

ENCOUNTER ISSUE APR-AUG 2024



SHINING LIGHT

The official newsletter of BLD Vancouver district

WEEKEND ENCOUNTERS WITH

God

“DRAW NEAR TO GOD,
AND HE WILL DRAW NEAR TO YOU.”

James 4:8

<https://www.bldvancouverdistrict.com/shining-light>

Jesus' Image from BLD Global Facebook page

Cover Verse: Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. James 4:8

Choosing this verse for our cover is an invitation—a beckoning toward a deeper connection with the divine. It's an intentional act, not a passive waiting. We engage through prayer, meditation, or simply being still in His presence. Just as we seek out close friends, we seek God with a genuine desire to know Him better. God's promise to draw near to us is deeply comforting. It reveals His character—a loving Father longing for a relationship. When we take steps toward Him, whether in joy or struggle, He responds, bringing peace, comfort, and wisdom. In this closeness, we encounter transformative power. Fear turns to courage, brokenness to healing, confusion to clarity. It's an ongoing adventure—a solace that reminds us we're never alone. This is the essence of BLD Encounters—drawing participants closer to the Ever-Loving God.

Inside this Issue

We have chosen the theme “The Encounters of BLD Vancouver” for this issue. Each encounter sponsored this year by BLD, *from the Marriage Encounter in April, to the Solo Parents Encounter and Singles Encounter in May-June and Youth Encounter in August 2024*, was blessed with unprecedented attendance and stellar feedback. After each encounter, we solicited literary contributions and are delighted to publish them in this issue. This year too, we are blessed with a new set of leadership (Cluster Shepherd (CS) and District Council of Servants (DCS). For the first time, the BLD Academy came to Vancouver to provide teaching on Witness Development, Excellence in Worship, and Leading Like Jesus. We also share reflections and pictures at the “Lead Like Jesus” teaching. We also have teaching from Fr. Nixon D'Silva on the Holy Eucharist as summarized by our regular and generous contributor, Suzeth Sanares. We are also featuring Ben Carlos' Mission Trip to Honduras. Mycah and Ethan share their experience at the St. Matthew's Youth Expo 2024.

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2024 BLD Vancouver Community Day



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Ernie Alcalá, Editor
Lydia Damasco, Article & Ad Solicitor
Carmen Handinero, Assistant Editor
Annie Nacionales, Guest Editor



Special Message from Immediate Past Cluster 10 Shepherds

Dear Beloved members of Bukas Loob sa Diyos Vancouver District,

As our term as Cluster Shepherds comes to a close, we are filled with profound gratitude for the unwavering love and support you have extended us through these three years. Your dedication to the community and fervent prayers have been a source of strength and inspiration for us, especially during challenging times.

We are particularly touched by the outpouring of prayers and support for Mitth during her battle with cancer. Your collective prayers and well wishes have been a beacon of hope reminding the power of faith and community. As we step down from our role, we carry with us cherished memories of fellowship and solidarity, knowing that the bonds forged within this community will endure beyond our time as Cluster Shepherd.

Thanks for your love, prayers, and unwavering support. May God continue and guide Bukas Loob sa Diyos in its mission of spreading love and compassion to all.

With heartfelt gratitude,

*Mike and Mitch Montero
Cluster 10 Shepherd*





Bukás Loób sa Diyós

CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC COVENANT COMMUNITY

Council of Servant Leaders

Bishop Reynaldo G. Evangelista, D.D., Community Spiritual Director

COMMUNITY BULLETIN

CSL CIRCULAR NO. 05-2024-021A-18

Date: May 15, 2024
To: The BLD Community – Vancouver District
Thru: Outgoing Cluster Shepherds – Vancouver Cluster 10
Cc: Outgoing DCS/ Incoming DCS/ Incoming CS
CCEO
Bishop Reynaldo G. Evangelista
From: The Council of Servant Leaders
Subject: **Appointment of the District Council of Stewards – BLD Vancouver**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We praise and thank the Lord for the spirit and grace of discernment in the 2024 General Emergence to choose the new District Stewards.

With one heart and one mind and blessing of our CSD, Bishop Reynaldo G. Evangelista, the Council of Servant Leaders, announces the appointment of the following members of the **District Council of Stewards (DCS) for BLD Vancouver**, with their respective Apostolate assignments, for the term **July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2027**:

District Council of Stewards (DCS)

Evangelization	- Mina, Ross & Cristy
Formation	- Ebarvia, Alex & Mel
Management	- Almonte, Lingo & Mely
Mission	- Lim, Ted & Ondette
Pastoral	- Dela Rea, Ed & Bebeth

Being called by the Lord, we know that the incoming DCS will be empowered with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and will be well equipped to accomplish the tasks and challenges ahead. We exhort them with this verse from 1 Peter 5:2-4: ***"Tend the flock of God in your midst, (overseeing) not by constraint but willingly, as God would have it, not for shameful profit but eagerly. Do not lord it over those assigned to you, but be examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd is revealed, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."***

We take this opportunity to thank the outgoing DCS for their selfless service towards the accomplishment of the BLD vision, mission and goals in the District. We also thank the DCEO and CCEO for their tireless work in the conduct of the General Emergence.

As the incoming District Stewards assume their functions, we ask that a smooth and complete turnover of responsibilities and all pending matters and concerns be conducted by the outgoing DCS. Further, we highly exhort the new DCS to study and be familiar with their respective functions as contained in the BLD Statutes, various policies, community bulletins, guidelines and manuals covering their respective apostolate and for the community.

Please schedule the commissioning of the new DCS during the community's monthly Eucharistic celebration.

May the Lord bless the work of our newly emerged District Council of Steward with joy and dedication so that they may claim the Lord's promise to His disciples, ***"Well done, good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a little I will set you over much; enter into the joy of the Master."***

Let us continue to pray for our community leaders that they may exercise their functions with love, dedication, wisdom and fortitude

Yours in the service of Christ,
The Council of Servant Leaders

Jojo and Koi Jalandoni
Presiding Servant Leaders

With my blessing,

REYNALDO G. EVANGELISTA, D.D.
Bishop of Imus
BLD Community Spiritual Director

Anointing of New DCS



District Council of Stewards (DCS)

July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2027

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| Evangelization | - Mina, Ross & Cristy |
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Reflections on “Lead Like Jesus”

BLD Academy by Eileen & Jover Reyes

The most important ideas I learned from “Leading Like Jesus” are: to follow Jesus’ style of leadership, which is to lead with integrity and character. Moving forward as members of the BLD community, we need to treat each other with respect, serve each other in humility and in love, be grateful always in all circumstances and exalt God only by giving our best in the things that we do for him.

- Albert and Isabel Falcone

The Lead Like Jesus workshop was a beautifully interactive experience, filled with warmth and genuine participation from everyone involved. It was deeply moving to witness the collective engagement in every activity. The workshop powerfully reinforced the importance of having a pure heart to foster righteous thoughts. This profound message echoes the wisdom of *Proverbs 4:23* – “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” The facilitators, Eileen and Jover, emphasized that a pure and righteous heart shapes our thoughts, decisions, and actions, aligning our motivations and intentions with God's will and guiding us to act justly in all aspects of our lives.

The workshop was touching, as I saw people reconcile, offer and ask for forgiveness, and share prayers and gratitude with one another. The sense of unity that emerged among the community members, despite the numerous challenges we faced, was heartwarming. The experience brought everyone healing, connection, and a renewed sense of purpose. This experience left a lasting impact on me, and I hope it did the same for everyone present. Lesley & Edwin Saberon

“Lead like Jesus” emphasizes servant leadership with a genuine desire to serve others rather than seeking power or authority. Key qualities to lead like Jesus are integrity and character; virtues include humility, listening, willingness to serve, and a compassionate and forgiving heart; abilities spotlight the power to influence, foresee a vision, and empower members.

A truly symbolic moment during this workshop was when we “washed” the feet of other members with a “white towel” (no water), demonstrating that no task is too humble for a leader. Many shed tears, asking for forgiveness and/or appreciating each other for the work they do in the community. This act mirrors Jesus washing His disciples’ feet, the symbolic essence of servant leadership. Ernie Alcala





The Meaning of the Holy Eucharist by Suzeth Sanares, Youth Ministry Coordinator

Has your child ever asked you “Mom, why do we go to mass on Sundays?” or your teenage son said, “God is everywhere, I can talk to Him anytime”.

Do we know someone who started to lose motivation in going to mass because the choir is boring, the priest doesn't give a nice homily, the parishioners are not welcoming, or have we at times experienced our minds wandering around during mass?”

To gain a better understanding of the significance & importance of going to Mass, the Youth Ministry (as part of their Lenten activities) was very grateful to our very own Spiritual Director, Fr. Nixon D'Silva who gave us a talk about the Holy Eucharist last March 22, 2024.

Fr. Nixon gave a much simpler formula of for the order of the mass by highlighting the four actions for each part of the mass. First part - Introductory rite (Come), second part - Liturgy of the Word (Listen), third part - Liturgy of the Eucharist (Do) & the last part - Concluding rite (Go).



Furthermore, he gave a clear explanation of the purpose of the Eucharist as follows:

Eucharist is about BELONGING – we belong to a church that helps to form the connection & helps us to understand that we belong to the Body of Christ.

Eucharist is about CELEBRATION – it is actively participating in singing, responding, kneeling/standing/sitting. For the Eucharist to become a celebration, we need to **ACTIVELY** participate. We enjoy the celebration when there is participation. It is also important to ask ourselves if we too are actively participating.

Eucharist is about LISTENING – we listen, understand & respond. When we listen attentively throughout the Mass, we will understand & when we understand, we respond. When we listen to the Word of God & all the prayers carefully, when we listen to the different aspects of the Mass, the word & message will truly come into our hearts.

Eucharist is about CARING – this is loving others as Jesus loves us & caring for others as Jesus cares for us. This is being sensitive to the needs of others, to offer support in many ways.

Eucharist is about PEACE – “Go in peace and serve the Lord”. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. We come to the Eucharist to experience the peace. Do not allow Satan to destroy that peace within us. We find inner peace in the Blessed Sacrament. Let our eyes be fixated on the Eucharist.

The Meaning of the Holy Eucharist
by Suzeth Sanares, Youth Ministry Coordinator

Eucharist is about GIVING THANKS – we come to church to give thanks – for the sacrifice on the cross. The crucifix in all the churches is a reminder for us to give thanks to Jesus for dying on the cross. He offered himself as a sacrifice to bring us salvation & give us His Spirit. The mass is Jesus' sacrifice made present again.

We also come to church to give thanks to the sacrament at the altar – when the priest offers his prayers over the gifts, the bread & wine, this very particular part of the Mass, time COLLAPSES. This is the time that we go back to the Last Supper when Jesus Himself was the main Celebrant. Father Nixon emphasized that when he says, “This is my body” and “This is my blood”, it is NOT already him saying those words, but JESUS is present in the person of him.

Eucharist is about NEW LIFE – it is a thanksgiving celebration of the new life we have in Christ Jesus.

Eucharist is about SHARING A MEAL – it is the Lord's Supper. Jesus is giving us His very self & will be with us always in this meal. He makes His body & blood present to us in a real way. We receive Him into ourselves. Tangibly, He becomes our food. And in sharing that meal, we will be energized to go to others and proclaim the new life that He promised.

What struck me the most during Fr. Nixon's talk was when he showed us a short video of what is exactly happening during the Mass. This gave me goosebumps & I highly recommend you check out the video for yourself (link below).

[This is what really happens at the Eucharist Catholic Mass \(youtube.com\)](#)

In this modern world, we might know someone who no longer sees the need or find excuses to not go to Mass. Or maybe others who say that they just don't get much out of it or sadly no longer believe that God exists.

If we want to see these people come back to the table of the Lord, personal witness is powerful. Let us do our part to evangelize, let us pray & strive to show them how the Eucharist offers a unique opportunity to encounter God that is not available anywhere else.

When we go to mass, we are connected to the life-giving power of Jesus. This is also a time to be challenged, through the Word & Sacrament & a time to give thanks for our many blessings. The celebration of Mass serves to connect us to the truth of the living God who is the center of our lives.

Fr. Nixon ended his talk by asking “*Are you ready to share Jesus with others?*”

Ben Carlos' Mission Trip with CCO to Honduras

Last May, 2024, I went on a mission trip to Honduras with Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO), a missionary organization dedicated to Catholic evangelism on university campuses across Canada. Every year, CCO organizes mission trips to foreign countries with the hope of spreading the gospel. They explain the gospel to people and invite them into a personal relationship with Jesus through prayer to spark a personal conversion in them. They also accompany these people, guiding them in their spiritual journey.



Together with other 18 student missionaries and four professional missionaries from across Canada, I had this chance to evangelize university students and the opportunity to share the gospel with orphans and the locals. We also worked with a Honduran missionary group and the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal (CFR). I hoped to share the joy and freedom of living with Christ with others. I wanted to do God's will and; *make disciples of all nations*; (Matthew 28:19-20) so that people might have life and have it *more abundantly*" (John 10:11)

My mission team's first assignment was on May 18. I went into this mission expecting that sharing the gospel with people would be that easy. But as soon as I arrived at the retreat, I was met with stares and silence. I found it hard to connect with them. The culture and language barrier was intimidating and I was afraid to talk to people; moreover, people seemed afraid to talk to me. I didn't know what to do then! But not all hope was lost. I prayed and was reminded that without relying on the grace of God and cooperating with my missionary teammates, I could do nothing. And so I prayed for the opportunity to connect with the students to share the gospel. Later that night, my prayers were heard. After the eucharistic adoration, I prayed over some students with one of my missionary teammates. We took care of the English-speaking line. During the prayer-overs, the people we met cried, rejoiced, and felt at peace because of the love of Jesus that was showed to them at that moment. They shared whatever was on their hearts and we would pray for their intentions. It was a beautiful image, seeing the love of God working through me as people turned their hearts to Jesus.

Later that night, I sang praise and worship songs with them and danced in their drum circle. Though I did not speak the same language or come from the same culture, the love of God in the Spirit of Christ connected us. Everyone felt this great joy and freedom in living as beloved children of God through Jesus. I was overjoyed to see the fullness of life in Christ that I hoped to share with others on my mission trip. As the mission went on, God grew my confidence in Him little by little, every day, and increased my capacity to love and serve others. One example of this happened halfway through the mission trip on May 26th. We held a one-day retreat for the local orphans. After celebrating morning mass with them, they came to the retreat center where we were stationed. We prepared food, played games, and sang songs for and with them. I also had the blessing of sharing my testimony that day.

Ben Carlos' Honduras Trip... p.2

A Spanish-speaking missionary translated my testimony as I spoke it. I shared with them how seeing people going to confession as a facilitator for BLD Youth Encounter #22 moved my heart and led me into a deeper relationship with God. And so, I invited them all to go to confession and have a personal relationship with Jesus through prayer. Throughout the day, I interacted with them, taught them dance moves, and served them food. We really had a fun time together.

After the eucharistic adoration, the CFR priests held confession. A few orphans, after years of not going to confession, received the sacrament. Two girls who were into arguments that day, went to confession, made up, and hugged afterward, saying "It feels like we're in heaven!". Three boys who were resistant at first struggled to get through the sacrament but went to receive it at the end. The orphans commented that I made confession sound so amazing — like it was a beautiful thing that didn't have to be so scary. They said that they saw the light of Christ in me. The freedom and joy I had within me inspired them to live life with Jesus again. Hearing this filled my heart and I thank God for calling me to Honduras to share His love with others.

Nearing the end of the mission on June 2nd, we helped organize a eucharistic procession in downtown Comayagua. We had just wrapped up another retreat for university students the night before. We invited them to the retreat after leading them in faith studies for about a week on campus. One student from the retreat decided to stay with us for the procession. As we arrived downtown, I was paired up with this student to start spiritual conversations with locals and invited them to the procession. Sharing the gospel with this person made me realize the abundance of love and attention that God gives a single soul to let them know that they are loved by Him. Some missionaries had led this student in a faith study, some gave him spiritual guidance at the retreat, and others prayed over him there. He received a lot of love from our missionary team which helped him say yes to accepting Jesus in his life.

During the retreat, I remember being in a discussion group with him and he expressed his issues in his relationship with Jesus. Just before the procession began, I asked him if he still felt the same, and if he did, then we could pray about it. He opened up a little more about his situation and we lifted his worries to Jesus. Little by little, effort by effort, God had used our missionary team to draw this person's heart closer to His. More than before, he felt the love of Jesus. He felt at peace in surrendering his life to Him. About a week after our mission ended, he messaged me over Instagram to express how he was grateful that we met and that he is happier now because he feels closer to God. Knowing this made me realize how awesome the plan of God is. I was reminded that God's love for us is deeply personal and that evangelization truly happens one person at a time. At its core, evangelization is inviting people, young or old, near or far, into the body of Christ. It is an act of love which unites us. As Christians, we are called to love and to evangelize.

Overall, my mission trip to Honduras was amazing. I am so grateful for the BLD Community and to the IC Delta parishioners for their support in my mission. Thank you for all the prayers, donations, and advice. Thank you too for playing a huge role in my spiritual upbringing. Without these, I would not have been able to share Jesus with others and because of you, people in Honduras have encountered Jesus. Thank you! God Bless!

*The Encounters of Bukas Loob sa Diyos (BLD)
by Ernie Alcalá*

In the heart of our community, Bukas Loob sa Diyos (BLD), which translates to "Open in Spirit to God," has been a beacon of faith, hope, and transformation. Among its major activities are the Marriage Encounter (ME), Solo Parents Encounter (SPE), Singles Encounter (SE), and Youth Encounter (YE). Looking ahead, the Family Encounter is scheduled for 2025.

The BLD Encounter is more than just a retreat; it is a journey of rediscovery and deepened connection. Over a dedicated weekend, participants are invited to step away from the distractions of daily life and focus on their relationship with God. Guided by a team of experienced facilitators and sharers, including a spiritual director, participants engage in activities to enhance communication, trust, and intimacy.

The outcomes of these encounters are heartfelt and intense. Participants leave with a deeper understanding of each other's needs and perspectives, fostering unity, love, and mutual support. They report a renewed sense of purpose and a strengthened commitment to their spiritual journeys with God at the center of their lives. In these encounters, vulnerability meets grace, brokenness transforms into resilience, and faith intertwines with life's complexities.

For many, these encounters are transformative. Couples find new ways to express their feelings, hopes, and dreams, resulting in stronger, more resilient marriages grounded in faith and mutual respect. Solo parents embrace their roles with renewed strength and confidence, supported by heartfelt conversations and a loving community, discovering they are not alone in their difficult journeys. Singles and youths navigate the complexities of their journeys with renewed faith and purpose, finding support and inspiration through shared experiences. Families develop practical strategies for effective communication and conflict resolution, fostering a harmonious home environment and a collective commitment to their faith.

This issue of the Shining Light Newsletter is dedicated to the remarkable experiences of couples, solo parents, singles, and youths who have participated in these recent encounters. Join us as we celebrate these encounters and the inspiring outcomes they have brought to our community. May these stories inspire you to open your hearts to God's presence and experience the transformative power of faith in your own life.

May our encounters with God continue to shape us, renew us, and draw us ever closer to the heart of our loving Father.

BLD Vancouver's ME#46 Weekend: A Journey of Faith, Community, and Service

The recent Marriage Encounter Weekend (MEW) for Class No. 46 in BLD Vancouver was a remarkable celebration of faith, community, and selfless service. Inspired by the timeless wisdom of *Matthew 10:8* —“*the gift you received, give as gift*” our community stood united, embodying the core values of love, generosity, and unwavering devotion. The weekend became a community-wide event as members from various apostolates and ministries gave their support financially, physically, and spiritually.

Before the pandemic, BLD Vancouver struggled with low candidate numbers due to registration fees and work-related constraints. Undeterred, our community embarked on an audacious experiment: a FREE Live-In MEW. Thirteen courageous couples stepped forward, and God's blessings flowed abundantly throughout the weekend.

Team A presentors — Floren & Tita Jose, and Team B presentors—Edgar & Fely Sy, shared their life experiences, illuminating profound aspects of Marriage Spirituality and Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Meanwhile, the Sponsoring Class/es—dedicated and passionate—sometimes stretched beyond their allotted time. Enter the “volun-told” couples—unsung heroes who stepped in seamlessly. Many voluntarily served throughout the weekend, sharing their time, treasure, and talents.

The Sponsoring Class Shepherd Alex & Mel Ebarvia coordinated the efforts of the encounter. Incoming Shepherd Eric & Alor Alikpala guided the new class. The Evangelization Apostolate led the Food Committee.

The Technical Team of new technology pioneers like Alan Cerezo and Emil Cabana ensured seamless execution. The photography team of Jem Velasco and Alan Cerezo made sure to capture beautiful pictures of this spiritual event.

The Praise Ministry harmoniously provided vital spiritual music with meaningful songs. Operating behind the scenes, the Vigil and Intercessory Team spent dedicated hours in the Vigil Room, interceding for all Candidates and the Pastoral Team. Special mention goes to Edgar Sy, who built a riser of 10 modular wooden boxes to make up for the lack of a stage.

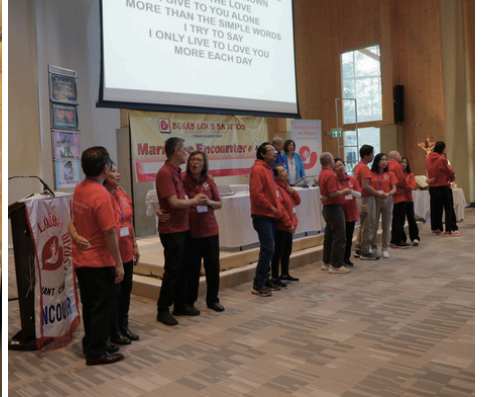
BLD Vancouver's ME Weekend transcended mere logistics. It became a living testament—a symphony of faith, community, and sacrificial service. As we journey forward, let us remember that our gifts are meant to be shared, and our actions can indeed transform lives.

Praise the Lord for His abiding presence and abundant provisions!

**Our Blessed ME#46 Sponsorship Experience
By Martin and Mitch Ferraris, ME Class #45
Sponsoring Class**

Being a part of the marriage encounter this past weekend was a great blessing and experience for us. As the sponsoring class, we were honoured to serve God. Blessed with a wonderful, loving, respectful, faithful, and supportive community, we were not afraid. Everyone was kind and was devoted and all had the same goal in mind, for the candidates to reconnect as couples the BLD way—to put God in the center of their marriage.

We pray that married couples get to also experience what we experienced so that they can grow together in their faith in God and in each other with the support of the community. May God continue to bless the BLD community.



*A Transformative Journey: Attending the Solo Person Encounter (SPE)
by Peachie Luzung, SPE# Class No 9*


From May 31st (Friday) to June 2nd (Sunday), 2024, I had the privilege of attending the Single Parent Encounter organized by Bukas Loob sa Diyos (BLD) Vancouver District. This event was more than just a retreat; it was a life-changing experience that brought together solo parents and single persons from various backgrounds, united by their faith and the challenges they face. The weekend was filled with inspiring talks, heartfelt sharing, and moments of deep reflection and prayer. I will share the highlights of this transformative journey and how it has impacted me personally.

Attending the Single Parent Encounter by BLD was a transformative experience. The weekend was filled with deep connection, personal growth, and spiritual renewal. I left the retreat feeling empowered, supported, and more at peace with my journey as a single parent. The tools and insights I gained will undoubtedly help me navigate the challenges ahead with greater resilience and faith.

The most significant takeaway from the retreat was the realization that I was not alone in this journey. The support and camaraderie I experienced with my fellow participants were invaluable. We shared our stories, struggles, and hopes, and in doing so, we created a community of support and understanding that will continue to uplift and encourage us in the days to come.

Evangelizing as a solo parent comes with unique challenges and opportunities. Balancing the demands of parenting, work, and personal time can be difficult, but it also provides a unique platform to reach others who may be facing similar struggles. By sharing our experiences and the strength we find in faith, we can offer a relatable and powerful testimony. The opportunity to build a supportive community that understands the specific challenges of solo parenting is invaluable. Through mutual support and shared faith, we can create an environment where God's love is evident and transformative.

The Single Parent Encounter by BLD served as a powerful reminder that despite the challenges I face, I am not alone. With faith and support, I can overcome any obstacle, drawing strength from the verse: *'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me'* (Philippians 4:13). The retreat's conclusion marked not an end, but a new beginning—a commitment to serve the Lord within my community. I am deeply grateful for this experience and the community it has created.



*Dear God,
Thank you for this fine weekend of having an intimate time with You. I realized more and more how much You love me despite my iniquities. The challenges and pains that I had to face made me stronger, and now I know why I had to go through all these stages: to become who I am now - a stronger mother to Elle, a loving and appreciative daughter to my parents, a persevering worker, and now a **COMMITTED SERVANT** to You. Make me an instrument to spread Your love to others. I surrender all to You.*

Love, Peachie

LETTER TO GOD

by Annie Nacionales, SPE# Class No 9

Dear God,

"You are my shepherd and there's nothing I shall want!"

I will praise and honor You, all the days of my life!

I am forever grateful for this Life that you have blessed me. Every moment that I have spent here on earth is always a BLESSING! You have always worked in my life in mysterious ways. Events that happened in the past...at present...in the future, all have meaning and purpose. I pray that I grow more in FAITH and LOVE for You. Let me be Your instrument of these virtues.

I pray that I may be able to inspire others...to show how unconditional love can be transforming and acceptance can be motivating and inspiring. And so I pray too that I can hurdle all life's challenges that have yet to come...in my daily struggles as a mother, daughter, sister, friend, co-worker and school counselor! Let my actions be towards a POSITIVE INFLUENCE. Let my words be comforting and healing.

May the Holy Spirit rain down on me the guidance that I may grow more in WISDOM and GRACE to do my counseling ministry. Every WORD I speak, every THOUGHT I have and every ACTION I take, will all be for YOUR GLORY!

I firmly believe and fully confident that I am not alone in this Solo Parent Journey...You have planned for me a future...A future full of HOPE!

Lead me Lord to where I should be. Take me there to that path where LOVE, JOY and PEACE reign forever!!!

Amen!

Your child,
Annie, SPE#9



Dear BLD,

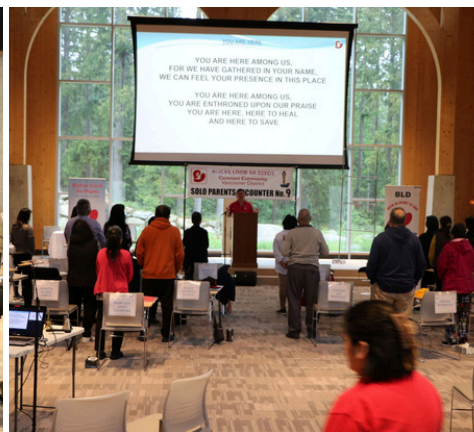
It is me who has to thank you all for the truly great opportunity to have a true spiritual experience. It was so different to most retreats, where you all reached out to make us feel in the presence of the Lord.

Also what was moving that you had a prayer group praying for us at the same time. So both action and prayers definitely helped me in getting into the presence of God.

The group was wonderful like family, made many more connections with people who share the same faith and are vibrant about it.

My thanks to Yeng and Alan for inviting me to this retreat.

Ciao and God Bless,
Angel, SPE #9



The Sound of Silence

By Felian D. Cabael, shared at the SPE#9 Grand Reunion before class presentation

The “Sound of Silence” is an oxymoron and a paradox but also has an acronym of the SOS, an international code of extreme distress. Silence can represent a devastatingly destructive state of mind filled with feelings of isolation and depression existing as if in an abyss or void. However, with the illumination of the Holy Spirit in our lives, silence is a peaceful moving experience of healing and reflection to be still with open hearts and minds to something new.

I love this song because of its many religious undertones and how it can have many valid interpretations. This song, written by Paul Simon in 1964 and inspired by a story told by Art Garfunkle, is about the “inability of people to communicate with each other, not particularly intentionally but especially emotionally” so what you see around you are people unable to love each other.

The Sound of Silence by Simon & Garfunkel

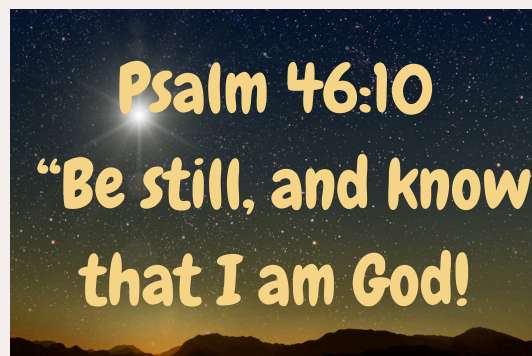
Hello, darkness, my old friend
I've come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping
Left its seeds while I was sleeping
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains
Within the sound of silence

In restless dreams I walked alone
Narrow streets of cobblestone
'Neath the halo of a streetlamp
I turned my collar to the cold and damp
When my eyes were stabbed by the flash of a
neon light
That split the night
And touched the sound of silence

And in the naked light I saw
Ten thousand people, maybe more
People talking without speaking
People hearing without listening
People writing songs that voices never share
No one dared
Disturb the sound of silence

"Fools," said I, "You do not know
Silence like a cancer grows
Hear my words that I might teach you
Take my arms that I might reach you."
But my words like silent raindrops fell
And echoed in the wells of silence

And the people bowed and prayed
To the neon god they made
And the sign flashed out its warning
In the words that it was forming
And the sign said, "The words of the
prophets
Are written on the subway walls
And tenement halls
And whispered in the sounds of
silence."



The Sound of Silence

A Christian Interpretation by Felian D. Cabel, SPE#9

Stanza 1: The very first line captures our initial feelings that we are familiar with Hello darkness my old friend: trials, tribulations, and staying in a comfort zone of numbness and nothingness and hiding in the shadows out of sight. *Left its seed while I was sleeping*, metaphors of seeds in the bible to plant ideas to be rooted within our minds from sources consciously and subconsciously as in a dream waiting for a moment of attention and awareness when eliminating negative distractions enlightens that hope of a Vision from the Holy Spirit.

Stanza 2: The Halo reference gives a visual image of angelic and holy illumination even from a man-made street lamp, the idea of searching for something greater. As we persist, lost in our struggle alone quietly, we turn our collar to the cold and damp - to tolerate what can sometimes be unbearable. *Eyes stabbed by the flash of a neon light, split the night*. This line conjures up an image of God's lightning bolt against a dark sky to awaken us, shocking us to snap out of it and take action. Also from the first lines of the bible in the book of Creation "The heavens and the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep." ..Then God said Let there be light. And there was light.

Stanza 3: *In the naked light, I saw 10,000 people maybe more*. Pure natural light reveals a number and reference in the bible mentioned twice, once in the book of Daniel 7 and then in Revelations 5 "*Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him*". *People talking without speaking*, as how we all currently communicate digitally through texting, emailing, etc. organic expressions and emotions are missing. *Hearing without listening*, auditory senses are intact yet our comprehension, compassion, and lack of connection to understand one another are sometimes lacking. Writing songs that voices never share, a reference to the Book of Songs of Solomon - describes both marriage and God's relationship to his people about commitment and intimacy.

Stanza 4: *"Fools," said I, "You do not know silence like a cancer grows*. I think of Jesus' words on the cross *"Forgive them Father for they do not know"*. Being in the health profession, we prevent cancer, or sickness from taking root by prevention, good lifestyle, education, and good choices. In an unhealthy state of neglect and inaction, we lose the essence of being alive and well as humans but more like artificial intelligence (AI), and robotic empathy. *Hear my words that I might teach you*. Jesus speaks to us through scripture, readings, sermons, and in the kindness of others. *Take my arms that I might reach you* - be receptive and humble enough to be on the receiving end of that helping outstretched hand keeping us from drowning in sorrow and feeling the connection through touch, the energy of the Holy Spirit working from one another in true friendship and genuine love of neighbor. But *my words like silent raindrops fell* - visually illustrate to me of God's tears falling from heaven when we forget to keep Him as the center of our universe, focusing our mind and our soul staying connected with Him otherwise all the teachings fall into an empty well, an abyss and state of decay.

Stanza 5: *And the people bowed and prayed to the neon god they made* -worshipping false gods, power and status, and anything that becomes an unhealthy obsession. *And the sign flashed out its warning*, we must heed. *The words of the prophets are written everywhere* and anywhere we go. In the tunnels of the subway or Skytrain stations as we rush through the busyness of our day oblivious to the beauty around us and tenement halls are a metaphor for this earth, the world we live in representing shared dwelling places.

MY SE#22 REFLECTION

By Victor de Guzman, SE#22

I was a candidate for the Singles Encounter at Carmel Hill, Little Flower Monastery, and a member of its graduated 22nd class.

Where do I begin?.. there are so many emotions whirling around in my mind, but they all come to the same conclusions of merriment and rejuvenation. I have been a Catholic for as long as I can remember, yet somewhere down the road of life, despite never abandoning my catholicism; I found myself wandering farther away from my religious teachings as I grew up and before I knew it, attending mass on Sundays had become nothing more than an afterthought.

I cannot recall what called me back to my roots, but on the spur of the moment, I decided to attend a Sunday mass on a whim and as the months progressed, my ears grew eager for the wonderful choir that sang God's words while my mind became keen on the priest's teachings and lessons. For the past three months, I'd been praying to the Lord to help me with the loneliness which had been eating away at me, and a week later I was approached by members of the BLD community who offered me a retreat at Carmel Hill's Little Flower Monastery.

To attend the retreat, I devoted myself to working late hours to ensure that I could make the deadline; and throughout the entire ordeal of working in the sun on a massive construction site, I found the usual weariness in my body absent as the date of my retreat came closer and closer while my perseverance had nearly doubled if not more.

When the day arrived and I set foot on the monastery's soil, I held the objective of meeting new people and broadening my horizons on the concept of love and care, but what the Lord had in store for me was so much more that my imagination could not hope to predict. From the pains, hardships, and experiences of those who watched over me and guided me to the monastery, to my fellow candidates who ventured from all sorts of backgrounds and cultures, I cannot thank you enough for the wisdoms you've bestowed upon me in the span of two days! I pray that even though I must return to my life outside the monastery, I now understand that there is so much I can learn while under God's loving hands as I venture out into this beautiful world of unlimited possibilities as a proud follower of the catholic faith.



Poem by Victor, SE# 22

*For you Lord, I'll soar high.
As you part the clouds for my flight.
Bless me with the warmth of your endless sun.
Lift me up with powerful yet gentle winds when I am weary.
And even if I fall, I know that you'll be there to catch me,
bind my wounds, and bring me back to your beloved heaven!*

Prayer to Jesus
by Angeline Magtibay, SE#22

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for bringing me here to be with You and Encounter You in another way. A huge gift I received from You this weekend is Your gift of forgiveness and helping me forgive myself.

You answered my prayers again and gave me freedom by receiving Your forgiveness. I dismissed forgiving myself because I thought if I gave myself slack, I might slip back and make the same or worse mistakes. But what You have shown me is that I can be free to make mistakes and not be afraid of my rejection if I embrace Your Divine Mercy. I thought it was selfish to love myself, but the opposite is true. Being so terrified of making mistakes keeps me selfish. Not accepting my weaknesses and who I am keeps me from being with others.

I want to be Your disciple; I want to become the person You created me to be and now I see that this was a necessary step and a merciful gift to forgive myself first. Once I did, it almost felt like everyone else I needed to forgive was already forgiven because I didn't realize how much I blamed myself and hated myself for letting the bad things in my life happen.

Before the retreat began, I could hear the words, "Watch what I can do," and You continually show me that You're always taking care of me and always loving me. You keep telling me this healing journey is a process and to not worry. I get so worried about not being fixed right away or not being where others are, but this weekend Fr. Mario talked about not comparing yourself to others, but what matters is that we all fall in love with God.

I'm grateful that I was able to rejoice in seeing Your work in others and share similar challenges with others. You keep showing me that everything is Your gift to me and I want to remember this when I start doubting why I'm where I am and why these challenges are happening.

Being in community has shown me that it strengthens my faith, shows me the goodness of God, and that we need each other to be different to bring out the strengths and wounds out in each other so we can be transformed to grow Your heavenly kingdom.

Lord, please bless me with patience and teach me how to be more like You. I need You Lord. You're the only way and I love You so much. Thank you for Your perfect everlasting Love.

Love,
Angeline



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YE#24 Participants' Reflections: Closer to God

Going into my first BLD Youth Encounter, I wasn't really sure what to expect, though I did know one thing for sure. I knew that I truly needed this weekend and with my experience, the BLD YE#24 weekend was more than I could've imagined. This weekend enabled me to get closer to God and allow myself to open up to people I have just met, but I can trust with my whole heart. Though I was new to the environment, I could feel that the people I was surrounded with desired only the best for me and my relationship with God. I believe God intended for me to be here, to meet these people and surround myself with those who have the same yearning for God as I do to give me a chance to renew myself and help me in my journey with him. Being given this community that I have faith in, to help me leap in faith with God means so much to me. Thank you. Aliyah Oropesa

During this YE weekend, I was able to tell my story without being afraid of others' judgment. I'm happy I was given this opportunity. The Lord forgave me, listened, understood me, and helped me let go. Throughout everything, it felt like the Lord was telling me 'it's okay and don't be afraid'. I am so glad I was able to meet new friends making this experience even more amazing. I am so grateful for this experience and the blessings of this new family and the opportunities that have been given to me. Jerimae Ibea

YE#24 was an amazing event for me. I met new friends and became closer to God. The events at the youth encounter left me feeling relieved, like some heavy burden was lifted from me. I could feel the love of the Lord and the love of the friends I met there. Earnest Mateo

Attending the YE was an amazing experience that deepened my faith and understanding of God's love. I felt a renewed sense of purpose and connection, realizing that God's message for me was to cherish my loved ones and to reflect on his grace and compassion in my relationships. Edrich Buston

This has been my first experience at a Youth Encounter and might I say, it was an experience of a lifetime. This experience has really opened a deeper understanding for me, bringing me closer to God. I watched people open their hearts and let go of their worries to Jesus. All the stories and experiences told were truly inspiring. During this experience, I enjoyed many fun activities, made new friends, opened my heart, learned it's okay to be vulnerable and so much more. I felt I had found a community that could understand me, wouldn't judge me, and could relate to me. I'm already so excited about when there will be another Youth Encounter. This experience was an experience I will always remember.

Leah Robina





YE#24, August 2-4, 2024
Little Flower Monastery, Deroche



YE Class 24

BLD YOUTH MINISTRY AT ST. MATTHEWS YOUTH EXPO 2024

by: Mycah Llarena & Ethan Dang

Mycah:

Recently, some of our Youth leaders helped serve at the Youth Expo that was held at St. Matthews. At this Youth Expo, we had a poster board and a photo slideshow. We gave away candidate forms for YE#24, as well as some treat bags to those who were interested in attending our upcoming Youth Encounter.



For me, my experience serving at this Youth Expo was very good as I felt happy when I was able to give other youth the same opportunity I was given to grow in my Faith.

I know that it isn't always easy to find a group you belong to, so I really enjoyed being able to talk to other youth about our encounter in hopes of them finding a place in our BLD community!.

I had the incredible opportunity to promote our upcoming Youth Encounter #24 this August. We promoted our Youth Encounter as a supportive space for personal growth, spiritual growth, and community building. Through this Youth Expo, we engaged with those who were attending through posters, photo slideshows, pamphlets, face-to-face conversation, and even through reaching out to youth who showed interest on our own time so that we were able to discuss what our Youth Encounter could offer. Through talking with the youth, we were given extremely positive feedback and many youth showed their interest in attending our Youth Encounter.

Overall, promoting this Youth Encounter was incredibly rewarding. It is truly amazing to see how we can come together and create such positive changes in our own lives and in our community. I highly encourage any youth looking for personal growth, spiritual growth and meaningful connections to consider joining the next Youth Encounter. It's an experience that can truly transform perspectives and lives.

Ethan:

Reflecting on my time at the Youth Expo, promoting Youth Encounter #24 (YE#24) was an incredibly rewarding experience. Standing at our booth, I felt very excited as I shared the camp's story with countless people. The energy and keen interest that people showed reminded me why YE#24 is such a special place.

One of the highlights was connecting with teens who were looking for a meaningful experience for themselves. Interacting with other teens that share the same interests as me was fulfilling. I watched as they peered over our camp photos and videos, their faces lighting up with interest. Answering their questions and seeing their enthusiasm grow reminded me of the powerful impact YE#24 can have. I felt a deep sense of purpose knowing I was helping to introduce them to an experience that could shape their futures in such positive ways.

Promoting YE#24 at Youth Expo reaffirmed my belief in the transformative power of the camp. It was a joy to see the spark of interest in so many young eyes and to know that I played a part in guiding them toward an unforgettable journey of growth and discovery.

MAKING FUN MEMORIES

by Alex and Mel Ebarvia, Sponsoring Class Shepherds

Last July 6, 2024, the BLD community held its annual summer picnic celebrating our Community Day at Boundary Bay in Delta. The scorching heat did not deter people from flocking to this beautiful beach to experience the cool sea breeze, and sunshine, enjoy food, play games, and catch up with friends with endless conversation. The program, ably emceed by Gian Cunanan started with a spirit-filled prayer led by Ed and Lisette Natoc. Newly emerged Cluster shepherds Floren and Tita Jose gave a heart-warming opening remark. Everyone enjoyed the sumptuous spread of food prepared by each apostolate and ministry.

The food table's main star was the Lechon courtesy of our generous donors which was deboned within 15 mins. The Cattail Shelter can accommodate 75 people, but many came and put up tents and camping chairs under the trees. It was truly a festive atmosphere especially when games started. Lots of fun and laughter headed by gamemaster, Suzette Sanares.

After everyone filled their tummies with good food, entertainment was provided with songs and dance numbers from our ME 46, SE 22, SPE 9, and Youth members. Much to the enjoyment of the crowd, there was an impromptu dance party when SE sang "Dancing Queen and Mama Mia". Overall, this annual event was a huge success as captured by the smiles on everyone's faces. Indeed, fun and relaxing way to enjoy the presence of brothers and sisters in community.









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I have been involved in Real Estate as a homeowner and in Real Estate Investments since the early 80's. That was the time when interest rates were as high as 22%. That was the time when people were panicking that they could not anymore afford to buy Real Estate due to high interest rates. That was the time when you could still buy a Vancouver Special house for less than \$80,000.00. Those were the days my friends.

After several years of buying, selling and holding investment properties in Greater Vancouver, I would summarize the following lessons in Real Estate:

1. That Real Estate will almost double in value every 8 to 10 years (3 major Real Estate booms happened for the 30 year period with minor booms in between.)
2. That home ownership is still the best option to fight inflation;
3. That Real Estate is the best way to leverage your money (imagine you can control Real Estate with only a down payment of 5% or no down for creative investors).
4. That most of the millionaires made their fortunes in Real Estate and or included Real Estate as part of their investments.
5. That Real Estate is not a quick money investment but follows the principle of buy and hold.

If you are thinking of selling, buying, downsizing or any other Real Estate matters; I am always ready to help you in all your Real Estate needs. It's not too late. I can speak Tagalog and Visayan(Cebuano).



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vulnerability

- — sounds like *truth* feels like *courage*.

Poem by John "patchwork heart" Roedel

Shared by Bebeth dela Rea, DCS Pastoral Apostolate

vulnerability doesn't mean telling others what happened to us
from across a cafe table or from behind a microphone

and then going home from the experience
feeling just as alone as you did before

vulnerability means allowing your human heart blanket
to get sewn to other heart blankets

vulnerability is about connection

we don't share for status
we do it for synergy

we don't confess for clout
we do it to build community

we tell our tale
to invite others
to tell theirs

it's the sacred cycle
of storytelling

we gather in a circle of trust and
say "here is my journey"

then we listen
to the other journeys
that are shared

we take space
then we give space

we pour
then we absorb

we speak
then we listen

we are storytellers
then we are witnesses

vulnerability isn't just about
grave digging in our past
to expose our skeletons

it's about sewing quilts

here is my patch
here is your patch
here is their patch
here is us

here is our story

SHINING LIGHT FOUNDATION VERSE

2 Corinthians 3:2-3— *Servants of the New Covenant*

You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.