

inaudibly a message, inspires me a lot. He is a person who is totally living the moment with love. He can appreciate a sunrise and a sunset. He has the heart of a child, the enthusiasm of the youth and the fidelity and wisdom of the aged. He is a man who suffered so much, that is why he is very deep. I wish that all of us can imitate his love, his generosity, his constant thanksgiving. After all John Paul II is the vicar of Christ on earth.

The letter “Y”

We now come to the last letter of the word “Sixty.” “Y” for me is a continuation of the state of thanksgiving. It can stand for youth yearning for God, or simply yearning.

Yearning for God should really come naturally when one reaches my age. It is an act of thanksgiving. The psalmist says: “What shall I render to the Lord for all the goodness he has done for me. I will take up the cup of salvation and call upon His name.” Yes, calling upon the name of the Lord gives me the chance to be a child again, calling on my father. To call on God’s name is to yearn for Him.

At sixty most likely we have already encountered countless losses of loved ones, or the loss of many valuable things. At this age we should yearn for things that no moth eats or the thief can steal. We should long for the everlasting hills, for that hidden treasure. At sixty we should be able to say with St. Paul: “I have come to count as loss all in the light of the love of the Lord.” Like Job we should be able to exclaim even in the midst of unspeakable sufferings and losses: “The lord has given, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be his name!”

DECEMBER CELEBRATIONS	
6	Bday Fr. Joshua Alvero, D.S. Wedding anniv. Keith and Ellie de Leon
7	5th Sacerdotal Anniversary of Frs. Alejandro Cabonelas, Jose Cornelia and Paolo Agostino Evardoni, D. S.
8	Wedding Anniv. of Zoilo and Connie Gabriel
9	Foundation Day of Legzpi Community
14	Death Anniv. of Pedro Tordilla Bday of Bro. Benedict Aducal, D.S.
18	Wedding anniv. of Lito and Dulce Abad
19	Foundation Day of Patmos House
24	Birthday of Bro. John Raphael Dalisay, D.S.
25	Birthday of Jesus Christ
27	Feast of Saint John Wedding Anniv of Arthur and Dr. Zenaida Balagot
29	Bday of Laz L. Zantua
31	Bday of Fr. Romuald Zantua, D.S.

If you are sixty or more, please accept my heartfelt congratulations. The older we are the nearer we should be to God. The nearer we are to God the more we should be happy. But we can be happy only if we succeed in simplifying our lives and integrate them. We should be more ready to forgive and forget, to cancel out our heartaches. At our age we should live a life of thanksgiving and yearning for God.

H.O.P.E.

Happiness Out of Patient Endurance



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Fr. Manzano Renews Vows

For the fourth and last time before Perpetual Vows, Father Paul "Pio" L. Manzano, D.S., Superior of Novaliches Community, will pronounce his vows on December 24 in the Church of the Most Holy Trinity in Phoenix before the Rev. Joshua Alvero, D.S., house superior.

Three Priests celebrate Ordination Anniversary

Fathers Alejandro Cabonelas, D.S., in special studies in Legazpi, Jose Cornelia, D.S., of El Cristo Rey Parish in the Grand Canyon, and Paolo Agostino Evardoni, D.S., of the Texas Medical Center, Houston, celebrate their fifth anniversary as priests of the Disciples of Hope on Dec. 7.

Aguinaldo Masses Scheduled in Legazpi, Naga, Quezon City and San Vicente

The traditional 9-day dawn masses, starting the 16th of December and culminating on the 24th, will be celebrated in the chapels or churches of the Disciples of Hope in the Philippines. As usual the Mass is a well attended and celebrated with singing and “agape” of native dishes afterwards. It is a most “teachable” moment for a lot of people. The themes of the homilies this year are centered on the Eucharist.

Bishop Labayen Guest Lecturer

Bishop Julio X. Labayen, O.Carm, the Bishop Emeritus of Infanta gave the Disciples of Hope candidates to the permanent diaconate an afternoon session last Dec. 4 in their formation house in Novaliches. He was accompanied by a permanent deacon, the Rev. Mario Van Loon of the Netherlands, who has been working as a permanent deacon in the Philippines for more than 30 years. Bishop Labayen gave importance to the “table of service” originally given to the first deacons in the Church. In the context of massive poverty, the role of deacons in poverty alleviation programs cannot be overemphasized. The deacon, according to Bishop Labayen is the Bishop’s partner in service.

Christmas Recollection-Concert at USANT

The Disciples of Hope will give a two-hour Recollection-Concert at the University of Saint Anthony in the City of Iriga on Friday, the 17th of December, from 4 to 6 in the afternoon. The concert will be an “Alay sa Estuyante” offered by the administration.

The composer-singer of the famous “Sino Ako?” Fr. Jose Castaneda will be the concert-recollection facilitator.

*Editorial Essay***Who is St. Joseph?**

The best statue I have seen so far of St. Joseph is found in the front lawn of San Jose Seminary inside the Ateneo de Manila University Campus. It's not the usual statue of an old man holding a rod with a lily on top while babysitting or carrying a child, but a very virile-looking carpenter, showing the young Jesus the ABC of carpentry. The sculptor who created that St. Joseph statue also created another virile-looking one — the "Oblation" statue at the entrance of UP, Diliman.

But despite having lived in San Jose for ten years, I know very little about this saint, obviously a victim of benign neglect, both by the scriptures and tradition, except for the last 500 years. He reminds me of priests and lay people who never received any honors during their lifetime, passed over in silence by their superiors, bosses, colleagues and peers, but faithful in their humble assignments till death.

Sometimes, however, out of my miserable and dangerously little knowledge of St. Joseph, a few sparkling ideas emerge. One of them came from the "points" for meditation I recall being given by Fr. Ed Hontiveros, S.J., some forty four years ago at the old San Jose Seminary. He said: "The characteristic trait that stands out in St. Joseph is his dependability. God relied on him to take care of Mary and Jesus. Like him, you, Josefinos, should also be reliable. You must be able to make the best out of the worst situation." Yes, this "just man" who never said a word recorded in the scriptures, who simply obeyed angels appearing to him in dreams, was also the head of the holy family and was obeyed by Jesus in Nazareth.

Indeed Joseph made the best out the worst situation. He proved to the world that he could



take care of the infant Jesus marked out for liquidation by a powerful and a jealous king. He saved the honor of the Virgin Mary by taking her as his wife not in a marriage of convenience, but in a genuine but virginal nuptial union according to law. The two gospel accounts of the family tree of Jesus list Joseph as the messiah's link to the human race, though Luke traces his genealogy all the way up to Adam.

But where does Joseph's greatness lie? In her relationship to Mary. Joseph is her husband,

The letter "X"

"X" can stand for several things: It can stand for the unknown factor. It can also stand for a pornographic rating of a movie. People who never learned to write can simply indicate an "x" on a document and that is considered legally as his signature, of course with his thumb-mark added.

But I wish to use "X" in its most basic action symbol of cancellation. At sixty I should be able to cancel out all my negative experiences by positive ones. I should be more flexible, more tolerant with the erring, more prone now to give a more positive interpretation to unpleasant events. At the age of sixty I should systematically forgive past offenses and offenders.

If people owe me money and it's impossible for them to pay back in full without extreme suffering on their part, I should learn to commute or to condone totally. Sixty is the decade that comes immediately after the jubilee year of 50, the year of grace, the year of amnesty and special blessings. As such it should continue the life-time process of forgiving which I must go through to obtain forgiveness myself. I believe purgation starts in this life and continues in the next. If I die at sixty it would not be totally against reason to suggest that the period of my purgation after this life will be equal to my lifespan, namely, 60 years. But I sincerely believe that I can lessen that period by living each day, after the age of sixty, fully, one day at a time, forgetting the past, and looking forward to the future with hope.

The Holy Book says the lifespan of a man is "seventy, eighty if he is strong." Any

additional month or year, therefore, after reaching seventy, is already a bonus. Had we died at 70, everything would have stopped: our heartbeat, our plans, all our projects. The fact that we are still breathing, reading this article, and with some on-going projects and missions to finish, is indeed a great bonus. We should be using these bonuses to cancel out the deficiencies of the earlier decades.

Everything that happens now, as in the past, from the moment we were conceived, will be allowed by God. We continue to be co-partners with him. Each one of us has a unique role to play, even if it's only to fold napkins or answer phones. The poet John Milton when he became blind wrote this line: "They also serve who only stand and wait."

The letter "T"

I'm sure you will be able to guess right away what the letter "T" stands for. "T" stands for thanksgiving. You know, reaching the age of sixty is already great blessing in itself, even if we feel pain and aches in many parts. We should count our blessings every day. Having a cell phone for sometime now, I have received so many wise text messages in the form of blessings. Every day, without exception, I receive inspirational messages reminding me to count my blessings, even the suffering-filled moments because they too are disguised blessings.

Since he visited the Philippines in 1995, I have made John Paul II my role model. I have read his poetry, his plays, his encyclicals, and now a very thick biography written by George Weigel. Seeing him bent by age and Parkinsons disease, sometimes his saliva dripping while reading almost

happens by chance, that everything is planned by a loving God to whom nothing is impossible. To integrate means to hope, even in the face of death.

Having been ordained 34 years ago I did not have what seminary students today have – a “Spiritual-Pastoral-Formation Year” (SPFY) wherein the seminarian is given the chance to integrate in one year of interrupted studies the many elements of the formation he has received so far. The SPFY is usually taken in the middle of his theological training. It would be too late to take it after the so-called comprehensive exams. The timing allows for revision of life, adjustments and a better assimilation of on-going formation.

At sixty therefore I will begin my own version of a “SPFY” and live it until I see my life as a whole, with all its seemingly disjointed phases and happenings, under one common denominator of meaning, or in the language of St. Ignatius of Loyola *sub lumine aeternitatis (in the light of eternity)*. It is never too late to integrate. As a matter of fact, every day should be a day of summing up, a day of recollection, a day that makes us ready to hand over our life to God at a moment’s notice.

I have a strange habit of making my bed and fixing my room in the evening, sometimes just before the time for Mass. For some reason I want to sleep on a made bed in an orderly room. My usually cluttered-up desk during the day becomes dynamically neat just before I sleep. So if I did not have time to make my bed as soon as I woke up, I make sure it’s made just before I sleep. It’s a kind of a ritual that

satisfies my psychological need to integrate the day’s events. What I do ritually for one day I wish now to do for life—putting things in order, making sure the day’s agenda, even if it’s not done completely, is at least read before sleeping. I believe that it is the nature of work not to be finished. And knowing that my work is never finished, gives me satisfaction even at the thought that I still have many unfinished tasks. If I rush to finish them I might just do it out of self-love. I trust that my intentions were already pleasing to the Lord. This realization is part of my personal integration. Even Our Lord while hanging on the cross could claim that he has achieved, that he reached his goal. And he was not even sixty!

At sixty people might feel they have not accomplished much. Remember in the Philippines there was a time when the average life expectancy was not more than 55. The crisis of generativity or productivity spoken of by psychologists is most relative. To God a thousand years is but a moment of time. God does not need my works. All he desires is my love and it could be given in a single moment, in an act of perfect trust which is nothing but an act of hope.

To integrate is to entrust, to endorse, to cast all our cares upon the Lord because He cares for us. In this life no one can say he has finished his “homework”. Our home is not here but in the next. All we can do is make sure we know our assignments, have tried our best to prepare for the next class. To finish or not to finish is not the question. What counts is that I tried my best. Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta has an often-quoted saying: “I am not called to be successful, only to be faithful.”

related to the Mother of God in a marriage that was no less genuine because it was virginal. This marriage came into existence so that the Son of God might be received and reared within that holy conjugal union. Just as God found in Mary a woman worthy to be the Mother of Jesus, He also found in Joseph a man worthy to be the husband of Mary, and to be related to Jesus by the spiritual ties of a true fatherhood. He was not only a spouse to the Virgin, or her companion in life, but a witness of her virginity, and the protector of

her honor. For this reason Joseph shares Mary’s dignity.

Just as on Calvary it was a sign of divine predilection for St. John to be chosen by Our Lord to care for her mother, so too, it must have been divine predilection for Joseph to be chosen by the Father to be the guardian not only of Mary but also of her Son, Jesus. What St. Joseph did for Jesus and Mary, he will do for us personally and for the universal Church today.

Father Rom’s Reflection on Luke 2: 7 “There was no room for them in the inn.”

Was it by choice or by circumstance that Jesus was born in a stable?

The first biblical fact is that the Son of God was not born in a hospital bed or in a comfortable home surrounded by carrying people, but in a stable in Bethlehem, in a place perhaps unfit for human habitation. Bible commentators now say that he was born in a cave normally used as night shelter for animals and the men who guarded them. The only people, besides Joseph and Mary, who were aware of the event, were the poor shepherds watching their flocks at night.

Poverty was the first human experience of the Son of God and, with it, homelessness. He identified himself with the poor which makes up the majority of mankind today. He experienced rejection, even by his own people. “There was no room for them in the inn.”

Jesus entered into man’s most down-to-earth reality, with the sights, sounds and smell of the poorest of the poor. But if you are born in a stable, it does not necessarily



mean you are a horse. You can be the King of kings, the Lord of lords.

The original message of Christmas was a most revolutionary one. The infant born in a manger is Almighty God Himself, the God who arranges the events in history to fulfill his most beautiful design of love for his children.

By his birth Jesus closed the infinite gap between God and man. He became one with us, sharing our poverty and our homelessness so that we, in turn, can be rich and be able to reach our true and only home with His father.

What To Do Upon Reaching 60 or more

By Fr. Romy P. Zantua, D.S.

Thirty years ago I used to be the youngest member of the clergy in my diocese. They used to classify priests like me as the “junior clergy,” especially during conferences on ongoing formation. Now I belong to the “senior” clergy category, a title I never thought I would ever use.

This reality dawned on me recently at the blessing of our community house in Houston. I took the opportunity of asking a recently ordained auxiliary bishop of Galveston-Houston diocese to make as his first episcopal act the blessing of our house. To make it more solemn I sent out a computer-generated invitation and 19 priests including the bishop and the local pastor came.

At the simple refreshment that followed the blessing I said to the 45-year old Bishop: “Bishop, Vazquez, today I am now convinced I am old. When I am older than the pastor and the bishop I must really be old.” The young bishop just smiled without any protestation. Since becoming aware of my superiority in age over my ecclesiastical superiors, I have developed a profound sense of peace and contentment that probably should come with age.

If you are sixty or above, I would like to share with you some ideas which might be worth reflecting on. You may have already heard some of these in homilies, talks, etc. After all there is really nothing new in this world. As a guide I will use the



acronym, “S.I.X.T.Y.” and explain what each of the letter stands for.

The letter “S”

The letter “S” stands for simplicity. At sixty, I should simplify my life. Six decades is sixty years. There was a time when I thought to be 30 was already old. Now at sixty I have doubled that. When a person has lived for 60 years, life will have become, by necessity, complicated. At 60, I should start simplifying my life by throwing away excess luggage: the old notes I will never use in the future, which just clutter up my trunk, my shelves and my cardboard boxes. I

should learn how to discard things permanently and without regrets. If I open my closet and I find clothes I haven’t worn for sometime, I should put them in a big box to give away to people – even total strangers. I’m sure others can have a better and more frequent use for them than me.

Shoes that still fit, belts, cups, wrist watches that don’t tell time anymore but still have some value, etc., all should be given away. Perhaps not in a single day, but one by one, if possible, every single day for the rest of my life.

I heard that some monks in India, when they reach 50, which already is half a century, they start giving away the things they have accumulated for the past 50 years. They stop buying new things. They stop accepting gifts. For five decades they have been receivers.

Now at 50 and for the remainder of their lives they wish to be givers. Like them, therefore, I should also look for something to give to someone, if not every day, at least as often as I can. And not just the things I don’t need, but even the things I need but which others perhaps need more than I do. I must make it a habit to be a giver and perhaps someday I will end up giving away what is equivalent to a “widow’s mite.” And we know what Our Lord said about the widow’s mite — it was more than what others gave from their surplus.

I must simplify by subtraction. That’s one formula for living according to my age with grace and love.

If I have some financial resources which already allow me and my small community

to eat three meals a day and have a roof over our heads, and do our apostolate, I should not think of amassing more. That would be too time-consuming and energy-draining. New investments just complicate life. At sixty I should be relying more on divine providence knowing that the God I serve will never abandon me and my community. At sixty (if I were a layman with political ambitions) I should not enter politics any more. I believe that at sixty a president of a country should not wage war against another, even if it’s a just war. At sixty a president should not acquire new enemies, and worse, destroy lives.

At sixty the greater my responsibilities are, the more I should simplify my life and my lifestyle. One way of simplifying them is to endorse responsibilities to others, to delegate, to allow others to make mistakes and learn from them. I should trust the younger generation to which I once belonged. I should stop worrying at all, and never micro-manage the lives of others. To simplify is to surrender everything to God.

The letter “I”

“I” stands for integration. It’s an overused word nowadays. At sixty, I should begin integrating the many scattered pieces of my life. I should begin to see the nexi, the connection between various events, big and small, even if my life-journey is not yet over. To integrate means to have the wisdom to accept even the tragedies and misfortunes with serenity. It means that I should learn to see things in the larger canvas. To be able to integrate means I can readily see the finger of God in my personal history, convinced that nothing