

Villanova Red Candle Week 2021



Family Table program

Place the red candle in the middle of the dinner table in the sight of all.

Introduction (by a parent): Before we begin our meal we are going to light this red candle. Tonight, many Villanova families will light a similar candle, and in the Basilica of Santo Nino in the Philippines many pilgrims to the Basilica will light a similar red candle.

The lighting of the candle is an act of prayer. We light the candle to give thanks to God for the many material blessings we enjoy. Many Filipino people will light their candle asking God to help them. They may need the material things that help make life a blessing! In this 'Covid 19 time', life is particularly difficult for Filipinos.

So, as we light our red candle, we are aware of other Villanova College families and of our brothers and sisters in developing countries who may not have all the food they need.

Candle is lit by a Villanova College student

The Prayer Before Eating (below) is now said by one or all family members:

Prayer: Blessed are you God of all that lives. Through your goodness we are blessed with food on our table. For this we are grateful and give thanks for those who prepare it. As this food strengthens our bodies may you strengthen our desire that all your children be safe from the pandemic and properly fed. We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Table discussion: Villanova College student/s tells of the various things that happened at Villanova today.

Conclusion, when meal is finished. Parent or older family member: On the Term 3 Villanova school fee account, we have been asked to contribute \$5 for our red candle. The money raised will be used to pay for the secondary school education of 16 Filipino boys and girls supported by the Australian Filipino Augustinian Solidarity.

Let's conclude with the 'Prayer After a Meal': We give you thanks O God for this food and all the good gifts we enjoy, through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Youngest blows out the candle (and helps to clean up!).



This photo below, taken in 2019, shows Villanova College 2020 Vice-Captain Tadgh O'Neill, in a candle factory outside the city of Cebu, in the Philippines.



This Red Candle Factory is owned and operated by the Augustinians. It began with two goals;

- to offer employment
- to supply candles for pilgrims to the Basilica of Santo Nino in Cebu.

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Eight regular workers are employed in the factory. Their wage is 450 pesos a day. Casual workers earn five pesos per kilo of candles made with a minimum of 400 pesos per day. With these wages the workers make their way out of poverty. 1 Philippine Peso equals 0.036 Australian Dollars. Therefore, these red candle makers earn around \$13.00 a day.

The Basilica of Santo Nino.

The Basilica is the spiritual centre of the Philippines, where pilgrims flock to pray and ask for blessing on their simple, and often hard, living conditions.



Often their prayer takes the ritual form of purchasing and lighting a candle in solidarity with those around them. The candle burns, its flame flickers in the breeze and its red wax melts. The pilgrim stands in silence seeing his/herself as vulnerable as the red candle and as dependent on God as the candle is dependent on its maker and the wind.

2019 Villanova AFAS boys have the privilege of lighting candles and praying at night when the Basilica is closed.

Currently, AFAS supports the education of 16 students in the Philippines.

Who benefits from the funds raised in Red Candle Week?

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, most of the students in the Philippines have not attended their schools in person. Rather, they have been on some Distant Learning platform. Given conditions in the Philippines, the ability to access learning thus varies greatly.

With many long lockdowns, the ability of some families to earn an income has also been affected. This is true for many of the scholars whom AFAS supports.



Given the above, the number of scholars will be slightly increased this year. At the same time AFAS will continue to support:

- The thrice weekly feeding programme in the Basilica for homeless families
- A community pantry—providing basics to families in the country town of Murcia
- A medical programme offering pneumonia vaccine to teachers in one school
- Annual food packs to the residents in a Provincial Jail
- Provision of school supplies to a preschool in Bago



Students on the 2019 AFAS visit to the Basilica feeding programme occupy children while their parents attend self-help classes. These children live on the streets.

Villanova also supports AFAS Elders who, through funds raised in February this year were able to supply a medical sterilizer to the clinic of the midwife on Kinatarcan Island, Cebu.

Biannually, for the last 28 years, Villanova students and staff have made their way to the Philippines to engage with local Augustinian communities. In these years of pandemic these visits have ceased. However, the strong connections have remained and the Villanova community still maintains contact and support.

Question: How do you raise enough money to do all the above and more?

Answer: Each year we rely on the generosity of Villanova College families giving \$5.00 for the Red Candle they will use at the family night dinners during the week of Mission Day. And, on Mission Day the College pastoral groups conduct food stalls and some activities. There are over 1000 families in the College. So, do the maths to see the potential money that could be donated through Red Candle donations.



And, why are the boys in these pictures so committed?

Because they went to the Philippines with AFAS to: See, Judge and Act.

They participated in a process that lead them to:

1. **See**—see, hear and experience the lived reality of the individuals and communities they met. They asked, “what are the people in this situation doing, feeling, and saying? What is happening to them and how do they respond?
2. **Judge**—a process that involved two key parts:
 - a. **Social Analysis**—they sought to obtain a more complete picture of the social situation by exploring its historical and structural relationships. In this step, they attempted to make sense of the reality that was observed in step 1. They asked, “why are things this way? What are the root causes?”
 - b. **Theological Reflection**—here they analysed the experience in the light of Scripture and Catholic social teaching. They asked, “how do biblical values and principles of Catholic social teaching help us to see this reality in a different way?”
3. **Act**—lastly, they planned to carry out actions aimed at transforming the social structures that contribute to the suffering and injustice they experienced.

That’s why these Villanova men are so committed!!