

A Weekly Publication of Our Lady of Penafrancia Basilica and National Shrine, Naga City, 4400 Philippines

February 26, 2012

www.penafrancia.net

1st Sunday of Lent

# AMAZING GRACE

Fr. Alfonso Grageda



## Sunday Gospel

Mark 2:1-12

The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God,

and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."

*"Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind, but now I see!"*

Those are the first lines of a world-famous and favorite song entitled amazing grace.

This song is a true-to-life story of its author and composer, John Newton, and a fitting tribute to the Loving heavenly Father who welcomed him like a son.

In the missions I had the good fortune of meeting a descendant of John Newton. When I made mention of this song in one of our prayer meetings, She was so happy, there were tears in her eyes.

The Gospel tells us that Jesus went into the desert, the wilderness for forty days. The desert was the dwelling place of evil spirits, wild beasts who represented the evil Christ came to conquer.

What connection is there between the "wilderness" where Christ lived for forty days during the first Lent, and you and me during this Lent of 2012?

Simply this: we are living in a "wilderness," a world in-



festes with wild creatures in the form of human beings. What could be more fierce or vicious than the cruelties of modern man – cold blooded murder and massacre, mugging, burglary, rape, bombings, kidnapping, arson, child-abuse. What beast could destroy more than a million human beings in one year? Abortion does just that.

The human "beasts" in our wilderness are destroying not only the physical life but especially the spiritual life of those near and dear to us. To mention just a few of these vicious animals: drug-pushers, filthy magazine publishers,

many writers of movies and television shows and a host of porno programmers in many kinds of computers, internet etc.

Is there no way to control these destroyers of body and soul? Yes there is, the way of Jesus. These are the very evil Christ came to cure. The main reason he went into the wilderness was to overcome these evils by prayer a penance.

Only in his way will we overcome the evils in our world today. Only by asking God to help, only by giving up something to show our Love for God, can we control and tame these wild beasts in our midst.

The time to start doing this is during this Lent. In spirit we join Christ in the wilderness of today's world. With Him we will do penance and pray. Then, just as He overcame the evil of His day, we will conquer the evils of our modern wilderness.

And then many more people will be celebrating the Amazing Grace of God that saved them. Many who were lost will be found and many who were blind will see.

## Daily Readings of the Week

Feb. 26 Sun: IGn 9:8-15/1 Pt 3:18-22/Mk 1:12-15

Feb. 27 Mon: Lv 19:1-2, 11-18/ Mt 25:31-46

Feb. 28 Tues: Is 55:10-11/ Mt 6:7-15

Feb. 29 Wed: Jon 3:1-10/ Lk 11:29-32

Mar. 1 Thurs: Est C:12,14-16,23-24 Mt 7:7-12

Mar. 2 Fri: IsEz 18:21-28/ Mt 5:20-26

Mar. 3 Sat: Dt 26:16-19/ Mt 5:43-48

**"Repent, the Kingdom of God is at Hand"**



*"Let us be concerned for each other; to stir a response in love and good works" (Heb 10:24)*

## POPE BENEDICT XVI Lenten Message (Excerpt)

**D**ear Brothers and Sisters,  
The Lenten season offers us once again opportunity to reflect upon the very heart of Christian life: charity. This is a favourable time to renew our journey of faith, both as individuals and as a community, with the help of the word of God and the sacraments. This journey is one marked by prayer and sharing, silence and fasting, in anticipation of the joy of Easter.

This year I would like to propose a few thoughts in the light of a brief biblical passage drawn from the Letter to the Hebrews: "Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a re-

sponse in love and good works".

Here I would like to reflect on verse 24, which offers a succinct, valuable and ever timely teaching on the three aspects of Christian life: concern for others, reciprocity and personal holiness.

1. **"Let us be concerned for each other": responsibility towards our brothers and sisters.**

This first aspect is an invitation to be "concerned": the Greek verb used here is *katanoein*, which means to scrutinize, to be attentive, to observe carefully and take stock of something. We come across this word in the Gospel when Jesus invites the disciples to "think of" the ravens that, without striving, are at the centre of the solicitous and caring Divine Providence (cf. Lk 12:24), and to "observe" the plank in our own eye before looking at the splinter in that of our brother. Today too, the Lord's voice sum-

mons all of us to be concerned for one another. Even today God asks us to be "guardians" of our brothers and sisters (Gen 4:9), to establish relationships based on mutual consideration and attentiveness to the well-being, the integral well-being of others. The great commandment of love for one another demands that we acknowledge our responsibility towards those who, like ourselves, are creatures and children of God. Being brothers and sisters in humanity and, in many cases, also in the faith, should help us to recognize in others a true alter ego, infinitely loved by the Lord. If we cultivate this way of seeing others as our brothers and sisters, solidarity, justice, mercy and compassion will naturally well up in our hearts.

2. **"Being concerned for each other": the gift of reciprocity.**

This "custody" of others is in

contrast to a mentality that, by reducing life exclusively to its earthly dimension, fails to see it in an eschatological perspective and accepts any moral choice in the name of personal freedom. A society like ours can become blind to physical sufferings and to the spiritual and moral demands of life. This must not be the case in the Christian community! The Apostle Paul encourages us to seek "the ways which lead to peace and the ways in which we can support one another" (Rom 14:19) for our neighbour's good, "so that we support one another" (15:2), seeking not personal gain but rather "the advantage of everybody else, so that they may be saved" (1 Cor 10:33). This mutual correction and encouragement in a spirit of humility and charity must be part of the life of the Christian community.

3. **"To stir a response in love and good works": walking together in holiness.**

These words of the Letter to the He-

Cont. P.3

## CATECHESIS on the Sacrament of Confession

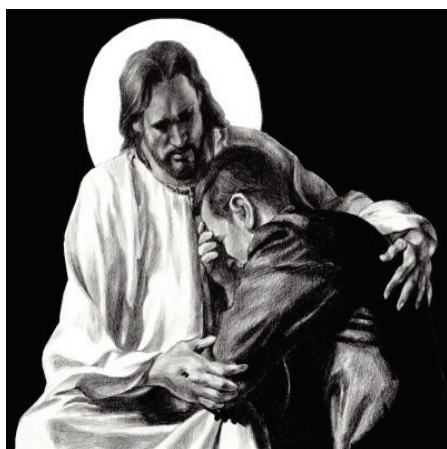
**T**he Sacrament of Penance, commonly called Confession, is one of the seven sacraments recognized by the Catholic Church. Catholics believe that all of the sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ himself. In the case of Confession, that institution occurred on Easter Sunday, when Christ first appeared to the apostles after his Resurrection. Breathing on them, he said: "Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained" (John 20:22-23).

### The Marks of the Sacrament:

Catholics also believe that the sacraments are an outward sign of an inward grace. In this case, the outward sign is the absolution, or forgiveness of sins, that the priest grants to the penitent (the person confessing his sins); the inward grace is the reconciliation of the penitent to God (which is why the sacrament is also sometimes called the Sacrament of Reconciliation).

### The Purpose of Confession:

That reconciling of man to God is the purpose of Confession. When we sin, we deprive ourselves of God's grace. And by doing so, we make it even easier to sin some more. The only way out of this downward cycle is to acknowledge our sins, to repent of them, and to ask God's forgiveness. Then, in the Sacrament of



Confession, grace can be restored to our souls, and we can once again resist sin.

### What Is Required?

Three things are required of a penitent in order to receive the sacrament worthily:

He must be **contrite**—or, in other words, sorry for his sins.

He must **confess those sins fully**, in kind and in number.

He must be willing to do **penance** and **make amends** for his sins.

### How Often Should You Go to Confession?:

While Catholics are only required to go to Confession when they are aware that they have committed a mortal sin, the Church urges the faithful to take advantage of the sacrament often. A good rule of thumb is to go once per month. (The Church strongly recommends that, in preparation

for fulfilling our Easter Duty to receive communion, we go to Confession even if we are aware of venial sin only.)

The Church especially urges the faithful to receive the Sacrament of Confession frequently during Lent, to help them in their spiritual preparation for Easter.

### Why Is Confession Necessary?

Non-Catholics, and even many Catholics, often ask whether they can confess their sins directly to God, and whether God can forgive them without going through a priest. On the most basic level, of course, the answer is yes, and Catholics should make frequent acts of contrition, which are prayers in which we tell God that we are sorry for our sins and ask for His forgiveness.

But the question misses the point of the Sacrament of Confession. The sacrament, by its very nature, confers graces that help us to live a Christian life, which is why the Church requires us to receive it at least once per year. Moreover, it was instituted by Christ as the proper form for the forgiveness of our sins. Therefore, we should not only be willing to receive the sacrament, but we should embrace it as a gift from a loving God.

## REFLECTION

### Commitment and Choices

**D**uring my early years as an employee and serving the community as an active staff of the Boy Scout of the Phil., a Lupon Member and a dynamic member of BCBP (Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals); and more often than not, I have to travel and spend my time with my mother; spend time with my family. I am a busy person, sometimes I forget to take some rest and have some fun. As the time go along, I realized that I have to balance my daily activities. I have to perform my responsibilities in life and serving our Lord in the best way I can.

We all have responsibilities in life. And how we respond to them is often the criteria by which we are judged by peers, brothers and sisters and ultimately by our Lord. At every crossroads in our lives, we need to remember that we have all been endowed with talents and material blessings that need to be utilized. Things happen for a reason, and therefore, we should regularly reflect and ask ourselves what we should be doing with these talents and material blessings. How grateful are we to the Giver of gifts? How can we maximize their use in fulfill

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### Pope created 22 New Cardinals



**P**ope Benedict XVI told the family and friends of the Church's newest batch of 22 cardinals that this weekend's consistory was "an opportunity to

reflect upon the universal mission of the Church in the history of man." "In human affairs, which are often agitated and confused, the Church is always alive and present, bringing Christ: light and hope for all humankind," he told over 4,000 family members, friends and pilgrims gathered in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall on Feb. 20.

"Remaining united to the Church and to the message of salvation she bears, means anchoring ourselves in truth, reinforcing a sense of true values, remaining serene whatever happens," the Pope said.

### CBCP Online Lenten Retreat

**T**o facilitate busy people to experience a spiritual exercise during the season of Lent in the midst of their hectic lives, the Catholic Church is offering an online retreat. Organized by the Media Office of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, the virtual retreat is a new feature of this year's CBCP Visita Iglesia Online.

But the Church said that an online retreat is no substitute for

spending a few days in a Lenten atmosphere; but their online retreat is meant for people who, for one reason or another, cannot do that. Msgr. Pedro Quitarro, CBCP media director, stressed that making a retreat still makes demands on the individual. According to him, the Church can provide the material, but it is still the person, who must make the retreat that will be made available online starting the first week of Lent. The site is [www.visitaiglesiaonline.net](http://www.visitaiglesiaonline.net).



### Archdiocesan News

#### Installation of New Parish Priests



Fr. Danilo Vargas, of Palestina Pili, one of the new parish priests installed by the Archbishop recently

**T**he Archbishop has already installed 4 new parish priests of the Archdiocese. They are Fr. Joal Bernales of Sto Domingo Iriga; Fr. Jovey Balang of Sto Domingo, Nabua; Fr. Danilo Vargas of Palestina Pili and Fr. Judiel Galvo of Cararayan Naga.

Meantime, for the coming week, new parish priests who will be installed are **Fr Maysar Herrera** on March

3 at OL of Peñafrancia Parish in Balaton, Lagonoy; on March 4, **Fr Anthony Imperial** of Sts Philip & James Parish in Lagonoy, CS; on March 8, **Fr Noel Alforte** of St Clare Parish in Tigaon, Camarines Sur; on March 10, **Fr Alex Guimpol** on St John of the Cross Parish in Agdangan, Baao; on March 11, **Fr Leon Fajardo** of OL of Guadalupe Parish in Malawag, Nabua, CS; on March 17, **Fr Ching Penetrante** of St Therese of Liseux Parish in Sta Teresita, Iriga City.

#### Reflection Cont...

ment of the responsibilities that have been given to us?

God is going to look into our lives and ask us how we have used all that He has given us to His Kingdom on earth. Eternal life is more likely to be given to the one who has gratefully shared his blessings with those in need.

Detachment from the things that weigh us down and distract us in our life journey should be looked into and now is the proper time, before it is too late. Jesus tells us that the true disciple is the one who is willing to give up everything in order to follow Him. (Luke 14:33)

- Cristita B. Marco  
(Basilica Auxiliary)



### BASILICA NEWS

#### Marilou Abaya returns to INA



**M**s. Marilou Diaz Abaya, director of the movie, *Ikaw ang Pag-ibig*, returns to Naga last Feb. 21 after more than a year after the recurrence of her cancer that made her difficult to go back to Naga. "I re-

ally miss Naga and I want to thank INA for giving me everything" says Direk Marilou. She narrated that only in September 2011 (the feast month of INA) that the tumor started decreasing in size - another miracle of INA for her! That's why she promised to really visit and thank INA for taking care of her.

The multi-awarded movie director visited also the Archbishop and the Carmelite sisters. She happily returned back to Manila Feb 22 after a brief yet fruitful visit to her second home.

Meanwhile, the movie *Ikaw ang Pag-ibig* is still being shown in many institutions as well as bicolano associations abroad. Last January 26-28, in the seminar on Film and Mary of the national diocesan media directors, the movie was highly praised.

#### Lenten Message cont.

brews (10:24) urge us to reflect on the universal call to holiness, the continuing journey of the spiritual life as we aspire to the greater spiritual gifts and to an ever more sublime and fruitful charity (cf. 1 Cor 12:31-13:13). Being concerned for one another should spur us to an increasingly effective love which, "like the light of dawn, its brightness growing to the fullness of day" (Prov 4:18), makes us live each day as an anticipation of the eternal day awaiting us in God.

The time granted us in this life is precious for discerning and performing good works in the love of God. In this way the Church herself continuously grows towards the full maturity of Christ (cf. Eph 4:13). Our exhortation to encourage one another to attain the fullness of

love and good works is situated in this dynamic prospect of growth.

In a world which demands of Christians a renewed witness of love and fidelity to the Lord, may all of us feel the urgent need to anticipate one another in charity, service and good works (cf. Heb 6:10). This appeal is particularly pressing in this holy season of preparation for Easter. As I offer my prayerful good wishes for a blessed and fruitful Lenten period, I entrust all of you to the intercession of the Mary Ever Virgin and cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican,  
3 November 2011

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

## ANNOUNCEMENT

To all members of the  
**Cofradia de San Jose (Naga Parishes)**  
There will be a **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
on Saturday, March 3, 2012 @ 2:00pm  
at the Small Hall, Basilica Complex.

## Financial Report Cash Receipts & Disbursements For the month ended January 31, 2012

<b>Receipts:</b>	
Mass Collections / Collection Boxes	Php 506,501.00
Donations	28,340.00
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>Php 534,841.00</b>
<b>Disbursements:</b>	
Utilities (Light, Water, Tel, Internet, Cable)	Php 149,237.84
Honoraria, Salaries & Wages	176,311.70
Altersheim/Rectory Expenses	47,482.15
SSS/Philhealth	17,636.00
Repairs & Maintenance	47,688.00
Materials: Special Project (Bodega Construction)	168,937.54
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>Php 635,945.23</b>
<b>Deficit</b>	<b>(Php 101,104.20)</b>

## Basilica Schedule of Services

### SUNDAY MASSES:

6:30 am(Bikol) (1st Sunday - Latin) 8:00 am(Bikol) 9:30 am  
(English) 11:00 am(Tagalog) 4:00pm(Bikol) 5:00 pm(English)  
6:00 pm (English)

### SATURDAY

6:00 a.m. (Bikol) 7:00 a.m (English) 5:00 pm Anticipated (Eng-  
lish) 6:00 pm - Procession around Patio  
6:15 pm - Healing

### WEEKDAY MASSES

6:00 a.m. (Bikol) 7:00 a.m.(English) 5:15 p.m.(English)

### CONFESSIONS

Sunday 6:30 a.m. to 12:00 Noon 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

### Weekdays

Wednesday - 3:30p.m. - 5:30p.m.  
Thursday - 2:00p.m. - 4:00p.m.  
First Friday - 5:00p.m. - 6:30p.m.  
Saturday - 9:00a.m. - 11:00a.m.

The BASILICA BULLETIN is a weekly publication of the Basilica of  
Our Lady of Penafrancia, Naga City Philippines.  
Tel. No. 473-3644

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