

## FR. STEVE BAUMBUSCH ,PIME

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c/o Bishop's Residence • Guadalupe Center - Balindog • 9400 Kidapawan  
N. Cotabato, PHILIPPINES

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Dear Mom and Dad,

*I'll be going to Davao and then Kidapawan in the next couple of days, and I hope to be able to get the internet. We have a Regional Council meeting in Kidapawan from Monday the 22nd to Wednesday the 24th and I will go to Davao on Sunday to pick up Fr. Giulio Mariani who is flying in from Manila for the meeting. I really don't know how much time I'll have, but I should be able to send this letter off quickly.*

*Thanks again for the goodies! I said that I was going to be selfish with them, but I didn't have the heart, so I shared with everyone in the house, and they all enjoyed them. Apparently, baking cookies at home is not something that is done here, because everyone kept asking me, "Your mom made these? She knows how to make cookies? Where did she learn that?" Also, thanks in advance for the tupperware you are sending; maybe I'll get ahead in this war on the ants after all.*

*I was fit to be tied last week. The electric bill for October arrived (collectors bring it right to the house, and collect payment at the same time). October was the month when we had daily brownouts for hours at a time. So what about the bill? It was HIGHER than usual, actually a good bit higher. When I asked the collectors about it, they said, "Well, you know Father, if there are brownouts, a lot of power is used when the electricity comes back." I said, "Wait a minute, let me get this straight. When there's no electricity we pay MORE?? What's wrong with this picture?"*

*Finally they admitted that they had read the meter a week late, so even though the bill read Sept. 30-Oct. 30, we were actually paying for usage from Sept. 30 to Nov. 6. Even so, there seemed to be a disproportionate increase. There was nothing to do but pay, but I plan to keep an eye on the billing and if necessary I'll go the Electric Company office in Tacurong (about an hour away) for some answers.*

*I mentioned that we're having a Regional Council meeting next week; our Regional Superior, Fr. Gianni Sandalo, will come here to Columbio on Saturday and spend a couple of days before the meeting. I wanted to be sure that he has a mattress to sleep on (as you know, I brought my own mattress here from Manila, because they normally just sleep on a kind of raised platform). And Fr. Peter had told me that there was an extra one at the Tribal Training Center next to the rectory. I went over to ask the woman in charge (Angie) if I could borrow it. I didn't know the Tagalog word for mattress, but I was sure that I had heard people using the English word, so was confident that she would understand. In fact, she seemed to know what I was talking about, but wasn't sure just where the extra mattress was. She said she would ask the students who lived there, and let me know later. About a half hour later, a student came over and said, "Father, Angie wants to know what you mean by 'mattress'." Still not knowing the Tagalog word, I tried to describe it, then finally took her to my room and pointed at the mattress on my bed. "Oh, Ok Father," and later someone brought the mattress over. At dinner that night, I found that the story had spread to the students who live with me, and they told me the source of the confusion. When I asked Angie for an extra "mattress", the closest Tagalog word she could come up with was "matris", which means uterus! In the typical Filipino way, she didn't want to embarrass me, so she acted like she knew what I was talking about, but she was sure that she didn't have extra one!*

*But this language stuff goes both ways. Quite a few English expressions are used, but with a distinctly*

*Filipino accent. So, for example, at a parish team meeting, one of the members suggested that we start planning for the "Parish Youth Days" in December, using the English words. The first few times I heard it, I could have sworn she was saying "Parachute Days", and I couldn't figure out why skydivers would be coming to Columbio. Once I figured out what she really meant, I had my own little private joke as I asked, "Tell me what goes on during Parachute Days". And the parish team members answered as if it were the most natural question in the world, telling me about the ballgames and other activities of the Youth.*

*A while back, in the morning, there were several small explosions, like firecrackers, not far from the rectory. I asked the parish secretary what they were, and she told me that they were indeed homemade firecrackers, made out of bamboo and small amounts of gunpowder. Later that evening, they were more frequent, like practically constant.*

*I asked one of the students what the reason was, and he began to explain to me how they were made. "I know that because I asked Arlene earlier," I said, "but what I want to know now is WHY they're setting them off." He looked at me as if he had never heard a sillier question, and answered, "Well, because it's close to December, Father." "So, you mean this is in preparation for Christmas, and we're going to hear these things every day until then?" "Well actually, Father, more like until the middle of January, since there's the new year celebration too. Why? Don't you celebrate Christmas in your country?" "Not on November 10!" I said.*

*Really, it shouldn't have surprised me. We complain in the States about early Christmas decorations in the stores, etc., but it's nothing like here. They say that as soon as you reach a month that ends in "ber", it's time to start preparing for Christmas. One nice thing about it is the Christmas songs that begin on the radio. They have really beautiful Christmas songs in both English and Tagalog. But daily firecrackers for two months is a bit much.*

*The planning for the new church continues. We were supposed to have a meeting last Saturday, but most of the members of the committee had other commitments, so we postponed it until today. Meanwhile, when I was in Kidapawan, I talked to the Bishop and showed him the initial plan we had already drawn up. He had some ideas, which I presented to the committee. He would also like us to take a look at a church in Davao to get some ideas, and I will do so when I'm there next week, taking pictures and maybe even trying to get a copy of the plans. Then I'll bring all the information back and the Committee will meet again on December 11 to start over again on the design (actually the changes aren't major, but will require re-drawing the plans). It's not a big problem, because we have plenty of time: the fundraising will have to take place, at least to some extent, before construction can start, so we're a long way off. Ok, I'm going to close for now. Love you and miss you!*

Love,



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