



DECEMBER
2023

RIPPLES

PASSIONIST NUNS ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CHRONICLE

Dawn of Christmas Morn

Rush Giftwrapping. Time to take a nap. Kitchen overtime. Washing Up. Late sleeping expecting late rising. Overnight party is over. These are some of the words that would pop-up if we will hear the word 'dawn of Christmas morn.'

I am just thinking what if MARY will really give birth to JESUS this year on the same date, at the same time and this BABY JESUS whom we now adore and glorify will really be at the manger, lying in swaddling clothes... would we still do the same activities written above?

Maybe, philosophically most of us would answer... Hey, hey, that nativity scene happened more than two thousand years ago and now it's time to commemorate and celebrate.

And so what is the right thing to do then? How do we celebrate then? It already sounds cliché if we will say we have to find time to kneel down and pray... and be thankful to GOD who so loved us that He sent His only Son to redeem us. But this cliché is the TRUTH of GOD's LOVE which is the sole core meaning of this Christmas celebration.

This dawn of Christmas morn is a reminder that HOPE for Salvation was born... that MERCY and LOVE of God was revealed... that darkness covering the earth is now transformed into marvelous light.

We have our own various ways of celebrating. Our different walks of life differ our way of understanding. GOD sees us but chose not to intervene on how we find meaning to His sacrificial gift.

But one thing is being asked of us on this time of dawn when sunrise is about to scatter the power of darkness... 'never forget that GOD loves us unconditionally'. This incarnation... this nativity scene is a concrete proof that GOD will do everything for us.... and that **no sin we committed can make HIM love us less.**



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Immanuel

GOD with us



Though we are wrapped in darkness, there is a circle of light that embraces us: Jesus, the Light that shines in our darkness! He is a shield of light that protects us from the forces of evil that threatens to swallow us if we allow even an iota of consent.

God is with us. “Ang Diyos ay aking naging kapwa-tao.” There is no other response to the birth of Jesus but a deep silence surrounding one’s being at the mystery of the Word-made-flesh. God lies in a manger to show us how available He is, how approachable He is.

Every Christmas reminds us of how God loves the world so much that God continues to be born especially in every Holy Mass. We welcome Him in our very souls praying that He truly be Immanuel for us.

May the words and expressions of Christmas never be reduced to mere platitudes, to routine celebrations, to empty parties. Rather, may our souls feel the thrill of the subtle surprises of God everyday as we live our lives fully aware of God-with-us!



CHRISTMAS

LIGHTS



I love Christmas just as I love birthdays. When we were children, my sister and I used to receive new dresses on Christmas from our mother. There are Christmas parties, gifts, and most especially, Christmas lights! I really enjoyed the Christmas season.

When I entered the monastery, the way Christmas is celebrated changed for me. There are no Christmas decors and lights up until December 16. No more new dresses and no more parties. The only celebration we have is on Christmas itself when the Baby Jesus is born of Mary and laid in a manger. (I seldom attend Misa de Gallo before I entered.)

Now I value Christmas even more. I get to prepare myself during Advent season acknowledging my unworthiness and imperfections. I realized that the real joy of Christmas is felt when we are able to celebrate it truly in the silence of our hearts.

May we have a meaningful and blessed Christmas 2023!



HAPPY THE PEOPLE

*Happy the people the Lord has
chosen to be His own.(Psalm 33)*

This was the Responsorial Psalm that I sang during the Holy Mass of my First Profession as a Passionist Nun. I was very nervous because I was not so confident in singing in front of many people. But I told myself this is not for me. This is for the Lord who has loved me and chosen me as his own. Yet, surprisingly, my brother, Jericho, approached me after the Mass saying, "Ate, magaling ka palang kumanta. 'Di ba 'di ka naman kumakanta before?!" I just smiled and did not say anything at all. But I was grateful to the Lord for my brother's uplifting words.

I pray that as I continue to walk this Passionist Contemplative way of life, I will always find joy even in trying situations. I will keep in mind what I read on the orange vocation promotion card that I got from the Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage Parish five years ago: We stand with Mary at the Foot of the Cross. These words, although I did not fully grasp the meaning at that time, impressed me, letting me realize that these women (the Passionist Nuns) are dedicated to a life of simplicity and prayer.

Now, here I am, chosen to stand with Mary at the foot of the Cross, together with my Sisters. We strive to lift up our personal sufferings along with the needs and prayers of our human family and all of creation, unceasingly praying that the memory of the loving Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ be imprinted in the hearts of all.

May God be praised forever!

July 18, 2023 at ten o'clock in the morning, a simple yet Solemn Eucharistic Celebration was held where Sister Maria Nina of the Good Shepherd (Jennylyn Del Carmen) professed her Vows in the presence of her family, Sisters in Passionist Nuns Community and the three Passionist Priests.

Rev. Fr. Nazario 'Nonoy' Plaza, C.P., Provincial Superior of Passionist Fathers and Brothers in the Philippines presided the Mass, who happened to be the same priest who officiated the wedding of Sister Maria Nina's Parents (Raul and Melyflor) thirty (30) years ago (June 1993).

Fr. Nonoy in his homily gave heartwarming words of encouragement for Sr. Maria Nina. He said:

As you begin another phase of your journey, embrace it with joy, knowing that you are participating in the unique and glorious mission of spreading Christ's love and compassion to our broken world. I pray that God's grace will always sustain you, His love inspire you, and His presence be your eternal refuge.

Together with Father Nonoy were Father Mark Ian Peliño, C.P. Provincial Secretary and Confessor of the Passionist Nuns, and Father William Pondo, C.P., Assistant Rector of Saint Gabriel Passionist Seminary in Marbel.



Poetry

Poetry

Poetry

SURFING THE SEA OF LIFE

You are swimming
In an ocean of options
Hardly able to make decisions.

You are surfing
The Net for whatever
Till it has you in its power.

Time thieves are lurking
In the shadows of socmed
And you are unaware, unguarded.

Is there no stopping
To this relentless race
Of posting a good face?

An immense service it is doing
This worldwide Net
But let us not forget –

Our own hearts calling
For silence and meaning,
For truth and well-being.

after Reading Momo by Michael Ende

In the Inner Desert

The desert within -
A vast solitude
Of stark and immense space.
Here my heart expands,
My mind explodes!
I can only kneel
Before the Mystery
That allows Itself
To be glimpsed.

Let me stand alone
Quivering with the changing dunes.
Alone and brave
For the many
Who are forced
Into loneliness and despair.
In the frontiers of thought
In the margins of fear
May I stay for them, with them.

Mysterious solitude!
Why are we ever alone,
Even in the midst of the crowd
With a network of friends?
But here in the inner desert
We find a communion –
Intimate, loving, peaceful...
Because we find You here.
You let us discover You within!

BELOW THE DIN

Coming into the chapel to pray
The blare of the videoke
Assaults the ears, disturbing,
Invading the whole being.

How can I pray in this noise?
How can I hear God's voice?

I will myself to pray saying,
"I am above this din."
But the person so bold
Sings "Top of the World"!

So I dive deep below the din,
The faint and peaceful sounds
discern

The distant cry of the Asian koel
The cooing of doves so gentle
The chorus of cicadas and
crickets
The plainchant drone of insects.

Lizards clicking, dogs howling,
Crows cawing, frogs croaking.

The wind blowing in the trees
Makes my heart at ease.
I focus on the faintest sound
where God may be found.

There in the music of nature's
symphony,
The silence of God awaits me.



CHRISTMAS AGAIN?!

Are we filled with expectation,
Or weighed down with exasperation?
Has Christmas become a burden,
Or a glimpse of heaven?

Amid the festivity
Can we grasp the mystery,
Of the Child born for us
At Christmas?

We wait for Christ to be born
But do we sense that He waits for us in turn?
That He Himself comes looking for us
On every road, in every pass?

Christmas is here to remind us again
Of the God who took to Himself our pain.
The Little Child in the manger
Is born in us, our Savior.

Let the power of this Child
Bring our dying souls to life
That Christmas may truly be
A season of loving welcome for everybody.

GRATITUDE

God loves you.
Respecting you, He gives you
freedom.

Admiring your beauty, He
blesses you.

Teaching you goodness, He
cleanses your heart.

Inspiring you always, He
strengthens you and gives
you courage.

Thinking of you, He fills you
with wisdom.

Understanding your
weakness, He gives Himself
for you.

Dedicating you to Himself, He
calls you, that you may follow
Him.

Embrace your cross and abide
in His love.

A little thing He asks of you...

Dear Jesus, FOR CALLING ME, I THANK YOU

Dear Jesus, for calling me,
I thank You.
Despite my weaknesses,
You are faithful and true.
Whenever I fall,
You are there.
To help me stand,
my cross to bear.

Let my simple life,
O Good Shepherd,
Proclaim Your Name
till it be heard;
My love for You,
may it grow and flower,
To be for You,
now and forever.

Always keep me humble
That I may not stumble;
Yet, if ever again I falter
May Your mercy still be there
to offer.

Free me from my fears,
Relieve me from my tears,
Embrace me in Your love,
That I may continually be Your
chosen dove.





January 8, 2023. Solemnity of the Epiphany. Three priests for the Three Wise Men!

Fr. Job Abo-abo, Fr. Francis Bryan Deita and Fr. Ted Vincent Emboltorio celebrated their Thanksgiving Mass with us. They were ordained to the priesthood on November 28, 2022. We continue to pray for them as they are plunged into the ministry of bringing Jesus to our people.



April 22, 2023 @ 6am. Rev. Fr. Marvin Luague, C.P., a newly ordained Passionist Priest (last March 28, 2023) celebrated His Thanksgiving Mass with us.

February 7, 2023. After the untimely death of Father Louie, the Passionist Fathers and brothers had their emergency Chapter to elect new Provincial Superior and Council members. Rev. Fr. Nazario 'Nonoy' Plaza, C.P. was elected as the new Provincial Superior and elected consultors are: Rev. Fr. Julito Villarente, C.P. (1st); Rev. Fr. Edwin Flor, C.P. (2nd); Rev. Fr. Orven Gonzaga, C.P. (3rd) and Rev. Fr. Rogie Castellano, C.P. (4th).



May 20, 2023. Twelve Nuns from different Poor Clare Monasteries in the Philippines who attended their Formators Update 2023 in their monastery in Polomolok came to visit us.



July 26-30, 2023. Retreat with Mother Marrietta Vega, OSC, Superior of the Poor Clares in Kidapawan City. Two Postulants from Poor Clare Monastery in Kidapawan joined us,

November 1, 2023. Remembering the one who first lit the candle of HOPE on this hilltop, Rev. Fr. William Pondo, C.P. together with the community blessed the grave of our beloved Mother Marilyn, C.P.



November 13-17, 2023. A Great Memory Recall leading to Immense Gratitude, Rev. Fr. Mark Ian Peliño, C.P. guided the Passionist Nuns community on their Annual Retreat in preparation for their Renewal of Vows and the forthcoming Advent.



November 21. This **Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary** is significant to the Passionists moreso to the Passionist Nuns all over the world who chose this date to be their common day for the Annual Renewal of their Vows.

Last November 21, 2023, Father Sulpicio Francisco presided the Mass and gave a profound homily before the renewal. Below is an excerpt:

There is a connection between the Feast of the Presentation of Mary and the Passionist order that lies in the shared themes of surrender, dedication and contemplation. Mary's presentation in the temple foreshadows the total self-giving that would mark her entire life, leading her to stand at the foot of the Cross, intimately sharing in the Passion of her Son. The Passionist order founded by Saint Paul of the Cross, emphasized meditation on the Passion of Christ as a means of deepening one's relationship with God and fostering a spirit of prayerful contemplation. The Passionist Nuns, through their secluded life of prayer, seek to unite themselves with Christ's suffering, offering their lives as a continuous prayer for the salvation of souls.

As we reflect on these interconnected feasts, we are called to examine our lives. Are we willing, like Mary, to present ourselves fully to God, surrendering our plans and desires to His divine will? Do we embrace moments of contemplation and prayer, allowing the Passion of Christ to transform us from within?

Rippling Ripples

In August, I was invited by the Japanese Community of Passionist Nuns. During my one month stay with the Sisters, there was a time that I had to go out and came back to the monastery using a taxi. When I got off the taxi, I wondered why the driver was waiting for me outside. Then he said, "This is my donation for the poor children in the Philippines." I was so surprised and touched by his love and concern for the Philippine children. So I decided to buy some school supplies for them.

I shared my experience to the Sisters in the Japanese community. They were so moved. Mother Superior with another Sister went out for their errands. And they bought plenty of enjoyable toy candies and sweets for the children. They happily filled the limited space of my suitcase which could hardly contain other objects anymore.

It was the first time I received a donation from a taxi driver for the poor children of the Philippines. Actually, my joy and surprise have a background. I learned during our short conversation that the driver (49) has three (3) children, the youngest girl was just born. He shared with me he had to work very hard because of his children. He grew up with a strict father. "I want to become a very gentle and good father so that they will have beautiful memories in the future." He went to a Catholic kindergarten and on to high school. While in kindergarten, he used to attend the Mass though he was not Catholic, even now. Surely, he must have associated his children with the Philippine children.

Our little acts of kindness inspire others to be generous. Ripples make ripples.

IN THE SPIRIT OF SYNODALITY

Follow the breath of the Holy Spirit. The Words of JESUS Urge Us On!

"Again I tell you, if two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatever, it shall be granted you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there I am in their midst." (Mt 18:20) This text provides us a way to enter deeply into the spirit of Synodality.

In another text we hear Jesus say: "all you ask the Father in my NAME, he will give you." (Jn 15:16)

What consoling and assuring words from our LORD JESUS! Praying together means our heart, mind, and spirit are united constantly with JESUS, in JESUS and through JESUS. We are all in need of healing. We are all in need of GOD's mercy. The world is in need of healing, mercy, love, justice and peace. Together let us beg the FATHER for whatever graces we may need for the betterment of the entire human race. With JESUS in our midst through the working of the Holy Spirit who guides and directs our plans and actions we can be sure that we will not be lost. Yes, these very words of the LORD JESUS highlight the importance of journeying together and keeping HIS SPIRIT alive in our hearts.

"Within this context, synodality represents the main road for the Church, called to renew herself under the action of the Spirit and by listening to the Word." (PD #9).

"Adsumus [Domine] Sancte Spiritus! ("Here we are Lord, Holy Spirit!") We open ourselves to the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Fr. Ramil Nerio, who gave us two conferences on Synodality, emphasized: "The Holy Spirit who guides us individually, is always at the service of community...We need to dispose ourselves to the use of the Church." And so we do our best to live our Passionist charism in the Church- in Communion, Participation, Mission - to be truly a synodal community, not only within ourselves but with our wider community, the people who come here for Masses, prayer requests and thanksgiving.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis just concluded the month-long synod for a Synodal Church. Let us continue to pray for the intentions of the Holy Father, Pope Francis whose greatest desire is to do the Father's will. Let us keep him in our prayers as he continues to lead the universal Church in our time today.

We are being reminded by the very words of our Holy Founder St. Paul of the Cross: "With a special urgency, I beg you to have a filial love for holy mother Church and a total submission to her visible head who is the supreme Pontiff. For this purpose, day and night the religious shall remember in their prayers holy mother Church and the Holy Father. There, I shall never cease to pray for the Holy Father and for the Holy mother Church."

(*from the Spiritual Testament of St. Paul of the Cross, priest)

After hearing Jesus, **I went away sad...**

I am the rich young man to whom Jesus said: " Sell everything you have, give them to the poor and come, follow me". And I went away sad for I have many possessions.

Sell everything. Many possessions. These are all figurative expressions.

Aware of my abilities, capacities and all the gifts and graces that God bestowed on me, I believe I have a mount of possessions. To sell them is to let go. To give to the poor is to devote all those abilities and giftedness in serving the poor.

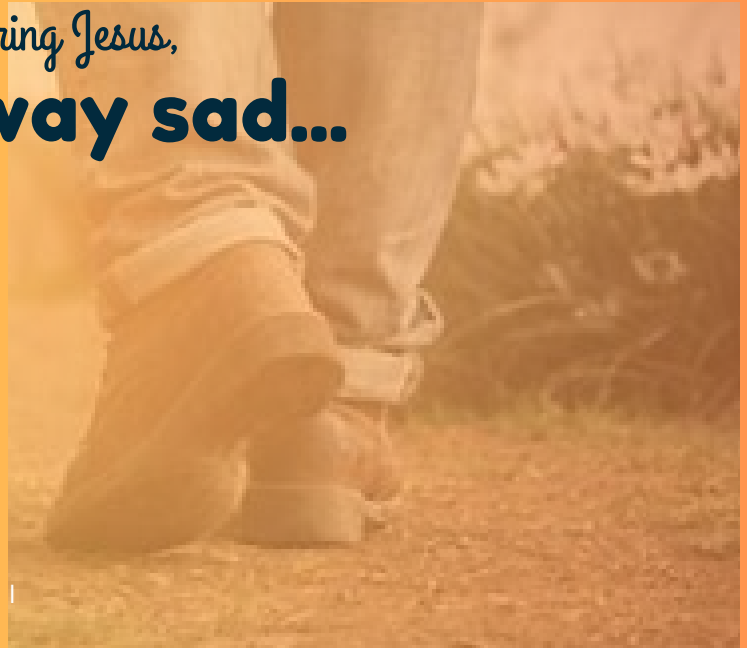
Who are the poor?

Those who are so broken by life that have no more heart to try; those who are so bound up by their own addictions that liberty and release are a mirage; those who think that they will never again experience the favor of the Lord or see His just vengeance meted out against those who have misused them; those who think that their lives hold nothing more than ashes, sackcloth and the fainting heaviness of despair; those who think that suicide is the best solution to end up their pain; those who are in mental anguish and no one dare to listen. They are the reason behind Jesus' coming. They are the poor - the object of His love and sacrifice. They are the poor of Yahweh whom Jesus is asking me to go, sell my possessions and give to them then follow Him.

My heart remains closed, my eyes do not want to see, my being resists and I went away sad.

It was indeed a long journey and of searching. And finally, when the search is over and I got the answer... when I heard what is to be done to attain the kingdom of peace... I just dropped it, turned back and went away. What a waste of time journeying!

To follow the footsteps of Jesus needs courage, it needs brevity. He is not asking the impossible. This world is sick and many poor are in need of help. To be invited to follow in his footsteps is privilege enough. All I have to do is to make a choice.



I returned. I changed my mind. I realized that to turn my back would be another long journey leading to nowhere. Though it is so hard to accept the invitation, I took the courage and joined Jesus in the garden of olives. He shed blood when he made the choice and he also resisted. "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by but not my will. Your will be done". My obedience, if it be total need a sacrifice; it needs self- emptying and trust in the wisdom of God.

"I am now ready to put myself at the Lord's service with my gifts and abilities, with my hopes and efforts, with my lights and shadows." - Saint John Paul II

To journey together in synodality entails poverty and obedience, respect and understanding. I need to shed my own mindset and open my heart to the cry of the poor especially those who are in the fringes of society.

To be obedient is to empty myself and have the capacity to listen.

In my limited time and space, nothing is impossible. I don't need to look around, for opportunities are always knocking to articulate what I believe in. I will just have to make a choice. No one can do it for me. I may fail. No one is perfect. But HOPE will help me get up and try again. I may experience brokenness but I can always cling to Jesus for healing and be made whole again. At times I can be in darkness, but I am certain I am not alone in darkness and I can choose to participate in the darkness of the Passion of Jesus - participate in the life of God knowing that it is the path to HOPE and FREEDOM.

Who am I? Why do I live?

Fr. Peter Von Essen, a Franciscan Capuchin priest once said : " Let's come to know not only our own identity (WHO am I?) but also the 'WHY?'- the reason of our own existence. "

Fr. Peter referred the writings of Dr. Nagai regarding Human Nature.

Dr. Nagai accurately revealed the human nature:

- If the muscular strength is precious (valuable), bears are better than humans.
- If the strength of shoulder is precious (valuable), humans are no match for cows.
- If running, man will lose to a horse.
- And the sense of smell of human will not be as effective as dog's.

The preciousness of ' being ' of a human is that we have 'the soul' endowed with ' wisdom and will ' "

What about Jesus?

His Identity is clear. He is God. Jesus is Wisdom Himself. He accepted and followed the Will of the Father by His Will. Jesus became God and man. Though He is God, He became man. He was born of the Virgin Mary as a man in order to save this world, each of us. We will come to know our own identity through Him, and to know what we should be. He accompanies us in our journey towards God the Father.

St. Augustine wrote this ; " Because God has made us for Himself, our hearts are restless until they rest in Him."

Jesus, come to us. Now we know our identity -who we are, and why we Live? And that is through You, Jesus.

A PLACE WHERE I AM EXCITED TO GO...



Rev. Fr. Renato 'Rene' P. Ventajar, C.P.
Oct. 21, 1962 - Feb. 09, 2023

It's no. 1 in my bucket list but I am not sure if it is a realistic wish or just a wishful thinking. The possibility depends on how I live each day saving all my resources of goodness and love so that the gate will be opened for me when it is time for my climb.

So many of my friends and loved ones went ahead and I am pretty sure they are now together and enjoying in that perfect place. This year was a painful letting go 'though I knew it is already coming.

With the passing of Father Rene, our beloved brother, Father and friend, I have no right to ask 'why?' but I am supposed to say 'Thank you to the moon and back... for EVERYTHING' This 'everything' will be a long list so I'd like to sum it up. Thank you for the love, the care and for letting me realize that JESUS is always near and present.

I was only fifteen when you taught me the great lesson about humility and forgiveness. That was the first time I received a 'sorry' card from a grown up... from an adult saying to a stubborn child like me: *I am really sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you. Fathers never intend to hurt their beloved children.*

I will do my best to follow you there. I hope I would be able to sustain my excitement and live in accordance to my goal - to be in GOD's loving embrace and see you once again!



MY LIFE WITH THE PASSIONISTS

I grew up in a Catholic family. The church where we attend Mass is just in front of our house. I did not know about religious orders at my young age. All I can remember are foreign priests with black pin on their suits (habits). I called it "black heart bar pin".

Fr. Owen, Fr. Marcellus, Fr. Albinus, were some of the priests' names. I knew their names because of my father who was also extending his services in the church.

In my high school days, I was with the church choir. Our regular Mass celebrant was Fr. Gabriel Baldostamon, C.P. I was so proud that I was one of the Fr. Gabriel Baldostamon "Angels" as one of our parishioners called us.

As I graduated from high school, I met Fr. Leo Acierto, C.P., who was still a Brother, in our basketball summer league. They (the Passionist Brothers) extended their community service in our barrio, now Barangay, Bula.

Luckily, I married a man in the person of Mr. Victor Borromeo who is also dedicated to serve the Lord through his ability of singing. We moved here in Koronadal City from General Santos City last 1990.

We were introduced to the Passionist Nuns by Mrs. Lina Lucena in 1992. They were looking for cantors to sing the Responsorial Psalm during the Mass.

From that time on until now, Mr. Borromeo commits himself to singing the Psalms at the Passionist Nuns. He would practice the whole week before Sunday. The Nuns composed music for the Psalms which he sings gladly in his tenor voice.

So glad and happy that we are still here serving the Lord at the Passionist Nuns in Marbel.

-Mrs. Isabel Pacomo Borromeo y Moreno

**I AM CRUCIFIED
FOR YOU BECAUSE
I LOVE YOU!**

Sometimes it puzzles us, what keeps us going?... what urges us?... Until we realized when we lift our eyes at the crucifix the immense LOVE and MERCY of GOD.

It is HE that keeps us going... that urges us to move forward despite our limitations and weaknesses. He is our strength. He supplies what is lacking in us. And without Him, we really cannot proceed merely by ourselves.

As St. John says, " Love then consists in this : not that we have loved God but that He has loved us and has sent His Son as an offering for our sins"(1Jn4:10). This offering of JESUS is continually done 24/7. It is His love that makes us long to see His face.

St. Matthew, on the other hand, teaches us how we can respond to GOD's LOVE and see His Face. "Blest are the single- hearted for they shall see GOD" (Mt. 5: 8). The single-hearted are truly those who love and serve GOD with all their heart, mind and strength and love and serve their neighbor in humble loving service without counting the cost. No labor is too difficult for a loving heart.

For us, this is best expressed in 'silent love offering' of ourselves to GOD through a life of persevering prayer, silence and solitude. Our Holy Founder St. Paul of the Cross reminds us that "when we remain with a loving attention of heart to GOD in living faith, we pray twenty-four (24) hours a day".

May our young people find some precious time of silence to listen to the voice of the LORD knocking at their hearts. " Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with Me." (Rev.3:20)

LOVE is indeed the very language of GOD in SILENCE!



MERRY Christmas



FROM OUR
COMMUNITY
TO YOURS.



THE PASSIONIST NUNS . OUR LADY OF HOLY HOPE MONASTERY

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