

The Servants of the Word

Fall 2012



Of Coffee and Perk-Olators

Coffee. The very dark brown or black liquid that people drink – hot or cold, flavored or unflavored, with or without cream, “leaded” or “unleaded,” brewed or instant. It comes in a thousand and one varieties, blends and concoctions, peddled by upscale coffee shops, or dispensed by Vendo machines in paper cups.

But one thing that coffee does – it perks up people. It is no accident that a machine invented to brew it is called (*but of course*) a percolator.

Jopeng (or Joseph Piquero, when referred to more formally) is a coffee nut (*pardon the intended pun*). He begins his day, ceremoniously enough, with a good dose of the aromatic black liquid. After his first quaff (“*sip*” is too tame), he perks up – round bleary eyes popping, a grin materializing on his fresh-out-of-bed face, and his lips chirping a cheerful “Good morning, brothers!” at the breakfast table.

“A good cup of coffee starts and makes my day,” Jopeng says matter-of-factly. “It makes me human! It relaxes me,

sharpens my mind, squeezes out my creative juices, gets me through the day’s work. Best of all, conversations with brothers become more stimulating over (*what else?*) a cup of good coffee!”

Just like coffee, Jopeng also perks up the lives of many brothers and sisters, especially the young people of *Ang Ligaya Ng Panginoon* (The Joy of the Lord) Community in Manila, where he serves as director for the Young Adults Program. He is fondly (and intentionally) called by those in the program: “KJ” – for “Kuya Jopeng,” *kuya* being the Filipino title of respect for an older brother.

“Young people make me young,” he declares. “They are full of idealism, energy and enthusiasm for life. They are like a sponge that absorbs everything, uncomplicated, and just willing to listen and take in the truth. The knowledge that I am making a difference in their lives is quite humbling for me. I am grateful for the chance to serve my young brothers and sisters”.

Along with a dedicated team of youth workers from The Servants of the Word and the local community, Jopeng organizes and runs summer camps, mission trips outside of metropolitan Manila, temporary households for boys during the summer, retreats, training modules, evangelistic events, sports activities, and more. Jopeng the percolator?

But of course! For Jopeng also perks up the brothers who work in The Servants of the Word office. As the regional steward, he makes sure that the brothers’ finances are in order and the overall practical administration of our life is working well. Being a mechanical engineer by training, Jopeng is methodical and systematic in his stewardship work. At the same time, he is brotherly and personal; he is one of the more compassionate brothers I know.

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It is a great privilege to share with you once again about the life and mission of The Servants of the Word! I have recently completed the first year in my new role as Presiding Elder of The Servants of the Word, and I survived! Humor aside, this year has been filled with many blessings as I have visited our brotherhood houses and missions across the world. I have had the opportunity to come to know brothers I had previously not known or knew primarily by name only. I have also had the opportunity to see the varied and inspiring ways my brothers are serving the Lord and faithfully living as brothers in The Servants of the Word. This has brought me great joy!

For those in North America and Europe, autumn is once again upon us. With it comes the beginning of a new school year in these locations. This means new opportunities for the many Servants of the Word brothers doing student outreach to share the gospel with students from across the world! This also means much excitement as well as much hard work for our brothers involved in this mission. I have had the opportunity to talk to a number of them from across Michigan and all have shared about early fruitfulness as young people are responding to their various overtures and invitations to find out more about the good news. I will ask for your prayers for these men and for the students they will be in contact with throughout the year. Pray that there be a rich harvest for God's kingdom.

In this issue of our newsletter you will read about an exciting mission trip that a number of our newest Servants of the Word affiliates were involved in at the Crow Creek Indian Reservation at Fort Thompson, South Dakota. This turned out to be a highly effective experiment combining short term mission and relationship building among younger men in our brotherhood life. This type of trip is something we hope to do again in the future.

In this issue you will also be introduced to the "percolator," Joseph (aka Jopeng) Piquero, one of our lifelong committed Filipino brothers. I had the opportunity to live and work with Jopeng for several years in the Philippines. He is all the article describes him as, and more! Read about him and get to know another one of the unique personalities that make up The Servants of the Word.

If you are interested in contributing to our mission, please do not hesitate to contact us! We would love to explain how you can partner with us in the great work that God has given us. God bless you all! 🏴‍☠️

Kew



Doing form work for the front sidewalk.



Pulling the main service wire to the house.

Affiliates Make a Difference on Crow Creek Reservation

“Now we’re cooking with gas”, beamed Mike Kramer’s voice as team members took the forms out from around the freshly hardened concrete sidewalk. He had been operating a Bobcat skid loader to spread dirt and gravel to flatten the landscape and lay the groundwork for a driveway. A couple other men were beginning to dig a 200 foot long, 2 foot deep trench to bury electrical cabling. Others were priming the siding of the four bedroom house that we were helping to build. Five Servants of the Word affiliates and two lifelong committed brothers were on this mission trip with the primary objective

of contributing to the construction of this Habitat for Humanity home (www.dacotahtipis.org) being built for a Native American family on the Crow Creek Indian Reservation at Fort Thompson, South Dakota. And what a mission trip it was!

Tasks ranged from installing sump pump crocks to wiring and insulating the house. Activities ranged from a tour of a hydroelectric power plant on the Big Bend dam to fishing on Lake Sharpe on the Missouri River. Meals ranged from rib-eye steaks (while visiting the parents of one of the brothers) to traditionally prepared fried bread tacos. Long drives, robust laughs, and raw, manly service characterized this mission trip. Overall, it was a time of innumerable memories, solid brotherly fellowship, selfless physical labor, and strong evangelistic focus.

Aside from the physical work at Habitat for Humanity (www.dacotahtipis.org), a clear highlight was connecting with the missionaries at Diamond Willow Ministries (www.d-w-m.org) who selflessly reach out to the distressed and largely isolated Native American community on the Crow Creek Reservation. We were




Our team with the recipient family who will soon occupy the house.

Thanks be to God for this awe-inspiring opportunity to see and witness God’s greatness, goodness, and love.



Our paint team at work.

given numerous opportunities to exchange our stories with both the older and the younger generations in an effort to contribute to Diamond Willow’s outreach efforts. We were clearly struck by the humility, joy, and sacrificial generosity with which the missionaries there serve, as they leave behind careers, family, and comfortable living situations to pursue God’s will and bring people into the body of Christ. Thanks be to God for this awe-inspiring opportunity to see and witness God’s greatness, goodness, and love.

“God gave us a unique opportunity to plug in with both Habitat for Humanity and Diamond Willow Ministries, and we’re grateful that we were able to contribute even in small ways to the good work that these two organizations are doing.” 

– Greg Codouni

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Jopeng made his lifelong commitment to live single for the Lord in The Servants of the Word in 2006. “I have always wanted to live for something greater than myself. So even earlier on, as a youth leader both in school and in civic affairs, I involved myself with things like the Red Cross, campus politics, student activism, advocacies, academic pursuits, an engineering career after graduation in the country’s major power company and, yes, even girlfriends. But none seemed to satisfy my heart’s deepest longings.” In 1994, Jopeng joined a retreat for single professionals, and there he made a personal commitment to live for the Lord. “I didn’t exactly know what it meant to give my life to God and to follow Him but I thought I’d give it a try,” he recalls. “I gave God a chance. Little did I know that it was the start of the greatest adventure of my life. Little did I know that God was about fulfilling that deep desire in my heart ‘to live my life for something beyond myself.’ Little did I know that I had stumbled upon the ‘treasure hidden in the field,’ and that saying ‘yes’ to God was to receive the key to that treasure.”

In addition to community youth work and his stewardship responsibilities for The Servants of the Word, Jopeng also serves as trainer or formator for some younger brothers who are investigating our life. That tells you a lot not only about Jopeng’s pastoral and evangelistic skills but also his ability to model our life to other men. Jopeng truly has a big heart and gift for evangelizing and discipling men.

Besides his missionary work, Jopeng also loves to run, do wilderness activities like hiking or mountain climbing when he has the chance, tinker with our two vehicles and, yes, have coffee with the brothers and his friends. Having grown up in Baguio City (about 250 kilometers north of Manila in the cool mountain regions of northern Philippines), he loves to eat the exotic food of the mountain people – backyard vegetables, boiled pig or chicken entrails, even dog meat!

Jopeng’s favorite coffee is neither the genteel *Arabica* nor the full-bodied *Robusta*. He likes the local variety called *Barako* (Filipino for “bull”) which is strong, full-flavored, even aggressive, yet smooth and lands well. Like the Servant of the Word that he is.

Just listen to his parting shot at this interview: “Living for and in the grace of God has no dull moments. The pursuit of heaven is the ultimate adventure!”

Very Jopeng. A cup of *barako* coffee, anyone? 🍷



Jopeng at a recent training session in Manila.

– Francis I. Iturralde

WE APPRECIATE YOUR HELP

The Servants of the Word gets its support through the financial earnings of the brothers as well as by donations from our benefactors. Many of our brothers work for sacrificial wages or for no pay at all. Please consider if you can become a financial sponsor of The Servants of the Word. Your prayers and support are appreciated in our work with young people and our community development work.

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