

Villanova Red Candle Week 2023



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! After 3 years with the huge impact of COVID, 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 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: At the beginning of the year, all Villanova families were asked through our school fee account to contribute to Mission Week. The money raised will be used to pay for the secondary school education of 20 Filipino boys and girls supported by the Australian Filipino Augustinian Solidarity (AFAS), along with other projects in Augustinian communities that benefit the whole school community.

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 Tadhg O'Neill, in a candle factory outside the city of Cebu, in the Philippines. We will be visiting there again on our Immersion Program at the end of 2023.



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.

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 of Cebu

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 20 students in the Philippines.

Who benefits from the funds raised in Red Candle Week?

For three years during the COVID pandemic from 2020 to 2022, most of the students in the Philippines did not attend their schools in person. Rather, they have been on a Distant Learning platform. Given conditions in the Philippines, the ability to access learning thus varies greatly and with many challenges. Students and teachers are now so happy to be back at school face to face in their learning.

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.

And so, AFAS continues to support scholars as they return to school this year. At the same time AFAS annually supports:

- The thrice weekly feeding programme for homeless families around the Basilica de Santo Nino in Cebu City.
- A community pantry—providing basics to families in the country town of Murcia.
- Annual food packs and toiletries to the residents in a Provincial Jail in Bacolod.
- 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 livelihood and self-help programs. These children live on the streets in Cebu.

Our funds from Villanova College also support the Children's Welfare Foundation (CWF) in Cebu. In April 2023, Villanova staff met with three young adults who have moved from life on the streets to study and are now completing university degrees.

This year we celebrate 30 years of AFAS! Biannually, for the last 30 years, Villanova students and staff have made their way to the Philippines to engage with local Augustinian communities. In the last three years with the pandemic these visits temporarily ceased, and Global VILLAge began allowing our students to connect via zoom and share about life in our two countries. In April 2023 a group of staff went to the Philippines to reconnect face to face with our partners and plan the immersion program at the end of 2023. This program will especially celebrate 30 years of AFAS and is currently open for our students in Years 10, 11 and 12 to apply. The strong connections have remained across time and are handed down through the student community.



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



Answer: For many years families at Villanova College have contributed a donation for the Red Candle they use at the family dinners that occur during the week of Mission Day. Red Candle week is our focused time of fundraising as a community. For many years on Mission Day the College pastoral groups have conducted food stalls and activities to raise funds. The last two years, during COVID, we have had Dare 2 Donate when staff have taken up dares to raise funds. When we all contribute with over 1000 families in the College, our small contribution goes a long way. This year, families have donated \$40 for Red Candle week, which is inclusive of our candles; events on the day; and lunch. We are very grateful for the generous contributions.

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 led 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!!

