine on my spare time. Upon reading about the Middle East Crisis, Earthquakes, Wars and other calamities in some parts of the world, I am not worried anymore for I know what the future holds.

More Power to your magazine and especially to the staff of *The Good News*.

R.D.J., Silay City

... Your magazine has taught me a lot and also my family! I told my friends and relatives of your magazine and they are much interested with it. Your magazines make me a better person.

Please never stop sending your magazines to me. Thank you very much for making me one of your subscribers.

F.A.D., El Salvador, Misamis Oriental

I am an avid reader of *The Good News* magazine. I take it with me wherever I go and it is one of my sources of spiritual growth, knowledge and education on how to combat our troubled world.

I have shared this magazine to the people close to my heart and now they are receiving their own subscription. Thank you and God bless!

N.C.V., Davao City

Thank you very much for sending me *The Good News*. It has helped me a lot especially in my outlook in life. Everything written there are all facts, which makes it worth reading. I was impressed on your articles about sex, smoking and many other things that really affect the lives of teenagers like me. I appreciate you for proclaiming the Word of God in spite of all criticisms because of narrow minded-ness. I really got mad with my brothers and sisters who cancelled their subscription to your magazine. This shows that they can't accept the truth; they are not willing to change for the best...

J.B.P., Barlig, Mountain Province

Sir, I am reading your magazine regarding Early Church Belief and Practice. It opens my eyes sir. Most churches, (that includes where I came from) don't practice and observe The Feasts of the Lord and The Sabbath. By the way, may I know what is the relationship between United Church of God and Armstrong... Thank you sir. I like your magazine. The teachings are Biblically based...

Text Message

Other Literature

... We appreciate very much the many publications that we have been receiving from God's work. Certainly, we would like to be a part of this great work! Thank you very much!

A.B., Dipolog City

... I am grateful upon receiving your booklets and magazines. Thanks for not ignoring my requests...

In reality, I haven't finished all of the literature that you sent me. But I endeavour to give it time and opportunity so that I could read it all. You see, in the past, I request your literature but don't read it. But I came to realize that it is useless to subscribe if I will not read them. I reckoned that if I, like other teenagers, can easily read thick pocketbooks with fictional stories of love, how much more if I will read your relatively thinner literature that teaches me to be truly repentant with all my heart?

... This time, I am focusing to read the booklet "Transforming Your Life". Even if I can't understand some phrases and sentences there, I'm sacrificing to know it so that I will have a healthy soul and have a strong faith to guide me in the bright way...

S.L., Ormoc City

Davao City Brethren Hold Rummage Sale

by Daisy S. Macaraeg

The Davao City brethren of the United Church of God, AIA Pilipinas, Inc. held its first rummage sale (garage sale) on Sunday, April 3, 2005 at the Macaraeg's residence. It started at exactly 2:00 p.m. and ended at 5:00 p.m.

Some members of the church brought and bought used clothing, household appliances, CDs, tapes, books, kitchenware, and shoes. These items were sold to the brethren from a P1.00 – P50.00 tag price only. All unsold items were given away free to those who attended the rummage sale. Everybody went home satisfied with the snacks and happy with the very successful activity. ■