

By: Bro. Jay Lituañas

Klang! Klang! Klang! At quarter past 5 in the morning, there goes the bell of the nearby parish church summoning people to the first Mass of the day.

In the kitchen, a brother is busy preparing the breakfast while others are preparing for their day's studies or the Lauds at 6:30 AM or doing their morning meditation. After chanting the morning prayer, the brothers and some Chinese residents take their meal. Sensing that everyone is done with his meal, the prayer presider of the week bangs the cup or plate and asks: "Do you have anything to foresee for today?" The brothers take turn to inform the community of their activities for the day such as regular classes, celebrating mass in another place, having spiritual direction and buying grocery items. Brothers, as well as residents, also take turn in washing the dishes.

By 7:30 AM, some brothers are gone for their 8:00 AM classes in the nearby Loyola School of Theology inside the Ateneo de Manila University campus. The others who remain, particularly the priests, do their regular household chores like washing linens, sweeping the garden or cleaning toilets. On certain days, team meetings like that of the Communication Team are held in the morning.

Whenever their schedule permits, brothers stay in the school library to do their reading assignments or to do research work. Some attend study-groups or photocopy certain academic materials.

By 12 noon, the student-brothers are back from school. Bong! Bong! Bong! There goes the house gong to gather community members, volunteers and guests for the 12:30 PM lunch prepared by the hired cook. At table, people usually converse with one another by sharing their experiences in school or their views on certain social, political, pastoral or theological issues. Jokes find their way into the conversation.

Lunch usually ends at 1:15 PM. Student-brothers with 2:00 PM classes usually leave the area to prepare themselves. Those without afternoon classes/activities, the priests, the volunteers and the cook wash the dishes and clean the tables. Thereafter, except for the volunteers and the cook, people take their afternoon nap. Student-brothers use the rest of the afternoon to write papers or to accomplish reading assignments or to do certain physical exercises like jogging, swimming in the pool, biking or going to the gym. Others do their chores at this time of the day or wash their own clothes too. On certain days, other team meetings are scheduled in the afternoons such as those of the Vocation Team and of the Marytown Team. On Wednesday and Friday afternoon, the Marytown Team members go to their apostolate area nearby.

At 6:00 PM, certain members of the community do their afternoon meditation while others are still wrapping up their day's work. Vespers are chanted beginning at 6:30 and the Eucharistic celebration follows thereafter. Around 7:30 PM, community members dine separately from the volunteers Chinese and Vietnamese residents. At table, the brothers talk about their day's experiences or about various concerns involving the life of the community. Jokes are a great part of the dinner.

After washing the dishes and cleaning the tables, some brothers continue with their talk while a couple settle in the community room to read the daily local and/or international papers. A few go to the TV room and follow their favourite telenovela. Meanwhile, one brother sets up the table for breakfast and prepares what he needs to cook for the following morning.

Around 9:00 PM, student-brothers lock themselves in their room poring through books and other reading materials in preparation for the next day's academic endeavour. While other members of the community are sound asleep by 10:30 PM, those who have quizzes or examinations usually stay late in the night or way past midnight or wake up early on the following day. The brothers do their night prayers individually.