

Parents First

Monthly Bulletin for Parents of Southridge School

December 2023 issue



“Advent is here. What a marvelous time in which to renew your desire, your nostalgia, your real longing for Christ to come – for him to come every day to your soul in the Eucharist. The Church encourages us: Ecce veniet! – He is about to arrive!”

ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

The Forge, no. 548

This Advent season, we are enjoined to prepare our hearts and homes for coming of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, and the celebration of his nativity.

Inspired by St. Josemaria Escriva, in the company of Our Lady, we want to “try to imagine how she spent these months, waiting for her Son to be born.” We especially want to seek Our Lady’s help in our: vigilant listening, reading, reflection, personal prayer, and charity towards others.

“This time of Advent is a time for hope. These great horizons of our Christian vocation, this unity of life built on the presence of God our Father, can and ought to be a daily reality” (Christ is Passing By, no. 11).





MAKING CONNECTION

BY SHERWIN AND RICHELLE SIKAT
Grade 5 parent

It is again that time of the year when people come together to celebrate and give thanks for the blessings in their lives. It's a time to reflect on the past year and to look forward to the future with hope and optimism.

Making connection is an important part of this season. It's a time when people come together to share their experiences and to support one another. Whether it's through family gatherings, community events, or volunteering, people find ways to connect with others and to build meaningful relationships.

It is also an opportune time to reconnect with cut or lost relations. To forgive those who have offended you and to make amends to those who you have offended and hurt. To seek long lost friends, who at one point in your life have brought you joy and love. To reach out to that sibling or cousin who was there when you were growing up but have lost touch with.

Gratitude is also an important part of this season. It's a time to give thanks for the people and things in our lives that bring us joy and happiness. From the food on our tables to the roof over our heads, there are many things to be grateful for. By taking the time to express our gratitude, we can cultivate a sense of contentment and peace.

One of the best ways to cultivate gratitude is through acts of kindness. Whether it's volunteering at your local community or donating to a charity, acts of kindness can help us to feel more connected to others and to the world around us. They can also help us to develop a sense of purpose and meaning in our lives.

Another way to cultivate gratitude is through mindfulness. By taking the time to be present in the moment and to appreciate the world around us, we can develop a deeper sense of gratitude and appreciation. Whether it's through meditation, prayer, or simply taking a walk in nature, mindfulness can help us to cultivate a sense of peace and contentment.

In this season of connection and gratitude, it is a time to come together and to celebrate the blessings in our lives. By cultivating a sense of connection and gratitude, we can find meaning and purpose in our lives and develop a deeper sense of contentment and peace. So, take the time to connect with others, to express your gratitude, and to cultivate a sense of mindfulness. You'll be amazed at how much it can transform your life.

"It's a time to give thanks for the people and things in our lives that bring us joy and happiness"



NO VACANCY

BY ANGELO PUYAT
Grade 2 Dad

As one reads this, chances are one is rigorously ticking things off that annual gift-list, suffering through carmageddon jams induced by the holiday frenzy, and have heard Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is You" for the thousandth time. Yes, the Christmas season is upon us. The most wonderful time of the year! And yet, with all the hullabaloo and excitement, one may also find that nagging feeling inside. The one that keeps asking, "what is all this frenetic preparation for?"

From the Latin word "adventus" which means coming or "ad-venire" meaning to come to, the season of Advent brings with it an obvious element of preparation. A preparation geared towards a great anticipation. Ask any child nowadays and this orchestration will probably be centered on something wrapped with a bough, or treats brought by some big jolly fella in a red suit. It's easy to get consumed in all the trappings of the holiday season, but Advent and its climax Christmas, is really rooted in quite the opposite.

The faithful are reminded to draw their eyes back to that first Christmas, where in a dark and damp lower dwelling, two nobodies, accompanied only by their trusty donkey, saw the miracle of the Most High taking the lowliest form of man...a baby. There was no room for them that night, on every door that they knocked on, except that humble space reserved for animals. In modern times, the revenge travelers would simply read "No Vacancy." Let our advent begin with this.

In a Christmas homily delivered back in 1963, St. Josemaria Escriva expressed, "You must look at the child in the manger. He is our love. Look at him, realizing that the whole thing is a mystery. We need to accept this mystery on faith and use our faith to explore it very deeply." [1]

Yes, advent does prepare us for a great feast. But as the church teaches, preparations are not just for wanton merry-making. "Like Lent, the liturgical color of Advent is purple since both are seasons that prepare us for great feast days. Advent also includes an element of penance in the sense of preparing, quieting, and disciplining our hearts for the full joy of Christmas." [1]

"Quieting." "Disciplining." Words that one would not necessarily equate with the caroling and egg-nogging we usually indulge in during the season. In the same homily given by Escriva, the founder also says, "There is a great simplicity about his birth. Our Lord comes without any fanfare. No one knows about him. On earth only Mary and Joseph share in the divine adventure... and then the shepherds and then the wise men from the East. They were the only witnesses of this transcendental event which unites heaven and earth, God and man."

That being said, one doesn't need to drearily go through the season feeling deprived and gloomy. Say for instance, the music we sing with our children. Maybe this year we sing less "Jingle Bells" and instead internalize the words of "Silent Night." Or draw images from "O Little Town of Bethlehem" instead of Rudolph lighting up the reindeer carriage. Decorations are always part of the season. But maybe this year we highlight more the Belen, instead of just jazzing up the tree.

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The message then is succinct yet uncomplicated. The preparations for Advent need not be too hard. The going back to the sacraments are always a good way to begin. Misa de Gallo or the Simbang Gabi masses are a time-honored tradition of our culture that we can inculcate in the young ones. And the giving is better than receiving mantra never fails...ask them how they can live this better especially this season.

It has been almost three years since a mysterious virus turned the world topsy turvy. As we gear up for a Christmas that sees circumstances return to normal, maybe it would be worthwhile to look back on what was taken away during those times, and give thanks for what we are allowed to enjoy now. Perhaps we go out of the "quarantine-built comfort zones" and begin reaching out, repairing, and re-connecting. Perhaps a family member needs remembering, or an old friend needs a warm smile. It's refreshing after all to see loved ones smile in full beam, without the need of wearing those ubiquitous face masks.

In one of his reflections on the Rosary, Bishop Robert Barron opines that the Virgin Mary knew how to receive gifts. She was ready to receive. Let us then come to our Mother during this season and ask her to open hearts as to what her son is "giving" us.

A Christ-filled Advent season to all!

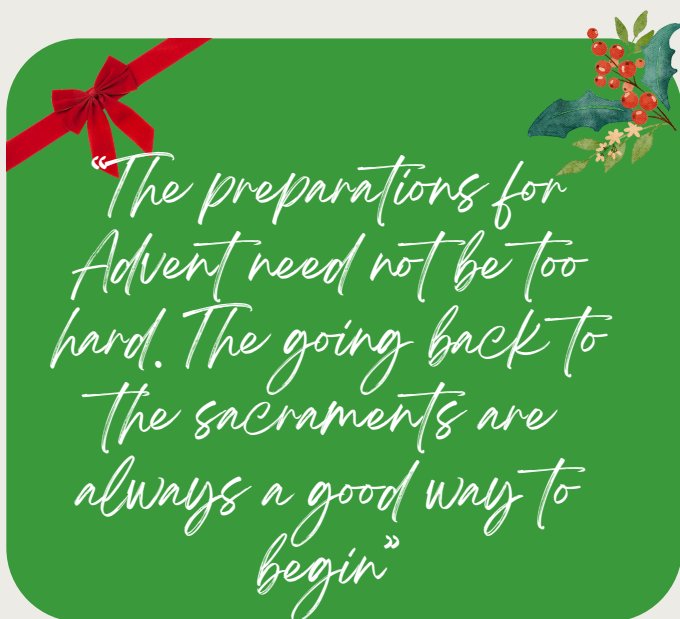


SEASON OF GRATITUDE

BY RAP AND KAYE PLATON
Grade 4 parent

For our family, Christmas is that time of the year we look forward to the most. It is the longest "break" we can have together because even our hectic advertising workload typically slows down during this time. Our three children know this, and along with the gifts under the Christmas Tree, they look forward to days with no school or work to disturb the time we can have together. We hang out, go on little adventures when we can in and out of the city, and just spend time together.

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Our Christmas season is filled with family time – whether just us 5, with our immediate family, and even extended family. There are the yearly Christmas get-togethers with different branches of the family, where the kids can reconnect with their cousins and other relatives they don't get to see often. Then there is the yearly tradition that our children participate in with one set of grandparents, where we share our blessings with an orphanage that the family supports. Finally, there is the tradition of going to mass on Christmas Eve and New Year's Day, where we thank the Lord for the year that has been and pray for the year to come. We eagerly look forward to all of these as December approaches.

As the years go by and our children get older, the more intentional we are in making our Christmas about being together, fostering and strengthening connections with each other and the rest of the family. Using the gifts they receive as an example and a way to open the conversation, we also use this time to teach more intentionally about gratitude for the blessings we have received in the past year.

From all of us, we wish you all a Joyous Christmas and a Blessed New Year!



A TIME FOR TRADITIONS

BY RENE AND ANNA AGUIRRE

Grade 5 parent

The Christmas season, like for many families, stands out as a vibrant time for our family. Its threads are woven with the hues of connection and gratitude. In our family, this time of the year is more about the warmth that emanates from quality time, shared traditions and the joyous laughter of our children.

The season rolls in and our family rides the wave of connections and a whole lot of thank-yous. It's that special time when our home gets a little makeover with festive cheer and our Advent wreath finds its cozy spot right next to our Belen and Christmas tree. It's not just about decking the halls; it's about the stories that twinkle as bright as the tree lights when we're all huddled around for some reflection & thanksgiving prayers, candles flickering, and hearts full.

For our little ones, the thrill of Christmas is made tangible by the mischievous elf on the shelf, a sprite of Santa's entourage. Each morning brings a new chapter of the elf's overnight escapades, igniting bursts of giggles and wide-eyed astonishment. This playful tradition stitches a quilt of memories that they will one day pass down to their own children. Our older boys, now 11 and 14, have outgrown the elf's charms, but they have found a new role in our holiday narrative.

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*"We thank the Lord
for the year that has
been and pray for the
year to come"*

(Continuation of page 04)

They have become co-conspirators in the elf's antics, crafting scenarios to delight their younger siblings. This evolution of their participation is a testament to the growth and deepening of their own spirits of connection and gratitude.

We also use this time to share our blessings with those less fortunate. Together with our household and partners in various advocacies, we strive to make the season brighter for orphans and support our dedicated missionaries. This shared purpose has become a long tradition teaching us all the true essence of season.

A tradition that has also become particularly dear to us is the annual letter my spouse and I write to our children. We have been doing this for more than 10 years now. In these letters, we weave the narrative of the year past, highlighting learnings and blessings, and charting the course for the year ahead. It's a cherished moment of reflection and anticipation that we all look forward to.

As we discuss our goals, the conversation is less a solemn assembly and more a lively council, where dreams are shared and plans take shape amidst laughter and playful debates.

So, as we wrap up another year under the gentle glow of Christmas lights, our family tradition isn't just about making merry. It's about doing our bit to sprinkle a little extra happiness where we can. We also make sure that as we count our blessings, we're also reaching out to add a bit of joy to someone else's tally. That's the kind of math that really adds up for us. Merry Christmas to everyone and God bless!



HELPING HANDS, HANDS IN PRAYER

BY VEN AND CHARM GUCE
Grade 3 parent

"Can you hear the Christmas bells ring? And the sound of the carolers too?..."

The Sound of Life: Jose Mari Chan

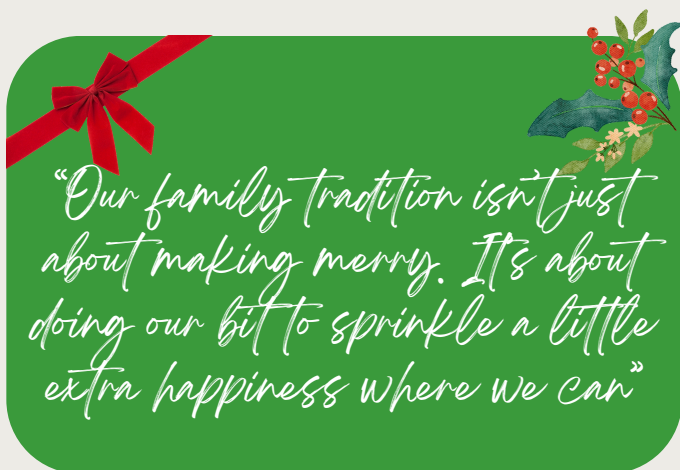
With the hustle and bustle of the early morning of September, the tunes of Jose Mari Chan's famous carols never fail to send the panic of the Christmas season fast approaching. Shopping lists and Christmas events are the first thoughts to pop in my head. It's the season of busy-ness of the long holidays and events here and there that make me worry. Delineate from the reason of the season, I am guilty of not having my first thoughts on the Season of Advent.

THE REASON FOR THE SEASON

Colorful twinkling lights across the streets, big "parols" and "belens" in every building, meeting Santa Clause in Rustan's, carolers everywhere--these are all part of my core memories of Christmas. These memories truly make me smile from ear to ear. These tug at heartstrings that make me relive precious moments with much glee.

My core memories of Advent is somewhat different. Advent makes me think about the time when I saved up my allowance so my siblings and I can buy my mom a gift back when we were in high school.

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The desperate early morning “timbang-gabi” the ceremony that tested my fortitude and steadfastness was the ultimate sacrifice that helped me grow in my little faith after my prayer requests were granted. Another one was a time when we, as a family, reached out to estranged relatives knowing if we succeeded in rebuilding our communication once again, then Christmas will be much more heartfelt and complete. It took time before we reunited again in celebrating as a family, but there I learned about hope and faith in God’s mercy and love. Indeed, the season of Christmas, for as long as society continues to practice its glitz and glam, will always give delight and a universal overwhelming captivity. Celebrating the season of Advent while embracing all of life’s travails and challenges will always give one meaning and purpose.

A GENERATION OF PIETY...

For as long as I can remember, I was surrounded by pious women. From my great grandmother, to my “lola”, and mom. They were all tough acts to follow. Back in the day, my first rosaries were given to me by my great grandmother. As an eight year old, “Nanay” as we would call her, became my advocate for my rosary collection. They were all exquisite, big and antique. She was also the one who first taught me to pray the Hail Mary in Spanish. Years later I would realize it was her way of telling me I will have to pray it with her as soon as I learned it. From each generation, I have fond memories of how each matriarch in our family showed true Christian faith is lived in the home and passed down to family members. It was through my mom that I had learned how Advent should be a time for reflection about how Christ came to us more than just a time for gift-giving and parties. While growing up, she and my dad instilled in us the spirit of generosity, but particularly every Christmas, my mom always asked us: “This Christmas, what is your gift for Jesus?”

The Advent Season is all about reflecting on how we can prepare our hearts and homes for Christ’s birth. More than the gifts and celebration, the deeper meaning of the true Christmas can be found in the manger.



I always saw my mom as a great story teller. Every year, our elaborate “belens” more than the Christmas trees were the highlight of all our decors. She would gather us around the “belen ” and ask us to imagine the scene. From the shepherds to the angels, to Mary and Joseph, we would converse about how lowly our Lord came into this world. She would then go on to relate this loving choice of our Lord to come into the world with no comfort at all and how He only seeks our hearts full of compassion and love for Him, just like how the shepherds and the three kings sought and found Him. Indeed Advent is a time to know Christ deep love for all of us and how He waits for all of us. This confidence brought about by our realization of Christ’s love is what moves our hearts to prepare our soul for Him. It is this same reason that moves us to show our love in deeds for others.

“Advent invites us to stop and be silent, to take in the presence of God. These are days when we can think again about Saint Josemaría’s words: “we’ve got to be convinced that God is always near us. We live as though he were far away, in the heavens high above, and we forget that he is also continually by our side. He is there like a loving father. He loves each one of us more than all the mothers in the world can love their children; helping us, inspiring us, blessing – and forgiving.”

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FAMILY TRADITIONS

Back in the 90's, one of the growing popularity then was the use of artificial plants in homes. I remember my mom took great pride in bringing a giant one home. It was six feet tall and perfect to place our "belen" under. For many years, it became our Christmas ribbon-filled tree. The aim was every day every mortification becomes a ribbon offering to that tree. My mom emphasized the tree should be filled up with hundreds of ribbons by Christmas. A tree filled with ribbons of services, kindness and forgiveness offered are the best gifts for Christ she would say.

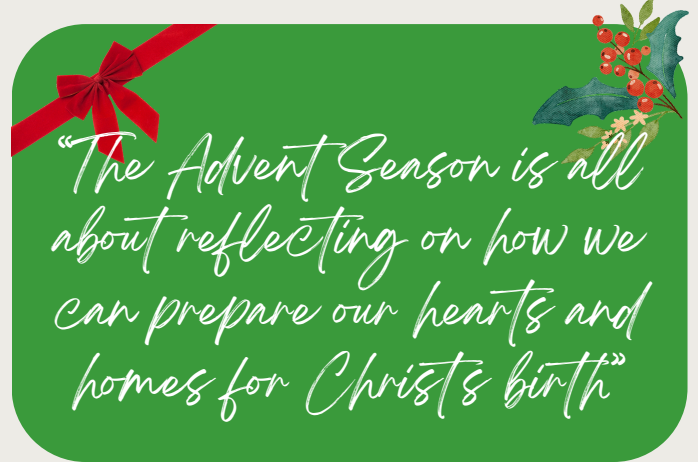
Following suit, I replicated this tradition in our home when the kids were very young. This time, instead of a tree, we used the ribbons as the cushion for Baby Jesus' manger. It was easy for them to understand and show their love in making acts of kindness, service and forgiveness knowing every ribbon they contribute will make our Lord more comfortable in his cold, hard and tiny manger.

Each day brings about many challenges but also helping hands. I would often remind the kids to enthusiastically grow their bright haloes during the season of advent as we try to encourage each one in the family to be more generous, patient and kind. Many heated arguments often turn into funny moments when they start pretending and comparing to see each other's growing horns with every increase in volume of their voices.

THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

I was very fortunate to have little kids who loved to perform for an audience. They never hesitated to sing and dance upon your request, and would give the performance of their lives in a heartbeat. That was until they turned around eleven or twelve. Caroling around the village and to relatives' houses became their fund raising for their own gift-giving, and Christmas Eve became our concert nights. What I would do to bring back those joyful days.

Then, an opportunity came when a group of orphans The Children's Joy Foundation performed at our parish. We were all extremely amazed with the talents of these children fund raising for their education. I thought it was payback time. Since the kids were much older and naturally refused to be the stars of the eve,



bringing carolers to our homes was the next best thing to truly make our Christmas celebration merry. They were old enough to understand the challenges of these children and through them be reminded of all their blessings. More than this, I reminded them that real gratitude gives back. They too can be blessings to others. And as they grow older, I pray they always choose to be a blessing to others in their own capable little ways. This became a happy family tradition with our relatives as well. We would invite the children for a performance on Christmas Eve and every family member helped contribute. Others decide to give their service in preparing their food or giving old and new things, money they saved or cash they wish to donate.

I don't remember anymore from whom I heard this from, but I believe its true. " Many times we receive more than what we give", so let us not hesitate to give. We can never quantify all the receiving and the giving we get out of Christmas or out of life itself. Nor is this saying less true..."There is no man so rich that he cannot receive nor a man so poor that he cannot give. " As important as giving is, let us not hesitate to receive as well. Just as I wish all of us a Merry Christmas, I pray we all have a blessed Advent.. one that is meaningful more than merry because Christ is in our hearts. That is the true magic of Christmas. With this, may we all be filled with peace, hope, forgiveness and love that overflows to our family and everyone around us.

"Can you hear the Christmas bells ring? And the sound of the carolers too?

Can you hear it, can you feel it? It's the magic in your heart.. Can you hear the message far and near? Merry Christmas, the Lord is here..."

The Sound of Life : Jose Mari Chan



reCONNECTING THIS SEASON

BY VIC AND TRISH RAMOS

Grade 5 parent

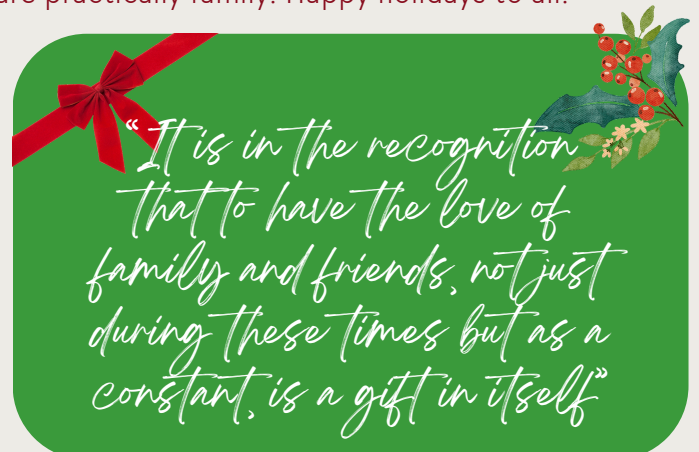
The Christmas season has always been filled with tradition for us. We both come from big families (core and extended) and have developed deep friendships dating back from our early school days, our later work mates and current social circles. And while making sure keeping connected is a year-round activity, it does carry an even more special meaning during the holidays.

And so all the while as they were growing up, the kids had always known December to be the busiest time of year for our family. It would be a time that we would traverse Metro Manila traffic, traveling north (where Vic is from) to south (where Trish is from), and consider it worth it. As we are sure is the same for most, it is time spent over hearty meals (the contributing pounds for which we will regret the coming year), extremely lengthy conversations (which our kids have often complained to be about the same topics, year in and year out) and thoughtfulness through gifts (which we're happy to note has kept a lot of home-based businesses afloat these last years).

For us, the true spirit of Christmas has always been in the connectedness and the togetherness. It is the knowledge that the celebration of the birth of our Lord is best done with those whom he has given us to love. It is in the recognition that to have the love of family and friends, not just during these times but as a constant, is a gift in itself. And is enough.

This is why the last years of distance had been such eye-openers. While it allowed us to become an even closer nuclear family with the holidays for two consecutive years spent just us in our home, it also brought home the message of how the current order can change so drastically and that time spent with those you love could be more finite than you think. The holidays of 2022 was a litmus test, when we gradually started allowing ourselves face-to-face celebrations. It was akin to a soft opening, also marked by a certain sadness over loved ones that had been lost. This year, however, is a more observed return to the status quo. And we are optimistic, as well as confident, that friends and families will finally again be able to reconnect and be able to celebrate Christmas' true spirit of togetherness. Already, we have prepped the kids that we will accept as many invitations as possible, move schedules around to celebrate with many and make room for what really matters – time. As we've learned so clearly, and for others painfully, these last years – life is short. And so one should make time.

And so this is CasaRamos' one wish for our Southridge Family this coming season. May your December (and surely the weeks after that), while tiring, be filled with memorable and meaningful time spent with those who matter – family who are also friends, and friends who are practically family. Happy holidays to all!





PARENT LEADERSHIP SEMINAR FOR THE HPCS AND DHPCS

BY EMMANUEL R. INAWAT

Parents and Admin Staff Formation Head

For the 1st time in Southridge, the Parents Formation Department with the help of the Parents Council Chairman, Mr. Jingo Fermin and the Parents Council representatives, organized a Parent Leadership Seminar for the Head Parent Coordinators and Deputy Head Parent Coordinators last Nov 11, 2023. This was conceptualized as early as August right after the PC Planning Workshop.

The seminar started with a Holy Mass presided by our Assistant School Chaplain, Fr. Raffy Quinto. The parents also had the opportunity to go to confession before the start of the Holy Mass. The theme of the Homily, Welcome Remarks by our Executive Director and Talk by our new Board Chairman, Mr. Titoy Francisco, centered on friendship, i.e., for our HPCs and DHPCs to take the extra effort and time of being friends and role models to their co-parents in the batch. Their roles should not only be limited to just being events organizers, program managers,

clerical work but their roles should elevate them to become formators, i.e., forming other parents in virtues and good parenting roles. They should also realize that the benefits of being a PC are (1) gaining friends and (2) if they are open to formation, they are formed along the way, e.g., being formed in the virtues of friendship, patience, piety, organizational skills and improved parenting roles.

The workshops were facilitated by the Parents Council representatives: Group 1 (Grades 1-3) was facilitated by Atty Stephen Quiambao, Group 2 (Grades 4-6) was facilitated by Cocoy Carpio, Group 3 (Grades 7-10) was facilitated by Rex Catedral, Group 4 (Grades 11-12) was facilitated by Al Camacho while Group 5 (Grades 7-10 Afternoon School) was facilitated by Alvin Villanueva. The workshops solicited inputs from the HPCs and DHPCs on different topics: the needed skills, proper selection for the PCs and evaluating their performances, what formative activities can be organized for the batch, how the virtues of sobriety and temperance can be practiced in the batch, how to handle difficult and uncooperative parents in the batch and how to encourage the Dads to attend the Recollections and other formative activities in the school. After the workshops, each group reported on their respective outputs.

The seminar ended with a battle cry for the PCs suggested by Robert Sarile, Grade 11 HPC, that "We Are All In This Together." It was heartening on the part of the school to see the passion, commitment and enthusiasm of our HPCs and DHPCs in carrying out their roles to support the parent activities in the school and being open to their new roles as formators-forming their co-parents in the respective batches.



DECEMBER 2023 CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES



PAREF Southridge

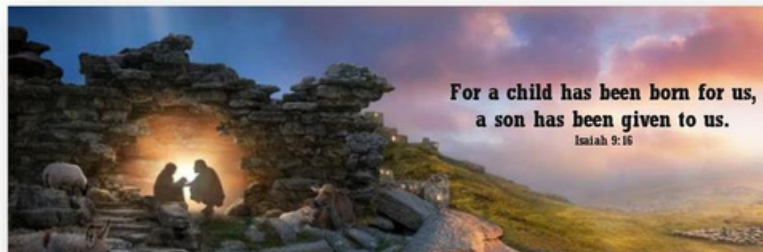


DECEMBER

Calendar of Activities
School Year 2023 – 2024

1	Friday	HS Student Assembly
2	Saturday	AS 2nd Parents Forum Gr. 7AS Pinoy EduChild Session 3
2 - 3	Sat - Sun	Grade 1 Father & Son Activity
3	Sunday	1st Sunday Recollection for Men (English)
4 - 6	Mon-Wed	SHS Sem 1 Period 2 Exams
4	Monday	AS Student Assembly
5	Tuesday	GS Student Assembly
7	Thursday	Eucharistic Procession Christmas BazSR, a fund-raising event
8	Friday	Feast of the Immaculate Conception (Holiday)
11	Monday	Validation Exams for SHS
12 - 14	Tue-Thu	GS & JHS Mid 2nd Trimester Exams
12 - 23	Tue - Sat	SHS Extended Semester
12 - 17	Tue-Sun	Bansag: Gr. 12 Student Seminar
14	Thursday	Gr.2 2nd Parents Forum
15	Friday	Class Christmas Parties
16	Saturday	Start of Christmas Break
17	Sunday	3rd Sunday Recollection for Men (Filipino)
20	Wednesday	Faculty and Staff Christmas Party

*Notes: Teachers and Staff report back to work on January 3, 2024, Wednesday.
Classes resume on January 4, 2024, Thursday.*



DECEMBER VIRTUE OF THE MONTH

DECEMBER Virtue of the Month **GENEROSITY**

Advice to Parents

Parents can help their sons develop the virtue of Generosity through the following:

- Teach them to thank God for what they have.
- Spend time having a personal chat with your son.
- Show your concern towards your household helps.
- Make them help in household chores.
- Have monthly corporal works of mercy with the family.
- Ask your older kids to help the younger ones in their studies.
- Teach them to save money to donate to the Church or charitable institutions.
- Help them form the habit of saying “Thank You” to show their appreciation.
- Praise them whenever they do something well.
- Ask them to check their closets and give up clothing they are not using.
- Celebrate birthdays and ask your sons to prepare something for the celebrant.





PAREF Southridge

Eucharistic Procession

DECEMBER 7, 2023 | THURSDAY



"The procession reminds us that we are called to go out and bring Jesus to others."





Christmas Bazaar

An fundraiser event for the school auxiliary staff

December 7, 2023 | 4pm-10pm
at Southridge Main Parking Lot



Our goal: P150,000
for our AUXILIARY STAFF

This season of giving, help us give back by sending donations to these online accounts.


All proceeds of the event shall go to the SR auxiliary staff and their families.




BR*D A.**
Mobile No.: 091* ****716
User ID: *****WOCPCO

For bank transactions:
Bank: **BDO**
Name: **Southridge Student Council**
Savings Account No. **006500055550**


SOUTHRIDGE BATCH 99
HOMECOMING FOR A CAUSE
PRESENTS




TEACHERS' FUND




A medicine reimbursement program to enhance their existing health plan.



A developmental training fund to boost professional skills of our teachers.




PAREF Southridge
VIRILITERAGITE



HOMECOMING FOR A CAUSE

VISIT



SUPPORT THE CAUSE

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