

IV World Ultreya

Aireen Macatula - Tagalog

“The Beauty of Being a Christian and the Joy of Communicating It”

Good morning/afternoon/evening brothers and sisters in Christ. My name is Aireen Macatula and I am sharing on behalf of your brothers and sisters in the Filipino Cursillos in Christianity – Los Angeles (FCIC-LA) chapter. I’m currently a full-time student at the University of California, Santa Barbara majoring in Communication and Psychology. I lived my Cursillo on September 6-9, 2007, Class #697, in Riverside, California, USA. I’m from the parish of St. John the Baptist in Baldwin Park, CA, and my decuria is ST. CECILIA! For those of you who can speak or understand Tagalog – the native tongue of the Philippines – please forgive my accent, or my “crooked” Tagalog, but Mabuhay (*greeting that means more power or life to you*)! For those of you who cannot understand or speak Tagalog, well, it doesn’t matter because you don’t know what I’m saying anyway! Joke lang! (*Just kidding!*)

One of the rollos that specifically sticks out in my memory from my Cursillo class was “Beyond the Cursillo”, which discusses the various ways we, as Cursillistas, are called to live out one’s Fourth Day. I remember sitting at my table with my decuria thinking about what I could do to carry out my mission as an evangelizer. Reflecting upon my immediate environment at school as a college student, I realized that the topic of religion doesn’t come up very often in conversation. And if it does, it usually isn’t in favor of Christian values or lifestyles because – siempre, alam niyo na (*of course, you know*) - most students or young adults are more progressive and liberal nowadays and think “the old ways” are too limiting on their freedom, especially in the U.S. or western civilizations that value individualism. So here I was, a new Cursillista, excited na excited at high na high pa kasi siempre kalalabas ko lang sa klase diba? (*pumped up and still on a Jesus high fresh out of my Cursillo weekend*). And yet, I had NO idea how to carry the cross I’d been given as my duty to carry... the one mission that my rectora & vice rectoras told me I should really work on. Isip-isip ko, Jesus naman, BRO naman – nanonood ba kayo ng Santino? Sino pong may TFC dito? BRO ang tawag ni Santino ki Lord diba? Ay sorry, na sidetrack na ‘ko. (*I was thinking, aww come on Jesus, come on Bro – do you guys watch the tv show May Bukas Pa with Santino? Who here has TFC, The Filipino Channel? Santino calls God “Bro” right? Oh sorry, I got sidetracked.*) Okay, anyway...

As I was saying, I was at a loss of how to go about evangelizing my friends, my cousins, my nieces, my peers – the younger generation of the Catholic Church. So I figured that in time, I would eventually find out how to go about that but in the meantime, I should just move on and live out the Fourth Day in my *own* individual way and stop worrying about others. So the school year started up again, months passed, and before I knew it, it was summer again and time for the annual DWHL retreat. DWHL is short for Days With the Helpers of the Lord, a youth outreach ministry under the umbrella of the FCIC-LA that focuses on helping Catholic high school-age adolescents better understand their faith as well as bridging the generation and communication gap between these teens and their parents. The DWHL held its first retreat in July 2003 and I was actually a graduate of its first class, and since then, I’ve continued going back every year to serve as a staff member along with several of my fellow graduates. It was in preparing to serve for the DWHL’s Class #6 this past summer of 2008 that I realized how to best live out my Fourth Day – by assisting my peers and the youth in getting to know the deeper background of our faith and

why we do the things we do as Catholics. In my opinion, the reason why teens and young adults don't find religion appealing is because of their lack of understanding, or a misunderstanding of our faith. Yes, Catholic children and teens are raised practicing Christian traditions and going to Mass on Sunday, but just because they are familiar with something doesn't mean that they *truly* know WHY we do things or the history behind the long-standing traditions our Church upholds. Additionally, teens and young adults don't see the practicality of religion in their lives. Sure, you can say you're a good Catholic, and that you'd love to preach the Gospel of the Lord to others, and that you've memorized the Beatitudes, but if that's all they are to you – words, routine phrases we respond with at Mass, and mechanical actions we do to stay “in good standing” in the eyes of the Catholic Church, then we don't really know how to apply our knowledge of our faith to our lives. Some teens and young adults may have studied the bible in confirmation class or in religion classes in Catholic schools, but if that's all they are to them, texts to learn and master but not live out, then it's useless.

Hence, the DWHL changes that. The DWHL retreat is very similar to that of the Cursillo Weekend, but the talks and activities are all prepared and delivered by youth staff members and brought down to the level ng mga “baguettes” (*of the teens*), so that they can better relate it to themselves and see how God functions in their lives through their environment and most importantly, through them. It provides parents, siblings, family members, and friends an opportunity to express to their candidate how much they love and appreciate them through letters that are somewhat of an equivalent to the Cursillo's Palanca Love letters. One of the most touching and impactful aspects of the DWHL retreat is a “Message” (talk/rollo) given on Sunday morning (the last day of the retreat) by an adult Cursillista, a sort of parent figure. Since all of the talks are delivered by the candidates' peers or young adults, this talk stands out. Here, the speaker explains to the candidates their parents' points of view and their feelings about their children, such as the sacrifices they made for them by immigrating to the U.S. from their homelands in order for their kids to have better futures, or working 2 jobs and long hours just to be able to give their children what they want. This talk truly opens the candidates' eyes and allows them to see the love that radiates from their parents everyday actions and gives them a tiny glance of the sacrifices and dreams their parents have for them. This pivotal talk explains that despite the arguments, the misunderstandings, the hurtful words, the yelling, the bad attitudes, and the nagging, their parents love them... as God the Father loves them, unconditionally. After this talk, an opportunity for each candidate to respond to their parents' letters is given, and the goal of this activity is to bridge the communication gap between parents and their teens. I have personally found that it's difficult to express intimate emotions and thoughts in person. However putting one's thoughts down on paper seems to be slightly easier. Before the candidates' graduation and closing ceremony, the parents are gathered in a room together and given the letters their children wrote in response. Here, the parents are allowed to volunteer to read their letters outloud to the group of parents and some staff members present in the room. Although these letters may not fix the issues that families constantly deal with and stress over, one thing we as staff members have seen year after year is that these letters DO give these families opportunities to express what's most important: the love, sorrow, mga pag-kukulang (*shortcomings*), appreciation, and thanks they have for one another. And it is through these unspoken moments of peace and expressions of love between fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, that have allowed me to find my calling and my personal mission – my Fourth Day mission: Bringing my peers and the youth of the Church closer to God, while

simultaneously bringing families together as well. Because after all, I'm sure we all know the saying, a family that prays together stays together, di ba (*right?*)? The whole time I was looking for my cross to carry, and it was right here in front of me since I first entered the DWHL in 2003. I want our Church to be in good hands in the future. I want our faith to flourish, and I want my generation to be able to accomplish what years and years of generations have already achieved... I want my generation to follow in the footsteps that our parents have so carefully laid out for us to follow. I want my generation to be the evangelizers of the world. Therefore aside from serving in the Cursillo, I have been, and will continue to live out my Fourth Day through my service in the DWHL because as our previous Spiritual Advisor, Fr. Nestor Rebong always said, "The youth are not the future of the Church. They are the present."

DE COLORES!