



October 2012

Dear Friends,

This update letter is going to be a bit different from previous editions. As you will recall, I typically try to tell you how the Lingap children are doing and I am very pleased to announce that all are doing just fine. The school year is moving along and all have survived the first marking period. Our 15 college students are doing remarkably well and our two college graduates have landed jobs with the Marriott Hotel in Cebu City!!

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In this edition, I would like to focus on one of our other important outreach activities. In August, Fr. Geoff Rose, OSFS, the Lingap Chaplain, went with me to visit the Lingap Center (his fifth



Celebrating Mass in Larap Village

visit). Along with the Lingap staff and Lonnie Cooper, our Peace Corps volunteer, we took the opportunity to celebrate Mass at several of the squatter villages in the area. The following weekend, Fr. Geoff conducted a community-wide retreat at St. John de Sahagun Catholic Church in Toledo City. We used an interpreter which was a unique but tremendous and fun experience for all of us!

The squatter villages provide the roots for some of the Lingap children and many still

have families living there. It is at these locations that we hold our Street Children's Education programs five days a week. Fr. Geoff and I, however, wanted to reach out to the street children's *families and extended families* in a different manner. It was the first time that many of the villagers had ever been to a formal church service and we did it in their own little communities (outside). It was really a touching and unbelievably rewarding moment. One thing that struck me especially, was when they took up a collection afterward -- **for us!!** In one location, they donated the equivalent of \$1.61 and at a second location, approximately \$0.83. Clearly we were not expecting donations, but they wanted to give back for all that has been done for them! The donations came directly from their hearts and they were given to us with a sense of amazing pride and joy.



Presentation of the Gifts

In one village, a lady prepared a feast for us after Mass consisting of rice, roasted chicken and (warm) Coke. I seriously doubt that her family had ever had a meal like the one she had prepared in our honor. It was her way of expressing gratitude to us for taking the time to visit and especially for celebrating Mass together with them. They were so honored to have a priest and me visit their homes that our hostess did everything she could for us. She was crying as she

served us because it was such an unbelievable honor for her family. She refused to join us since it was her 'privilege' to serve us. We had to eat it of course, but we left as much as we could so she would have food for her children. ***These villagers have nothing - nothing at all and live in the worst possible poverty - yet they took up a collection during Mass and then later fed us!!*** It simply demonstrates that those who have nothing are the most generous of all. I am reminded once again of one of my favorite quotes from Bob Pierce who said: ***"Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God."*** My heart was certainly broken, yet filled with joy - it is really difficult to describe my feelings in this situation. But I will freely admit that I absolutely love the work that we do.

As mentioned, the villagers seldom, if ever, had attended a formal church service. The church is too far away for most of them and travel is difficult at best. Further, they are not particularly welcome or at least they don't feel that they are. On the following Saturday evening, as we were doing the community-wide retreat at the church, to our amazement, many of the villagers came and filled in the front pews! I knew they were there because I could see them through my tears. Fr. Geoff added: ***"What an honor and a privilege it was to bring the Mass to these villagers. They were powerful experiences of the Body of Christ. To see many of those same faces come to the retreat, told me that we had definitely accomplished our goals for this week!"***

This is just one of many examples in which the Lingap Center is empowering those who are less fortunate. While our focus is always on the children, we are concerned about their communities and families as well. All of you, our supporters and Place at the Table sponsors, have made this possible. It would not have happened without you. I can only thank you all so much for making it possible. Together, all of us really are making a very big difference in many lives, both young and old.

As I remember those moments in the squatter villages, I am reminded of a quote from Jonas Salk in which he said:

"I feel that the greatest reward for doing is the opportunity to do more."

Sincerely,



John Drake

P. S. ~ I receive many requests for updates on the Carpentero twins. They are now 3 1/2 years old. Genalyn had her first cleft-palate surgery on October 16. Genelyn had her second surgery on the same day. Both of them are doing fantastic and are mothered and loved by 100 Lingap wards and staff. They are alive today thanks to all of you.



Genalyn and Genelyn