

# Magis

Formation for Mission

Stewardship  
Simplicity  
Sharing  
Service

Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community

April 2017 Issue

## Bilibid Recollection

Witness the heartfelt  
Lenten Recollection

## Transfiguration

Read the transformative  
article by Fr Tanseco

## Live & share your faith

Strengthen your conversations  
with God this coming Lent

## ME Weekend

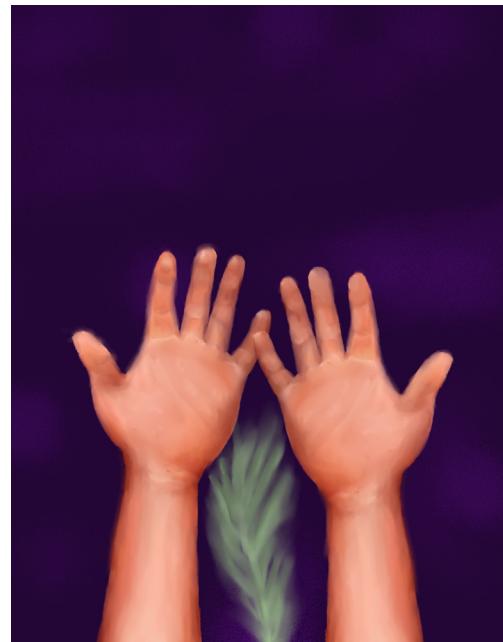
Discoveries during the  
weekend of love

## Millennials

Feeling #blessed?  
How to be thankful



## About the Cover



## Editorial Board

*Magis*

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<b>April</b> 08 Sat Lenten Recollection 21 Fri Central Sector Fellowship Night 29 Sat Amigos Del Senor – Companions of Christ	<b>June</b> 16 Fri Couples' Night 23-25 ME Weekend 2 (By: Fr Allan Abuan)		

# BCGG – Living and Sharing of Faith

Cesar and Marivic Pareja, Chaircouple

In consonance with our community's thrust this year of revisiting and going back to our basics, the Council decided (with the approval of our Spiritual Director) that teachings and talks during our Community Celebrations will focus on our current practices.

We already had a talk on revisiting our prayer life last February with Fr. James, and last March 4, 2017, we invited our fellow member, Monchito Mossesgeld, to give us an overview on our Basic Christian Growth Group (BCGG) – what it is, its composition, and the vital role it plays in our spiritual journey.

Monchito's talk focused not only on the format used in our BCGG meetings but also on the substance/content of the meetings. As we know, our BCGG is an avenue for us members to share how God moves in our daily lives, and how we can be inspired by His presence by listening to our fellow BCGG members as they share their God-experiences as well.

The topic at our Community Celebration is very significant because the officiating priest for our Mass was our founder, Fr. Ruben Tanseco, SJ, who was also the first BCGG Shepherd after our community was formed. The 2017 Pastoral Council members were commissioned during the ComCel, as well as all Magis Deo members as we renew our commitment to the Lord by serving Him through our Magis Deo Community.

Below are the key points of Monchito's talk:

## The BCGG

Friends in the Lord. A small community of Faith. Basic structure of the Magis Deo Community.

## BCGG Members

Meet regularly to pray and share their God experiences in daily prayer, in their daily lives and in their relationship with Him. Help each other grow through support, encouragement but also through challenging and feedback. Participate in Magis Deo Community programs. Help each other discern how to respond to God's call for them in their daily lives and to be a "Couple for Others."

## Weekly Meetings: Prescribed Format

- 1) Prayer
  - a. Opening Prayer (Call to Prayer)
  - b. Prayer using Sacred Space
  - c. Spiritual Conversation in Small Groups
  - d. Closing Prayer (Call to Mission)
- 2) Community/Business Matters

## The Meeting Venue

Generally, in a member's home. Preferably a place different from the dining area (if not possible, clear area of all food and drinks). Set up a "prayer place/space."

## The Meeting Proper

A prayer session, in six stages, inspired by Ignatian Spirituality. Recommended daily prayer guide for Magis Deo BCGGs. Each stage helps you to get in touch with God, and God's presence in your life. The stages are for doing not just for reading.

## Daily Prayer Using Sacred Space (3 Phases – 6 Stages)

- I. Preparation
  1. Presence
  2. Freedom
- II. Prayer Proper
  3. Consciousness
  4. The Word
  5. Conversation
- III. Closing
  6. Closing

**Presence** - Awareness of the presence, and being in the presence, of God.

**Freedom** - Preparatory prayer: Place yourself at the disposal of God.

I place my life in your hand, Lord, I am Yours. Make me what You will. Amen. I ask for the grace to believe in what I could be and do if I only allowed God, my loving Creator, to create me, guide me and shape me.

## Consciousness (Examen)

Sacred Space's Consciousness uses different "shortened" forms of the Examen. In its place, BCGGs use the traditional 5-Step Format taught to us by our Spiritual Director, Fr. James Gascon. BCGG's can occasionally use other Examen Formats, as the need arises.

## 5-Step Examen of Consciousness

1. **Ask God for Light** – Review your day as God sees it.
2. **Give Thanks** – Think of the blessings you have received in the past day, from the routine to the ordinary.
3. **Review the day** – Play back the entire day to see God's presence. Be aware of your feelings and motives behind your actions.
4. **Face your shortcomings** – Identify moments when God seemed absent or you turned away from His invitation, and express sorrow.
5. **Look toward the day to come** – Ask for the grace you need in the coming day

**The Word** - Scripture Passage from the mass readings of the day.

Know God affectively through Christ, who He is, what He cares about and what He does. Know how God is specifically relating to you through His Word. Become aware about how you are being affected by the Word of God. Know to what He may be inviting you. Read over the passage, slowly, several times and see if any word or phrase stands out for you. Stay with and savor that phrase for as long as you like before turning your attention to anything else. Do not analyze the word/phrase. Allow it just simply to speak to you.

## Conversation

Speak to Jesus from your heart and mind about your experience with His word.

Listen to what Jesus says to you in reply, or what you imagine Him to say.

"That is the difference between thinking and praying. When we think, we generally talk to ourselves. When we pray, we talk to God." (Anthony de Mello, SJ, Sadhana, pages 78-79). Saint Ignatius calls this conversation a colloquy: "In the way one friend speaks to another, or a servant to one in authority..."

## Conclusion

End with a short concluding prayer, usually the "Glory be to the Father..."

## The Spiritual Conversation Process for Small Groups

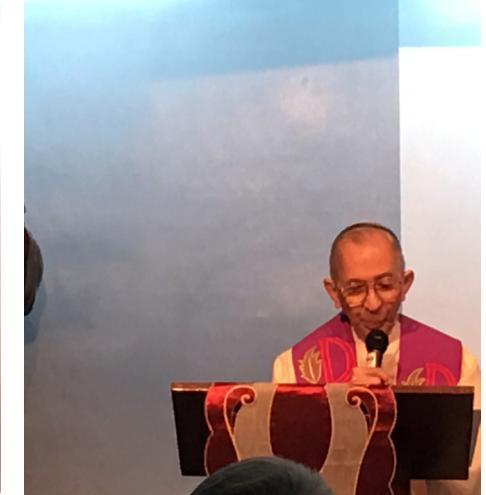
An important form of group prayer. Conversation deeply rooted in faith. Sharing and listening to members' personal experience of God in prayer and/or in daily life. Listening to the Spirit who speaks through each one in the group. A community-building experience.

## Prescribed Format of Weekly Meetings

- **Pre-Meeting Preparation.** Preparing what you will share. Preparing the area for the group prayer meeting

- **Meeting Proper** Preparing What to Share. Pray on scripture and do a review of your prayer experience daily. Prayerfully reflect on your daily life experience. Journalize the review/reflection. Before the meeting, review your journal and decide what to share and how to share it.

**Review of Prayer.** What happened to me as I prayed? As I look over my prayer, where and how did I experience God's presence most deeply? How/What does this make me feel? How am I being invited by the Lord? How will I respond?



**Increasing Awareness of God in Our Daily Lives.** Who has brought God's Love to me this day/week/month? Which stories this day/week/month have shown me what God is like? In what way has God challenged me this day/week/month to change in some way? What has God taught me about myself this day/week/month through one of his creatures? What has gone wrong for me this day/week/month and has it shown me anything of God's ways of working in my life?

## Spiritual Conversation in Small Groups

Share	Listen	Respond to Others	Respond to God
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of God in Prayer</li> <li>• Experience of God in Daily Life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With attention, appreciation, gratitude, and empathy.</li> <li>• For God's presence and action in the experience</li> <li>• To what in the sharing is affecting or striking you and how.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share</li> <li>• What, in the sharing of others, affected you and how.</li> <li>• What meaning it has to you.</li> <li>• Leader summarizes the common themes of Rounds 1 &amp; 2.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual/Group prayer following from the sharing.</li> <li>• Special Prayers</li> </ul>

## Reminders and Guidelines

- Share about a faith experience.
- Every person is an expert on his/her own experience.
- Sharing is not a communal performance; share what you can and as simply as you can.
- Be brief and clear.
- The major activity of any small group sharing is grateful listening.
- Times of silence are very appropriate and needed.
- Spiritual conversation is not a place to sermonize, moralize, explain our favorite ideas, have a discussion or debate, solve problems, interfere with another's contribution, convert others to our way of thinking, or explain our favorite idea.

## Outcomes of Spiritual Conversations

- Our affective knowledge of God grows, deepens and takes greater root.
- Our relationship with God becomes more real and personal.
- As our relationship deepens, we increasingly love Him and we become more like Him.
- A strengthened community of faith.

# How's our relationship with God?

Tina Mossesgeld  
Cana BCGG

**L**ent is usually the time when we assess where we are in our spiritual journey. Liturgical songs urge us to "come back to me with all your heart." Many of us who do not make it a habit of going to confession or the Sacrament of Reconciliation as it is now known, take the time to do so at this time. Spiritual articles invite us to deepen our friendship with our Lord as he ends his public ministry and heads towards the greatest sacrifice, which is to die for his friends.

One way of sensing where we are in our spiritual journey is getting to know our interior movements. Vinita Hampton Wright, a contributor in IgnatianSpirituality.com, asks this question to help us: "Are we moving toward more doubt, fear and anger? Or are we moving toward greater faith, hope and love?"

There seems to be a tug of war going on in our inner lives. Simply put, are we moving towards God or away from God and towards Satan? Many of us may not believe in the evil spirit nowadays but we are being very naïve if we think that evil does not operate in us. Ignatius discovered early on in his spiritual journey that human beings have evil tendencies and the only way to deal with these tendencies is to resist with all our might.

These interior movements are what Ignatius calls spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation. Many writers have given a contemporary translation of these



two terms. Dean Brackley says we are in spiritual desolation when we experience sadness and inner turmoil. It is not just feeling low but a disturbance arising from deep within and therefore touches our whole being and outlook on life. Spiritual consolation is the opposite of spiritual desolation. It refers to the peace and joy that arise from our center, which also affects our overall outlook.

We may experience spiritual desolation and spiritual consolation both from pleasant and unpleasant or painful experiences. For example, a very successful businessman can experience spiritual desolation at the height of his success when he begins to see his money and the power and honor that go with it as the end goal, replacing God in the process. On the other hand, a cancer patient can experience spiritual consolation in her trust and dependence on God and in the love of her family.

Margaret Silf has a very good description of these two spiritual states:

#### Desolation

- Makes us focus on ourselves
- Drives us down the spiral deeper into our own negative feelings
- Cuts us off from family and /or from community
- Makes us want to give up on the things that used to be important to us.
- Takes over our whole consciousness and narrows or clouds our vision

- Covers up the progress of our journey with God so far (making us discouraged)
- Drains us of energy
- Makes us feel tepid or lukewarm

#### Consolation

- Directs our focus outside and beyond ourselves
- Lifts our hearts so that we can see the joys and sorrows of other people
- Bonds us more closely to our human community
- Generates new inspiration and ideas
- Restores balance in our commitments and refreshes our inner vision
- Shows us where God is active in our lives and where God is leading us
- Releases new energy in us.

Can we take the time to prayerfully reflect on this list? Let us beg God for the grace to see, to know, and to understand ourselves as He sees, knows, and understands us. If we have done the Examen religiously and recorded this in our journal, then we can see emerging patterns of either consolation or desolation. If we see patterns of consolation, then to God be the glory! Humbly acknowledge God's goodness and be grateful. If on the other hand you detect signs of desolation, fight it with all your might by forcing yourself to pray, to receive the sacraments, and beg for God to help you even if you feel He is absent.

*Continued on page 7*

Joy S. Uy-Tioco, Sirach BCGG

# God will make a way

Philip & Malu Panlilio  
Mustard Seed, BCGG



We begin 2017 with faith and trust that God will guide our MagisDeo Community in "going back to basics", the thrust of this year's programs. In all humility, the Council cannot make it happen without God's grace.

As God is a God of order and light, He surely will want this mirrored in our Community life. He definitely wants us to live an orderly, beautiful and fruitful life. All of us who form part of Community has a stake in this.

Our God is a God who labors but slow. It is with patient trust that we await the fruits of formation in our Community. We remember some years back of an observation shared with us that the manner we receive formation inputs and our weekly faith-sharing are a slow process of getting the results. But looking back at our own personal formation and those of other

#### How's Our Relationship with God?

*Continued from page 6*

While consolation and desolation are very personal, these movements also have a communal nature. These spiritual states are contagious and can affect members of a community. "Desolation is contagious. We can spread it by becoming stumbling blocks, undermining the faith and idealism of others" (Brackley). On the other hand, we can inspire others with our energy and

commitment to serve.

Perhaps it would be good for our leaders to also pray and reflect on the list above as it applies to our community. Can our leaders assess whether our community is in consolation or in desolation? What makes us say Magis Deo is in consolation? Are there signs of desolation?

# Transfiguration

12 March 2017 Ruben M. Tanseco, SJ

**T**ransfiguration is transformation. Jesus went through his persecutions, passion and death before his resurrection. It was the resurrected Christ that Peter, James, and John witnessed as the transfigured Christ. And this was how disciples of Christ were called by God to follow him. They heard God's voice speaking to them: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased: listen to him... Rise, and do not be afraid..." (Mt. 5:5,7). And so they did. They likewise carried their crosses in preaching the Gospel, and died for the sake of Christ, only to be followed by a new life with God.



The ever-loving God the Father joined us here on earth as the ever-loving God the Son to be our guide and companion. We are all lovingly invited to follow his human way of living, and not to be afraid. As St. Paul tells us in today's second reading: "Beloved: Bear your share of hardship for the Gospel with the strength that comes from God" (2 Tim. 1:8). The spiritual author William Maestri describes it this way: "All of the glory and exultation is set within the context of the passion and death of Jesus. There is no promise of cheap grace. The holy life to which we are called requires a willingness to suffer and die in Christ so as to rise with him." (Grace Upon Grace, p. 24).

Today is the anniversary of the canonization of two saints: St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Francis Xavier, who were both canonized in 1622. Allow me to focus briefly on each one of them in connection with today's liturgical teachings. Faith-Cross-Resurrection.

St. Ignatius belonged to a noble Basque family, with all its wealth, power, and political influence. As an adult, he was a soldier in the service of the Spanish King. During a battle in defense of Pamplona against the French, he was hit on the leg by a cannonball and was seriously wounded. He went through several operations, followed by a prolonged convalescence. One can just imagine the human suffering that he went through. Physical, psychological, emotional, and what-have-

you. To spend his time, he requested reading material, preferably chivalrous romances that he was fond of. But there was none available. Instead, he ended up by reading the lives of saints that were available. In God's plan, such was the beginning of his spiritual conversion. This went so deep that when he was already physically well, he went on a pilgrimage to Montserrat. Later on, he proceeded to Manresa, where he spent several months of solitary spiritual retreat. This brought him to the conviction of becoming a priest. To make the long story short, he eventually formed a new religious Order which was no less than the Society of Jesus. But in time, their ways of doing things were opposed by other groups in the Catholic Church. Ignatius himself was not free from such controversy. In due time, this controversy subsided, and the Jesuit Order continued to work and spread in different parts of the world. One of the most significant contributions of St. Ignatius to the Church was his Spiritual Exercises, a thirty-day retreat, which was very much appreciated, as it is today.

St. Francis Xavier was one of the original companions of St. Ignatius. His 15-month voyage to Goa was the beginning of a marvelous missionary journey that lasted 11 years. From Goa, Francis did missionary work along the southern coasts of India, and after that, he explored other islands in Southern Asia. Then he proceeded to Japan. Let me quote here what he wrote to Ignatius: "It seems to me that we shall never find...

another race to equal the Japanese. They are a people of very good manners... They are men of honor to a marvel, and prize honor above all else, in the world... They like to hear things propounded according to reason; and, granted that their sins and vices among them, when one reasons with them, pointing out that what they do is evil, they are convinced by this reasoning." (From R. Ellsberg, *All Saints*, 1999, p. 528). He then planned to proceed to China, a very daring challenge indeed, but he became seriously ill. He suffered so much, and passed away at the age of 46. Quite young, indeed. But he had done so much mission work by that time.

Uncanonical saints. Coming now to our own country, we just commemorated a couple of weeks ago our incredible People Power Revolution at EDSA in February 1986. Armed with God's support, our human love for one another, for peace, unity, and justice, we were able to end a twenty-year rule of dictatorship and martial law, and restore our country's democracy. The rich and the poor, the old and the young, families and communities – we were all there as one, huge family of God.

This year's commemoration inspired Arch. Socrates Villegas, president of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines, to write a letter to the late Cardinal Jaime Sin, who was an active leader of our EDSA revolution. Let me quote just a part of that inspiring letter:

"For EDSA is not about the enemies of peace and democracy but the faith and bravery of a people who called upon the Lord in their distress and whose cry the Lord has heard from heaven. EDSA is our people's cry and our God's loving reply... Against all odds, Cardinal Sin, we will remember. We will give thanks. We will challenge ourselves to live for God and to live for country as you did.

In this connection, let me just single out our Vice President Leni Robredo and our former President Benigno Aquino III in reminding all of us to be aware that "the fight is not over."

## 04 March 2017 Community Celebration



# Nothing short of a miracle

Frances Zyra Mella, Magis Youth



**I**t was March 16, 2016, a Wednesday. It was a big day because it was my sister Fiona's 19th birthday. My mom, dad and I planned to take Fiona out to celebrate. We were going together – I was going to drive – and my dad would follow. But because of a misunderstanding, my mom and I kind of fought and she ended up driving herself to the hospital and I ended up the only one picking up Fiona from school. I was annoyed, mostly with myself, because it was a big day, and not just because of Fiona. It was also the day we would know the results of my mom's biopsy.

I was sitting across my mom in front of the doctor's table when the doctor said "It's cancer." Just like that. Two words. But their weight was so immense, I couldn't even fathom them. My mom immediately cried and I stared at the floor, trying very hard not to cry too. I was there to support and I wanted to be strong because I was the eldest and I was the one supposed to be mature enough to hear this news with her. But I felt very much like a child then. I think no matter how old you get, there's always this sort of reverence and admiration that you feel for your parents because they raised you and you feel they can do anything. But something like this, getting news that your parents are human and vulnerable, makes you vulnerable all the same. I felt helpless and I didn't know what to do.

When we came out of the doctor's office, now with my dad, my mom faced the wall of the hallway and started crying. I remember very clearly how my dad put

a hand on her shoulder, how his face crumpled, like he was about to cry too; in a second he reeled it in and comforted my mom instead. I looked away because it was painful and scary enough, even without knowing your parents were scared too. I left and went to get Fiona who was sleeping in the waiting area.

I had a lot of questions. I was so confused. I remember asking God for answers, for further comprehension, for more faith, more belief. I wanted to *know* and believe that this was just a test, one we could overcome. Growing up a Catholic, I felt that an unwavering acceptance of God and His plans was required. But it was difficult to do that back then. Why couldn't I question my mom's getting sick when she and my dad took care of their health as much as they could? Why couldn't I ask why this had to happen to us? Why shouldn't I? They're *my* parents; don't I deserve some answers? Of course I never really knew the answer to those *whys*.

I've always thought that understanding, to understand, is personal because facts, information, awareness, knowledge are required. You have to *know* to truly *understand*. I've never really understood what it was like to have someone you know get sick. I've been a shoulder to cry on for friends. I've offered my sympathies and have been empathetic. But it wasn't until then that I knew how heartbreakingly it was for someone you love to go through something so big, it feels devastating. It felt like everything you know is crumbling and you're not entirely sure how to get

out and fix things.

But it wasn't devastating. It isn't. As the song goes, "the first cut is the deepest." Still, it's just a cut. I sound like I'm oversimplifying it, but what have happened since the news have been encouraging and far less daunting. My mom has been doing well, close to being in remission, after a year of alternative treatments here and in the U.S. She's healthy, positive, and remains beautiful. What more could I ask for?

I've always been proud of how close we are as a family. Growing up, my siblings and I have always been close to our parents. My mom and dad created and maintained a culture of openness and it has never been difficult to talk to them about things (most especially, if it wasn't about a screw up). I didn't think we could be any closer than we already were and I didn't realize how expansive the word family could actually be.

I have spent more time with my mom in the past year than in the years I've been alive combined. (I'm clearly exaggerating, but you get the point.) I've been with her almost every day, driving and accompanying her to her check-ups and treatments, and I was so grateful – I still am – that I was able to do these. I'm happy that I can be present and provide the support and help that she needs. (I don't think it's a coincidence that I was assigned to the night shift in December 2015. How else would I be able to go with my mom if I worked a regular schedule? The Lord works in mysterious ways.)

*Continued on page 11*

# Did God miss (again)?

Leo Soliman, Corinthians BCGG



Jun and I grew up together sharing the same activities of our youth. From grade school to high school to college, I was always in tow, always following him, being my immediate elder brother. And since we were born just 22 months apart, our sphere of interests, parties, sports and gimmicks inevitably intertwined. His friends became mine and mine his. Yes, there were benefits along the way. In school, I was untouchable by upper class bullies. In parties where he was invited, I get the pass to tag along. Doors were opened for me when people come to know he is my brother.

On the business side, I always get the biggest discount on his insurance products. I had seen his attitude in life when his wife died at a young age. He moved on, remarried, and continued to be the bedrock of his family. Again, his spirit was tested when his retirement money went down the drain due to the Banco Filipino fiasco. This time the blow was felt hard since those were his parachute funds he lost. Worse, he still had 3 kids in school. But again, he managed to tide this over. No, he didn't blame anybody. He just did what was needed to be done.

**Nothing short of a miracle** *Continued from page 10*

But I didn't just become closer to my mom. I became closer to my siblings. As the eldest, I had a responsibility to make sure that Fiona and Jared were okay, that they were handling things as well as they could. There were a lot of talks, a lot of discussions, messages of encouragement, questions and answers. I offered support as best as I could and they did the same for me. I also became closer to my dad. We've always had open lines of communication, but I guess there were just certain things you don't talk about with your dad. He showed me a side of him that I rarely see, one that made me feel honored because it meant he trusted me.

It's really amazing what a cut can do, no matter how deep. The way it heals so beautifully makes up for that initial bout of pain.

So much love has been given to my mom and to our family. Our relatives and friends – my parents', my siblings' and mine – have been so supportive emotionally and physically, that it never fails to make me emotional just thinking about it.

As if the challenges he faced weren't enough, Jun has been diagnosed with prostate cancer. What stage I didn't care to know. What I know is that this time it isn't fair anymore. Here is a guy who dedicated his life to the upbringing of his family in the most decent way, served the community, served in church organizations, and helped a lot of people along the way.

No frills, no fanfare, just pure desire to help and serve.

I lost my kid brother Gerry 3 years ago. Up to now I cry whenever I reminisce about him. Now, the prospect of losing another sibling hovered so closely. Jun's youngest is my inaanak. I can't bear to look at her 12-year old eyes. I can't help but ask God what His divine plan is. I wondered, baka naman it was really me who was supposed to go. Kaso God missed in His first attempt and His arrow hit Gerry. Now, His aim is towards Jun. I am in their middle, e. Just asking.

*Continued on page 12*

You get to a point where you think, "Why would God do something like this to us? How could He? Doesn't He love us?"

And then He goes and answers you with "Yes, I do, and *this* is how I love you." This is *how much I love you*."

There is no way to deny a love like that.

It's been one year and nine days (as of this writing) since that doctor's appointment, and everything that happened since has been nothing short of a miracle. A miracle is defined as an extraordinary event, one that has supernatural causes. I definitely think this qualifies as one, and then some. Because not only is my mom better, we are all better. This chain of events has taught me that things like this, joys or pains, no matter how seemingly big, are just a small speck in the long run. There are bigger things, more important things, like growth, family, and love – both a person's and God's.

# The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do In Life and Business

By Charles Duhigg, Penguin Random House

Zarah Gagatiga, Mt. Olivet BCGG

This is a book I have always wanted to read and do a review about. As I am very much interested in how the human brain works, The Power of Habit meets this interest and more!

I enjoyed reading about the human brain's physiological make up and its capacity to work wonders in the human body and, yes, in one's spirituality (this is just me and my reading of the book). Neuroscience still has a lot to tell us about our brain. How it has the capacity to rewire itself, to grow and to evolve! We are changing, learning beings and our habits manifest this dynamism.

Charles Duhigg begins by telling stories of people who underwent changes in the brain both by choice and by chance. Through the stories of real life people overcoming challenges that affected their physical and personal well being, I realized how powerful the human brain can be if we are mindful and aware of how to make use of it. Duhigg elaborates this cognitive power with more stories of groups of people interacting in the workplace, in the community and, at large, in the bigger global society.

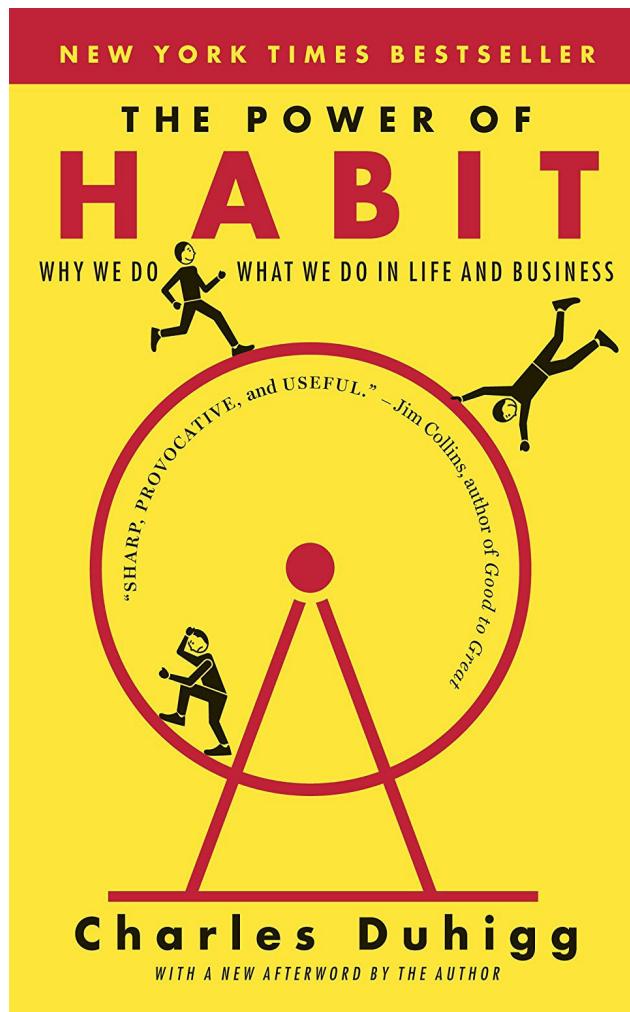
Habits begin with the individual person. But the person is not removed from the bigger and wider world. I find the stories inspiring most especially the ones about change beginning from within so that others can be influenced by it. Our habits shape our identities. Our habits have an effect on the environment we live in.

I am recommending this to readers who wish to better themselves in business or in the pursuit of one's passion. Give this book shelf space in your library or in your e-reader.

**Rating: Four bookmarks over five.**

**Did God miss (again)?** *Continued from page 11*

Sometimes, no matter how strong your faith is, it will still be challenged by unfortunate events. And your response to it will define you. I have carried for more than a decade now the adverse effects of my stupidity. And the end is nowhere in sight. But my faith and prayers sail me through the never ending stormy seas.



(Image source: Amazon.com)

I plan to check on my brother. I'll do so to cheer him up even if I myself need some cheering up too. But how do you brighten the day of a gloomy person? How do you look at him without pity in your eyes? Will my visit bring happiness? Or will it just be another dramatic scene? What kind words can you say to a dying man?

Questions, questions. I don't need questions. I need answers. I need assurances. I need peace and serenity for my brother, his family, for our clan. Answers only God can provide.

Chacho Angeles, Thessalonians BCGG

## An evening in Glan, Sarangani

I am in a womb of darkness,  
Sitting on a wooden bench  
Near the beach, beer in hand,  
Sometimes walking barefoot  
By the sea, feeling the fine  
Sand squish under my feet,  
I hear the rhythmic sound  
Of the surf lapping the beach,  
With the rustle of the leaves  
Of trees in the nearby hills,  
The briny scent of the sea  
Filling my nostrils, the moon  
And the stars in the heavens  
Leaping out of the darkness.



This short hymn made me realize that the darkness did not make me oblivious to my surroundings, despite the diminished view of my eyes. There was beauty all around me. The soft ambient sound of civilization did not bother me a bit.

The recent gospels portray Jesus healing blind people, and every time I meditate on these gospels, I go inside me and I see my own blindness, not physical blindness, but a blindness of a different kind. Many times I failed to see God's hand in people, in situations, in creation. I failed to see beauty, graciousness, inspiration, God's grace. Sometimes everyday events, concerns, as well as significant events take up much of my attention. And the stress or the tension that many of these events bring with them, fill me with darkness.

I have recently been exposed to a few continuing dramas that brought such tension-filled situations and made me do and say things that I later regretted. These involved major change and sacrifice that affected not only me, but those I live with. But reflecting on recent gospels about Jesus healing the blind made me realize that my faith is being severely tested, and stretched. I forgot that I am still loved despite the things that are happening around me. As much as I want to see beyond my concerns, the tension put up defensive scales that covered my eyes.

Reflecting further on the tension, I realized that tension gives birth to beautiful things. The tensing of the abdominal muscles of a mother causes the birth of babies. The tensing of the muscles of ballet dancers enables them to perform beautiful and gracious movements. I tried standing on the tip of my toes, and I could not do it. I marvel at the stamina of ballet dancers.

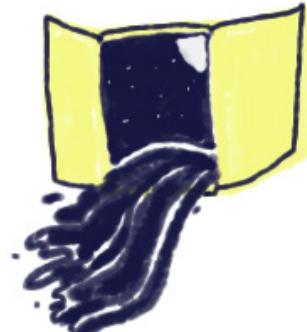
I also realized that tension fills nature and produces very pleasant sensations in me. When the surf hits the beach, the sand or rocks on the beach resist the arrival of the water, and, depending on the strength of the current, the water rushes over or around the obstacles and this resistance is the tension that creates the sound that I hear at the beach or near the sea. The sound of the leaves when the wind blows is created by the wind moving around leaves that refused to fall from the branches of the trees. This tension makes the pleasant rustling sounds that I hear.

In this modern world, in construction specifically, we see and hear in construction sites the phrase "post tensioning." This is the process of applying stress on the reinforcing bars in concrete posts and beams once the concrete has set. A good kind of stress? Though in this modern world too, stress has been looked at as "bad" and likely causes a lot of diseases like hypertension and even cancer.

This tension I must learn to live with, and grow with. Another recent gospel, the story of the Annunciation, told me a lot. Taking the cue from Mary, she could have freaked out when the angel told her that she would become pregnant, without the participation of a man. And this was not the only time there was confusion, hurt, pain or stress. I can just imagine being told by my twelve-year-old son that I should not be looking for him because he is doing his father's work. And I could not imagine a parent watching a son's execution through a very cruel kind of execution, crucifixion – a slow and painful death. And Mary ponders these in heart.

In relation to Mary, somebody wrote about pondering these things in her heart. Maybe there was no concept of stress and tension during her time, but the effects would have been there, felt and acted on. The writer says that Mary did not simply think about these things because she obviously felt them. For Mary, ponder involved not acting, and not doing something like getting mad, or cursing or worse, lashing out. She did not retaliate in kind. She did not blow her top. She transformed the pain, the hurt, the stress, the tension into a virtuous act. Mary obeyed and did what was asked or expected of her. Her heart was like a gracious ballet dancer.

As I finish my beer and  
Make a final stroll down  
The beach, knee-deep in water,  
The window of my soul is  
Unhinged, thrown wide open,  
And my heart is full of grace.



# Our communal journey

Jecelyn Gumila, Easter BCGG



**I**t was quite fitting for us that Sacred Space's theme for the week of March 12 to 18 dealt with Communal Journey. "If we can experience our journey in communion with others, it makes it so much clearer that we are on a journey together. When we can share our experiences with a close friend or our worship community, we can enjoy support that allows grace to flourish. Let us pray for one another on this journey, especially for those who need and desire a change of heart on this pilgrimage to Easter joy".

Our schedule for the last couple of weeks before the ME Weekend was kinda hectic because we were trying to finish our sharing in time for our ME talk for the March 10-12 ME Weekend. It was especially hard for Edwin because he procrastinated for awhile, as he was still hoping that Marivic and Tita Josie will come to their senses and realize they are making a terrible mistake in inviting him to share. So he only got the time to sit down and write his thoughts after accepting that there was no more turning back. At the end of a long day for him, I could see him trying to focus on his writing even if his eyes were already drooping and he was already tired from his normally toxic daily schedule.

We came to the ME Weekend with no clue as to what it will do to us physically, emotionally and spiritually. We thought it would be a free and easy weekend since all we had to do was read our talks which we prepared ahead of time. I even downloaded a few movies into my iPad, hoping

we could catch in between our talks.

But alas, our weekend didn't turn out to be that way. God had other plans. I guess He listened to our opening prayer and sent the Holy Spirit to enlighten and inspire us and made the weekend a truly beautiful experience for Edwin and me. It was like we were transformed into another dimension, a feeling that was new to us. It was our first time to be couple sharers, and instead of being overwhelmed by the number of participants - 25 couples and 36 Cefam soon-to-be counselors - we got more determined to make the weekend a memorable one for them.

The action songs that we usually dreaded and hated doing didn't seem to be that corny at all. In fact, we had a great time doing them together with the participants. During Friday evening's introductory talks, we could see stoic and blank faces from the seemingly tired participants. But along the way, as our talks progressed and focused on our personal experiences with the Lord, I could see the changes in their faces, from indifference to eagerness. Maybe they also sensed the changes in us in imparting our story. During the first part of the first session which was mostly an introduction and orientation, there were no feelings involved and we were still kinda nervous.

But as we progressed to Talk 3 (Personal Masks), then to Talk 4 (Illusion and Disillusionment Stage), and Talk 7 (Closeness to God as a Couple), I started to feel calm. I felt God telling me to just focus on my experiences, read them

from the heart, and I will be okay. When I got to Talk 9, the PDR (Passion, Death and Resurrection), I was so immersed in reliving what I had gone through - my struggles and pain, how I overcame my passion and death, and ultimately my resurrection. I wasn't able to control my emotions but I guess I needed to go through with that in order to finally have my inner healing. Even Edwin would sometimes pause to compose himself while reading his notes. He was so filled with emotion even if he tried to add a few 'ad libs' to inject his trademark humor.

Edwin and I were physically and emotionally drained but spiritually high after our experience. As Edwin said, the kind words of appreciation from the participants in between the talks, and most especially during their graduation were very heart-warming and more than enough reward for us. It was even made more special when Fr. James hugged both Edwin and me at the end of our talk. The weekend was indeed a truly memorable adventure for us.

When we were invited to be couple sharers, I didn't have any hesitation at all because I believe that one of the most powerful tools we have for sharing our faith is to tell people what the Lord has done in our lives. Edwin, being the private person that he is, was quite apprehensive at first because it means we would be sharing our personal experiences with the community.

Continued on page 15

# A Weekend of Love & Discoveries

(Our ME Experience)

Jun & Ring Mendoza, ME 124

## Wala Nang Hahanapin Pa

*"Ewan ko ba ngunit kahit ganyan siya, minamahal ko siya, wala nang hahanapin pa." —APO Hiking Society*

It all started as a requirement for our Theology 396.1 (Family Spirituality Practicum) course in CEFAM. Dr. Myrna and Miss Muriel announced that March 10-12, 2017 should be blocked-off for the Marriage Encounter Weekend in Tagaytay.

As soon as I arrived home; I told my hubby Jun about it. I remember telling him not to make any appointments for that particular weekend. The day after, as soon as he reached the office, he filed for a vacation leave for those dates.

At first, a thought came to our minds, "Nothing's really wrong with our relationship for the past 17 years?" We would go out on weekly dates and family time, and have constant communication about our day to day endeavors.

As the retreat neared, I told him we can just look at the retreat as an opportunity for our "couple time" spent in one of our favorite places – Tagaytay! At the first evening session in St James Retreat House, Fr. James Gascon, SJ, our spiritual director for the weekend, reiterated: "No such thing as accidents... only moments of grace." Then he initiated the discussion on feelings. Feelings are very important ingredients in our life.

The "couple sharing" or dialogue was the time when Jun's concept of feeling in a relationship was developed. He realized that there is no reason to be angry with the other's feeling as long as it is delivered with utmost respect. The feeling is aimed not at the person but on the action or the situation. Armed with this knowledge, he has never felt more open in discussing his feelings with me.

## Our communal journey Continued from page 14

But again, God works in mysterious ways. He gave Edwin the courage and humility to accept His challenge. Edwin and I are not professing to have a perfect marriage but we want other couples to be inspired; that despite the trials and challenges in our marriage, we strived and still continue to strive to overcome the hardships by being open to God's plan.

Being couple sharers is our way of giving back to the Lord for all the things He continues to bless us with. I know this is



It is therefore essential to have that awareness, openness and a non-judgmental attitude in every marital relationship.

We were moved by the 3 Stages of Love presented to us participants: falling in love, disillusionment, and the decision to love. These stages of growth and development of love happen again and again.

Furthermore, it is in STRIVING to reach that joy and true love stage that we can attain a continuing linkage. Loving is a decision and not a condition.

Throughout the remaining sessions, Husband and Wife dialogue was reinforced. It is expressing the partner's desires, aspirations and hopes that solidifies the relationship. The sharing of one's innermost-self will require deep confidence and the decision to be vulnerable.

The initial feeling of compliance has metamorphosed into fulfillment. Through the years, the vocation we have chosen has developed into a new calling through the ME Weekend experience. God has made us a couple, strengthened and nourished with His words, made possible through the couples and individuals who have shared their innermost selves.

As we headed back to Manila, Jun held my hand while driving and played for me his new theme song by the APO Hiking Society, a song written in his "Dear God" letter, which conveyed his decision to LOVE my UNIQUE-NESS in spite of the WHAT-IFs and BUTs in our marriage.

A LOVE tantamount to God's calling without anything in return. In every passion and death, we always look for the small resurrections that cascade into our marriage and family life. To God be the glory!

nothing compared to what others are doing for the Lord but I'm confident that in God's time we'll be able to do more. Meanwhile, I still continue to pray for complete healing and I believe that in His time, he will make me whole again.

We would like to thank our Easter family for all the encouragement, prayers and support. Of course, we also would like to thank Cesar and Marivic Pareja and Tita Josie Llamas for their guidance. You inspire Edwin and me to grow as a couple. I know it was your prayers that gave us the courage to go through the weekend. *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.*

## ME WEEKEND



**ME 123:** Dong & Gin Galang, Hector & Faith Villegas, Jane Aldeguer, Josie Llamas, Ney & Pinky Rosas, Eljon & Chelle Red, Jojo & MeAn De Guzman, Roel & Nette Wong



### ME 124 (from second to bottom picture)

**Couples:** Rommel & Maria Christeena Antonio, Franklin Jr. & Ana Marie Atencio, Josemaria & Edna Marie Bartolome, Michael & Agripina Batoctoy, Roel & Celia Claro, Geronimo Jr. & Janice Cruz, Winston & Glenda Mae Cruz, Reymundo & Leoncia Dionisio, Jayvee Nino & Mary Angeli Esteban, Sergio Jr. & Cecile Gacias, Heintjie & Annabelle Ho, Walberto & Shirley Mandin, Alwin & Eleonor Maramag, Proceso Jr. & Maria Rheina Mendoza, Anthony & Elisa Joy Morales, Rex & Mary Jane Nicdao, Jeyran & Marizel Nacional, Renato & Janice Ramento, Mariano Jr. & Djoanna Santos, Ramon & Ma. Theresa Silerio, Jocel & Joanna Tabuldan, Alexis Rey & Ma. Suzette Tresvalles, Gilbert & Gemma Vargas, Ramon & Monina Vinluan, Karl Anthony & Maria Caridad Virata

**Married (Solo):** Luisa M. Armovit, Pamela D. Balasabas, Surtalito Del Rosario, Mary Ann D. Imus, Eleanor Henedine S. Laurena, Anthony D. Lorenzo, Regina Charissa Molines, Aileen Nicolas

**Singles & Lays:** Ybonne Christine Chua, Maria Patricia Francisco, Lyvie M. Libradilla, Reynaldo O. Samson, Maria Ester Tabin, Anne Margarette S. Tongo Luis Manuel Torrejon

**Religious:** Fr. Bon L. Arimbuyutan, Fr. Singarayar Arockiam, Jubanie Rey F. Baller, Fr. Ricky Cabugsa, Sr. Latitia Cardoza, Genesis S. Carpio, Fr. Surapong Labuddee, Fr. Edison M. Lotilla, Abelardo Jose M. Mendoza, Richard Bryan O. Mijares, Sr. Thao Phan Thi Ngoc, Jaime Silvestre C. Parmisano, Christian Jhon G. Paspe, Joerald Pepito, Fr. Hoang Hai Phi "Vincent", Sr. Tiibe Raimon, Michael Anthony L. Ricarte, Amado T. Tumbali Jr., Fr. Suan Za Lian "Lucas"

## ME WEEKEND

# ME reflections



This ME Weekend was truly one of those occasions we can say God was with us and continues to be with us. The feeling of service was overflowing. It was really a time of being couples for others. As an auxie in the ME Weekend of Class 124, the inspiration for us was of doing this in service of the Lord. It overrode the pagod, the puyat and apprehensions of the many things that had to be done minute-by-minute. We were 6 ninja couples from ME 123 led by our master Shepherd Couple (Jojo & Jane Aldeguer), steered by our sensei (Tita Josie) in the Holy Spirit-guided production for 85 participants. The cohesiveness of the team came out, each contributing without being told, overlapping with pre-assigned tasks, basically helping wherever and whenever we could. At the end of the ME Weekend there was the humbling feeling of being an instrument of God in touching the couples and solo participants. Bonus was the reinforcement of the bond between us as husband and wife.

Thank you dear Lord for another opportunity to give praise and service to You!

– Ney and Pinky Rosas, ME 123 Head Coordinator



Like any other weekend, preparing for the event was exciting... going through the MEW flowchart, practicing the action songs, and thinking of ways to make the weekend extra memorable. And yes, just like any other weekend, the recruitment part was jittery. But with the candidates from the class, from the BCGGs and from RMT Cefam students, the total number of candidates jumped to 85! And adding the MEW staff, the final count came to 115. We were informed that this was a record breaking number of candidates/attendees. And yes again, we felt that, because, even if we tried to prepare days prior to the MEW, the sheer number was really overwhelming and challenging... a number of auxiliaries were getting sick, and even the equipment and sound system were giving up on us! But, through God's goodness, we were able to wrap up the afternoon of March 12, 2017... with grateful hearts for all the support given to us by our sponsors, the energy from God, the patience and understanding we had for each other in the many times of topsy-turvy, the couples who were touched, and the students who were inspired and empowered.

Thank you dear Lord for another opportunity to give praise and service to You!

– Jojo and Jane Aldeguer Shepherd Couple, ME 123

May we also acknowledge with gratitude the BCGGs who were instrumental in bringing in ME 124 candidate couples:

- Archangel Gabriel
- Exodus
- Psalmaritans
- St. Peter
- Easter
- Francis

Thank you for the assistance in kind from the Ng Sys, Sirach BCGG, the Parejas and Genesis of David BCGG.

Our heartfelt thanks to our Team couples - Cesar & Marivic Pareja, and Edwin and Jes Gumila (on their debut service as a team couple), and our beloved Spiritual Director Fr. James Gascon, SJ.

More for God...

# The millennial under the parents' roof

Milo Parada, Magis Youth



## The Ipod generation

You see it all over social media: young kids taking thousands of selfies, placing overly tacky filters, and then posting them on Facebook to collect likes. I bet you've done the same many times too. You probably also asked your parents about that new iPhone you've always wanted, or asked for some cash so you can go on a road trip or shop for new clothes, right? Articles about the habits of the younger generation populate the internet, itself a world-changing platform which your parents may never have enjoyed back in the day.

Here's the thing: you're not alone. You and I are part of the demographic infamously labeled "millennials" – people born in the late 80's to the early 2000's, spending an inordinate amount of time getting a taste of technology and getting exposed to globalization, automation, consumerism, widespread circulation of information, and immense connectivity due to the invention of mobile devices, the internet boom, and extensive innovation.

## All about the label

Willing to agree with your mom or dad when they say that millennials are the laziest, most dependent, most self-entitled demographics to ever walk the face of the earth? I bet not. They probably read the term "MILLENNIAL" on Facebook or heard it from their gossip with friends or colleagues. You may even accuse them, "Dad, fake news yan!" or "Mama, why do you have to be sooo judgmental?"

You're very much aware of the stigma, and so are your parents. Ever encountered any of these?

"Anak ang tamad mo naman, hindi ka

man lang mag-arial nang mabuti!"

"Anong oras na? Puro ka lakwatsya!"

"Wala kang ginawa kundi magkulong sa kwarto at magcomputer maghapon!"

These are most likely from your parents, and you've probably heard one or perhaps all of them. You wonder why your parents don't understand you and why you do things, all the while you lie on your bed with your chores undone, your homework and studies abandoned, and your bedroom a mess, feeling like they owe you a favor. When your parents start giving you endless advice on how to live your life and how to be a productive person, your thoughts would drift to your friends who seem to have all the liberty in their lives without doing their chores, getting the material things they want, and going wherever they want. Sounds familiar?

## Working hard for you

Your mom and dad always stress how hard they work to give you a good education and whatever wants and needs that you have. Your parents may not understand the conyo lingos you say to your friends or how Snapchat works, but if there's anything they are masters of, it's that they know what's best for you. They undeniably will try their best to buy you that Coldplay ticket, or allow you to go out with friends to that new food park or music festival. Why? They definitely don't want you to get stuck in the 1920's where traveling and exploring isn't that much of a thing, and even listening to the radio has a 9 PM curfew. In other words, you're able to enjoy your millennial life. However, if they did realize that you're already getting drunk weekly or failing your ex-

ams in school, your parents will definitely step in to remind you of the limits to your privilege.

Yep: Privilege. And it's that privilege that many young people repeatedly abuse. You may have tried to overstep many times as well. Complaining once your parents refuse to give you additional allowance, or ranting whenever you get grounded from going out on a Friday night?

"Mama, yung friends ko pinayagan; ako hindi???"

## You are better than your parents?

Truth is, you are not alone in these situations. The fact that your friends spend all day watching Netflix movies, or overspend on Zara or H&M clothing, also means there's a big chance that they may have gotten their moms or dads on their nerves as well. This generational friction is definitely the reason the term "millennial" has left a bad taste with many people. What was supposed to characterize a set of people born in a set period of time became a rather negative label for today's youth.

Admit it: it's rather annoying to hear all of these, mostly from the oldies. It's probably why you've finally decided to lock yourself in your room, or just spend your time with you "barkada" in the first place. You want to tell your parents that they are wrong; that they may as well put themselves in your shoes because times have changed, and that the situation now and when they were kids, is very different. You've had enough of the litany of sermons, and you talk back to get your point straight to your parents' ears.

"Dad, it's already 2017!"

## Are you?

It's easy to ignore your parents' 2-hours worth of explaining how your mom gave birth to you and made considerable sacrifices to raise you. It's easy to just dust off the conversation and go back to your Netflix show, to your call with your boyfriend, to your DOTA game, to your Instagram stories. It's easy to watch on Facebook how other millennials have become rich and successful and have started companies like Uber and Twitter, whilst you forget to study for your exams. You spend your money drinking. You go home late. You fail your exams. You fail to submit your reports. Everything's lagging. Your girlfriend breaks up with you.

Who are you gonna call? Your friends, maybe? Yeah you did, but they're out of reach, and you realize that they can only do so much to help. They're busy with their own lives after all. You're already miserable: more scrolling on Snapchat on people's daily lives, more bouts of jealousy, and more long thoughts ensue. You feel so alone, yet you remember that your parents have been begging you to answer their calls and reply to your texts.

Try stepping out of your room and say hi to your dad, would you?

## Prodigal sacrifice

You might have forgotten: whatever happens to you, your parents will always try their best to be there for you. Your friends may have their own lives, but for our parents, we're a huge chunk of their lives. They may have gotten mad at you and grounded you for lying to them and breaking your promises, but they will always love you. THEY WILL. That weekend work your dad's taking? He's most probably doing that for you. They may have all the rants about how millennials live their lives, but they will always see you as their child. Your parents will probably even take a bullet for you to protect you.

Understanding one another is the key to developing a good relationship with everyone, especially your parents. It's one good foundation for love to thrive. Be the agent.

## Your parents are your best friends

"But my parents still don't understand me."

You think you're not misunderstanding them as well?

Just like your friends who have boyfriends or girlfriends, perhaps you've learned about the importance of communication between people to foster a harmonious relationship. Talking to each other does three things: one, it lessens misunderstandings with your parents. Two, it helps you and your family solve dilemmas. Ultimately, communicating with one another strengthens your bond with your brothers, sisters, and parents. As much as you think your parents are old-fashioned, they've definitely made several attempts to talk to you about Beauty and the Beast, or go with you to that food park that you and your friends have been raving about. Pa-bagets, you may say, but there's the effort, nonetheless.

The worst thing you can do is to demand that your parents try to understand you all the time, and add to their problems. Try to understand their situation as well, and always be there for them if you think they themselves need to spend time with someone. Sounds cheesy? You'll get used to it; your parents are your destined pals for life, and they'll try to understand you, albeit sometimes much limited than you expect them to.

If you feel like your parents don't understand you, you don't have to aggressively rub it in their faces. Do it like you would to a friend: cordially, and honestly. Being honest, after all, is what you most likely do on Twitter on a regular basis; you may as well bring it within the family circle. Can't do it in a straightforward manner? My suggestion is, write them down and make a letter to your parents about your sentiments. Send it via Messenger, SMS, or even a handwritten note. If your parents can't easily reach out to you, maybe you can be the one to change the situation.

Understanding one another is the key to developing a good relationship with everyone, especially your parents. It's one good foundation for love to thrive. Be the agent.

## Your ultimate support

We may live in the age of technology and individualism, but hopefully you'll never forget how important your family is to you. Eventually you'll grow up, have a good career like other millennials, travel anywhere, and have your own family.

Remember those successful people you envy on Facebook? They didn't just get there with a snap of the fingers; they worked their way to their success. And while many millennials may be stereotyped as self-entitled or lazy, you'll realize that many other millennials have become exceptions and have been considered influential globally. Don't believe me? Just look at Mark Zuckerberg and Bobby Murphy, the Filipino co-founder of Snapchat.

"This ain't possible with me! I know nothing!"

Listen up: the more you think you can't do anything, the more you'll never accomplish anything. So start with the little things like doing your homework, studying well, and doing your chores. At

the end of the day, doing things that keep your mind and your body moving will always have a rewarding feeling the moment you hit the bed at night. Your parents will be happy about it, who knows. What will matter at the end of the day is that you have made the small steps.

This will sound very cliché, but always believe you can outdo who you are today tomorrow, and that your parents, siblings, and friends believe in your abilities and potential. Rediscover your passions and hobbies beyond lying down on your bed and watching Netflix all day. When you feel like giving up or thinking that you're a worthless being, it's not always too late to lean on your parents for support.

And last but not the least, put God at the center of your life. Millennials may scoff off at the idea, but these same people also pray to the Lord before exams or presentations. Just like your parents, you can also lean on the Lord in times of trouble. Never forget to thank Him for the blessings he gives you: your parents, your friends, your iPhone, your Coldplay concert ticket, and much, much more. You are blessed, just like your #BLESSED hashtag on Instagram.

Be a different millennial.

# God speaks to us...daily.

Rey Mella, Cana BCGG

**G**od speaks to me every day.

I am obsessive-compulsive when it comes to schedules and appointments. I live and die by my calendar. If lunch is not in my schedule, I tend to forget. If it says it's my bedtime, I force myself to go to bed. My waking up time and my exercise time – whether it's on the treadmill or walking in the village or to the barbershop – is in my calendar. If one's name does not appear in my calendar, it would be difficult for me to give the time a person needs from me. Of course, I am flexible and I do have time for people, but I prefer they be in my calendar in order to have quality time with them.

So, where does God appear and speak to me in my calendar and in my schedule?

"Planning in solitude" used to be in the beginning of my day and in my calendar. That is when I prayed. When I had gotten used to it, it disappeared, and I simply started my day with the prayer using the Sacred Space website.

But when I ceased going to office to work 8 to 5, when I had more freedom to choose my prayer time, ironically I stopped starting my day with prayer from Sacred Space. I simply inserted my prayer time in the middle of the day when I had time to quiet down and be alone.

Somehow God does not disappear just because I am busy.

He speaks to me through the people I meet every single day. There are times I would be unhappy with the way a conversation went; sometimes it becomes more positive and the person I am talking with becomes more responsive to what I am saying. When someone does not buy the concept of insurance or has budgetary constraints and I am tempted to give up on the person, God reminds me. My thoughts turn from negative to being inspired, from trying to forget the person, into not being able to walk away from a conversation. And, when I meet the person again, he becomes a client.

Twice during the last 2 weeks, I worked very hard to fill up a morning by booking a meeting, and it didn't happen. God does His small miracles on

my calendar. I needed those open times in the mornings after all. I had to make important follow-ups, work on some documentation, and file applications, at those precise times I tried so hard to book meetings. I was so relieved I had those open times. Not by design, but yes, maybe by God's design.

When I can't find a parking space or Waze disconnects and I can't find my way or lose direction, I call on Him and He responds as quickly as I call Him.

I am so busy and tied up with a calendar full of meetings, that I was anxious and had difficulty finding the time to get a doctor's appointment, get a blood test, and have a medical procedure done. That was 2 weeks ago. I got everything done, without a hitch in my calendared activities. How? God knows.

When I can't put prayer time in my calendar, God really doesn't mind. He finds a way of meeting me somewhere, somehow, sometime. He inserts Himself in my calendar, through situations, circumstances and people. Every day.

*I cannot imagine how the clockwork of the universe can exist without a clock-maker.*

— Voltaire

There was a preacher who fell in the ocean and he couldn't swim.

When a boat came by, the captain yelled, "Do you need help, sir?"

The preacher calmly said, "No, God will save me."

A little later, another boat came by and a fisherman asked, "Hey, do you need help?"

The preacher replied again, "No God will save me."

Eventually the preacher drowned and went to heaven.

The preacher asked God, "Why didn't you save me?"

God replied, "Fool, I sent you two boats!"

— [www.laughfactory.com/jokes](http://www.laughfactory.com/jokes)

During a 6-week vacation, I struggled with finding time to pray with Sacred Space. Not that I did not have the time or

the opportunity. I was simply distracted with being on vacation and enjoying the places we went to, staying in different places and in various hotels, preoccupied with people we engaged with, etc.

Other than short prayers thanking God for taking care of our safety during our daily drives to the clinic and driving for hours, doing other activities during the day, walking home at night, not losing our way during a long drive or a train or bus ride, I thought I never really spent time with God.

But somehow, God found His way to me. He actually never let me be alone or be by myself.

My wife and I were away for six weeks and traveled to six cities, in two countries, three time zones, three types of weather (warm, cold, colder).

In San Antonio, we visited three churches and in our one-day swing to Austin, I spent at least three hours in a conversation and education with Pastor Al.

In Mexico City, we visited the Cathedral Metropolitana and the Sagrario Metropolitano, two very old and beautiful churches. And of course, we visited the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a national shrine of Mexico, built near the hill of Tepeyac where Our Lady of Guadalupe is believed to have appeared to Saint Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin.

In Cancun, we had a family reunion to celebrate my mom's 85th birthday. I was with my brother Deacon Gem, and of course, with my mother, a devout Catholic and a very spiritual person. (A side note: We often wondered why our mother always prayed at least an hour each day. One brother eventually had the answer – she has to, there are 10 of us.)

In New York we had dinner with people who shared recent miracles in their life, and my wife and I were prayed over by three Baptist pastors who happened to be with us at a dinner with my friend and classmate Stanley. We also attended masses, with Sunday mass at the prominent St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Walking to Wall Street, we happened to pass by and went in the historic Trinity Church where people took refuge from the massive debris cloud when the first tower of the World Trade Center collapsed in September 11, 2001.

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# Passion-Commitment

Manny Gatchalian, Psalm 98 BCGG / Head, Magis Deo Chorale

**M**usic has long been my passion. This is why I have enjoyed singing in the Magis Deo Chorale. Thanks to Francis Llamas and Ramon Go who persistently invited me to join way back 2010. Their invitation led me to pray and ask for guidance if joining the choir was for me.

Challenges within the choir inspired me to help in its structural organization. Slowly, I became a serious member. Touched by the concern of previous members on how they tackle the many obstacles to the choir's growth, I decided to do the same. Thus started my journey and goal to make the choir better in serving God.

Moreover, it dawned on me that the Lord has given me the task and the challenge to head the Magis Deo Chorale. It has not been easy. I have encountered a lot of frustrations and disappointments the last 7 years. I needed to deal with 14 to 20 different personalities all at one time. I needed to cut my time at the office. I needed to transport the musical instruments from one place to another. The logistics bordered from hilarious to radical every time I needed to carry them. But I have poured my body

and my soul to this passion-commitment. I have enjoyed feeling the Lord each time I serve. This has given me a sense of fulfillment and peace.

The choir has improved a lot as individuals and as a group through the years. Thanks to the Lord! Comments of praise and inspiration came from presiding priests in our community celebrations, haranas, ME Weekends and other growth activities of the community. I applaud Mr. Gerry Olaguer for being a patient and persevering teacher, and each of the choir members for their dedication and commitment.

The Chorale grew more by wanting to share, and soon embarked on various outreach activities, reaching out through music. It has actively participated in the National Bilibid Lenten and Advent retreats spearheaded by Sally Chua Chiaco, spent special days with the abandoned disabled residents of the Servants of Charity and the abandoned elderly of Emmaus. It has also served monthly in the First Sunday Holy Mass at Christ the King Church of the Divine Word Seminary, and participated in free Christmas Concerts for parishioners

**God speaks to us...daily.** Continued from page 21

God sure had His way of staying in touch with me throughout the entire six weeks of traveling.

Even during our five-day long drive to the picturesque sites of Sedona, Monument Valley and the Arches in Utah, God, through these awesome and breathtaking views, reminded me of His power to create and provide our world with nature and beauty.

A minister told his congregation, "Next week I plan to preach about the sin of lying. To help you understand my sermon, I want you all to read Mark 17."

The following Sunday, as he prepared to deliver his sermon, the minister asked for a show of hands. He wanted to know how many had read Mark 17. Every hand went up. The minister smiled and said, "Mark has only sixteen chapters. I will now proceed with my sermon on the sin of lying." — [www.broadcast.org.uk](http://www.broadcast.org.uk)

In Phoenix, the death of a 25-year old son of our friends' friend, reminded me that we do not need to be on this earth very long to be able to touch the lives of many people. During the viewing and then the service of Angelo, who died in a motorcycle accident, the funeral parlor, the church and the dining hall were all filled to the brim with many people – young and old, different types of people he knew and affected as a church leader, car club organizer, a friend. All were touched by his simple demeanor, sincerity and humility. As a 60-year old now, I was envious... when I

was 25, I could not have touched that many lives. God sent me a message through Angelo's death.

"God's presence is everywhere around us. God is able to penetrate intertwine himself within the fibers of the human self in such a way that those who are enveloped in His loving companionship will never be alone." — Dallas Willard, Hearing God

On a sunny Sunday afternoon, two young church members were going door to door to invite people to visit their services. When they knocked on one door, it was immediately clear the woman who answered was not happy to see them.

She told them in no uncertain terms that she did not want to hear their message, and before they could say anything more, she slammed the door in their faces.

To her surprise, however, the door did not close; in fact, it bounced back open. She tried again, really putting her back into it, and slammed it again... with the same result – the door bounced back open.

Convinced these rude young people were sticking their foot in her door, she reared back to give it a slam that would teach them a lesson. Just then, one of them said quietly: "Ma'am, before you do that again, you really need to move your cat." — [www.broadcast.org.uk](http://www.broadcast.org.uk)

If it excites you, if it makes you feel good, it's God speaking to you. — Wayne Dyer



for several years. The Magis Deo Chorale under the Magis Deo Community has always rendered the finale at these events.

The Magis Deo Chorale has given me the privilege and opportunity to serve. I enjoy serving to pay back the love and mercy the Lord has given me.

At this point, I take the opportunity to ask the Community for recruits. Almost all the choir members have "student cards." We are in dire need of new fresh voices. If you have the talent or at least want to know if God has given you what it takes to be a Magis Deo Chorale member, take heed. Maybe it's time for you to take the helm and to feel the Lord more in your singing.

Message us through Facebook: Magis Deo Chorale

## Bilibid Recollection #7: “Sino Ako Sa Inyo?”

Sally G. Chua Chiaco, John BCGG

Outreach activity	Lenten recollection for 200 inmates (male)
Date	Saturday, March 25, 2017
Venue	School inside the Medium Security Compound National Bilibid Prison
Recollection time	9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Theme	“Sino Ako Sa Iyo” Mateo 16:13-17
Food provisions	We sponsored morning snacks and lunch.

**T**wenty-three joined the recollection from “laya,” as residents refer to visitors from the free society – 16 from Magis Deo, and 7 non-Magis Deo friends. Ten were first-timers, and 13 repeat visitors.

### Fr. Eli Lumbo, SJ

We were accompanied inside the Medium Security Compound by Fr. Eli Lumbo, SJ, Executive Director of the Philippine Jesuit Prison Service Foundation, Inc. (PJPS). PJPS is one of the ministries of the Society of Jesus, perhaps the least known. Fr. Eli is the longest serving Executive Director, six years in tenure to date. I first met him in August, 2012; he was my Spiritual Director for my third Retreat in Daily Life. He introduced me to the prison in October, 2012 with a mass in and tour of the Maximum Security Compound during Prison Awareness Month. Before that visit, the prison was nowhere in my radar screen. Today, after seven recollections, I have come to see it with a heart of compassion.

### “Bro.” Eli Prieto (Francis BCGG)

In previous recollections, Eli has always imparted lessons about life and faith using videos downloaded from YouTube which his audience appreciates. No wonder, upon seeing him, a few residents asked, “May sequel po ba sa mga Rene Requiestas videos ninyo noong nakaraang rekoleksyon?” No, this time, Eli’s sharing would be serious. He could not get to write his sharing and did so only the day before. Still grieving the loss of wife, Edith, six months ago, he could not answer Jesus’ question, “Sino Ako Sa Iyo?”

His top-of-mind answer would have been “tagapaglitgas” (Savior). But Edith went anyway despite his family’s pleas, and his son was seriously injured in a vehicular accident just as he was about to leave for a training program abroad. “Anong “tagapaglitgas?” Eli asked.

But now, six months after Edith’s departure, Eli says “TAPAT ang Diyos sa Kaniyang pangakong ibibigay Niya lahat ng hindi makakasira sa aking pagkatao at sa relasyon ko sa Kaniya. Nakikita ko

ngayon ang bunga ng pinagdarasal ni Mrs. para sa kaniyang pamilya. Palaging sinasabi sa akin ng aking anak, “I love you, Dad!” Ngayong wala na si Mrs., tuwing Linggo, ang bunso kong anak ang nagre-remind sa akin, “Daddy, anong oras tayo magsisimba?” At sa pagdala namin sa puntod ni Mrs. tuwing Linggo, ang tatlito kong anak ang nungungunang magdasal ng rosaryo. Buhay si Mrs. sa mga isinasabuhay ng kaniyang panalangan. Buhay si Mrs. sa pagpaptuloy namin ng kaniyang mga makaDiyos na gawain... Dito naging tapat si Hesus sa akin at sa aking pamilya.”

Eli left his audience teary-eyed. One man held his hand firmly and shared that he lost his wife while he was in prison. At the back of the conference room, he embraced Eli and said, “Nararamdamang ko ang nararamdamang mo.”

Eli later confided, “I wanted to back out from the sharing. I could not get myself to write my talk. I could not even bring myself to read my notes. I was teary-eyed at the Mass, up to the time I shared. But maybe, Edith would not have wanted it any other way. And I thank God that He gave me the strength to share. It was not easy.” (Thank you, Eli.)

### “Sis” Yoling Sevilla (John BCGG)

Speaking in both Tagalog and Bisaya, Yoling instantly connected with the audience and lifted their spirits up. She summed up a whole life’s experience in six ways she has known Jesus.

Kapatid: Nagkatawang-tao at nakaranas ng gutom, antok, saya, lungkot, galit, pagsubok, katulad nating lahat.

Kuya: Panganay ako sa magkakapatid at magpipinsan. Parati na lang akong napagbibilinan. Nais ko namang magkaroon ng Kuya – isang taga-payo, taga-turo, taga-gabay, taga-alaga, taga-pagtanggol.

Kaibigan: Mahal Niya ako. Tanggap Niya ako. Di ko kailangang magkunwari. Kahit mga kahinaan ko, alam Niya. Siya'y nakikinig, nakikiramay, nakiki-isa, nakikisama.

Kabalikat: Binigay Siya ng Ama sa

akin para maging kabalikat sa pagtahak ng landas ng aking buhay. Akay-akay Niya ako patungo sa kaharian ng Ama.

Kaiban: Hindi ako nag-iisa. Parati akong may kasama. Siya. Si Hesus.

Kuyog: Kaya ako, isang kuyog. Kasama-sama ni Hesus, pasunod-sunod kahit saan siya magpunta.

This was the second time Yoling shared in our Bilibid recollection. “Hinahanaan-hanap ko rin sila. Napakalakas ng tama sa akin tuwing kasama ako.”

### My friend, C.T.

C.T. is not from Magis Deo. She has been a classmate in Bible studies for the past five years. She is into Ignatian spirituality after doing the RDL in 2014. It was her first time to join a Bilibid recollection.

She shared with me her reflection. While walking around her village that evening, she asked, “Sino Ka Hesus sa akin?” It took her 7 kms. to answer. “I could not understand the answer coming from my heart, so I asked the Lord, “Bakit sinasabi ng puso ko na ‘You are my All.’ Paano naman ang love ko sa aking asawa at sa mga anak namin?” He replied, “The love you have for them is pure grace coming from Me. I am your source of everything. I am your All.”

### Residents

In an open forum after the recollection proper, residents volunteered to share their thoughts and feelings.

“Si Hesus ay may pusong mapagpatawad at mapagmahal. Siya ang tumutugon sa aking mga pangangailangan at tagapuno sa aking mga kakulangan.”

“Lumaki akong illiterate. Itinakwil ako ng aking pamilya. Nagpasalamat ako na natuto akong magbasa at magsulat dito sa Bilibid. Grade 2 na po ako.”

“Si Hesus ay aking personal na kabiligan at kapatid. Maaari ko siyang lapitan kahit kailan.”

“Di ako marunong kumilala sa Diyos. Nagnakaw ako. Ngunit dito sa kulungan, nalaman kong may Diyos palang puedeng takbuhan.”

“Nagpapasalamat ako sa pagkakatong magbago at mabuhay.”

“Nakilala ko si Hesus noong sumali ako sa Marikina jail choir bilang gitarista. Dito sa loob ay gitarista din ako. Hindi Niya ako pinabayaan. Buhay pa rin para magbalik-loob.”

“Si Kristo ay isang kapatid. Nakilala ko lang ang Diyos dito sa loob. Gusto ko na sanang kunin ang buhay ko pero binigyan ako ni Hesus ng pag-asa.”

“Si Hesus ay pastol ng buhay ko. Ako ang nawawalang tupa, hinanap Niya ako.”

“Dalawampung taon na ako dito sa loob. Noon, wala akong spiritual life, kasi kailangan kong maghanapbuhay. Dito, kasama ako sa apostolado ng panalangin. Si Hesus ay aking kaibigan, kapatid, magulang. Sa mga bumisita sa amin ngayon, masaya po si Hesus sa inyo.”

### 21 Facilitators

The number of visitors was just adequate to have one facilitator for each group of about ten residents. Every one graciously took on the task. They listened to the stories. Some were challenged with questions, particularly from the “juveniles” (17 to 20 years old). All felt blessed to be free, and said that through their experience, they had received more than they had given. The prison is indeed a place of personal transformation, not only for the residents but also for those who visit them.

### The College Guild

All our recollections in the past have been capped with a performance by the College Guild, a group of about 30 residents who are students in the college who sing and dance to the music of a live band. Although I enjoyed the entertainment, it took me some thinking to see it as relevant to the recollection. I now understand that the songs and dances are the residents’ way of reciprocating the kindness of their visitors, and a way to share their gifts and talents. They do have something to contribute and they can actually make other people happy. We did enjoy their performance and asked for encores. A few of us even danced with them.

My sincerest thanks to all who gave of their time, talent, and treasure for the lost (or once lost), the last, and the least of our brothers. Thank you, Magis Deo, for supporting this outreach activity.



Quieting down



All one singing the “Our Father”



Group picture with Fr. Eli



Sis Yoling Sevilla



Bro Eli Prieto



Dancing with the College Guild “Bongga Ka Day”

