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*In necessariis, unitas; in opinabilibus,
libertas; in omnibus caritas*

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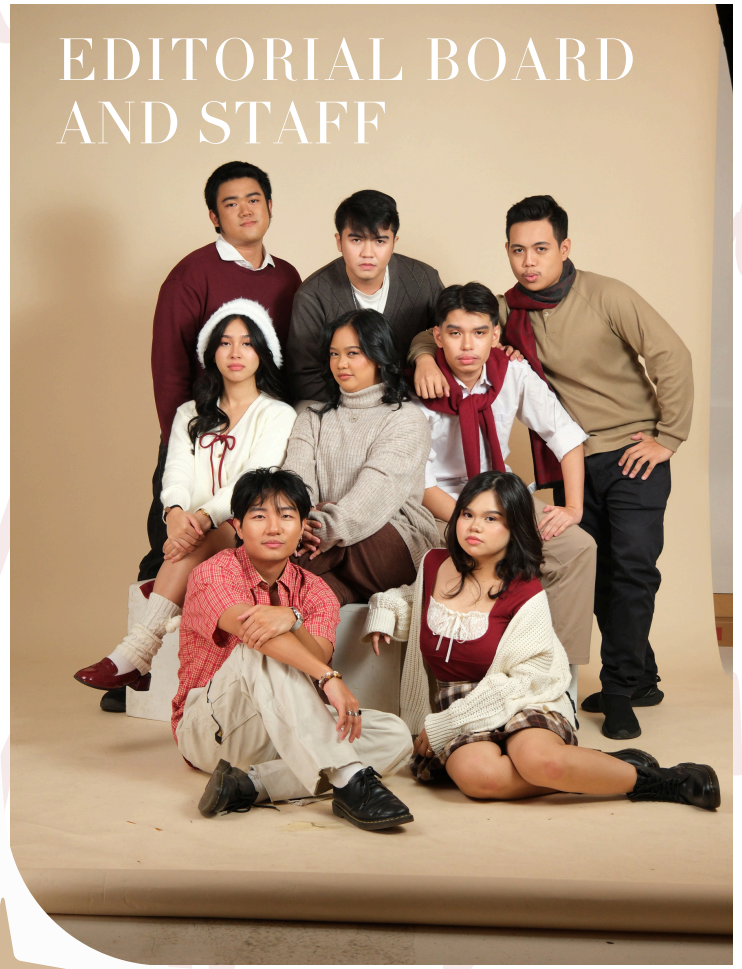
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VOLUME 82

Editors' Note



MANSSEL JIANNE LATONERO
AND
RIZIAN VENIZ BALLETA



WITH OUR CHILDHOODS LAVISHED WITH JOY AND HEARTFELT LAUGHTER FILLING UP THE LIVING ROOM, WITHOUT A CARE IN THE WORLD, AS WE CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS WITH THE IDEA THAT EVERYONE DOES SO TOO IN THE SAME WAY, ENCLOSED IN OUR HOMES, WITHIN OUR FAMILY'S COMFORT. IN THE COMING YEARS, OUR WORLD EXPANDS A LITTLE MORE AND DESCENDED UPON US IS THE DISCOVERY THAT AS WE GROW OLDER, THE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION WE ONCE KNEW VARIES IN THIS MULTIFACETED WORLD, BOUND WITH A YEAR'S WORTH OF CALAMITIES, DISASTERS, AND CHANGES. THE TWINKLING STAR ON THE TREE REMAINS TO SHINE ITS BRIGHTEST, EVEN AS THE TREE APPEARS TO BE DISHEVELED – THAT IS HOW WE SEE THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT AMONG THE FILIPINOS.

In this special issue, we offer a glimpse of the different perspectives on the celebration of Christmas this year as an outlet of hope and shared humanity. Despite what seemed like an endless hurricane of obstacles, the people still yearn for the restful feeling the holidays have to offer. Whether it felt like a walk in the park, or as extreme as a roller coaster ride, the world offers this time to reflect on the mountains you've overcome, and on how to keep moving forward in solidarity with the masses who had to overcome more. May this holiday season be felt as a time to breathe and process, enriching one's soul to face yet another year of hurdles.

We may have not passed the same routes this year, we have reason to believe that all had a fair share of obstacles, some more than the others while some experienced those that headlined national news. What we don't have a reason to is why it all happened, and why it keeps happening. Subject to a good number of debates, what we could boil down for you is that the way of the universe is an inexplicable phenomenon one must adjust to. To ponder on the "why's" is to have time to strategize in moving forward. Although for now, take a deep breath with us.

As said in the film "Dead Poets Society (1989)"; "Medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for." So, whether you had a pending project that you've been wanting to work on, a film or show you've been meaning to watch, or a book you've been meaning to read - take this as a sign to replenish and remind yourself of the things we stay alive for. While our Christmas celebrations may not be as we once knew them to be; anticipated and borderline extravagant, we hope for the joyous yet tamer spirits to remain, both in all our hearts and homes.

To you, who made it this far; pat yourself on the back as you gear up in what lies ahead. The holidays are the universe's compensation for the challenging path you had to conquer. This season offers a time of solace to everyone, regardless of how much one endured or celebrated.

To the weary, may this season be your refuge; To the victorious, may it be a time of humble gratitude; To each and all, may it serve as a reminder that life, along with the barriers, will never be empty of the small yet profound moments that make it worth living.

In the embrace of December's warmth, *The Bedan* offers its cherished holiday issue. This year, we reflect on the season as a sacred pause—a tender respite for weary hearts.

The holidays awaken a deep sensitivity within us, revealing the beauty and fragility of life. Amid the laughter, the music, and the glow of Christmas lights, we feel both the ache of burdens we carry and the solace of the love we share.

To every Bedan who has toiled, triumphed, and endured, this is for you. May this season cradle your spirit, offering moments of rest and glimpses of hope—reminding that even the most fatigued souls are worthy of joy.

May you find rest in the company of loved ones, feel the gentle touch of unseen angels, and carry forward the strength to face the days ahead.

About the issue

December Beat is a special issue published by *The Bedan* every December to celebrate the holiday season. With a curated selection of news, features, and highlights, it embodies the spirit of connection, joy, and reflection. Designed to resonate with the entire Bedan community, this issue serves as a meaningful companion to the festive season, inspiring readers of all backgrounds to embrace the warmth, hope, and wonder that Christmas brings.

Cover by **Rizian Veniz Balleta**

About the cover

“The spiritual light means finding Jesus,” says Fr. Rector during #PaskongBedista2024

▼ Gian Marcel Chiu and Veronica Balbin

PRESERVING A TREASURED HOLIDAY CULTURE IN THE BEDAN COMMUNITY, THE UNIVERSITY HAS AGAIN WELCOMED THE HOLIDAY SEASON AND THE OFFICIAL START OF #PASKONGBEDISTA2024 WITH A SERIES OF PERFORMANCES AND A COMMEMORATIVE LIGHTING CEREMONY LAST DECEMBER 2 AT THE SAN BEDA UNIVERSITY (SBU) DRIVEWAY.

With the theme, “Paskong Bedista 2024: Lakbay Pag-asa sa Taon ng Hubileo,” the ceremony featured performances and intermission numbers from the different colleges, institutions, and organizations of the University such as the Bedan Dance Theatre (BDT), Vasilea from the Integrated Basic Education Department (IBED), San Beda Chamber Chorale (SBCC), and Musika Medisina from the College of Medicine (COM).

Notable among the performances was the Narration of the Christmas Story narrated by the Graduate School of Liturgy’s Dean, Dr. Josefina M. Manabat, SLD. Following this, students from the Senior High School and College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) departments presented the Panunuluyan, a Filipino Christmas tradition reenacting Mary and Joseph’s search for a shelter in Bethlehem.

Rev. Fr. Aloysius Ma. Maranan, O.S.B., the University Rector-President, then delivered a message to the Bedan community, telling them that “in moments of darkness that we see... it is very important that we know that behind the clouds there are the stars. That behind evening and night, the sun can rise tomorrow.”

The Rector-President further added that “it is God who continues make us for who we are and that is the light in our life... Jesus is telling us, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever comes to me will experience the Kingdom of Heaven.’”

Following this came the most anticipated event: the lighting ceremony that was blessed and presided over by Fr. Maranan and the other administrators of the University. After the countdown, the University was illuminated with the warmth of Christmas lights adorned iconic Bedan landmarks: the Red Wall, Sabater Court, Jubilee Garden, St. Maur’s Hall, St. Bede’s Hall, St. Benedict’s Hall, and outside the main gate.

The lighting ceremony was then followed by the institutional Christmas Music Video which was in close collaboration with the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Office of the Prefect of Student Activities (OPSA), San Beda Red Lens (RL), Bedan Musicians Guild (BMG), The Spires, and the CAS Student Council (SC).

Prof. Marvin Reyes, PhD, the CAS Prefect of Student Activities, explained that the music video followed a particular story, featuring the stories of Bedans within and outside the walls of the University, particularly highlighting the story of Joshua Nicole Alinea, a CAS student



Rector-President Rev. Fr. Aloysius Ma. Maranan, OSB, delivers a message to the Bedan community before officially commencing the University-wide Christmas lighting

Photo by XIALEA PELAYO

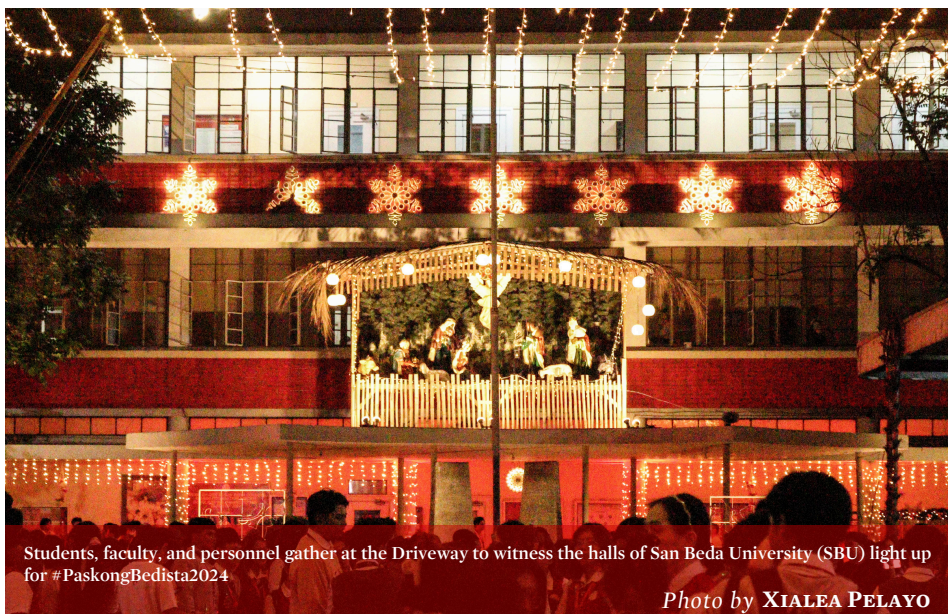
from the Department of Psychology, working part-time as a Grab and Foodpanda rider who, in the video, disclosed how his “ambition and dreams” drove him to work. Later in the ceremony, Alinea was gifted with a brand-new bicycle by the University.

Thereafter, the music video featured a tribute from the parents of the late Aaron James Saludares, who honored his memory with the words, “*lagi mo kaming gagabayan anak,*” and expressing hope that his comforting presence would remain in their lives.

The music video closed with Christmas greetings from the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) in Baguio City, partnered communities, James Reid, as well as faculty and students from St. Vincent College (SVC) in Pennsylvania to which the University had an encounter through the mobility program last September 1.

To cap the ceremony, the College of Nursing (CON) gave the closing intermission number before the community enjoyed themselves to free refreshments.

Welcoming the holiday season, Fr. Maranan gave his greetings to the Bedan community, saying “in the midst of all the challenges that we have—in society, in our families, and all the challenges in our academic life—we believe that we will be able to overcome them as long as we know that Jesus is in our hearts...God bless everyone, and may you have a healthy and happy celebration of a Christmas season.”



Students, faculty, and personnel gather at the Driveway to witness the halls of San Beda University (SBU) light up for #PaskongBedista2024

Photo by XIALEA PELAYO

SBU concludes #PaskongBedista2024 festivities

▼ Mika Isidro and Rcee Tenefrancia



The Bedan community gathers at the San Beda University (SBU) Driveway to enjoy performances by guest artists and performing organizations during the culmination of #PaskongBedista2024

Photo by DIANE FRANCISCO

CELEBRATIONS AND CHEERS FILLED SAN BEDA UNIVERSITY (SBU) AS GUEST ARTISTS AND VARIOUS PERFORMING ORGANIZATIONS TOOK THE STAGE TO CONCLUDE THE #PASKONGBEDISTA2024 AT THE SBU DRIVEWAY ON DECEMBER 12.

The event, attended by students, faculty, and alumni, culminated the week-long institutional celebration of the Yuletide season, which commenced on December 2 with a commemorative Christmas lighting ceremony.

Performing organizations from the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) such as the San Beda Chamber Chorale (SBCC) and the Bedan Musicians' Guild (BMG) were joined by the Integrated Basic Education Department's (IBED) Vasilea Dance Team, The Bedan Harmony, and the Bedan Musicians' Club.

Moreover, organizations from different colleges, such as the Bedan Nightingales Chorale from the College of Nursing (CON), Medisalto Dance Crew and Musika Medisina from the College of Medicine (COM), and San Beda Vox Legis from the College of Law (COL) also graced the stage with their performances.

Afterwards, the event's highlight featured performances from special guest artists Jolianne, Shane G., and James Reid.

Jolianne showcased her latest single, "Plain Girl" and her second-highest streamed song entitled "Halfway There."

Returning to SBU after her performance earlier this year, Shane G. opened her set with her single "Peligro" from 2023 and her latest release "KSPL."

Leading the highlight of the event was #PaskongBedista2024 headline performer, James Reid. The prominent Filipino-Australian actor and singer delivered a setlist of songs from his latest EP, "jgh."

During the performance of his track, "u & i," a lucky member of the Bedan community was invited onto the stage by James Reid himself.

After serenading the crowd with songs from his latest EP and his hit song "Randomantic," his last act marked the conclusion of Paskong Bedista 2024.

In an exclusive interview with The Bedan, James Reid expressed his enjoyment in performing in front of the Bedan crowd.

"I had so much fun. The energy was great tonight, and you know it was so cool to see everyone singing with me," he said. He also shared the highlight of his night, a Bedan named "Michael" who came up to the stage and danced to his songs.

Shane G., on the other hand, could not hold back her excitement after returning to San Beda once again after her last performance in January of 2023.

"I started and ended my year here dito sa San Beda and I'm very much grateful and happy that I get to perform again," she said, wishing the community a "Merry Christmas."



Following this concert, the Christmas break began along with the institutional Christmas Party, which took place on December 17 and 19, respectively.

(with Paris Isaac Falcone)

▼ Photos by Nathaniel Soriano and Diane Francisco

San Beda poised to keep general championship for NCAA's centennial season

▼ Thirty Pabilico and Rizian Veniz Balleta

AFTER A STELLAR PERFORMANCE IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (NCAA) SEASON 100, SAN BEDA UNIVERSITY (SBU) IS ON PACE TO RETAIN ITS STATUS AS THE OVERALL CHAMPION IN THIS YEAR'S ITERATION, MARKING ANOTHER YEAR OF DOMINANCE IN THE NATION'S GRAND OLD LEAGUE.

Amassing, thus far, a record haul of eight golds, one silver, and one bronze, San Beda, bearing the pride of reigning champions, is on track to retain the general championship in NCAA Season 100.

The Mendiola-based squad has delivered impressive performances in both the Senior Men's and Women's divisions of the sports that have concluded since the opening of the NCAA's centennial season. These include basketball, swimming, chess, table tennis, badminton, and taekwondo.

RED PADDLERS

Determined to rebound after narrowly missing the championship in Season 99, the San Beda Red Paddlers made a resounding statement by clinching the crown in both the Men's and Women's divisions of the Season 100 Table Tennis Tournament.

The Men's squad dethroned the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde (DLS-CSB) Table Tennis Team, while the Women's squad, following a similar script, overcame last year's champions in the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA (UPHSD) Table Tennis Team in dominant fashion.

Led by the standout performances of Men's Most Valuable Player (MVP) Matt Andrew Ramos and Women's MVP and Rookie of the Year Danaia Reblora, the Red Paddlers have paved a promising future ahead in maintaining their dominance in the ensuing season.

RED SMASHERS

Historic triumphs have defined the centennial run of the San Beda Badminton Team, with the Men's squad earning a hard-fought silver finish and the Lady Red Smashers securing their maiden championship, cementing their legacy.

The Men's team showcased relentless tenacity throughout their campaign, highlighted by Arjay Lazareto and Joaquin Pollentes' electrifying doubles victory against the Blazing Shuttlers and Renzo Barlinan's recognition as Rookie of the Year. Though their four-year reign ended in a fiercely contested finale, their resolve only signals a strong comeback next season.

On the other hand, Team Captain Isabella Pollentes secured the decisive singles victory against defending champions San Sebastian College-Recoletos (SSC-R), a performance that earned her the Women's Division Most Valuable Player title.

As the crowning achievement, Head Coach Rocky Magnaye's recognition as Coach of the Year highlights the strong leadership guiding San Beda's badminton program. With resilience and a growing legacy, both squads are primed for even greater achievements in the seasons ahead.

RED WOODPUSHERS

Reclaiming the chess championship title, the San Beda Chess Team made a triumphant return to the top after their silver finish in Season 99 and their first over-the-board title since Season 93.

Adrian de Luna, Lionel Escote, Johann Cedrick Gaddi, and Joshua Miguel Yongco stood as the formidable front line for the Red Woodpushers, delivering a masterclass in strategy and resilience during their thrilling championship clash against the Lyceum Pirates.

Escote's standout performance earned him the Most Valuable Player (MVP) award, while Head Coach Idefonso Datu was named Coach of the Year, solidifying their position as a top contender in the seasons ahead.



▼ Photos by Irish Macanang, Mika Isidro, and Nathaniel Soriano

RED LIONS

Falling short of replicating last year's magical run, the San Beda Red Lions—the winningest team in NCAA history—crashed out of the Seniors' basketball championship contention in disappointing fashion.

After a rocky start to Season 100, the Red Lions ended the elimination rounds as the third-seeded team identical to their Season 99 outcome. However, the odds were not in favor of the Mendiola-based squad this time as they suffered an early exit against first runners-up Benilde Blazers in a do-or-die game, settling for a bronze finish in the entire tourney.

RED JINS

Reigning supreme from Season 99, the San Beda Taekwondo Team dominated the field yet again with a relentless back-to-back championship in Season 100, dismantling their opponents to capture both Men's and Women's titles with unshakable pride.

Leading the charge were Leiron Capitle, who earned a triple accolade as Rookie of the Year, Freshman of the Year, and Men's Most Valuable Player (MVP), and Rica Antonares, named the Women's MVP for her knockout performance.

Both players were instrumental in their team's triumphs, reflecting the discipline instilled by Head Coach Jun Rosquillo, who was honored as Coach of the Year in all divisions.

With consecutive titles secured, the Red Jins have taken command, ready to extend their reign and set an unchallenged standard of excellence in the NCAA.

RED SEA LIONS

Making sure to reinforce their decades-long reign in NCAA waters, the San Beda Red Sea Lions continued their near-perpetual dynasty in the NCAA Season 100 Swimming Competition, securing their 21st and 11th consecutive championships in the Men's and Women's divisions, respectively.

The Red Sea Lions also saw its athletes shine individually, with Jennuel Booh De Leon being named the Men's MVP, while Ihiazal Fei Dolliente earned the Women's MVP nod. Both captured all the individual awards in their divisions.

Fresh off winning another championship and bagging all of the individual accolades, the Red Sea Lions have yet to show signs of slowing down.

Moving forward, the Bedan community is enjoined to look ahead as the Red Spikers, Red Booters, Red Tracksters, and Red Corps gear up for their hunt, empowered by how with each victory, the title calls louder to the Mendiola squad—as if it's already theirs to claim.



Photo by MIKA ISIDRO



Photo by KIEL SALUDO



Photo by NATHANIEL SORIANO



Photo by NATHANIEL SORIANO



Photo by VERONICA BALBIN

Holidays under Ominous Skies

A climate-changed Filipino Christmas

▼ Manssel Jianne Latonero

FOR MANY, CHRISTMAS MAY BE A TIME OF JOY AND MERRIMENT. YET FOR COUNTLESS FILIPINOS, IT CARRIES A DEEPER SIGNIFICANCE TO THEIR RESILIENCE AND SURVIVAL. AS CLIMATE CHANGE INTENSIFIES, TYPHOONS INCREASINGLY DISRUPT THE WAY WE CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAY SEASON, RESHAPING WHAT SHOULD BE A TIME OF FESTIVITY INTO A PERIOD OF RECOVERY AND REFLECTION.

Christmas is not merely a holiday in the Philippines; it's a cultural phenomenon marked by festivities, colorful decorations, and cherished family gatherings. However, as rising temperatures, stronger typhoons, and unpredictable weather patterns occur during the holiday season, climate change is beginning to cast a shadow over these joyful traditions, making it harder for Filipinos to celebrate Christmas as they always have.

THE SERIES OF SURGING TYPHOONS

This year, between October and November, it has been reported that six typhoons entered the Philippines with varying intensities, namely: Pepito, Kristine, Leon, Marce, Nika, and Ofel.

These surging tropical cyclones have left the country in a devastating state where over 15 million people across 17 regions were affected especially in the provinces of Bicol, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, and Ilocos Norte regions. The damage incurred in terms of agriculture and infrastructure was estimated to be at least Php 21 billion.

To promote sensitivity to such hard-hit damage, the Malacañang Palace released a statement urging their government agencies to “scale down” extravagant celebrations to show compassion and spread cheer to the victims of typhoons in an effort to be considerate to them.

THE GRIM REALITY BEHIND CLIMATE CHANGE

Asst. Prof. Gerard Santos, a faculty member from the Department of Natural Sciences of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), explained that climate does in fact change, though it shouldn't be happening fast enough for us to see it during our lifespan.

According to him, the climate change that we usually see and hear in news and social media is anthropogenic climate change. “Yung anthropogenic climate change, this is driven by activities such as burning of fossil fuels, urbanization—*pag nagbabago 'yung landscape, nagbabago rin ang activities, 'yung mga processes*, which in turn will contribute to emission of greenhouse gases, which exacerbates global warming, which eventually exacerbates *'yung changes ng climate natin.*”

Furthermore, he emphasized “Given *na natural naman nagbabago 'yong climate natin, meron din kasing pagbabago sa climate that is driven by anthropogenic or human-related activities*. And these changes, compared with the natural ones, happen much faster. And because it happens much faster, *mas nararamdaman at mas na-o-observe natin siya* within a generation or two *ng tao.*”

THE DEBATE ON FILIPINO RESILIENCY

Filipino resiliency is something that is deeply rooted in the country's culture and history. Centuries of colonization, natural disasters, and socio-economic struggles have shaped Filipinos into resilient individuals who “refuse to give up,” regardless of the odds or impending storms.

But, while the Filipino spirit is undeniably strong, there is a pressing need to demand accountability from those responsible for taking action to fortify communities against the devastating events we are increasingly forced to endure.

“Filipino resiliency is a strong trait that doesn't let us break our Christmas spirit. So, even if nagkakaroon ng mga typhoons na paulit-ulit kada taon, kahit walang

“*tulong sa gobyerno, may Filipino resiliency pa rin, pero it's not a good thing. We should talk about it,*” said Jesse Rebuelta, a research committee member from the Bedan Advocacy and Consciousness Enhancement Society (BACES).

Samantha Catimon, the Vice President for Internal Affairs of BACES, echoed Rebuelta's claims and argued that Filipinos are resilient because of the “lack of choice.”

To that, Rebuelta further emphasized that Filipinos are “forced to be resilient” because as typhoons continue to hit the country, there is still no actual action or substantial action from our government, saying “this year was just another event in the perpetual cycle of government failure in disaster risk prevention and climate change.”

The incumbent President of BACES, Karl Aldrich Rivera, described Filipino resiliency as impressive yet overused stating, “We're used to having resiliency instead of accountability, *parang ginagawa na lang natin, tatatagan na lang natin kasi ito na 'yung reyalidad, eh—ito na 'yung nangyayari*. In fact, *hindi naman tayo dapat lagi lang nag-sesettle for resiliency.*”

“There's proper funds to allocate—there are proper funds from the government na pwede i-allocate do'n sa mga disasters na 'yon, so, I think...Philippine resiliency is being overused albeit it being impressive,” Rivera added, demanding accountability from government leaders.

Although Filipinos have long endured the wrath of natural calamities, it is time to move beyond short-term remedies and commit to lasting solutions. Community solidarity, government accountability, and shared responsibility are not just ideals but necessities to change the trajectory of the future, so no Filipino ever has to celebrate Christmas under ominous skies.

(with Maegan Belicena and Myrna Ydwina Xialea Pelayo)

Simbang Gabi ain't no

▼ Mika Isidro

IN A SEASON THAT OFTEN CALLS FOR INTROSPECTION, ONE CANNOT DENY THE SUBTLE DETERIORATION OF THE REAL ESSENCE OF DECEMBER DAWN MASSES, NOW SHIFTING INTO A STAGE FOR COMPETITIVE AND OUTWARD DISPLAYS WHICH LEAVES THE LINE BETWEEN FAITH AND SHALLOWNNESS EVER SO FAINT.

The modern *Simbang Gabi* embodies an irony where goers focus more on strutting their outfits than the spiritual reflection and worship that once defined this holiday tradition. With appearance and status now often eclipsing the sound of prayers, how do we reconcile this growing paradox?

The “clout-chasing” culture

Recent times have seen bandwagon tendencies become a dominant force, infiltrating nearly every aspect of life, including holiday traditions. *Simbang Gabi*, too, has not been spared from this shift, with its true meaning often diluted by the desire for social approval.

John Jacob Ong, a freshman from the Department of Political Science, shared his observations on how the majority treat the dawn masses with purposes “misaligned” with its spiritual importance.

“I have noticed that some people focus more on dressing up for the fashion or clout chase in *Simbang Gabi* rather than preparing for its spiritual purpose,” Ong expressed.

Ong also pointed out that the supposed spiritual tradition has become, for some, a space for “regrouping their circle of friends,” reunions and gatherings, or to flaunt their new shoes and designer clothes, ironically shrugging off its core purpose.

A hallowed purpose

In an era where convenience and fleeting interests dominate, it's no surprise that

many traditions have lost their deeper significance.

For those who uphold them, the challenge lies in resonating with the younger generation.

For Francheska Simone Rayala Fernandez, a freshman from the Political Science Department, she attests that their generation has “yet to fully grasp the essence of the celebration,” adding that she herself, at a younger age, didn't understand why the routine of waking up at four in the morning for nine consecutive days mattered.

Over time, her understanding of such folklore deepened, moving beyond the common view of *Simbang Gabi* as simply a way to ask for blessings or fulfill one's wishes. Rather, “for me, attending *Simbang Gabi* is a meaningful way to start the day and to reflect on the nativity of Jesus and the journey of Mary and Joseph before His birth,” said Fernandez.

With Gen Z approaching *Simbang Gabi* in a satirical way—whether for social engagement or as a superficial obligation—she believes that “attending all nine masses truly reflects one's understanding of the spiritual essence of *Simbang Gabi*.”

Genuine essence

At the end of the day, when the world becomes consumed by change, traditions can sometimes be forgotten or reduced to mere rituals, clinging to social recognition. In an era that often views the past as a barrier to progress, it's easy to overlook the significance of practices like *Simbang Gabi*.

Jestony Lumabi, from the Bedan Pastoral Ministry (BPM), observed a shift in the atmosphere around these celebrations, commenting that, “By numerical aspect, it is countless; *biglang dumami ang attendance, hindi mo aakalain na ang mga alam mong hindi nagsisimba, ay biglang nagsimba! Kumbaga, tila nag-spawn na lang sa loob ng simbahan!*”

However, despite seeing an increase in attendees, it was seen that people have been using the mass as a social event. He stated that “It becomes a social gathering of dress to impress rather than preparing our hearts and minds for the coming of Christ. These trendy outfits ay walang lugar o have a great impact *na magsimba ng maayos.*”

Jestony concluded by sharing, “On the sense of our oneness with faith and as well as on keeping it (*Simbang Gabi*) alive, it is our relationship with God that makes this practice and tradition more unique than other Christmas traditions in the world,” a sentiment reflecting the authentic spirit of the practice.

While many cling to the validation of their peers, it remains vital that, in these socio-religious gatherings, one is reminded to uphold the utmost respect and dignity, offering one's presence fully to the practice of these traditions. After all, it is within the essence of *Simbang Gabi* to clothe ourselves with the strongest of faith in the coming of Christ.

(with Paris Isaac Falcone and Cass Manao)

'Tis the season of love... and spending (?)

▼ Nathaniel Soriano

WHY MUST ONE SPEND SO MUCH IN THE SEASON OF GIVING? CHRISTMAS, A CELEBRATION CHERISHED ACROSS ALL WALKS OF LIFE, IS NOW VEILED IN SPECTACLE AS THE JOY OF THE HOLIDAYS HAS BEEN REPLACED BY THE RACE TO PURCHASE LUXURY. AS CONSUMERISM TIGHTENS ITS HOLD ON THE FESTIVE SPIRIT, ONE IS LEFT TO QUESTION: WHAT ARE WE TRULY HONORING AND WHO REAPS THE REWARDS OF THIS FRENZIED PURSUIT?

Tainted by corporations, the color red has become less about the holiday's spread of love and joy, but now more synonymous with big sale signs or 50 percent off price tags in malls.

With Christmas just around the corner, it's important to reflect on the true essence of the season. Beyond the overly decorated homes and towering stacks of gift-wrapped boxes, one must take a step back away from the frenzy and acknowledge the reality of Christmas for the girls and boys selling lanterns on the streets.

Christmas and consumerism

In the Philippine context, consumerism during the holidays is characterized to be the increased emphasis on buying products and services, fueled by traditions like gift-giving and the desire to throw lavish parties and get-togethers.

This constant pressure to spend can overshadow the true spirit of Christmas, transforming meaningful traditions into material obligations or a chance to flaunt one's status.

Bedan lawyer Atty. Giancarlo Garcia, who also earned his Economics and Public Policy degree from San Beda University (SBU), explained that "excessiveness" is part of our culture, stating, "We have to understand, first and foremost, noong context, *kung paano mag-celebrate ang mga Filipino*. And I think, rooted *'yan sa pagiging communal ng celebration natin*, na again, it's a celebration *'pag may excess*. And why do we have excess?"

Kasi parang welcome tayo to invite everyone to join in," delving into how Filipino celebrations have communal roots.

At present, consumer conditioning in forms of holiday sales during this season becomes a powerful driver of consumerism, transforming the act of spending into a cultural event as well.

Akiah Loveigne Agbanlog, the first-year representative of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Student Council (SC) and the National Council Associate to the President at the Junior Philippine Economics Society (JPES), explained how there are nuances to this economic reality.

Agbanlog highlights how holiday sales condition people to spend, saying, "It is negative in a sense that people have the urge to buy more things because it is on sale." On the other hand, "For businesses, it's a chance to promote their brand, clear out inventories, and attract new customers," she added, describing the seasonal rush as both a tactical opportunity for retailers and a maelstrom of temptations for consumers.

The weight of tradition

Prioritizing tradition is important for Filipinos, often at the expense of their financial well-being and ability to save money.

"The problem here is *dahil hindi na nga gaano kataas 'yong income natin, na-pu-push pa 'yong mga tao na mag-spend nang masyado*. So *'pag gumagastos ka, ano 'yong nawawala sa 'yo?* Nawawala is *'yong ability mo to save,*" Atty. Garcia expounded.

Abanlog further supports the idea of how upholding tradition puts financial burden on Filipinos. “Though it is always the thought that counts, financial strain and stress on low-income families are heightened,” she claimed.

As holiday spending has been established to be deeply interwoven with human nature and cultural traditions, it also stresses the importance of financial literacy and the ability to save. Rather than simply falling victim to enticing promotional deals, consumers must recognize the value of mindful spending that aligns with their priorities and values.

Atty. Garcia warns that falling for instant gratification leaves families vulnerable, with little to no resources for emergencies or future investments. With the country’s economy banking on the idea of people saving money wisely, it’s more likely to create a robust economy.

“From a macroeconomic standpoint, kapag mayroon kang middle class or even lower middle class na nagsa-save ng pera, it creates a strong economy,” shares Atty. Garcia as he outlines how building wealth from the ground up is a practice that empowers individuals while driving national economic growth.

So, for all the queso de bolas and hamon that money can buy, let us not let the true spirit of giving be lost in the expensive demands of consumerism.

If one can cast aside the hollow distractions, Christmas can be meaningful even without the glittering lights and fleeting discounts, transforming moments into lasting memories that outshine even the most extravagant celebrations. Only then can Christmas become more than just an investment for a few ruling elites, but a celebration for many.

(with Dianne Radel Magallon and Xialea Amacio Pelayo)

The cost of convenience

Seamless one-click purchases, constant sale alerts have transformed shopping into a boundless experience, making transactions easier through e-wallets and digital payments.

While these advancements are often seen as conveniences, they stand in stark contrast to the shopping experience of the ‘90s.

Atty. Garcia recalled how spending back then was less impulsive, largely because the processes involved—from withdrawing money to making purchases—demanded time and effort.

“It takes a lot of time. So n’ung time na ‘yon, mas makakapag-contemplate ka pa, makapag-isip ka pa kung saan ko ba dapat gagastusin ang pera,” Atty. Garcia recounts with the observation on how the introduction of financial technology and a globalized economy “contributed to a heightening consumerism.”

LONG LIVE THE CHRISTMAS BONUS!

▼ Jennifer Gwyneth Fabros

AS THE HOLIDAYS APPROACH, SO DOES THE SWEET SOUND OF A BONUS HITTING YOUR ACCOUNT. WHETHER YOU CALL IT “THE” 13TH MONTH PAY, CHRISTMAS BONUS, OR “*pamasko*,” THE EXTRA CASH IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE HIGHLIGHT OF EVERY HARDWORKING FILIPINO THIS HOLIDAY SEASON.

For a moment, it feels like hitting the jackpot. But where does this “*Aguinaldo*” actually go? Spoiler alert: It disappears faster than you can say “Add to cart!” With *The Bedan* as your guide, let’s explore the classic ways Filipinos make the most of their bonuses.

THE NOCHE BUENA BLOWOUT

“*Walang Noche Buena kung walang ham, queso de bola, at three kinds of salad. Dapat may extra spaghetti din!*”

Every Filipino family knows that the Christmas *handa* is not just a meal—it’s a tradition that binds everyone together. For every household, part of the bonus is immediately set aside for a delightful feast: *lechon*, *hamon*, fruit salad, and of course, the endless Pinoy-style spaghetti.

The night is more than just about food; it’s a centerpiece for reunions, where relatives—close or distant—gather to share stories, laughter, and maybe even a friendly debate over who brought the best dish of the night.

THE SEASON STAYCATION

Filipino bonuses often fund big family reunions. It’s either spent at an extravagant party at home, or a grand outing to a *pasyalan*, may it be in Tagaytay, Subic, or that one beach resort everyone loves. It’s all about bringing everyone together.

Moreover, no Christmas staycation is complete without the classics: the good-old karaoke machine, a feast

lovingly prepared by the *titas*, and a hilariously competitive party game that usually ends with one *bunso* crying over a loss.

In the end, it’s never about the location or how much was spent—it’s about gathering the *buong pamilya*, including that long-lost tito you barely remember. Now that’s a bonus well-spent, ‘*di ba?*’

THE CHECKOUT CRAZE

“Add to cart. Add to cart. Wait, may coupon! Sige, check out na, para mabilis ang shipping!” Holiday sales are every Filipino *budol* warrior’s battleground.

With flash deals, double-digit sales, and free shipping, bonuses turn into carts filled with anything and everything: power banks, frying pans, socks, and even an inflatable pool for the backyard that well... doesn’t exist.

Whether it’s gifts for the family or random “*pang-self-love*” and “*deserve ko to*” purchases, there’s no stopping the “Add-to-Cart” generation from spending their bonuses like there’s no tomorrow. Because honestly, who can resist that “Buy one, Take one” promo?

THE ANNUAL GIFT HUNT

Being the season of giving, a big sum of the bonus goes to hunting for the perfect gift to give to your loved ones, especially since Christmas parties and family gatherings are just right around the corner.

One of the ageless traditions that always seems to find its way into the yuletide celebrations is the famous Secret Santa exchanges that keep everyone grinning with anticipation and curiosity.

Nothing beats the excitement of knowing who your “*monito*” or “*monita*” is, and the buzz after the “*bunutan*,” prepare to be showered with questions like “*Sinong nabunot mo?*” repeatedly until the actual exchange gift arrives.

HOLIDAY PAMPER SESSIONS

“Wow, *bagong* rebound!” or “New hair, New me!” are just some of the few remarks you’ll surely hear from your relatives, or in parties or gatherings, once they spot your new and fresh aura.

The yearly pamper and makeover sessions are the perfect excuse to treat yourself and hit the salons for a renewed and revamped Christmas-y look. With the holiday season in full swing, it’s also worth taking a moment to prioritize ourselves.

In the middle of the rush of Christmas hoarding, be the kind one who will spare yourself the gift of self-care.

Don’t feel guilty for indulging in a little transformation—for sure your bonus stash has got you covered! A fresh look will not only give you the best holiday snapshots but will also urge you to step into the new year ahead with confidence and a refreshed outlook.

THE “SMART STASH” PLAN

Picturing a fruitful year ahead, setting aside a chunk of the holiday bonus stages a wise start for a financially secured tomorrow.

It doesn’t matter if it’s a tiny nest egg for a longed goal, a safety net for adversities, or an investment for your dream destination; having that saved cushion sets you a less certain and more promising future.

It certainly is a little bit of discipline now for a lot of peace of mind later, but the post-holiday guilt of overspending almost becomes futile when you know you’ve got a stash tucked away.

For most, this is the most practical way to spend the holiday bonus—a gift that keeps on giving—allowing you to grace the new year with peace and without the looming dread of January bills, knowing you’re settled long after the feasting month.

At the end of the day, it’s more of how we create something meaningful out of this seasonal perk. Simply put, those heartfelt meals, well-thought-out gifts, and simple gatherings are mere schemes that mirror the real joy and gratitude that lies within the prosperous season. May the things we receive during the holidays remind us of their real meaning and spirit—it is less about what we spend, and more about what we make of it; that’s what makes it special!

(with Cass Manao)



*In the refuge of angels, may
the holidays bring rest to the
weary, joy to the hopeful, and
love that binds us in peace.*

*From our family at The Bedan to yours,
Merry Christmas and happy holidays!*

FROM BEHIND BARS, WITH LOVE.

▼ Paolo Vital

TO BE DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY IS A SOMBER FATE, ESPECIALLY IN A SEASON THAT IS AS FREEZING AS THE ABSENCE OF LOVE'S WARMTH. AND YET, GRIM THEIR REALITY MAY BE, LINGKOD LAYA, A FLAGSHIP PROJECT BY THE JUNIOR BEDAN LAW CIRCLE (JBLC), DRIVEN TO ACT IN DISCERNMENT, REMINDS US THAT COMPASSION TRANSCENDS BOUNDARIES, REAFFIRMING HOW THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTMAS UNFOLDS EVEN BEHIND BARS.

Dreams of brighter days often gather during Christmas time. A time that brings a distinct shade of light that revolves around the radiance sourced from the confluence of emotions we experience together as a community.

The season of giving is just the right time to search for such light, for it is a season when the needs of the helpless glow faintly, flickering through even the gloomiest corners of a city's precinct.

GRANTING HOPE BEHIND BARS

Since its establishment, Lingkod Laya has actively pursued its primary objectives of alleviating jail decongestion and improving the lives of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) as they carry out different activities and targeted initiatives aimed to "address the inefficient disposition of cases."

Led by students from the College of Arts and Sciences' (CAS) Department of Legal Management, Lingkod Laya's foundation was first centered upon educating PDLs through the knowledge they've acquired in their program. Little by little, as they took concrete steps, like visiting city jails and inquiring what help could still be offered, their purpose evolved beyond teaching.

Rheanna Yazmin Melanis, Lingkod Laya's Chairperson, discussed the remedies provided by Lingkod Laya in the problems present behind bars, as she cited specific programs they conducted such as "case consultations and court follow-ups," which over time, with the intention to progressively meet the PDLs' needs, progressed to include "paralegal training sessions and marketing livelihood products" crafted by the inmates.

"So, what we do to achieve our goals is to go talaga mismo sa jail and tatanong kung ano 'yung pinakailangan. From there, we address each problem one by one. From knowing kasi kung ano 'yung kailangan nila, doon natin magagawa 'yung activities or projects na makakapag-address ng need nila," Melanis expounded.

During *The Bedan's* visit to the Parañaque Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) City Jail-Female Dormitory, some of the PDLs, were holding their modules provided by LL members and other partner organizations with the same vision, which contain the information they need to understand their rights and how to navigate the laws relevant to their cases.

Moreover, the project had also launched the "Handog Pag-asa" program, providing livelihood opportunities for PDLs nearing their release, assisting in eradicating the negative societal factors that make it difficult for them to find jobs after life behind bars.

Now in its seventh year, Melanis noted that approximately 250 PDLs have been released through the activities held by LL, a testament to how this flagship project has served as a "steady beacon of hope," offering enduring support to the rehabilitation of inmates.

CONFRONTING AN UNFORTUNATE REALITY

For most, the holidays are a time when families come together, wrapping each moment in the warmth of love and shared memories. However, for PDLs who we'll call Janet and Yang—names chosen to protect their identities—the holidays carry a different emotional weight.

While both Janet and Yang, along with the majority of the PDLs, face the challenge of being separated from their loved ones, each has a unique perspective on the meaning of Christmas when celebrated behind bars.

Janet and Yang both shed tears whenever the thought of celebrating the coming Christmas crosses their minds. They have both been incarcerated for less than half a year, making it their first time celebrating inside the prison walls.

Moreover, both of the PDLs interviewed were overcome with emotion as they expressed how painful it is to miss a loved one and to celebrate Christmas with them. "*Syempre, masakit, sa buong buhay ko kasi, ngayon lang talaga ako nahivalay sa dalawang anak at sa asawa ko.*" Yang stated.

Yang further cited the shared sense of mournfulness within the jail, saying "*Hindi mawawala 'yung lungkot naming mga magkaka-inmates na gusto namin makasama talaga 'yung family pero, laban lang.*" Furthermore, she told her children to "stay strong" in these difficult times, "*pag nakakausap ko 'yung mga anak ko at tsaka 'yung ate ko sinasabi ko na pagsubok lang, kailangan natin harapin.*"

Despite the pain evident in their statements, both illustrated a positive outlook as they narrated how they are still looking forward to celebrating Christmas together with their co-inmates. "*Kasi dito po, wala 'yung pamilya namin... eh, sa laya, nandun kasi sila lahat... Dito kasi, solo lang ako. Bale kasama ko 'yung mga kapwa preso ko.*" Janet emotionally reiterated.

Janet then underscored that life in prison is not as difficult as it would seem as "*napakaluwag at tsaka nabibigyan naman kami ng kailangan namin,*" and that their respective community was very "hospitable," "*'yung mga empleyado dito mababait naman sa amin, pati 'yung warden namin, naibibigay naman po lahat.*"

From a different perspective, for a PDL called Bibe, the holiday season inside the confines of a detention facility is a mix of "bittersweet moments and quiet hopes." However, Bibe is one of the few inmates possessing a reality that the life within the prison walls is way better than the liberty in the life outside, saying "*mas okay dito kasi 'di ko naman kasama ang pamilya ko eh.*"

WARMTH IN THE HOPE THAT LINGERS

Amid the melancholic tone shared by the PDLs, the hopeful backdrop of Christmas does not diminish, letting these individuals remain optimistic in their quest to find peace and justice. Yang wished profoundly, as she hoped to achieve a tranquil state of being amidst her faced conflicts. "Peace of mind lang. Kasi once na meron kang peace of mind, daig mo pang nanalo sa lotto eh," she expressed.

Meanwhile Bibe hopes to reconnect with her lost daughter, "Wish ko lang po sana, makontak na po nila 'yung anak ko."

Lastly, Janet wishes for a hopeful reconciliation with her family after her imprisonment, "Sana sa paglaya ko, ay mapatawad po ako ng pamilya ko dahil dalawang beses na po akong nakulong rito - at 'yung makita ko po 'yung mother ko na buhay pa kasi na-stroke po siya. Gusto ko lang po talaga siyang maabutan na buhay." Further emphasizing a turned leaf, "kaya kahit kailan po hindi po ako nagawa ng masama dito sa loob," aspiring for an early release.

Behind bars, the lights may flicker, but the spirit of Christmas still burns bright. While the camaraderie with fellow PDL's and the lively celebrations offer a sense of belonging, the absence of family serves as a poignant reminder of the life waiting beyond the prison walls.

As this season brings us together, may the stories present within the corners of the prison make their way to the hearts of the people, serving as a reminder of what Christmas is truly all about—faith, hope, and love. May the essence of this season thrive and unfold even in the most unlikely of places, especially to the last, the least, and the lost.

(with Samantha Calderon and Prince Piolo Tagarino)

UNDER THE SAME STARS:

HOW THE HOLIDAYS ARE SPENT
BY BEDANS OF ALL FAITHS

▼ Veronica Balbin

WHILE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS GROUND CHRISTMAS, IT HOLDS AT ITS CORE A UNIVERSAL MESSAGE OF LOVE AND JOY THAT TRANSCENDS THE MANY DIFFERENCES THAT DIVIDE US, INCLUDING THOSE OF FAITH. IN THE SPIRIT OF SHARED HUMANITY, LET'S STEP OUTSIDE OUR BUBBLES THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, AS BEDANS OF ALL BELIEFS COME TOGETHER TO SHARE HOW THEY ARE UNITED IN THE SEASON OF JOY.



People are all connected by a common thread that weaves the magic in the experience of Christmas. The magic lies in the time for togetherness which serves as agents of joy and love, regardless of religious affiliations.

Zoey Axibal, a sophomore from the Department of Psychology and a born-again Christian share, "During the Christmas season, usually, we also do communion as a way to remember the love and sacrifice. The message during the Christmas season is to emphasize "Christ" in Christmas rather than the man-made traditions of gifts, or the money, or whatever else," highlighting the nuances of how Evangelical Christians hold Christmas with utmost reverence and significance.

Patricee Jhoan Caday, a freshman from the Department of Political Science, described how Christmas brings her family together.

"We usually celebrate Christmas in the province. Most of my family members, my *lolos* and *lolas*, *tito* and *titas*, and cousins are all in the province, and celebrating Christmas with them feels great. It brings us a lot closer despite the distance we may have. We sing karaoke the whole night while waiting for the clock to strike 12 so we can finally eat," Caday narrates.



PATRIECE CADAY

As a Methodist, Caday says that her faith portrays Christmas as a "time for redemption and renewal," saying "[The] holiday season for me is a time of reflection. Reflecting on all my past experiences and having the chance to redeem yourself and do the right thing."

To Caday, the tradition beyond having a Noche Buena lies in a deeper value of reconciliation and hope emphasized by her religion during this season.



HANNA ALAWIYA

Hanna Shamiha Alawiya, a sophomore from the Department of Legal Management, illustrated how, even though her religion doesn't celebrate Christmas, she feels the "warmth" in the way people share the joy that prevails every month of December.

"As a Muslim, I see Christmas as a time of kindness and generosity, which are values that are also essential in Islam... Christmas is a season that highlights unity and compassion, which I can deeply appreciate and connect with," Alawiya emphasized.

"Even though we don't celebrate Christmas, we do some things together as a family... And usually, during Christmas, there are Christmas sales all around the town... We shop and make use of those Christmas sales to somehow give gifts to each other," she noted, recounting how the spirit of the holidays is manifested in Hanna's family through little ways.

Additionally, Alawiya is looking forward to the Christmas break as a much-needed respite from the demands of her academics, savoring the chance to spend time with her family.



ASBI EDDING

Asbi Raheem Edding, another Political Science freshman, shared a similar perspective, explaining how his upbringing as a Muslim has shaped his appreciation for the holiday season.

While Christmas is not part of the traditional Islamic practice, he enjoys the spirit of this season, especially because they bring people together and they reflect on their lives more. Moreover, Edding also emphasized that the values of Christmas are very much "in line with the teachings

of Islam," such as giving back to others and strengthening familial bonds. "I find it as a time for reflection, a time for giving back to the community. 'Yun talaga isa sa mga ano, if ever it's Christmas season I go to either orphanage or senior citizens [back in Zamboanga]," Edding recollects.

As Christmas approaches, Edding is looking forward to reuniting with his family in Zamboanga. He reminisced, "May mga Christmas tree din kami n'un like linalagay namin din for the aesthetic, then 'yun nga madaming regalo nagulat ako so umaasa ako na meron din ako d'un," Edding conveyed.

Looking ahead, Edding's experience reflects a further understanding of the Christmas season that cuts across religious beliefs and values shared in mutual love, respect, and community.



ROBERT DELA PAZ

Christmas is the time of the year where joy thrives for it is a season which brings people together to foster all that is positive through gestures of love and generosity. It is a time where joy is inviolable, up to the point of it being touched in the form of gifts, hugs, and lasting moments.

Robert Dylan dela Paz, the Student Council (SC) Finance Committee Co-Head from the Department of Political Science, reiterated how Christmas means a lot to him "due to the fact that I value happiness, the pursuit of happiness."

Even though he specifically does not practice celebrating Christmas, the "smiles that Christmas brings to people" made him "believe in the joy" brought upon by the spirit of this season. Therefore, he still perceives Christmas as a "season of joy."

"Now, whether it is in line with my belief system or not, whether it is so or not, religious tolerance, I believe in it," said dela Paz.

Moreover, dela Paz mentioned that he traditionally spends Christmas together with his loved ones, joyfully looking forward to receiving "blue bills" the most this season.



JILLIAN BUENSUCESO

Jillian Chloe Buensuceso, a Political Science freshman and a recently converted Christian presenting as part of the Christ Commission Fellowship (CCF), has similar sentiments about joy during the holidays.

"I look forward to spending time with my family and reconnecting with God after being so preoccupied with college life—looking forward to catching up with them and recuperating," Buensuceso shares.

To Buensuceso, faith plays a "central part" in experiencing Christmas. What this season gives her is a chance to relate spiritually and emotionally to members of her family.

"Our family celebrates Christmas by making sure the entire family is together, especially during Christmas eve. We prepare food, decorate the house, and liven things up with music. And come the eve of Christmas, we pray first and then eat together. Sharing stories with each other, and opening presents together afterwards," Buensuceso shared.

Quick fun fact about Jillian: she was a Catholic before she was CCF, but that never stopped her from sharing the same exciting things her relatives also enjoy.

"We come from the same beliefs naman sa Catholic, our traditions during Christmas are almost the same. We put up decorations, we celebrate Christmas eve—but we also give emphasis and remind ourselves of the true essence of Christmas which is celebrating the birth of Jesus," Buensuceso proclaims as, for her, Christmas is a timely reminder to slow down and spiritually enjoy life with family.

All the people in the world are essentially bound in the chase after what is good. While the world may not be united due to divides such as religious differences, in the most authentic form of every belief, there are no such disparities, for we all aim to be in a place of peace and joy—a place that the season of Christmas emulates.

(with Samantha Calderon and Nityananda Dasi Santos)

CHRISTMAS ACROSS BORDERS

HOLIDAY REFLECTIONS FROM OFW FAMILIES

▼ Paolo Vital and Manssel Jianne Latonero

DESPITE THE GROWING NUMBER OF OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFWs) SPENDING THE HOLIDAYS FAR FROM HOME, THE WARMTH OF CHRISTMAS NEVER FADES FOR FILIPINO FAMILIES. ACROSS MILES, THE SEASON'S SPIRIT BRIDGES THE DISTANCE, PROVING THAT NO OCEAN IS TOO VAST TO KEEP HEARTS APART.

The prolonged absence of OFWs makes it easy for families to lose track of the time since their last embrace. Such absence forces these families to carry the weight of longing, as they hope and wait for their loved one's return.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the number of Filipino workers abroad reached an estimated 2.16 million between April and September 2023, a nine percent increase from the previous year. This growing trend means more Filipinos are spending Christmas away from their homes, adding to the distance felt during the holiday season.

Beyond recognizing the nobility of such sacrifice, we come to understand that these circumstances demand immense resolve as there is no greater cause than persevering for the well-being of one's family.

BRIDGING THE DISTANCE

Filipinos strongly believe in the saying, "If there's a will, there's a way." When challenges arise, solutions follow. Physical absence is no obstacle to a joyful Christmas, as digital means have become the bridge that keeps families connected.

Jhenien Lure Mantaring, a sophomore from the Department of Political Science, hasn't been with her father for Christmas in two years. She last celebrated the Yuletide season with him in Singapore in 2022.

She shared that their alternative celebration to commemorate the occasion was to be on call and prepare their own setup as if they were together.

"So, minsan 'yung dad ko rin naghahanda sa ibang bansa para parehas 'yung vibes nung day na 'yon. Kahit na magkaiba 'yung place and 'yung oras para feel din niya 'yung Christmas even though nasa ibang bansa siya," said Mantaring.

On the other hand, Patrick Gabriel de Guzman, a sophomore from the same department, attests to this fact as he recalled his last Christmas celebration with his father, "*noong nakaraang six years pa,*" adding that his father usually comes home during summer.

De Guzman articulates that he grew up in a household that can be satisfied by simply catching up with each other, "*Tanungin ko kung kumusta siya, pag-usapan namin like 'yung buhay niya ro'n sa abroad and buhay ko.*"

He further underscored his approach in communication, where he would "act like it is just a simple day and make them feel *na I'm always here whenever they need me.*"

Considering the prospects of celebrating Christmas as a whole, De Guzman shared his heartfelt hope, saying "*Sana mabigyan ako ng chance.*" "First is *makipag-bond sa kaniya; pangalawa is pumunta sa kahit anong gusto niya or kahit sabihin na natin concert pa ng Air Supply kasi favorite niya 'yon,*" he added.



MANTARING FAMILY



DE GUZMAN FAMILY

ANCHOR FOR THE HEART ADRIFT

It is undeniable that fellowship is part of every Filipino no matter where they go. They always have the ability to gather people and make their own new circles abroad. In doing so, through the friends they make, they alleviate the loneliness that accompanies being away from one's family. In the season of storytelling from one another, OFW relatives of writers from *The Bedan* had reached out to bring perspectives from the nation's lifeline themselves.

Grace Belicena, a Sterile Processing Technician for five years in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh and eight years in Abu Dhabi, UAE, said that celebrating with the Light of Jesus family, a Catholic community, soothed her Christmas while being away from her daughter Maegan Belicena, who is a research staff from *The Bedan*. She would also often participate in duathlons at times to ease the feeling of being away from home.

On the other hand, Rowena Deveza, aunt of *The Bedan's* circulation manager, Paolo Vital, stated that in the past six years of being a domestic helper in Hong Kong, she has yet to celebrate Christmas with family as her last visit was in April of 2022.

Moreover, Deveza shared how she would celebrate this upcoming Christmas day with other domestic helpers.

"Yung iba nakikilala ko sila sa mga kasabay ko dati sa household, o nakikilala ko nalang din dito, friends by friends. Paniguradong makakasama ko sila ngayong Pasko, tapos pasyal pasyal lang."

While she celebrates her Christmas with friends, Deveza could not help but also think about her family in the country, *"...nasa isip ko pa rin 'yung pamilya ko sa Bicol sa buong panahon na 'yon."*

Wishing wholeheartedly, she longs for a chance to be with her family this holiday, as she misses travelling with them all over the city of Naga. *"Sa sobrang minsan ko lang makasama family ko, kahit anong experience na kasama ko sila magiging memorable talaga."*

OFWs are reminded that despite separation from their loved ones during this holiday season, they are never alone with the community, friends, and family that they have. The spirit of Christmas lives across borders as OFWs are called to hold on to their purpose.

In the holiday season, let us honor the courage of the OFWs. Through modern technology, opportunities arise to keep in touch with our loved ones who work abroad, rendering the chance to feel like they are with us this Christmas, wherever they are, and where they may be.

(with Maegan Belicena)



GRACE BELICENA



ROWENA DEVEZA



LIGHTING ONE CANDLE AT A TIME:

THE SPIRIT OF BEDAN BAYANIHAN

▼ Mansel Jianne Latonero

THE “BAYANIHAN” SPIRIT IS MANIFESTED THROUGH HOW ACTS OF KINDNESS ARE SHARED TOGETHER AND HOW COLLECTIVE EFFORTS BRING LIGHT TO A COMMUNITY. ITS ESSENCE GOES BEYOND THE PHYSICAL ACT OF ASSISTING OR HELPING. IT CREATES A SPIRIT OF SOLIDARITY, GENEROSITY, AND HOPE THAT ECHOES THE SENTIMENTS PREVALENT DURING THE HOLIDAYS.

Whether in grand or small gestures, Bedan bayanihan is one that is grounded by a shared humanity, closing gaps between people and, therefore, fosters a culture of compassion and mutual support. Bayanihan becomes a way of life that rings deep inside every willing heart.

These values take the forefront during the Christmas holidays. Christmas outreach activities—such as aiding the less fortunate and organizing festive events for children in impoverished areas—showcase the alignment of the Bedan identity with the season’s call for giving. Witness the acts of service by the Bedan community as they beautifully embody the essence of this generosity.

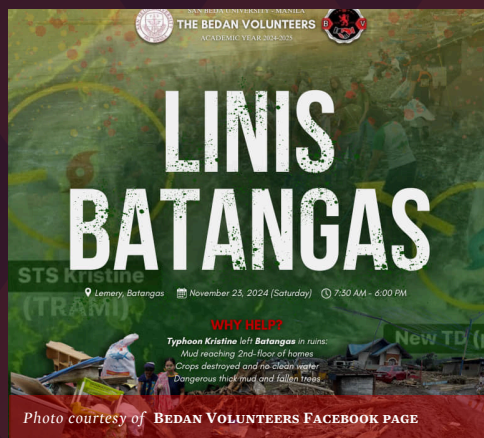
In their Batangas Relief Operation, Lee stated that the collections of donations from the students, such as canned food, clothes, and blankets, really “showed that we, Bedans, always have time to support one another in times of calamities like this.” The said donations were then sent to Batangas. In the latter part of their operation, Lee recalled how they were supposed to conduct a clean-up drive in Batangas, however, they were met with internal challenges, causing them to not push through with it.

Lee also shared that one of the challenges they had encountered was the “manpower,” affirming the struggles of having to properly execute their programs as an “organization from scratch.” Despite the challenges, their hearts persevered, finding strength in the resources they had allocated for their clean-up drive which were instead offered to street sweepers and the homeless around Mendiola, as their “pamaskong handog” to them. “Nakakataba ng puso to see a smile on their faces,” Lee articulated.

HO HO HOPE: BRINGING SOLACE TO NEEDY SOULS

The Republic (TR), the professional organization of the Department of Political Science, hosted two community engagement activities this month, whose beneficiaries focused on both ends of the life spectrum.

In light of the holiday spirit, they delved into an opportunity to help increase skills available for the elderly, fortifying their livelihood and fostering a green and clean community all at once with “ChristMasaya sa Repvblika: Ligtas at MaLinis Na Pamayanang Luntian,” a community engagement event for the residents of Barangay 869 in Pandacan, Manila, conducted last December 14. The program was themed to be a Christmas party including raffle prizes and games.



OPLAN RELIEF: A BEDAN'S LIWANAG SA DILIM

The non-professional organization that centers around the very essence of exemplifying bayanihan among Bedans, the Bedan Volunteers (BV), had conducted two community engagement activities that prioritized giving aid to those who were victims of Typhoon Kristine in Batangas. BV President, Quency Queen Lee, often highlighted that it was their mission to always inculcate the spirit of bayanihan among Bedans, especially during the nation’s crises.



Its purpose was to teach the residents of Barangay 869 sustainable but effective means of developing income for the locals, also incorporating values of *Laudato Si'* in teaching them sustainability. Merjane Pomoy de Guzman, a guest expert in bag and wallet creation, taught everyone how to create these accessories with sachet packets.

"Nagturo siya kung paano gawin ang mga ito, at hands-on ang mga participant sa paggawa ng output," said Xyruz Serrano, TR's first year level representative and in charge of the event.

On the other hand, TR touched on a deeper advocacy, being put into action by hosting a beneficiary event for the Laura Vicuña Foundation as part of their program's anniversary celebration. The event became an avenue for serving the youth with its main event grounded on "community service assimilation," encouraging developing solutions whenever a problem was presented to the children, which gave students a sneak peek on how to pay it forward soon.

The children's expression of gratitude through a performance was the most touching moment for Rhonna Mae Cusi, co-Activity Chairperson for the event, as she recalls, *"I was teary-eyed kasi I can feel na na-appreciate nila 'yung ginawa namin."* For Cusi, this event was not only about giving but also about creating memories that would last in the youth's hearts.

Reflecting on the event, Cusi expressed her commitment to community engagement. Originally, the event was supposed to be conducted last school year, but with the activity finally being pushed through, Cusi said, *"I'm really lucky that we get to conduct it. It was really special din and close to my heart,"* expressing her heartwarming gratitude on how the program was able to bring light to children's eyes.

MOTHERS AND MIRACLES: GUIDING LIGHTS PARA SA MGA ILAW NG TAHANAN

It's easy to overlook the trying times of our own mothers as their resilience shines brighter than their struggles. In recognition of their efforts and own initiatives to empower themselves, the Social Awareness and Community Involvement Committee (SACI) of the San Beda Student Council (SC) spearheaded the community engagement program "Kabuhayan Para Sa Mga Ilaw Ng Tahanan: Building Sustainable Livelihoods in the Spirit of Christmas" at Brgy. Anahaw Dos, Silang Cavite last December 11.

SACI and its collaborative partners San Beda Junior Marketing Association (SBJMA) and Community Engagement Center (CEC), chose Sikap 3K as their partner community for the event to empower women and mothers.

This was an effort to uplift mothers and women by enhancing their knowledge and skills in sales strategies. Participants engaged in activities focused on improving their marketing approach while experiencing the warmth of the season.

In the spirit of *Bayanihan*, we continue to celebrate their strength and resilience as they bring light and after all, supporting as we mothers we nurture the heart of every home and community.

These initiatives from Bedan organizations are living testaments of how a lot of great things start with just one push, like "one little candle. All you need's a tiny spark!"

These moments of shared humanity with different communities are not just activities and mere paperwork, but an exchange of life-changing lessons, creation of memories to look back, and ignition of hope for our future as Bedans empower not just these communities, but also themselves.

The Bedan *bayanihan* spirit remains steadfast, unbound to specific seasons throughout the year as these initiatives prove that learning from each other is a lifelong journey, and love as a fuel of all great things is the greatest Christmas gift for all.

Small things done as a collective are the heart of it all, like how "if everyone lit just one little candle, what a bright world this would be!"

(with Dianne Radel Magallon, Paris Isaac Falcone, and Nityananda Dasi Santos)



Photo courtesy of SOCIAL AWARENESS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, SAN BEDA UNIVERSITY FACEBOOK PAGE

CELEBRATING THE PERFECT PASKONGBEDISTA

▼ Rcee Tenefrancia

THE HOLIDAYS MAY HUM A THOUSAND TUNES, BUT WHAT TRULY LINGERS IS THE MELODY OF MEMORIES WE HOLD DEAR, THE ONES WE CARRY LONG AFTER THE SEASON FADES, CRAFTED IN THE MOMENTS YET TO UNFOLD. JOIN US AS BEDANS AND A FEW VISITORS TO OUR COMMUNITY LEND THEIR VOICES TO THE CHORUS OF WHAT MAKES THE QUINTESSENTIAL "PERFECT CHRISTMAS."

As houses light up the dullness of the streets with their overly dazzling decorations, excitement, and the smell of *bibingka* and *puto bumbong* fills the air, you can hear the singing of carols like A Perfect Christmas by Jose Mari Chan from miles away. Ding, dong, ding, dong... it's Christmas again!

Christmas is a season known for camaraderie and generosity, where the magic of a perfect Christmas sets up a stage of rainbow-like parols which illuminates the night sky, transforming the world with joyful anticipation.

But really, what do we look forward to when we're so eager to feel the Christmas spirit? Is it through the twinkling lights that you see when you walk through town? The exchange gift you were meant to give to your monito or monita? Or the relatives you seek to visit when you go to your hometown?

FAMILY FIRST

Christmas also comes from a deeply rooted tradition, brimming with love, spirit, and warmth. There will always be the ones who stick to the custom of spending their Christmas break with their families.

True love does not always pertain to princesses and fairy tales. Sometimes one can find true love in the comfort of loved ones.

Prof. Marvin Reyes, PhD., the Prefect of Student Activities, believes that the very essence of Christmas is to "spend it with your family and loved ones... with your true love who resides in your heart."

The charming Filipino actor and singer James Reid reciprocated and expressed a similar point of view as he emphasized the importance of time spent with friends and family is what would make up for his "Perfect Christmas."

Singers Shane G. and Jolianne also shared the same sentiments of a perfect Christmas in spending them with the family and loved ones—to be "home soon."

After a long period of work the whole year, the holiday break is ultimately the time of *pahinga* for many people.

As for students facing all odds to succeed, the completeness of a family would spark up their path. Such in the case of a student from the College of Law (COL) who agreed with the four believing that "To be with my Family, my wife, my daughter, my parents... just be together with them makes it a complete Christmas."

SURROUNDED BY GOOD COMPANY

Besides the people who yearn to be with their family during the holidays, there are some who would just love to spread a cold yet comforting festive deluge with the people—may it be their friends or their special loved ones—they treat as their star for the holidays.

For Sean Carlos Shapoory, a junior from the Department of Political Science, "Time spent with good company" is what would bring him joy. "Around friends, family, people who you love, eventually who will bring meaning to what Christmas really is."

Heartwarming it is that "love" is the deciding factor of the holiday's definition as Lee Saltore, a fellow junior from the same department, agreed that a perfect Christmas consists of a "family that bonds together this season" and "happy friends as well" to keep your heart warm in the cold December breeze.

But of course, the significance of having a healthy system and heart holds as much importance as having a complete and happy family. Similarly, the idea of a perfect Christmas for Carlo Manuel, a student from the College of Nursing (CON), is a "Healthy and happy Christmas for everyone."

WISHES TO COME TRUE

Into the holidays, there persists an old saying that only good girls and good boys get great gifts during Christmas! Straying away from the naughty list, Shara Estaba, from the Department of Legal Management and fortunately part of Santa Clause's nice list, wished to pass all her law subjects that she took for the first semester with "flying colors."

No matter how many challenges or blessings Filipinos face the whole year round, they will always contemplate what kind of Christmas they will be facing each year.

And of course, while each one has something to look forward to—may it be the nostalgia from the past that they continue to live up until today, or the new beginnings that they would like to be grateful for—the grand certainty amongst everything is to experience the "Merry" in Christmas, and the joy "on to the next" year.

(with Jasmine Casadores)

