

## Monthly Diary No 15 – April

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*Quote of the Month: "Who ever drive like hell, bound to get there"*

**Taxis:** Tricycles and Jeepneys are the preferred means of transport for the locals and missionaries alike as they are so cheap but every now and then I steal a taxi and am able to rationalise it by saying it helps get me out of what I might call a difficult situation. Well returning from the doctors was one such occasion as I actually fainted in his surgery on one trip and I did not have a Kauban which is recommended here. (Companion) Anyway I was bundled into a taxi and he drove like a lunatic all the way home. Maybe he thought I might get a heart attack in his cab. Well I nearly did. I stopped taking them after this until Carl and I had cause to avail ourselves of one recently. Well the driver never seemed to release his vice like grip on his horn which was bad enough but when the horn sounded more like a siren I thought for a moment that I was in a police car. Everything seemed to want to get out of his way. (Don't blame them) We got home in record time and I was a cot case after that and informed the driver that he had definitely won the prize for the fastest cabbie in Davao and I would recommend him for a special medal to our beloved Mayor! Cabs are no longer my preferred means of transport needless to say. There are no taxis in Maasin or Hilongos, so tricycles both motorised and foot pedal are the go there.

**Last Hurrah :** Our last trip to Marahan was brilliant. The Visit to the Crocodile farm was also very successful and our final swim at one of our favourite spots completed our farewell celebrations. Will we ever be quite the same after the Davao experience? I doubt it. We would need more space than I have given myself here to share with you how we have grown and what we have learnt. I will let the photos tell the story of our last two Sunday outings. The farewell to our hosts, the MJ Priests, was moving and saying farewell to all our new found friends from MILC and Davao was not easy either. Needless to say there were petitions for us to stay and start a mission in Davao City but we resisted all temptations and caught the plane out of Mindanao and arrived in Cebu where we spent the night with the Columban Fathers. Fr O'Donough was our generous host who we heard just now was appointed the new Provincial of The Philippines, replacing Brian Gore.



**Arrival:** Here we are on the Island of Leyte in the town of Hilongos. We arrived at the town of Bato at 10 pm Tuesday of Holy week after a four hour Ferry ride which, thank God, went smoothly enough. Fr Van met us at the wharf and transported us the ten kilometres to our new home in Gomez Extension, Hilongos. The house had been prepared for us by our landlady, Rebecca, and the vase of flowers and large amounts of fruit awaiting us

made us feel most welcome. The next day was spent doing some shopping and going to our first welcome lunch arranged by the staff of St Teresa High School. A quick dash to Maasin proved necessary in the afternoon as much of what we deemed essential could not be bought here. The day ended with the Eucharist where I saw for the first time the big welcome banner with our names in bright colours. Dr Eleanor and a couple of Teachers popped in to visit us late in the day, Eleanor is proving to be our main benefactor as she has been responsible for many of the gifts showered on us this last couple of days. One of the Teachers invited us to join in the celebration of her son's 12th birthday. Frank did go to the party but Carl and I had an early night. Our first day was completed without drama.

**Holy Week:** Palm Sunday was celebrated in Davao City and the ceremony was much like ours at home. As you enter the Church you are encouraged to buy a Palm. The range was quite large from P5 to P50 which can give you a simple cross, several crosses woven together or the expensive model including a doll depicting Santo Nino. The Mass started with the blessing of the Palms outside the Church, with the people holding their palms on high. The long reading was beautifully dramatised and as such a sermon was not necessary thank goodness. The rest of Holy week was spent in Hilongos and I have devoted reflection 6 to this story so I won't go on here. Enough to say it was very moving and more elaborate than ours at home. We were invited to join the 12 Apostles for the last supper which we did Thursday evening with Fr Hope as our companion. Friday was the busiest day of all with activities organised all day. Saturday was the only day we could call quiet and we appreciated the rest. Easter Sunday started with the Vigil mass and the choir was magnificent with much rejoicing as indeed the Lord has risen. We also were presented to the parish community at the vigil Mass where Frank said a few words in Cebuano. We went to Maasin to have the Easter dinner with the good Sisters rounding off a wonderful first week in Leyte. Sr Judith, Sr Margret and Sr Elvira were our hosts for the day.

**Graduation week:** Wednesday was Pre-Elementary graduation where 27 five year olds had their recognition day as they call it here. Well things got under way with a Mass at 8am which went smoothly enough. The young boy doing the reading could barely be heard or seen but one little hiccup was his final prayer which should have read “This is the Word of the Lord” however it came out as “This is the end of the world” and everyone happily replied “thanks be to God”. Well there were a couple of more of these types of humorous interludes but I won’t bore you. The presentation of the awards followed with trumpet music proudly proclaiming each graduate. As this went on for quite some time there were dance items presented to break things up a little. The usual Academic Awards were followed by awards such as, Best - Attendance, Punctual, Behaved, Diligent, Versatile, Industrious, Respectful, Amiable, Well-Groomed and Nightingale of the year. Well there were many more like these so every one got his or her moment which was cute. Lunch followed which was very nice; then our farewells. Thursday and Friday was Elementary and High School Recognition days and of course we were guests of honour as the new Teachers from Down Under on both days. I thought the Kindergarten Graduation was on grand scales but as you moved up the academic ladder so the solemnity increased and the pomp and ceremony jumped a couple of pegs to make the whole experience something worth recording I can assure you. I have included a couple of photos to help you catch the feel of the day. The only change to what was a full programme any way was our little official welcome from the School. Frank gave the occasional speech but we were invited to say just a couple of words. I had my few words in Cebuano memorized so I was OK. Fr Celso the Parish Priest said a few words as the representative of the Bishop who is the President of our little school. His theme was “No short cuts” to academic excellence and he used the Story of Jesus to make his point. He had the power to use a short cut straight to the Resurrection but no He chose the hard road through the Crucifixion. “No pain no gain” sounds familiar. The first two weeks here at Hilongos have gone and we now can slow down a bit though I guess the Honeymoon period is not quite over yet.



Until next time.

Br Peter (cfc) Davao City and Hilongos