

# Where There Is Hope



# SS.CC. Mission

*Making God's Kingdom a Reality*

## SS.CC.'s Mission Presence— Resurrection Parish-Bagong Silang, Looks Back One Year

Harald Adler, ss.cc. and Martin O'Lughlen, ss.cc.



*Bagong Silang, Philippines, is home to an estimated 800,000 souls, who until the arrival of the SS.CC.CIM Pastoral Team, were served by only four parishes. There are no public hospitals there, not a single bank nor street lights, in fact, no streets as we know them in the U.S. In this issue we include a review of the highlights of this graced team's work that were noted when the parish celebrated the anniversary of SS.CC.'s arrival on May 15, 2003. ■*

**F**our catechists have been hired. “We already had four catechists”, says Fr. Martin, “as of the beginning of the next school year, in June, we will have twice that many”. Within the parish, not far from the church, there is a public elementary school and a public high school. Our catechists are allowed to give religious instruction in the schools. However, since the schools have more than 12,000 students, it was impossible for the catechists to give even one period of instruction to each student per week. Now, it should be possible to accomplish this modest goal. Besides teaching in the school, the catechists perform many other tasks in the parish. “For example”, Fr. Martin explains, “we anticipate that we will now be able to improve the quality and quantity of instruction prior to Confirmation, First Communion and Matrimony as well as both infant and adult Baptism.”

**F**or over 1,800 students who were about to graduate from either elementary or high school, the parish provided a one-day retreat. They were taken away in groups of about 120 to 150 in order to give them an experience of God's presence in their lives.

**L**ast January, the youth leaders took part in a weekend Leadership Training Formation Retreat. They have now had 12 follow-up sessions and will take a two-day workshop on facilitation so that they can then repeat the process they have been through with other young people in their section of the parish.

**A**nother new initiative is a summer Youth Formation Program. Remember, summer here is considered to be March, April, May. Seventy-five teenagers participated in a two-day workshop on human development.

**E**specially important in the view of Fr. Martin is a scholarship program for out-of-school children. “There are many children in our parish who do not go to school because they can't afford it. Public school is supposed to be free, but the uniform has to be bought and there are fees for every little thing. Even more difficult than providing for the financial needs of the students, will be altering the culture in the community and the home that says it is okay for a child not to go to school. We hope to address these challenging tasks as well.”

Over the past several weeks a committee of four parishioners and Sr. Inez have been diligently at work, trying to determine who should be the beneficiaries of the sixty scholarships that are available this year. Homes have been visited; the economic status of each family has been analyzed, applications and report cards have been pored over; children and parents/guardians have been interviewed, all for the purpose of deciding who are the most needy, most deserving children.

“It is always sad,” tells Fr. Martin, “to see bright young people drop out of school for financial reasons. But it is really heartbreaking when you realize how close some of them were to breaking out of the cycle of poverty and unemployment. We can't solve this whole problem, but, because of the generosity of many people, we look forward to being able to assist some young scholars.”

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**apostolic activity** “...what the Gospel looks like when it is lived by a group of people who take it with complete seriousness for themselves and for the world.”

*Fintan Sheeran, ss.cc.*

**A**nother commitment showing great promise: Two members of the parish are now being trained as Community Development Workers. By June they will begin their long range and somewhat daunting task. This will involve enabling people to come to a shared understanding of their common plight and to develop Gospel based communitarian solutions to their problems.

**V**ery impressive is the zeal of thirty-four members of the extended parish council. A few weeks ago they took part in a weekend at a retreat house. They were led through a series of team-building exercises in which the parish priest had to be involved. “You should have seen me jumping through hoops and rolling around on the grass!” Fr. Martin tells of having identified what our parish looked like in the past and what it looks like now; they were introduced to a new vision of what a Post-Vatican II parish might look like. There will be twelve two-hour follow-up sessions, the last eight of which will be led by a team of the parishioners themselves.

**N**one of these activities could have been done using only the meager resources of the parish. The support which Fr. Martin receives comes from friends and helpers in the USA, from one of the parishes in Japan and from some Filipinos working in Ireland. In his own words, “it is an essential part of our efforts to make God’s kingdom a reality in this part of Bagong Silang. The God who has assured us that not even a cup of cold water given in his name will go unrewarded will certainly reward you richly for your (the supporters) kindness.” ▣

## Starting This Month, SS.CC. India Begins Special Year Long Formation Program

**Santhosh Thottankara, ss.cc.**

*“I ask for prayers for myself and the four students who are going to journey with me for one year. Their program began with a special Mass on July 3, St. Thomas Day here in India. Since St. Thomas was the greatest missionary to bring the message of Christ to India, I believe that he will inspire our young candidates to bring the good news wherever they are sent by the congregation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”*

I have been asked by Fr. Felipe to look after the new students who are coming to stay in Damien Residence. The leadership team in India has decided to have this special year of formation to help the students improve their English. My major task is to prepare the young men for their philosophical studies in Bangalore and to help them increase their command of English so that they can excel in their studies.



Bro. Santhosh Thottankara, ss.cc., (top) and Fr. Felipe Hamilton, ss.cc.

I am happy to have this duty because I have always had a special interest in formation work. I hope to do my best so that the students will benefit fully from the program. I have decided to focus on four major areas: initiation to the SS.CC. community, English formation, critical thinking and appreciation of Indian culture, and self discipline and character building. I believe that these are important areas for the students as they begin their life with us and aspire to be SS.CC. religious priests.

I am aware that this job is not an easy one. Though I lack experience, I believe my long period of formation in different seminaries under various people will strengthen me in fulfilling my duties as a formator. I started my formation at the age

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