

## FR. STEVE BAUMBUSCH ,PIME

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Dear Mom and Dad,

*I can't believe how poor my memory is! The very reason I went to the internet café last week was to wish you a HAPPY BIRTHDAY, Mom. Then I went about answering your message and it was only after I was halfway back to Columbio that I realized I had never included the birthday greetings. Sorry, sorry, sorry! Anyway, I sure hope that it was a good one, and you should know that I was thinking about you in a special way.*

*Here in Columbio when I forget things, I always tell the people, "Matanda ako": I'm getting old. Or I tell them that the "save" button has been removed from my brain, so everything is immediately deleted. This has been a good week, and a sad week. First the sadness. Within the past week three young people have died in unrelated ways.*

*One was a nineteen year boy who had been sick for quite some time. In fact, several months ago, his mother asked for help for his medical bills and I provided some. Then a short while after that, I was told by the parish team that he died. This was shortly before I was out of Columbio for a few days, so I assumed that the funeral took place in my absence. And I never heard any more about him. So I was really surprised last week when they told me that he just died recently. I never did get the reason why they had told me he died before. We had the funeral Mass at the family home, and even though it had been a long sickness, of course it was an emotional time.*

*Then a 22 year old woman died of a heart attack shortly after she had a late-term miscarriage. She and her husband were married less than a year ago, just before I came to Columbio. Again, the funeral Mass was in the family home, this time in the barrio of Mayo.*

*Then the saddest of all, for me, was the death of Lisa, a beautiful 14 year old girl who was a member of the choir and spent a lot of time hanging around the rectory. In fact, she was here just two days before she died. It's not clear to me just what the cause was. Her mom told me that she had had an appendix operation and her death was caused by complications from that, maybe an infection. But in the course of the conversation, it came out that the operation was a year and a half ago, so it seems strange that an infection should take her now. At any rate, she complained of stomach pains, was taken to the hospital and in less than a day, she died. Her funeral Mass will be tomorrow (Monday) at the main church.*

*She was really a nice kid, always smiling and always there for choir practice, church cleaning, or whatever. We had the rosary at the family home a couple of nights ago and of course a lot of kids from the high school were there. I was impressed with her mom. She told me that she can't believe Lisa is gone, but she's sure that she is with God and at peace.*

*On a happier note, we held our Parish General Assembly this past week. I've told you before about the monthly Center Meetings we have, with representatives from all the barrio chapels. This was an expanded version of that: a two day meeting to assess the overall picture of the parish and plan for the future. It was well-attended and the delegates did a lot of work, both in small groups and in the general assembly.*

*One result was the formulation of the Parish Vision-Mission Statement. Here's the translation in English:*

## VISION

*We, the Catholic community of disciples of Jesus Christ at San Isidro Labrador Mission, Columbio, Sultan Kudarat, desire to join the mission of Christ to proclaim the Kingdom of God through the unity of each community (GKK/GLK)\*, respect for the dignity of the human person, and the search for justice, peace and preservation of the environment.*

## MISSION

*With the grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we find the meaning of our lives in the Word of God, in order to become true disciples, to live and proclaim the Good News to all of those around us, especially the poor. We also have a special interest in the nurturing of youth, so that they might become good Christians.*

*Therefore, with all our hearts, we offer our time, talents and treasure for the fulfillment of our Christian calling. With full faith, we call upon God Almighty to guide us as we continue to work for the spread of His Kingdom.*

## PRIMARY GOAL

*To strengthen and develop each local community (GKK/GLK) and to promote the unity of the entire parish.*

*You might remember that GKK stands for the Cebuano words for "Basic Christian Community". GLK stands for "Basic Lumad Community", made up of Tribal Filipinos. Not bad, eh? There were also a lot of ideas of practical ways to strengthen the local communities. It would take too long to go into all the details here, but suffice it to say that I'm excited about the possibilities, and the people seem to be excited too.*

*For my part, I stressed the unity issue. I told the people that, coming from the U.S., I did not have any direct experience with the Basic Christian Community model. I've found it to be wonderful, beginning as it does at the grassroots level and enabling individuals to achieve a good self-identity as Christians within their own local community. However, I told them, I see a danger as well: that each local community might become inwardly focused, without a sense of connection and unity with the other communities that make up the parish as a whole. Instead, I believe that we are called to be one: even though there are different tribes, different languages, different customs, different economic levels, our unity with one another is itself a sign of the Kingdom of God.*

*So, we talked about different ways to express this unity: mutual help, especially in times of economic hardship, shared liturgies, invitations to respective fiestas, etc. There is quite a bit of work ahead, especially for me and the parish team, if we are to implement the ideas that came out. A lot of seminars will have to be offered in the various barrios, covering basic Church teaching, leadership skills, liturgy, etc. Fortunately, the Diocese of Kidapawan has a lot materials (modules, they call them) on these topics. Unfortunately, all the modules are in Cebuano! So we will have to translate them. Anyway, I'm happy with the results of the PGA and looking forward to the future.*

*I told you about beginning the English class for 3rd and 4th year high school students. So far, out of a possible nine opportunities for class, I've only held four. Three classes were "browned out" (since they take place in the evening, if there's no electricity, there's no class) and two fell within the same timeframe as the PGA. It's too bad, because the interest is certainly there. I told the people at Mass this morning that we'll try again this coming week. The school year here finishes up at the end of March, so maybe after that we can hold the classes in the daytime.*

*Speaking of brownouts, they are becoming more and more frequent here. In fact, there was one half way through this letter! It only lasted about thirty minutes though, so I was able to get back to the computer. There is an old generator on the property, which I was told, had not been used in years. I'm having someone look at it to see if they can get it working. I heard from Mark about the sponsoring of college students. He thinks that he has a few sponsors lined up. So, for the coming school year, which begins in June, we (the*

*parish team and I) have already identified 3 or 4 kids who are in the greatest need. We were thinking about making an announcement and inviting applications for scholarships, but then we figured we would be overwhelmed with requests and still uncertain about the number of sponsors available. So, we'll start slow and kind of privately, and if during the course of the next year we see that there is a significant number of sponsors, we can launch a bigger program for the school year that will begin in June of 2001.*

*OK, I guess that's about all for now. I will head for Kidapawan tomorrow, after the funeral Mass, and send this out then. Love you and miss you! Love,*



[| BACK |](#)

