



*An Advent Wrapped in Love*  
By Susan Ladrido

This year's theme, an Advent Wrapped in Love, made me think of our Family Christmas Party in 2013. Most Filipino parties are predictable: there's a full house, an exorbitant amount of food and when you greet elders instead of "hello" expect to hear, "EAT!"

Gary, Dean, Chase, Brad and I walked into my Aunt's house expecting the predictable. However, missing, was Lola, with her angelic smile and timeworn skin, sitting quietly on the couch, eating a small serving of vegetables and rice. This time fragility wouldn't force her to stay seated during karaoke and great-grandchildren wouldn't play at her feet nor a grandchild have an arm around her chatting. Her absence kept us wondering.

Was she not allowed to leave her nursing home for Christmas? Then finally, our 100 year-old Lola appeared at the door, we cheered as if she were an A-List celebrity. There was no red carpet and no glamorous outfit, yet we still fawned over her, in her layers of randomly selected clothing accented with a red scarf, the color of the twinkling lights trimming the tree. Time was precious



that day, we only had her for a few hours before she was due back, so we treasured every moment.

Looking back, those few hours felt like a dream with no time or place. Without saying it aloud, each of us knew then, that this would be her last

Christmas with us. We swirled around her, taking turns hugging and kissing her, snapping countless photos in an attempt to freeze time. I'll never forget Lola kissing Brad with her signature kiss; tightly pursed lips on his cheek, her loose-skinned hands squeezing his face and then deeply inhaling all of Brad's essence.

During Holy Week, Saturday, April 19, 2014, the day before Easter, our Lola ascended into Heaven to be with our Lolo.

*Psalm 90:12 So teach us to count our days, that we may gain a wise heart.*

*Dear Lord, sometimes we take time for granted, thinking there's always tomorrow. So, we forget to see the gifts that you give us today. Please help us to see the abundance that surrounds us. Amen*

