



ALLiance for the FAMILY
Foundation Philippines, Inc.

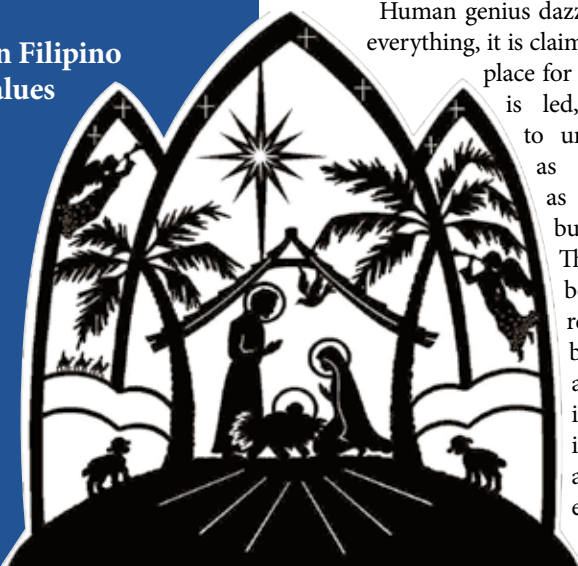
News

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ALFI is a multi-sectoral organization committed to foster and defend the sanctity of marriage, to promote family solidarity, and to protect life at all stages of development.

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Silent Night, Holy Night

by Atty. Maria Concepcion S. Noche

Albert Einstein once said: “The most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible.” He is completely bedazzled by the capacity of the human mind to discover and understand the intricate cosmic scheme of things in such fine detail and depth. To him and other great scientific minds, the world is out there to conquer—which man did and continues to do!

Human genius dazzles. Science explains everything, it is claimed; hence, there is no place for religion or God. Man is led, albeit erroneously, to understand the world as apart from God—as being man’s sole business, not God’s. This incompatibility between science and religion is contrived because science is assumed to make belief in a transcendent God irrelevant or absurd and to encompass an expanse its limited nature cannot cover.

Human genius likewise bewilders. Science has opened up a lot of dizzying possibilities to man. He is overwhelmed by the glitz and glitter of modernization that he forgets the essential horizon of purpose and meaning. He finds himself tossed here and there and carried about by every wind of fashion and lifestyle.

The world is entranced—there is an ever-increasing appetite to know, to discover, to have, to possess, to do. The mind is ruffled, the heart longs and seeks. The crescendo of wants and desires is burgeoning still as advances by leaps and bounds are achieved in practically every aspect of human existence—in science, communication, fashion, technology, media, culture, medicine and law.

Science, however, does not and cannot provide all the answers, nor can it satisfy all wants and desires. It does not and cannot calm the mind, nor can it still the heart. It does not and cannot satisfy the deepest longings of the heart, nor can it fully explain man’s origin, his destiny or purpose of being. Indeed, science is not a

The mind grapples to confront the increasing number of questions posed by man’s daily interaction with his environment: Where am I going? What is the ultimate meaning of my existence?

know-all and cure-all for the panorama of human issues and concerns.

Yet, contemporary world is getting more “a-religious” as it gropes around for answers to satisfy the mind. It continues to defy the longings of the heart for meaning and purpose. Man listens to himself and decides for himself what is true, good, and right, without reference to common values and to a truth that is valid in every time and in every situation. He has as his highest goal the satisfaction of his own ego and desires. To him, everything is negotiable, everything is open to bargaining, even the first of the fundamental rights—the right to life. The acceptance of everything and the exclusion of nothing become his norm to cope with modern life.

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Examining the Human Heart

by Nicole Bautista

No condemnation, justification in abortion movie

When actress Shari Rigby received the script for *October Baby*, she had no clue that it wouldn’t be just another acting job, but a chance for her to share her story. For Rigby, who plays Hannah’s birth mother Cindy Hastings in the movie, *October Baby* was a chance to find healing years after she herself had an abortion. The moment she read the script that directors Jon and Andrew Erwin sent her, she felt that this was the time to open up and help other women find healing, too.

The movie, which reached Philippine theaters on October 1, 2012, is a coming-of-age story about a 17-year-old girl who just discovered that her health problems were caused by a failed abortion. Hannah (Rachel Hendrix), as the young protagonist is called, decides to go on a road trip with her long-time friend Jason (Jason Burkey) and his friends in a long-shot search for her birth mother. The movie is a mix of rom-com and heavy drama, with very few instances of comic relief and the opposite quantity of “beauty shots.”

As it is a film about an abortion survivor, one can’t help calling it a “pro-life movie.” *October Baby*, however, does not focus on the immorality of abortion but instead chooses to let viewers see the issue from different points. The result is a movie that does not seek to condemn or justify the actions of any of the characters, but instead make friends with them: Jacob (John Schneider) and Grace (Jennifer Price), Hannah’s over-protective adoptive parents, had reasons

for keeping the truth from their daughter at the start; Nurse Mary (Jasmine Guy), a nurse at the abortionist’s clinic who assisted in Hannah’s birth and later on revealed to Hannah that she had a brother, had her reasons for quitting the abortion industry;

Human beings have the natural desire to choose the good thing—and repair the bad.



and Cindy, of course, with whom Hannah only had a few moments face-to-face before the former feigned innocence and walked away, had her own *continued on page 2...*

A Matter of Conscience

by Rosie B. Luistro

The choice of a career was not easy for 39-year-old Sheila Buxani-Callao, a Registered Nurse (R.N.), Master of Arts in Nursing (MAN). Like many, she wanted to be someone else—a veterinarian, a pharmacist, a broadcaster even. The choice of a nursing career—carved out for Sheila by siblings all engaged in medical and dental practice—was the beginning of an unrelenting journey.

From questioning her faith to testing her values, being isolated by her peers for refusing to participate in tubal ligations during clinical rotations, and being “harassed” sometimes for her unwillingness to do health education according to “modern methods”—Sheila has experienced them all in her clinical career.

Undaunted by derogatory nicknames hurled at her, she shakes her head at “the concept of building a society where people lack empathy for the unborn, the sick, the old and the dying.” She remembers what her mentor once told her: when a society fails to take care of the most vulnerable, it will eventually lose its soul. She sadly adds, “We may be losing our soul as a nation!”

She also takes issue with the fact that responsible parenthood is often misused by health practitioners to include abortion and unhealthy interventions to block conception in a woman’s body. Not that she is averse to the idea of family planning, but she advocates only natural means. Planning a family, in her view, is planning for the future. She adds, “There is so much room for many more children which will not make life miserable but instead will enable us to strive to work even harder.”

For her, responsible parenthood means “the prudence and generosity of married couples in deciding to have a large family, or, for serious reasons, in choosing to have no more children for a time, or indefinitely, as ruled by their consciences, arriving at these judgments before God.”

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Sheila moved on to the academe after taking up post-graduate studies, but everything changed when she was introduced to community work. She took the challenge, spending almost seven years teaching children, training volunteers, and educating mothers—all because she wanted to “make a difference” in her own little way. Hence, rather than relying primarily on medicines, she would rather “play with children and make families more self-reliant, economically and physically, and empower women so they can decide for themselves.”

While basking in this new-found love, Sheila had to interrupt her career to go home to Mindanao (where she was born and raised) in 2004 to look after her ailing parents. Her father was of Indian descent while her mother was Ilongga. Asked how they had seven children without talking the same language, her dad would say that there is a language *continued on page 4...*

Silent Night, Holy Night...

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The mind grapples to confront the increasing number of questions posed by man's daily interaction with his environment. The heart is laden with things of this world—it is about to burst, tired and burdened. Where am I going? What is the ultimate meaning of my existence?

Do you hear that knock at your door? Let them in, make way for them—make room for Joseph and Mary and welcome Baby Jesus in your heart! The Creator of the universe and the King of heaven and earth has come—in all humility and simplicity! He was born one silent, holy night two thousand years ago in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes. As the stars glittered in the sky, all was calm, all was bright.....

Let us make the light of that silent, holy night in Bethlehem penetrate our hearts and experience the great joy that shines forth from it. In the midst of the noise and confusion, of the disappointment and disillusionment, let us set out on a journey to contemplate and adore Baby Jesus. There is no journey so great as to seek Christ, there is no path worth following unless it leads us to Him.

True, the universe dazzles and the human mind comprehends. Truer still, wealth and power command and the weak follow. But it is only the peace and light of that silent night, holy night that satisfies the mind and calms the heart. It is only His Love that matters. ■ mcnoche@philonline.com



ALFI would like to thank Jess Abrera for his contribution as guest cartoonist for ALFI News.

Valuing a Valued Tradition

by Renelyn A. Tan *Former Regional Director (World Youth Alliance Asia Pacific)*

As a child, I always got excited whenever I would see that our house calendar's August page had already changed to the month of September. To me, it signalled the beginning of a long and cherished holiday tradition for people of all ages. It was also quite easy to observe how others were preparing for it. You could hear yuletide songs on the radio, view festive displays all over town, join various gatherings of merriment, and the list goes on. Once again, Christmas is just around the corner.

Once we take a deeper look at ourselves, we discover that the real value of Christmas lies in the faith, hope, and love found in each of our hearts.

As the years passed though, I have heard some remarks from friends that Christmas is changing. As change can either be good or bad, I pondered on what they meant when they said this. People gave different reasons but the most common I heard were the following: less financial resources than last year, fewer gifts received than last year, or less time spent with family or friends than last year. Humbly, I attempt to understand the reason for this changing notion.

Christmas is changing because I have less financial resources than last year. Over time, people have become more creative in preparing for this season. As a consequence, most people feel that in order to have a happy Christmas, they need to have a lot of money with them at this particular time. Though this is of course the most comfortable set-up, financial resources do not certify a meaningful celebration.

Christmas is changing because I received fewer gifts than last year. People say that Christmas is the season of giving and naturally, gifts become a thoughtful way of sharing your appreciation for someone. A possible problem with this is that people feel that in order to have a great Christmas, they need to receive lots of gifts from family and friends. Though this is a welcome treat, material things do not necessarily give people long-term happiness.

Christmas is changing because I spent less time with family or friends than last year. This can either be because people work overseas or are busier than ever. Some people might feel that because they are not able to spend time with close family or friends, the celebration becomes less meaningful. Though being together physically is the best scenario, there are many ways available today to make the most out of this once a year event.

Amidst all the happenings of the season, it is good to revisit the deeper reasons why Christmas is indeed a time to be valued. It is helpful to remember that on Christmas Day, we are celebrating the birth of a very special person. Born in a manger, the child Jesus experienced one of the most humbling ways that a person can experience in one's birth. At that time, Jesus' parents had no money to spare, no welcoming gifts to receive, and no big family to welcome them. Yet in spite of all these seeming limitations, this moment started the beginning of a very special tradition that would continue to be observed many years after.

Though it may appear that the realities during Christmas are changing, a deeper reflection shows that the things that matter most remain constant. Having faith, we find the value in trusting that God will provide. Having hope, we find the courage to believe things can get better. Having love, we experience the most meaningful relationships we can find. Once we take a deeper look at ourselves, we can discover that the real value of Christmas lies in the faith, hope, and love found in each of our hearts.

For us to remain true to the meaning of Christmas, we have to remember that when Jesus was born, all there was were the essentials. And today, for us to truly appreciate the value of this celebration, we have to look at our own essentials—the intangible things that make our lives beautiful in spite of what we do not have. ■ ree@wagmuna.com

LOVE FOR ALL SEASONS

by Ree Soria
Media Marketing Manager
True Love Waits

Christmas, the season of giving is here once again. This is the time of the year when we make a list of people to whom we want to give gifts. Family members, relatives, office mates, godchildren, and friends enter this list. But is giving only for Christmas? Are wrapped material things what we can only give? And must we only give to those we know?

Our idea of "gift" is so restricted that all we think of giving is what our money can buy. More than what we can buy in stores, there is also a gift that most of us neglect to give: time. It may also be the most valuable gift that we can ever give because it cannot be bought nor sold. It's the most precious gift that parents can probably give to their children. The gift that someone can give to a friend whose family is away. The gift that a child can receive from a visitor in an orphanage. The gift that prisoners can receive from anyone who might care to remember them.

We've heard of the saying "Love your neighbor as yourself" so often that it has become nothing more than a feel-good cliché. But think of that statement again. The "neighbor/s" we are talking about are not just the people living within your neighborhood. Your neighbor is any person who might surround you wherever you go. Technically: everyone around you.

Love your neighbor as yourself. What does it really mean?

We feed ourselves with food that pleases our palate and clothe ourselves with fashionable garments that make us feel comfortable and look good. If that isn't enough evidence that we love ourselves, let's add more: we buy gadgets that will make our lives easier and enjoyable; we entertain ourselves with all the entertainment we can possibly get (movies, concerts, Internet, games, etc).

If this is how much we invest in loving ourselves, ought we not invest as much in our neighbors if we truly love them? How much I feed myself, so will I feed my neighbor. How much I clothe myself, so will I clothe my neighbor. How much I entertain myself, will I also entertain my neighbor.

Christmas, being a particular season in a year, isn't a matter of everyday celebration. Yet, should it measure the length of "season" that we can give love? Maybe ours will be a more loving world if we will think less of ourselves and more of loving others. From this year onwards, why don't we give love on Christmas day and for the rest of the days that aren't Christmas? Maybe Love isn't for any particular season alone but something that must be seen and felt in all seasons of our lives. ■ renelyn@wya.net

Examining the Human Heart... *continued from p.1*

rejecting the gift of life that arrived 17 years before.

The movie does not scrutinize and comment on the right and the wrong; it just lays down the facts for the viewer. It encourages people to think about the story and to put themselves in the place of each of these flawed characters to understand them. Even Hannah is flawed. While it may be difficult to understand the struggles of an abortion survivor, it is easy to understand anger, which Hannah has a lot of.

The verdict? October Baby is a good film for the whole family—a way to get people to talk about abortion without taking sides. As a romantic movie, it has its sweet moments;

particularly notable is its success in showing that romance need not entail sleeping together. The comic parts are welcome, as the story gets really heavy-handed with the drama mid-movie.

As for Rigby's purpose of using the movie as a way to help post-abortive women find healing, if it worked for one person it will work for many. The strong messages of forgiveness and the chance to start over give viewers—post-abortive or not—a sense of hope: that good things can still come from bad situations, and that human beings, flawed in more ways than one, have that natural desire to choose the good thing—and repair the bad, if need be. ■



The World Meeting of Families: by Frank and Gerry Padilla

A family celebration with the Holy Father

The 7th World Meeting of Families (WMF) was held on May 30 to June 3, 2012 in Milan, Italy. It consisted of two parts—the International Theological-Pastoral Congress, and the meetings with the Holy Father, Benedict XVI. The theme of the WMF was “The Family: Work and Celebration.”

The family, work and celebration represent three aspects of life, starting with family and opening it up to the world. Work and celebration are ways in which the family inhabits social “space” and experiences human “time.” The theme looks at relationships (the family), the world (work) and human elements of time (celebration).

As is the case in all WMF events, people came to Milan from all over the world. Families from five continents came together and discussed their experiences and testimonies. The participants learned and worked together during the Congress. They confirmed their faith and celebrated with the Holy Father.

The various events built up one on the other until the joyful culmination of the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with Pope Benedict XVI. The Theological-Pastoral Congress was attended by 7,000 delegates. The meeting of the Holy Father with confirmands drew 70,000 people, mostly youth. That was followed by the Celebration of Witnesses at Bresso Park with 450,000. Then the open-air Mass at Bresso Airport with the Holy Father had 950,000 attendees.

At the concert in his honor at La Scala opera house, Pope Benedict XVI said: “It is in families that we first experience how human beings are not created to live closed in themselves, but in relation with others. It is in the family that we understand that self realization does not mean being guided by selfishness and putting oneself at the centre, but giving oneself. It is in the family that the light of peace begins to burn in people’s hearts, so as to illuminate our world.”

At the open-air Mass on the final day, Pope Benedict XVI said: “The liturgical Solemnity of the Holy Trinity that we are celebrating today... urges us to commit ourselves to live our communion with God and with one another according to the model of Trinitarian communion. ... It is not only the Church that is called to be the image of One God in Three Persons, but also the family, based on marriage between man and woman. ... God created us male and female, equal in dignity, but also with respective and complementary characteristics, so that the two might be a gift for each other, might value

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each other and might bring into being a community of love and life. It is love that makes the human person the authentic image of God. ... family life is the first and irreplaceable school of social virtues, such as respect for persons, gratuitousness, trust, responsibility, solidarity, cooperation. Dear married couples, watch over your children and, in a world dominated by technology, transmit to them, with serenity and trust, reasons for living, the strength of faith, pointing them towards high goals and supporting them in their fragility.”

The pope concludes: “One final point: man, as the image of God, is also called to rest and to celebrate. ... For us Christians, the feast day is Sunday, the Lord’s Day, the weekly Easter. ... It is the day of the family, on which to ex-

perience together a sense of celebration, encounter, sharing, not least through taking part in Mass. Dear families, despite the relentless rhythms of the modern world, do not lose a sense of the Lord’s Day! ... Family, work, celebration: three of God’s gifts, three dimensions of our lives that must be brought into a harmonious balance.”

On the whole, the WMF (done once every three years) was a grand and joyful event where the people of God were



The official Philippine delegation to the WMF led by Bishop Gabriel Reyes (second from left)

refreshed and energized, wonderful friendships made or affirmed, the continuing focus on the family emphasized, and Catholics once again sent back into the world to fight for faith, family, and life.

The official Philippine delegation was led by Bishop Gabriel Reyes, Chair of the Episcopal Commission on Family and Life. Together with him were his secretary, Fr Giovanni Yago, and the delegate-couple, Kit & Fenny Tatad. Also with them were members of the Pontifical Council for the Family—Archbishop Socrates Villegas and council Frank & Gerry Padilla. ■ fapcfc@gmail.com

Coming Out of the Closet: The Homosexual Agenda

by Anthony James U. Perez Editor, FYI Magazine, Pro-Life Philippines

From Starbucks to Google, and now more recently Facebook, the world’s top companies have been campaigning to legitimize and legalize same-sex marriage. With President Barack Obama supporting its legalization and New York city leading the way, it seems that the world is finally embracing the evils of liberalism and modernism. This tide has not spared the Philippines. It is not uncommon to run into someone who is living the homosexual lifestyle. In fact, homosexuals, with their penchant to always excel and outdo themselves, often hold positions of either power, or influence, or both.

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Another war the LGBT community is waging is a war on public opinion. This is why to them it is important to hold key positions in the government or in business. They use their positions in order to advance the LGBT agenda, like what the aforementioned companies are doing now. In forums and discussions, and even in street demonstrations, they often use carefully-selected words like “homophobic” and “bigot” or “hater.” All of these are designed to attract public sentiment towards their agenda. Anyone who disagrees is a hater or a bigot or homophobic; when I come to think about it, I neither hate nor fear them at all, but do disapprove of their lifestyle. Nevertheless, as a consequence of my disagreeing with them, I am now labeled—unfairly, if I may say—as a “good-for-nothing religious zealot who spews out hatred.”

Interestingly, one thing the LGBT camp always calls for is “tolerance.” Again, it is just another way of using se-

mantics in order to sway public opinion against Pro-lifers and those opposed to the homosexual lifestyle, who are called “intolerant.” One must remember though, that the verb “tolerate” has to have a direct object—an answer to the question: tolerate what? And the answer to that question, no matter how you spin it, is always something negative, and always something considered evil. A parent “tolerates” his kid’s shenanigans; a teacher tolerates her students’ misbehavior.

And so we have to ask the LGBT community: What do you ask us to tolerate?

The Reason for the Opposition

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

2331 “God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in his own image.... God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion.

Many make the connection between the word vocation and the priestly orders, forgetting that marriage itself is a vocation, too. It is a calling for a man to be a man to his wife, and the woman to be a wife to her husband. What roles do men and women play and how do they affect the dynamics of married life? Let us remember that Adam—the first man according to the bible—was asked by God to have dominion over the animals, plants, and practically everything in the Earth. This meant responsibility on his part. Seeing that Adam was alone, and felt alone, God created Eve, as a partner to the first man. This meant love and caring for Adam on the part of Eve. Thus, we see that in the earliest of days, God carved out for every man and every woman seeking the vocation of marriage the roles they have to play as man and wife: the man is the breadwinner and the woman takes care of her husband and their family.

To many feminists, liberals, and post-modern thinkers, this is a travesty. Feminists contend that the woman should not be seen as mere housewives, and should be allowed to explore a career for herself. Fortunately, the Church does not impose that men cannot be stay-home dads and women cannot work in the office. But even as the roles reverse

in this case, the inner calling of each man is still to protect his family and provide for them; the inner calling of each woman is still to love her husband and her family.

Thus we can see that homosexual relationships are intrinsically disordered; physiologically, these relationships are incompatible. The Church frowns on them because they are contrary to natural law, and are closed to the gift of life. Interestingly, a man who is in a relationship with another man emasculates his lover, who is supposed to be taking care of, but instead is taken care of. At the same time, a woman who is in a relationship with a woman cannot be true to her calling of taking care of her sons and daughters when her union cannot even produce offspring.

What they need: A caring heart, and the cross

2358 The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. They do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God’s will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord’s Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.

What the catechism calls for is clear: for us to give them our utmost respect, and for them to unite their difficulties and trials with the Lord’s sacrifice at the cross. Every Catholic and every pro-lifer should then be ready to fight the advance of the homosexual agenda. It is best to educate ourselves constantly on this issue as well as other family and life issues. Consider this as our duty to defend the faith and to defend the Church. In fact, every one of us is by baptism Catholic Soldiers waging war against evil. This is no time to be passive; we are at war against the principalities of evil itself. All it takes if for us to do nothing in order for evil to triumph. Let us take to the streets, to the forums, chat rooms, and classrooms, to the very ends of the Earth—and proclaim that Christ lives in us.

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:5) ■ life@prolife.org.ph

On Filipino Values

by Mercedes B. Suleik

What indeed are Filipino values? Are these unique to the Filipino, as we sometimes are wont to brag about, and also sometimes talk about the “corrupting” values of the West? It’s difficult to write about “Filipino values” off the bat, and so I thought of going back to some of the materials that I have read over the years.

An ancient pamphlet I have is “Four Readings on Philippine Values,” an IPC Paper edited by Frank Lynch. Another more recent book I have is one by Bernardo Villegas, *The Book of Values*, published in 1996. It struck me that Villegas and Lynch have slightly different definitions of values, viz:

When talking of “Filipino values,” we must return to absolute universal moral values which are by definition good or right.

Villegas distinguished between values and virtues, and defines values in two ways: “Values... can refer to absolute moral principles which are ethically and socially binding to all human beings, at all times and in all places... they can also refer to personal beliefs of individual persons or the collective concepts of a cultural group. If we use the first meaning, then values by definition must be good or right. Only by living according to absolute moral values can a person practice virtue. Under the second interpretation, there can be good and bad values, right and wrong values, as we express in ordinary speech.”

Lynch defined values as “standards used in making decisions... and... proceed from a structural principle by which statuses are distinct and unequal in prestige, and a conviction that the status is higher in comparison with another situation.” He adds that no values are uniquely Filipino, and the elements are the same in various value systems; however, Filipinos emphasize certain behaviors, his paper discussing the importance Filipinos place on social acceptance.

Social acceptance is an implied postulate for Filipinos, a cultural theme, Lynch said. Thus two intermediate values relative to this are smoothness of interpersonal relations and sensitivity to personal affront (“amor propio”), and so we have “pakikisama” and “galang.”

From the same IPC papers, another study by Mary Hollnsteiner proposed reciprocity, while a universal norm of behavior with the power to influence social behavior, differs from one society to another. In the Filipino, she found three aspects of reciprocity: (1) contractual reciprocity, which is a voluntary agreement between two or more persons to behave towards one another in a specified way for a specified time; (2) quasi-contractual reciprocity, examples of which are “*abuloy*” (differing when it is between equals or with a “superior”) and “*utang na loob*,” which marks a sense of gratitude, return of favor with “interest” so that one does not remain in the other’s debt (hence the rationalization that gifts to government officials or persons in authority are not considered as immoral bribes, but as tokens of gratitude or appreciation).

The values Jaime Bulatao derived from his study were basically classified into four: (1) emotional closeness and security in the family, which would bring about sacrifices for the family, especially mothers and wives are expected to sacrifice for the good of the husband and children, and tender relationships expressed in “*carinio*,” “*mapagpatawad*” or forgiving, worry about the good especially of the female children (chastity is highly prized); (2) authority value, where the approval of an authority figure is desirable; (3) valued too is economic and social betterment; and (4) values of patience, suffering, and endurance.

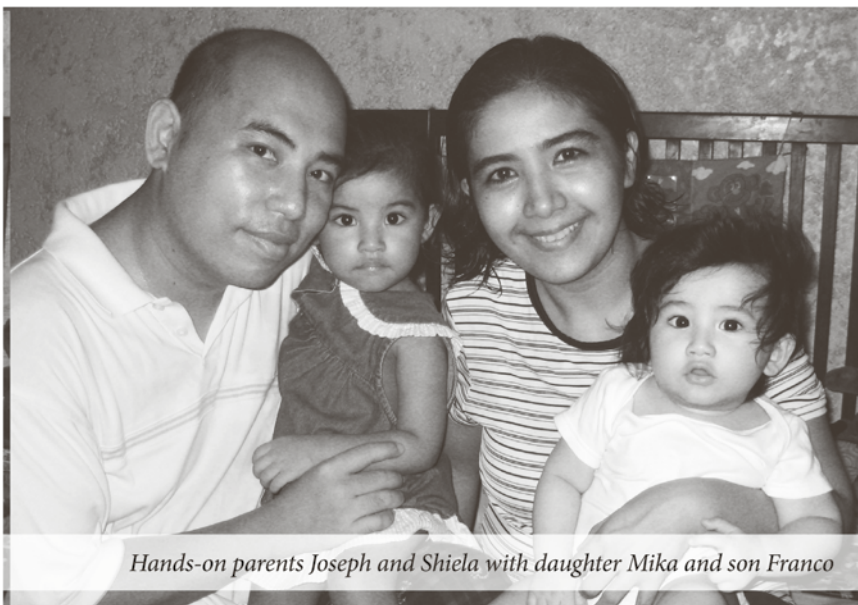
A summary of Filipino values might be classified into four types: (1) spiritual values which include *takot sa Diyos, madasalin, palasimba, debosyon, bait, and moralidad*; (2) relationship values, which include *pakiki-kapwa tao, utang na loob, pakikisama, may isang salita, mapagkumbaba, and maaasahan*; (3) workplace values, which include *sipag, ayos na trabaho, and pagkamasinop, pagkamatulungin, may kusa, pakikisama, pagkapalangiti, palabra de honor, integridad*; and (4) community values which include *bayanihan, paggalang sa batas, pagka-makawang-gawa, pakikisama, delicadeza, linis na pangalan, integridad, moralidad*. As one will note, some of them intersect within classifications. And one could go on and on discussing whether some of these Filipino values are good or bad, desirable or not, con-

tributory to human development or not (the discussion of which really goes back to the second definition provided by Villegas).

And so I would like to move on to a theme that Villegas covered in his Book of Values, going back to his first definition that refers to absolute moral principles which are ethically and socially binding to all human beings at all times and in all places. He describes the values that should underpin human development. The first concerns the obligation of every individual and every society to build a civilization of love (as an ideal first proposed by Pope Paul VI and enriched by Pope John Paul II), the model for this task being the individual family, in which every member is loved and respected for himself. The second delves into the role of women, especially in a developing country such as the Philippines—many important values are inculcated in children by mothers with the cooperation of fathers—and the harm that a distorted concept of feminism can sow and weaken the moral fiber of society.

Another value that is especially relevant to populous countries of the world where hundreds of people still live in dehumanizing poverty. The more affluent societies are urged to have a preferential option for the poor through efforts to educate and train them, thus requiring governments to truly commit themselves to fostering the common good, engaging in good governance both in the private and public sectors. Market forces must operate as freely as possible, and economic science can demonstrate that a pro-life stance is compatible with authentic sustainable human development, debunking the “superstition of population control.”

Indeed, when talking of “Filipino values,” we must in fact return to absolute universal moral values which are by definition good or right. Only by living according to absolute moral values can one practice virtue. The formation of the character of the young is especially important. According to another author, Bill Bennet, whom Villegas cited, “A person who is morally literate will be immeasurably better equipped than a morally illiterate person to reach a reasoned and ethically defensible position on... tough issues.” And thus, to my mind, values formation that leads to virtuous or moral behavior is what is necessary in these times, if we wish to have a society that is faithful to the true end of man. ■ merci.suleik@gmail.com



Hands-on parents Joseph and Shiela with daughter Mika and son Franco

called love. Though not a Filipino, “he was compassionate and lived like one!”

Her dad succumbed to heart attack and her mother died of bone cancer. Looking back, Sheila remembers choosing life even during her darkest moments. The agonizing stages of her mother’s illness gave her reason to depend on prayers

methodologies often clash with her own beliefs. She does not hesitate to publicly proclaim that these programs are not in line with what she believes as moral and legal. During ensuing arguments, she reminds co-workers of the pledge they made on their graduation day—to protect and

A Matter of Conscience ... *continued from p.1*

and to offer the pains. Indeed, the lives of her parents and the lessons they shared served as her inspiration.

After both parents passed on, Sheila returned to Manila and took on a new job as a Lecturer to teach Community Health Development. She helped improve the health care delivery system, educated future nurses and analyzed important issues such as reproductive health and bioethics. Her relationship with a Non-Government Organization (NGO) was rekindled.

Many of the government’s priorities in health care through

defend life at all stages of development.

Today, she is very focused on her young family—a loving wife to Reynaldo Joseph, Jr., who works with the Advanced Science and Technology Institute (DOST) and a doting mother to her two little angels, Ava Malaika (4) and Franco Suraj (2). She is a nurse; she is in the academe as well as with Family Cooperation Health Services Foundation (FAMCOHSEF), an NGO with a mission to train Barangay Health workers on the basics of Primary Health Care.

“How different it was then,” she muses. “We did not have virtues classes as we do now, nor were we brought to poor communities, but my parents showered us with examples of humility, generosity, and gratitude, and this is where I base my life on.”

As hard as it is to stand up for life and stand by the truth, Sheila feels proud to defend her beliefs and her faith. As she pushes on with this task, she concludes: “I raise my family, I get invited to review classes for nursing students, and I work with an NGO. Through all these, I find fulfillment in the knowledge that I can spread the culture of living and loving in all aspects of my life. This will never change.”

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