

# CABRINI COMPANION

The Official Newsletter of Circles of Discernment  
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## PONDERING ON THE BEATITUDES

By  
Oscar Villaluz

When walking the grounds of Baguio's Cathedral of Our Lady of Atonement, one would notice on the stairs descending towards Session Road, the verse signs as one descends towards the busy street. These verses are The Beatitudes.

Our COD January session with Fr. Alipio on the Beatitudes started with a premise that can be easily taken for granted: God desires our happiness if we let Him. Happiness, as the world says, has to be based on whatever pleases one's self. God through Jesus, in contrast, promises us true happiness by living out the beatitudes.

The beatitudes, in Mt. 5:1-12, begin with "Blessed are the poor in spirit." I have always had the impression that one had to be poor to obtain results from this verse. Poor in spirit rather means a detachment from material possession and wealth. It also implies humility. All things are from God and that one is a trusted steward of what is given. He alone is sufficient. He is the source of who we are and of all that we desire.

"Blessed are the sorrowing." The sorrowful have reason to be blessed or happy because all sorrow will end. Yet sorrow and happiness are not opposite forces. Only when one has lost something or one has been rejected can one appreciate acceptance and consolation. God promises us through this beatitude that our sadness will not be in vain and there will be an ending to it.

"Blessed are the lowly", or the meek, which does not mean being bashful or being a push-over. Meekness is strength under control. A horse is a good analogy of meekness. A horse trusts its rider with the direction and pace of a journey. In order words, the meek let God be in the driver seat. They let God use their potential for His purpose and their joy is doing His will.



The fourth beatitude "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice," denotes action. Hunger and thirst are basic human desires, necessary for survival. So holiness has to be wanted or pursued after, as vital as food and drink in order to live a complete life. Holiness means living as God desires--that one's family, one's vocation, one's career, one's talents and

gifts are directed to God for His honor and glory and motivated by His love.

"Blessed are the merciful" because those who espouse mercy receive mercy. Jesus is mercy personified and God is rich in mercy. Mercy is not merely forgetting the offense, but seeking to correct the misdeed in a way that will also redeem the offender. This is no easy thing, it would take a lot of grace from God and love to accomplish. But what a transformation to behold when one becomes merciful.

"Blessed are the pure of heart." One indeed sees God in being pure of heart. Purity of heart lets an individual respond to all that is good, true, perfect and worthy of praise with childlike appreciation and wonderment. With a heart such as this, one can truly see God in creation, in a person and in worship. Doubts, cynicism and sarcasm have no place in being pure of heart. Entertaining such negative thought patterns not only degenerate one's vision of others and one's surroundings, but it will also affect one's vision of self. **Continued on page 2.**

## CIRCLES OF DISCERNMENT EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Congratulations:

To Elsie Tindoc, whose daughter Lyra on Feb 4, won the gold and bronze medal in Teakwondo on the Carlos Palanca Championship in Manila.

To Mioryel Lagadan and Claire Bedic for passing the December National Nursing Board Exams and taking the Oath for New Nurses on Feb 8<sup>th</sup>.

To Beverly Buyawe, who will graduate on March 24 from University of Baguio with a BS in Commerce and Management.

To Claire Bedic, Helen Butag, Beverly Buyawe and Mioryel Lagadan who will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation from Bishop Carlito Cenzone on May 3<sup>rd</sup> in his private chapel in the Bishop's House.

**Births:** To Josefa and Richard Halaman, the birth of their second son, Elijah.

### And farewell

To Dolores Comacho who has received her visa for Canada and will depart this month for her new job in Toronto. Dolores thanks God and all those who have helped her make this dream come true! Best wishes, Dolores, and keep in touch.

### Deaths:

- Ed Canave, the husband of Edna, who died on Feb 6, 2007
- Grandfather of Helen Pormento, who died on January 2007

*May their souls rest in peace!*

## SOJOURNER'S Journey into Discernment

By  
Grace Calleja



I am a sojourner in Circles of Discernment. I joined the group three years ago. As I write this, I still haven't lost the excitement and anticipation in my heart that I had when I was about to attend my first COD meeting. I know that every time I come out of a COD meeting, I will feel recharged, renewed and revitalized for another month-long struggle with everyday discernment.

COD has been very instrumental in my life because I joined the group a few months after I migrated to Baguio City. I was born and raised in Manila. I finished my studies and worked for 10 years until I decided to transfer to Baguio City because of a business opportunity. I felt like an Israelite being led out of Egypt on my way to a promised land. I struggled hard with finances, mixed emotions and a challenged faith. I had no friends or relatives to turn to. I eventually joined a community of single professionals in the hope of keeping my faith anchored and alive in God. Joining the community made me question my faith further. Why don't I hear God's voice when almost everyone in the community seems to have a clear sense of God's message for them? How do I know what is God's plan for me? How do I know if I am doing the right thing? I questioned every stumbling block that I encountered. Through the community, I learned about COD. It's the perfect answer to my questions. I learned to have conversations with God. I learned how to discern His answers. Although I haven't heard His booming, magnificent voice from the high heavens, through COD, I learned that I am indeed on my way to His promised land of flowing milk and honey.

## Pondering the Beatitudes (continued from p 1.)

In the seventh beatitude, "Blessed are the peacemakers," I don't think anyone would refuse the opportunity to be called a child of God. The path to such a reality is simple: share the peace of God. But peace is not just the absence of turmoil. Peace is being in good order with God, others and oneself. To put it in the right context, the peace of God is rooted in love. It is a love that seeks not only to endure evil but to overcome evil with good.

With the last beatitude "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake," how is this possible? This is obviously not masochism. In the world today, doing the right thing has been relegated to the sidelines. Most often, doing what is right is confused with what feels good. Egoism (i.e. I, myself and me is the thing that matter in the world) is one of the popular basis of making decisions these days. Declaring that this is not the way to live and that there is such a thing as living righteously is to place one on the crosshairs or more bluntly onto the firing range. As a concrete example, many believe that paying or receiving bribes is not wrong because everybody does it!

The bottom line of the Beatitudes and the core reason why we will be happy and blessed is that we will have God as our possession and God will have us. All the promises in the beatitudes: reign of God, kingdom of God, children of God, mercy, the land, seeing God; all mean the same. We will have immeasurable joy because God gives His very self to us. What in all of Creation can really compare with that? God suffices. Come to think of it, that in itself is a good reason to smile as one descends the Baguio Cathedral stairs on the way home or to work.

## ADVERTISEMENT

**Are you interested in a community  
where you can grow as a person and as  
a friend of Jesus?**

**Consider Casa Cabrini, A House of  
Discernment in Baguio City.  
For all vocations and walks of life.**

### Application process:

- Individual interviews
- Mutual knowledge of the community through COD or visits

### Practical arrangements:

- Each member contributes to the cost of food and upkeep of the house according to their individual means
- If interested, contact Sr. Patricia Spillane at 442-6764, or text 0918-842-3035 or email at ps3816@skynet.net.

## SOSCFI CORNER By Dr. Hoover Agyao

Executive Director, SOSCFI  
Tel: 300-1318 or CT 0920-921-0170.

### Taking a Step Backward is not always a Sign of Defeat

Our world moves because there's life around it, and what keeps life going depends on the things that motivates our existence – God, love, wealth, the beauty of nature, family. This means therefore that we have to keep moving to get where we want or our relationship with God, family and nature, or love and wealth would go. We plan ahead, we consult with others, we pray. When things get tough or difficult, we stop, we cry, we surrender. That's life, that's the world. It is pictured either with success or failure, love or indifference, growth or inactivity and most people's minds have been programmed to believe this is really so. Unless we change the way we look at things or think of things, our experience of life and what the world offers will always be the same. But if we have established a pattern in our life, then change would almost be impossible if not painful.

Such is our case at Save Our Street Children Foundation, Inc.(SOSCFI) We worked all of 13 years following a vision, with our only partner, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Together we were making a difference in the lives of children; we loved what we were doing. But just as we thought we did everything within our capacity to help, comes more serious concerns and problems that required so much of our time, efforts and resources. The opportunity was there for us to live our greatness another step higher, through our professional and personal missions. We were inspired by our own achievements and efforts in the past that yielded positive results and the only way we can achieve more is to grab the opportunity and move forward, farther to where our passion and love for service and people would lead us. For the last three years, we felt like we were starting all over again. At Easter 2003, we lost our center at Lourdes on Kisad Road. There was more work, with very limited working space and resources. Add to this all the programs we wanted to pursue but could hardly get anyone besides the MSCs to help us. We just found ourselves taking steps backward as we postponed our plans, scraped the others and looked at all the rest which we were capable of doing. We were glad something else remained but the pain of not having enough and the embarrassment of failure kept us glued in confusion.



Come visit us in our new home at 22 Tandang Sora St., Camdas Subdivision and help us continue to make miracles.

It's not everyday that we see or experience miracles, but it was the only thing we all wished for. It was our only weapon against all the odds, and like a child driven out of his home, we went out and looked for something else to do. Hence partnerships with other individuals and groups, local, national and international, were born. Promises of assistance poured in, people came out to volunteer for us and we discovered that the world after all is full of loving people who shared our vision. Truly, God's way of using each one of us for a purpose is amazing. One thing could lead to another, and before you know it, you're there with everything you need. This experience has taught us to be more flexible; to expect the unexpected and learn to be open to everything that comes our way. We are now established at our "House of Miracles," our new SOSCFI Center. We look at this experience as God's way of telling us that we can do more if we work with others, and that we are not alone in this endeavor. As we continue to reach out to those who are in need, we should also reach out to those who are willing to help, this way we give them the opportunity to live their greatness. Of course we all know it is more pleasing to God to see all of us in harmony because the love we show and share to others manifests his presence.

### WHAT IS CIRCLES OF DISCERNMENT?

We, the members of Circles of Discernment, a unique group of Christian men and women of all ages, are students, professional people, mothers, fathers, parishioners, young and not-so-young, Seekers and Sojourners together. For three years, we have been coming together to nurture our spiritual life, to grow in companionship and in living a more courageous, faithful, hopeful and loving life. Circles of Discernment is a formation program for people like us who want to discern the will of the Lord for each one of us and how we can live that out in our daily lives.

COME join us for COD Year IV. The Program starts on the First of July 2007 at Casa Cabrini, # 43 M. ROXAS Street Teacher's Camp, Baguio City.

Contact # Sr. Patricia Spillane @ - 074-442-6764 or 918-342-3035  
Website: [www.motherscabrini.org](http://www.motherscabrini.org)



COD 2007 Epiphany Party@ Casa Cabrini

## PERSONAL TESTIMONY

By  
Richard Halaman

### *Miracle*

I was brought up in a world filled with lukewarmness, a world where sense of sin seemed to be fading fast, and God's commandment is always relative, not absolute. My lack of understanding about the 2,000 year old Catholic Church led me to commit sin without even knowing it. At a very young age, my bodily instinct of lust shrouded my head and my thirst of selfishness and pride dominates my heart. Needless to say, I'd done unspeakable sinful acts. Well, now I know it was unspeakable sin! But now I also know we are called to be holy, and because we trust God, miracles do happen.

I came from a very poor family; even so my mom raised me with a loving and compassionate heart. Mom is a hard worker, always looking for anything that can supplement my father's income. Overtime, her income is 10x higher than my dad's. Mom loves Elvis Presley, so no wonder I nourished some of Elvis' lyrics like: "Where could I go but to the Lord" and "I have a mansion just over the hill top." Later on, in my adult life, at my desperate moments, an instinct of melody plays into my brain: where could I go but to the Lord? Also, when Mother Angelica (EWTN) reflects on hope, she speaks about a mansion reserved for us in heaven; the word "mansion" instantly connects me with my childhood. My parent's love and support drew me within the grasp of morality. However, they themselves were not aware of the fullness of the Catholic faith. They are cradle Catholics but they seldom go to mass. Sadly, some of our brothers and sisters too are not aware of the significance of the Liturgy of the Word and the Holy Eucharist.

At times this past year I was very sick and couldn't work, so I just lie down on the couch and watch TV the whole day. I realize I hate fictional TV programs so I focused on CNN, Discovery, BBC, Joyce Meyer Ministries, Benny Hinn Ministries, and other Protestant Ministries. Then later on I came across Family Land and EWTN channels which are Catholic TV channels; these Catholic TV shows help me to acquire better understanding of my Catholic faith. I must say... I was hooked!

Then came a time when I couldn't resist the call of spiritual transformation! I thirsted for the sacrament of confession! I always stopped at our local parish church to look for a priest, but I could never find him. The only time I saw a priest is at the mass, but what about confession, I thought? Is there a regular scheduled time for confession? But one day, by divine chance, in front of the church, there was a notice which says: Retreat by Sr. Patricia, MSC, with confession and mass at the ICM retreat house. We went to the retreat. Both my wife, Josefa, and I were expecting a Filipino nun, but to our surprise, Sister Patricia is an American. Wow... Americans are known to be do-it-all, on time citizens. Interestingly, both Jo and I were late, but Sister Patricia, ALWAYS very kind, greeted us and patiently oriented us on what to do and where to go. We started by having two retreat conference on the "Path of Life."

Finally, Sister Patricia asked us if we were ready for confession. Everything seems so normal around me at that time but inside me I felt my heart was on fire; I'm having confession at last!!! After receiving the sacrament of confession, I found peace in my heart. If you want to define what is spiritual freedom is--this is it!!!! Then the priest, Father Vic, commanded me to receive Jesus at the mass. After I received Jesus, I prayed: "Thank you, GOD! I love you, GOD! Lord I'm weak, guide me and strengthen me in my pilgrimage here on earth."

Cherishing the moments of divine chance, I believe I'm in God's hands. In my life, vices have turned to virtues, lukewarmness turned to devotion. God's commandment has become absolute. Indeed, my spiritual formation is no less than a miracle!

Interested  
to write for the COD  
newsletter?

Submit your articles  
@  
Binklette1970@yahoo  
com or contact  
Rebecca Costales or  
Deborah Muena.  
Original articles,  
poems, reflections and  
photos are welcome