

# Happy New Year 2014!

Illuminated by the Presence of Jesus...  
As shown by these 'juniors' from Virgo Drive.

Jesus is **my father**. When I pray, I always think of my father who is dead. Sometimes when I'm sad, I pray and I hope that He is watching over my father. (Chinchin)

Jesus is **my inspiration**. Before, I had bad habits. Not anymore, I'm changing... (Jerrick)



Jesus is **my most important friend**. Because whatever my sin, He forgives me. (Jovie)

Jesus is **the one who keeps me**, because whatever happens, He is there. He never abandons me. (Joan)



The **junior volunteers** are aged between 14 and 20 and live in Virgo Drive. They receive a period of formation and prayer together, with Jen and Bernard, and they help with the children's activities and the Christmas parties.

My mother abandoned me. I don't know if she's still alive. My father's no longer around. **'Papa Jesus' looks after me.** (Josuah)



Jesus is **my Savior**. He gives me life. Whatever trials come my way, I can overcome them. He gives me strength. (Jamine)

Jesus is like **my big brother** (kuya). He guides me. (Renato)



Since April, it is **Bernard** (22 years old), our longest-serving Filipino volunteer, who, together with Jen, has mobilized these twenty of so young 'juniors'. Every year, he expresses the joy he gets from seeing the children happy when he assists with the organization of the Christmas parties – a joy so much deeper than any to be obtained from those latest technological gadgets which he likes. This year, he said he was particularly moved: *'Despite my great tiredness, my joy is ever greater this year, since I've been able to share this discovery with other poor young people like myself, and I've enabled them to understand a little how much joy there is in serving, in giving oneself. When I see them, I get the impression I'm seeing myself when I was younger...'*

### Christmas presents...

- That night, Benjamin arrives, all smiles: *'Sister, good news! I'm well again... No more traces of tuberculosis in the X-rays of my lungs. Thank you, Lord. It's my Christmas present!'* For 8 months, he had fought this disease. Benjamin, a street vendor, was our provider of daily pineapples. Like many others, he had stopped his medication too early and his health had deteriorated again... We supported him in his renewed application. It's not easy when one has relapsed, and at a certain age! One is looked upon with suspicion: why give him another treatment which he probably won't survive? Sr M. Edmée well understood this as she accompanied him. Then again, it's also not easy to accept having to go every week, for 8 months, to get the medications from the barangay, even though they're free; after all, you need money for the travel.



With the nanays (mothers) under the bridge...

- A few minutes later, Ella walks by: *'Sister, last night, I helped my sister to be reconciled with my father. They've forgiven one another. It's my Christmas present!'* The previous evening, she had gone to look for her sister, who had fled after an argument with her father.

A healing, a reconciliation, are these not in fact true Christmas presents?

### Looking ahead to 2014...

- Since September, **the Virgo Drive area has been threatened with demolition**. That month, they had already been taken to visit a relocation site in Bulacan, and given notice that the demolition would happen in November. Then it was January, and still nothing had happened... Now it might be in March. In any case, it seems this year will see their disappearance from the neighborhood – that's 270 very poor families sent an hour-and-a-half's journey outside Manila, far from their opportunities for work. This is our largest mission area, so the demolition will entail great changes for us.

- 2014 will mark **the 10th anniversary of our presence** in this neighborhood. A great party is being planned by the FBN Fraternity (Philippines), for this June 13th..

- An **inter-community group**, which we run with Violie, took off a few months ago. The idea is to give to the nanays (mothers), who are longstanding members of our prayer and discussion groups in different places, a chance to get to know one another and reflect together. This remains in conjunction with ATD Quart Monde (Fourth World) and its monthly forum.



- The **FBN Fraternity**, begun in 2012, is giving a good dynamism to the 3 Filipino volunteers committed to it: Bernard, Jen and Violie. Ella (22 years old, from Sitio Concepcion, one of our areas) will rejoin them this year.

- Finally, 2013 allowed us to live **a very communal time with our sisters of Toulouse**. During our 3-month stay in France, we shared with them the joy of the great 'Diaconia' gathering which for the last three years has galvanized the Church in France around the poor, and continues to do so. Then, in May-June, we travelled together from city to city (Angers, Paris and its suburbs, Lille, Lyon, Clermont Ferrand, Toulouse, Antibes, and even in Belgium - 12 in total) to talk about our vocation as a 5-speaker panel! A massive thank you to all those among you who have helped us to organise this.

Dear friends, your support is always invaluable to us, whether by your prayers, financial contributions or in making us more widely known.

We are immensely grateful to you.

Assuring you of our prayers and friendship,

Sr Anne and Sr Marie-Edmée, Sisters of the Good News (Philippines)

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