

Magis

Formation for Mission

Stewardship

Simplicity

Sharing

Service

Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community

April 2019 Issue



Our Christian Challenge

What should we choose to believe?

Movement from Self to Others

Our sacrifices don't end here

Sacred Space

Reflections on relationships

Our Oasis

Our life-giving water,
our Rock, our salvation

Paying it Forward

Whatever you do, work heartily

About the Cover



In line with the liturgical season of lent, Levenspeil R. Sangalang from Magis Youth illustrates an image that questions the true meaning and interdependence, of our Catholic faith and respect for humanity. Now that our country's state can easily be seen through the lens of social media, it's almost a blessing and a curse — the easy access to information through various channels can educate our countrymen, but at the same time be used as an advantage to delude and spread manufactured lies.

The saying goes, 'to see is to believe'; but the question it further asks is this: What should we *choose* to believe? One can only hope for a selfless choice, because the opposite of love isn't hate — it's indifference, it's injustice, it's war, and all the most horrifying things that man can do to man. Is that really what we want to offer to Christ, Our Savior?

Ultimately, illustrator Levenspeil paints an almost brutal imagery that equals to a symbol of the polarizing imbalance of what we know, what we believe, and what we practice. In the onslaught of dark clouds, may God be our silver lining.

Editorial Board

<div><div>Magis</div><div>Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community</div><div>2/F RMT CeFam Bldg., ADMU Campus, Q.C.</div></div>		
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Calendar of Activities: April - July 2019			
April		June	
27	Shepherding Workshop	1	Couples Night
		12	South Sector Meeting
May		July	
5	Community Celebration	7	Community Celebration
17-19	Annual Ignatian Retreat	26-28	Marriage Encounter Weekend
18-19	Youth Camp		
26	North Sector Meeting Central Sector Meeting		

Lenten Reflections: Movement from Self to Others

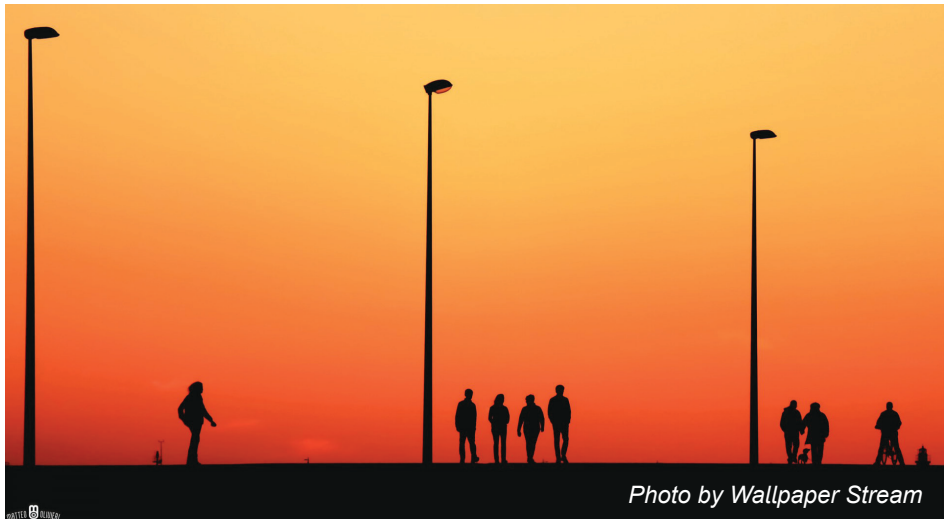


Photo by Wallpaper Stream

The ash on the forehead ushered in a new liturgical season. The violet vestments, the omission of some parts of the Gloria during the mass, the barangay processions of the Stations of the Cross every Friday, fasting and abstinence and sacrifices, and the many more prayers and rituals remind us that a new liturgical season, LENT, is here. The richness of these outward signs are meant to remind and help us to look more closely into what is happening within us as we continue our journey as pilgrims to discipleship with Jesus.

LENT and its meaning have changed as I grew up, matured not just in age but in my own spiritual journey. The focus of my concern changed from a concern on what to give up for the season to a focus on the interior movements of a pilgrim towards deeper discipleship with Jesus, to an openness and surrender, seeking what the LORD is bringing to light for me to reflect on, act on, move on; and praying for a transformation of my heart by the God who loves me and I, Him.

Amidst the din of election campaigns, the challenge to maintain one's journey in the spirit of surrender becomes more pronounced. And what comes to mind is the Lord Jesus' temptation in the desert. For forty days, as Jesus fasted and retreated to be alone with His Father, the noise of the devil followed Him. Through prayer and silent resolve, He was able to keep His focus on what the Father was leading Him to.

The challenge is not just to pray and focus on the relationship with our Father. Rather, it is to go out of that interiority and manifest the love of our Father that we continue to experience to those who need it most. The corporal and spiritual acts of mercy are more than just actions to take. They are actions that reflect our prayer which in the process help change us and our relationship with the Father.

LENT without EASTER is nothing but self-flagellation. We do not end with the sacrifices we offer but more importantly with the hope and joy that Easter brings. This is what gives LENT so much more meaning.

LENT reminds me, that while I am on this earth, my current given reality, there is so much more I need to do. Sacrifice and Hope need not be mutually exclusive. For we are able to sacrifice precisely because of the hope in the promise that the LORD has made manifest.

And so this LENT, let us surrender and offer ourselves to the LORD. Through our prayers, sacrifices and acts of mercy for others let us manifest our deepening LOVE for the LORD and the HOPE that EASTER brings.

Our Christian Challenge

Fr. James U. Gascon, Spiritual Director

Christians have always found themselves in challenging situations. Historical records will tell us that in many epochs in history, Christian communities have often wrestled with the reality of Christ's Kingdom being counterculture; that as they try to live daily their values and beliefs, they find themselves always under attack. Not only by external forces but even by those who claim to be Christians themselves as well. Perhaps it is for this reason that Jesus had to constantly remind his disciples that "His Kingdom is not of this world." Thus, it is not a coincidence that many of our named saints are martyrs. In their fidelity to Christ and the Gospel, they find themselves in conflict situations that often end in them offering their lives as a cost of this testimony, as a consequence of choice for the Kingdom. And becoming a martyr is both a grace and a call. It builds on small choices made daily to pick up the cross of Christ by choosing what is right, true and just.

As a country, we have never experienced divisions as we are experiencing at present. Groups against groups, supporters of one politician against another, mudslinging and online bashing on social media have become part of the daily grind. Families suddenly find themselves in enmity; friends don't see each other eye to eye, much less talk, which often ends in arguments. Many complain and lament this situation. Various political and sociological interpretations are offered, yet not one solution that works is found. No single explanation holds water. No politician or academician has a valid solution. Maybe because more than a political or sociological crisis, what is happening to us is a spiritual predicament. More than political affinity, I believe that what is at stake is the core of our spiritual values – we cannot claim to be Christians if we do not uphold

the values of the Gospel. And this affects the core of our very being as human persons.

Perhaps many will disagree with me that at the root of these coming political exercises is spiritual upheaval. It may look like a simple exercise of choice, but a choice that is crucial. It is compelling because more than affecting our political or economic life, our spirit – our identity as Filipinos, spirit and soul – is at stake. We know that evil seems to triumph: death is all around us, dishonesty is rampant, corruption is a daily living, and chaos and fake news are all we are bombarded with daily. Reason, law and order are victims of whimsical wishes of them who rule with impunity. Not to mention the vulgarity, profanity, and obscenity that are staples in media broadcast daily. All these are an affront to moral decency, and yet what is more scandalizing is the apathy that many amongst us seem to take. In the midst of this turmoil, we just shrug our shoulders in utter surrender and helplessness. No sense of urgency; no desire to rise and make a stand. Politically we may lose our national sovereignty, but as a human person, our spiritual identity is at stake. What is most scandalizing is that we have seemingly sold our spirit to the devil's means, that of sin and death?

Thus our choice is crucial, our cries are ceaseless, and our concern a charge. We must stand up for what is true, right, and just. We must exercise our power of choice to choose that which is good. And to let these values shine in our choices — our Christian choice. Perhaps it is time to invoke the names of the martyrs who never failed to persevere amidst death, that in their death, faith blossomed and justice prevailed. We don't have the favor of time. Now is the time. And this will happen only if we take our Christian Challenge. Challenge, Christian, and Choice.

Dear BEGG Shepherds & Alternates

You are invited to participate in a special workshop

Shepherding

Craft & Calling

Building Skills for Ministry

Workshop by :Fr. James U. Gascon, SJ

Date & Time : 27 April 2019 8:00am-11:30am

Venue : Magis Deo Office, CEFAM Bldg.

For Inquiries and Confirmation of Attendance :

Ricky Sun : 0939-9133017

Trixie Sun : 0908-8831466

pasture the flock of God that is among you, providing for it, not as a requirement, but willingly, in accord with God

- 1st Peter 5:2

Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous

Zarah C. Gagatiga, Emmanuel BCGG

Sometime in early February, I felt weighed down, irrelevant and vulnerable. Work made me listless and dissatisfied. Changes in family life left me confused, even lost. Under the circumstances, I would rather protect myself by staying in my comfort zone. I did recognize the invitation to be brave. Being brave, however, would mean taking risks, going the extra mile and stretching an arm and a leg. I found myself asking, “What for?” and “At what cost?” I was tired.

For several days, I allowed myself to be irresponsible. And it helped me. Seriously, it did. I stepped back from the noise. I loosened up. I ranted.

That was when, for some reason, I heard the song *Prayer of Generosity* a couple of times. I heard it one time in the van on my way to work. Then at school, when some students preparing for the school fair burst out singing liturgical songs and *Panalangin ng Pagiging Bukas Palad* was in the play list. *Na-LSS tuloy ako*.

Indeed, God knows me so well that He called me back in a way that is loving and tender. He spoke to me through music and song. A language I could truly understand.

Recognizing this grace, I tucked it in my prayer and opened myself to God’s hands.

Dearest Lord,

Teach me to be generous... to give and not to count the cost...
except that of knowing, that I do Your most holy will.

This was my prayer and God’s response was immediate and swift.

A few days after that episode, I found myself reconnecting with my father whom I do not regularly see except on family holidays and emergencies. For a week, my seventy-year-old father stayed with us. My kids experienced once again, how it is to have a grandfather. To our delight, he repaired the old bike that had gotten rusty over the years. This gesture seemed so small, but the message is laden with life lessons. My father’s presence at home reminded me of two things: to live in the now and to simply be.

A month has passed and I have kept in touch with my father. I realized how selfish I have been in taking care of my aging parents. This is a role reversal I was not ready to take on. I carried it with a burden and refused to accept the blessings it offered me. Apparently, God has a way of showing me the gifts of family life in light of the changing dynamics between parent and child. The child will always learn from the parent at whatever stage or cycle they are in. I did receive the grace of generosity and more! Humility. Forgiveness. And gratitude.

Prayers to Know God

Chacho Angeles, Thessalonians BCGG

Loving Father,

(1)
As we go about our business,
Let us know Your perseverance
For what we do is not easy;
Let us know Your patience
For we get in each other’s way;
Let us know Your suffering
For we too hurt and suffer;
Let us know Your poverty
For You alone are what we need;
Let us know Your mercy so that
We can learn to forgive ourselves, others,
So our hearts can become like Yours,
Compassionate and loving. Amen

(2)
Loving us totally, You sent Your Son to save us,
He showed us how to love You selflessly by
Dying on the cross to demonstrate this love.
Let me contemplate and know oneness with You
In the seas and mountains, in the trees and flowers,
In the birds, insects and the animals of this world,
In the men and women I live and work with, the
Rich and the poor, the disabled and the sick,
That in going about my daily living I practice
The great truths of Your words, in my prayers,
In the works of my calling, and the call for my
Service to my family and to my neighbors,
And that I be one with You, and experience this
Great love You have for us. All these we ask
In the name of the sacred and compassionate
Heart of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

(3)
Let me know You through by thanking You
For the food on the table every day, and then some,
For the loving embrace of my spouse and family,
For the happy and infectious smile of children
And their deep wonder at the ants and caterpillars,
For friends who stick by me in the good and the bad,
For all the people with me in my faith journey,
For the graces, the wisdom, the strength the love
That You shower on me all the days of my life.
I also thank You for the trials and difficulties,
The pain, the grief and the sickness that I and
My family go through in this life, for these
Teach me that life in this world is a constant
Overcoming, where I may see You pushing me,
Carrying me, comforting me, teaching me
And most of all, loving me. In the name of
The most compassionate heart of Your Son,
I pray that in gratitude I may see and accept
You in my heart, in others and in the whole
Of creation, and that I may live Your love
Now and always. Amen.

(4)
Conceived in darkness in my mother’s womb,
Born into the darkness of sin, selfishness, greed,
I was. Every breath I take is filled with radioactive
Poison of experiences that make me see a false self
Imprisoned in a toxic world of anger and hate.
There was nothing I could do. But You gave me
Light to drive away the dark clouds when Your Son
Became like me and sanctified the darkness
In the womb, and in the bowels of death.
His teachings and His presence accompany me
In my struggles, in my hurts and pains, and the
Fresh breeze of Your Spirit blows away the
Poison in the air that slowly kills my spirit,
To revive in me the true image of Your love.
By Your grace restore me to the union of my
Frail self and Your divine and compassionate
Heart. In the name of the sacred heart of Jesus,
I cry out and beg. Amen

(5)
Where are you bringing me?
It is noon time and I feel the
Amihan blowing strongly,
Sending chills down my spine.
While I pray hard for You to
Enlighten others, I pray harder
For my enlightenment. And
Soften hardened, closed hearts,
That Your compassion may enter.
Outside and inside me are one,
As love and hate, life and death,
The alpha and the omega. Yet I
Must flow like a river to the sea,
Overcoming rocks of resistance
To You, bends of falsehoods, and
Tightness of minds. I pray for the
Grace to let me focus on You,
The source of my life. Amen

(6)
This world has a way of making me
Forget You and Your love for me.
But Your grace undeserved, comes,
Awakens my heart to Your comforting
Presence, reminding me of the poverty
In my heart that You wish to fill.
You came in a stable to be like me
And fulfill a promise You made to us.
A babe You came, naked, vulnerable,
Even hunted and persecuted.
You grew up like me, yet favored
By the Father. You lived with
Integrity, sharing Your life to save
Mine. How can I not live as You did,
With compassion and with love.
I pray that Your grace be with me
To continue what You ordained
For me as the life that leads to
You, the Father and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Annual Ignatian Retreat (AIR)

Jesus

Sacrament of God's Mercy

Spiritual Director: Fr. Manding Francisco, SJ

Date & Time: 17 May to 19 May 2019

Venue: St. James Retreat & Conference Center, Tagaytay

For Inquiries & Submission of Payment Documents

Ricky Sun: 0939-9133017 or ricktsun@yahoo.com

Trixie Sun: 0908-8831456

Bank Details

PSBank: 089-332-00060-4

Metrobank: 093-3-09351539-1

50% Deposit required for Reservation

RATES (Limited Slots)

Includes Meals

	MD Member	Non-Member
A/C - Twin Sharing	6,400.00	7,000.00
A/C - Single Occ.	4,500.00	5,000.00
Non-A/C Twin Sharing	4,400.00	5,500.00
Non-A/C Single Occ.	2,500.00	3,500.00

Spirituality of Emotions

Pinky L. Rosas, Chronicles BCGG

At the February 3, 2019 Community Celebration, Fr. James talked about “Spirituality of Emotions – Using our Emotions as Prayer.” Below are some highlights:

The role of emotions in our life: Why are emotions important?

- Emotions are part of our being human. To be human is to be aroused by emotions. Emotions ignite our best behaviors such as courage in the face of danger; fierce attachment to our children and love makes us express our love for them. Emotions impel us our worst excesses, e.g., violent rage can endanger us; corrosive guilt can paralyze; too much passion can lead us to abuse. In the absence of emotions, we may survive for a while but we will not thrive. In other words, emotions make us human; without it we live inhumanly, become “manhid.”
- Emotions are social indicators. Our feelings do not exist for us alone. They are social strategies directed toward our interaction with other people. Feelings attune us to a web of connections that link us to one another.
- Emotions apprentice us to mystery. Our emotions teach us that we cannot control life; they remind us that life escapes our earnest control. Often, strong feelings lead us to deeper receptivity. Because it is mystery, emotions usher us to greater acceptance, especially our own limitations. Oftentimes, we struggle with our emotions but in the end, we finally let go... let God.
- In the Ignatian tradition, emotions are ways by which God communicates to us. The core of the conversion experience of St. Ignatius of Loyola is his capacity to distinguish the nuances of his emotions, which are fundamental to our self-knowledge and spiritual life. Ignatius’ autobiography details how he was converted towards God through his emotions.

Our experience tells us that our emotions can be positive, negative or neutral.

Why negative emotions? We need to understand our negative emotions because all of us have at some point in our life been caught up in emotions’ turmoil and bewildered by it. We need to come to terms with these powerful forces if we are to live fruitful and satisfying lives. We often interpret negative emotions as unwanted; thus we ignore or set negative emotions aside and welcome positive. By setting aside our negative emotions, we fail to understand what they really mean.

Our negative emotions can shape our spirituality

Emotions are our allies. Although bad feelings make us miserable, they often come bearing gift. The gift comes as invitation towards self-examination: because something is not right, then we need to know why. Our examination compels

us to act: “I feel so bad so I just have to do something about it.” Then our negative emotions open us up to possibilities, and thus to Mystery. Some negative emotions are beneficial. We reflect on them, they can usher us to deeper spiritual experience of justice, personal dignity and integrity, and maturity.

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What we should do with our feelings, especially negative emotions?

Two spiritualities: A spirituality of MASTERY that calls us to hold our emotions, because emotions are unruly instincts; another calls us towards embracing – to BEFRIEND, because negative emotions are ambiguous rather than destructing. Christian life is about embracing. Our Creator embraces us... but sometimes, like Jacob we need to wrestle with a mysterious God. Our process of taming our emotions, whether negative or positive, becomes our prayer experience. Because taming can be painful, the process purifies us – and yet we can transform our pain into suffering, redemptive suffering, and make something out of our painful emotions

Another way of processing feelings (adapted from IFS – Internal Family Systems)

Feelings are parts of our self (e.g., a part of me is angry, but a part of me is sad, etc.). According to IFS, these parts perform a function for us. We need to discover the functions, in order for us to be able to understand them and regulate their performance or role in our life.

Feelings can be exiles, managers and firefighters. Exiles are parts that experienced trauma and make an individual feel fragile and vulnerable; usually feelings that are repressed for a long time. Managers are feelings that help us run our day to day lives especially when we are in crisis; they can be striving, controlling, evaluating, criticizing, caring, terrorizing, and so on. Firefighters are parts that react when strong feelings are activated in effort to control or extinguish; there are extreme feelings that rescue us from self-destruction but end up in total damage.

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The 3Ds of March

Ferdie Joson, Sirach BCGG/Outreach Ministry

Our attendance in the monthly Community Celebration continues to increase by leaps and bounds.

230 attended our March 3, 2019 ComCeleb at the Lay Force Center in Makati.

Our innovative Community Services Ministry headed by Leony and Mia Parada, always makes sure there is a buffet breakfast hosted by the various sectors. To encourage deeper involvement and sense of belongingness with the Magis Deo Community, the host sector and BCGGs are provide greeters, mass readers, collectors, lay ministers, registration personnel, food servers/kitchen. These members with assigned tasks are the first to arrive and the last to leave, to ensure everything is in order every monthly gathering.

Magis kids under 14 years were taught the Virtues of Patience, Decisiveness and Resilience through pastry

decoration at the 2nd floor auditorium. Our youth aged 14 and above had a Mini-Workshop about their Life Story entitled “My Epic.”

Our Chair Couple Jojo and Jane Aldeguer gave Magis Deo members updates on the status and thrusts of our activities this year so everyone sees and appreciates the big picture on how our community functions. Jane also led the community in welcoming back Louren Dacanay after her more than two-year absence in our ComCeleb while recovering from an ailment.

The talk/teaching of Fr. Ted Gonzales, SJ, was entitled Discern, Decide and Delight (3Ds). He provided tools for proper discernment, arriving at the right decision, and enjoying its fruits after thorough and prayerful deliberation on the various issues that affect our lives, in making us better Christians.

A Holy Mass presided by Fr. Ted Gonzales capped the highlight of our gathering.

Spirituality of Emotions continued from page 8

The ultimate goal is to empower the SELF, who can and should lead the individual’s internal system. The parts are regulated so they do not perform extreme roles. Harmony is the goal: it is not without conflict but to let the emotions lead us to greater self-understanding, self-master and self-growth. When we are harmonized, there is a feeling of being “centered,” and the person becomes an empowered person.

During the talk of Fr. James, we were asked to examine what we were feeling. It is in examining our feelings that we get to know ourselves. Familiarity of the self, self-knowledge... knowledge of God.

In the Sharing portion, our group reflected on “What has been a constant feeling that you have been experiencing for the past weeks?” Almost all expressed negative feelings of panic, stress, impatience. Day-to-day, we experience negative emotions and, true to the teaching of Fr. James, upon reflection we are able to turn these negative feelings into opportunities to understand the people around us, make us want to do better, and be better.

03 February 2019 Community Celebration



03 March 2019 Community Celebration



EVENTS

Prayer Deepening & Interface Meeting



Deepening the Enrichment Experience Process (D.E.E.P.)

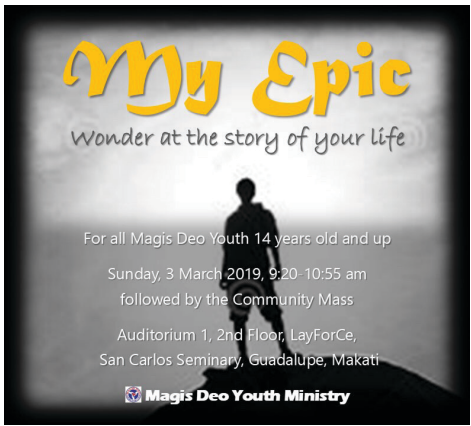
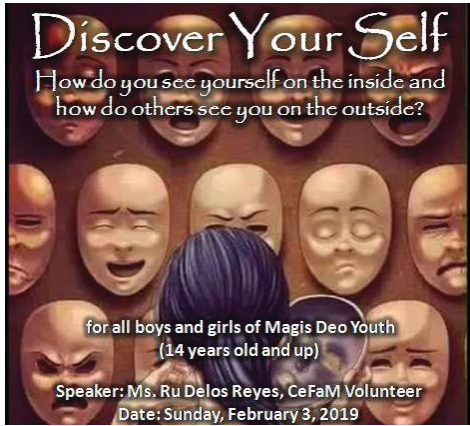


Suyuan in Malabon



Understanding Your Self through Your Masks and Your Life Experiences:
Sprouts and Saplings Activities in February and March

Mark & Cathy Maulit, Youth Ministry Head



The sessions for the youth 14 years old and up during the Magis Deo Community Celebrations in the last two months were devoted to self-understanding as a road to prayer. In this issue of the Magis Deo newsletter, we are featuring reflections by two participants.

Eighteen-year-old Angeline Bumanglag wrote “Masked Off” on the February session entitled “Discover Your Self” which was facilitated by CeFaM volunteer Ms. Ruziel “Ru” delos Reyes. Ru introduced the idea of “masks” we all need to wear according to certain circumstances in our lives. She invited then to make actual masks to represent their virtual masks. Through the session, they learned that although these masks are not their whole selves, they are their friends in that they make it easier for them to play some of the roles they play or to accomplish certain tasks. Like some of the superheroes in popular comic books and recent movies, they wear their masks out of love or a desire to do good. In the end, with new-found appreciation for their masks and a somewhat deeper understanding of themselves, they made an offering of their masks which Fr. James Gascon, SJ blessed during the Eucharistic celebration.



A reflection on the March session entitled “My Epic” was written by twenty-four-year-old Jessa Gavilla. In her reflection she describes the fruits of her meditation on the most significant experiences of her life to date. To prepare themselves for the guided meditation, she and her fellow youth participants did an awareness exercise which quieted them down and helped make them more open to remembering the memorable events which contributed to forming them into the persons they presently are. Later in the meditation, they made visual representations of their “epics” through timelines, graphs or maps. Going even deeper, they conversed with God and recognized God’s abiding and guiding presence in every moment of their journey through the twists and turns of life. Mark Maulit of the Magis Deo Youth Ministry core group facilitated the session.



Masked Off

Angeline Bumanglag, Magis Youth



I was given an empty white mask and we were told to draw anything that represents ourselves. I drew colorful gems on the forehead of my mask, different vines growing out of the face, a blood dripping from the eye and a line that says, “Art is Life.” As I drew each design on the mask one by one, I made sure that every design had a meaning/root and was linked to what I was currently involved in.

The gems in the head represent the important people in my life since they are the ones who molded me into who I am today. The vines represent that I am in love with nature; for me vines are like a new opportunity rising. The blood dripping in the eye is a sign of hardship, struggles and hard work all together because being an artist is never easy and I want to show that artists go through so much and tend to keep all of it inside; but they yearn to bleed some more, and show to all their real identity and passion. And last, the line “Art is Life” says that I myself am an artist. I like using colorful materials when creating art, which is evident in my drawings which are usually colorful. Art helps me easily express my feelings, art brings color and comfort to my life. I have come to realize that as I finish my mask. It reflects who I am right now and my interests and inclinations.

If I were asked 5 or 10 years ago to draw my mask, I would probably have drawn the Powerpuff Girls because I adored super heroes and saving people. But as years passed, I realized that we slowly take off each mask we have and discover a lot more about ourselves. As our resource speaker said, we are like an onion and we slowly we peel off the outer skin and soon we discover our true selves. At this point of time, I can conclude that I have so much love for the arts; but I know there will be more opportunities and discoveries in the future. I look forward to a new phase in my life, a transition that will bring about for me better self-knowledge and a stronger sense of identity. But one sure thing is that I always thank God for all the blessings and the talent He has given me. As I slowly discover myself, I will gradually transform into a woman after God’s own image and likeness, the woman He has always wanted me to be.

A Reflection on My Epic

Jessa Gavilla, Magis Youth



It is true that people remember moments and not days, and the meaningful moments they remember most are memories of either extreme bliss or despondence. Other memories feel like tiny fragments that lead, or are complementary, to these significant events. I had the opportunity to walk down memory lane when we were asked to write our own epic during the Magis Deo Youth session last March 3. In creating our own epic, we could simply list down the significant events or arrange the events chronologically or make a graph of the “highs” and “lows” we’ve experienced in our lives.

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The Seeds of Magis Deo Youth Join in Celebrating Valentine’s Day and Observing Lent

Ronald & Joan Ong, Youth Ministry Head

In the last two months, the Magis Deo Youth Seeds’ Sessions, handled by Ronald and Joan Ong and Alex Reyes of the Magis Deo Youth Ministry core group, were a venue for the children 14 years old and below to better understand current feast days and liturgical seasons.

Last February, the kids' session started with a prayer, followed by a film on St. Valentines' Day and the origins of Valentine's Day. Afterwards, a Valentine's card-making activity was conducted. the kids cut out heart patterns, pasted the patterns on paper cards, decorated the cards, and wrote valentine messages for their loved ones. They were encouraged to give the cards to their loved ones after they were done.

In March, the Seed's activity again started with a prayer. A short discussion on what Lent is and how they can observe Lent as kids followed. The children were asked to think about what they could give up as a sacrifice this Lenten season. It can be their gadget time, favorite chips, or fast food item. After the short discussion on Lent, they proceeded to decorate and eat pancakes. This activity was inspired by the tradition of some Catholic (mostly western) countries of a Pancake Tuesday, or eating pancakes and other sweets before fasting on Ash Wednesday and during the Lenten season.



A Reflection on My Epic continued from page 13

I remembered my achievements and the time it felt like I was defined by what I strove for and what I accomplished. I remembered how I sought validation from the wrong people in the wrong places. I remembered the phase where I questioned my beliefs and my principles, and at the same time felt the need to defend it to other people. I remembered when I had undergone hazing and how I rationalized the hardships by equating them with strength, endurance, and perseverance. I remembered the desperation and hopelessness I experienced in my academics. And yet, as I remember these events, I was reminded most of God's grace and how I was never too lost to be found again by Him. I was reminded how He turned these 'low' moments in my life into great opportunities to show me how faithful He really is. Despite spending my formative years in several Catholic schools, it was only during my college years – when I was thrust into a sea of non-believers and people of different religions – that I was able to find my faith and pursue a relationship with God. I learned to seek my identity in Christ and learned how to let go of what I am holding on to in order to receive what He is giving me. It is only by grace that I was able to overcome the struggles I faced and to emerge with a renewed outlook and strength knowing that He was, He is, and He will always be fighting my battles alongside me. In whatever struggle I may face, I take comfort knowing that He has already won the victory for me.

As I look at the epic I created, there is a small part of me that feels it is unjust that as I grow older, these current highs and lows in my life will eventually just be summed up into small fragments – a blip in time – that someday might not be as meaningful as how they seem right now at this point in my life. The possibility that someday I won't be able to remember or encapsulate how these significant events shaped me into becoming who I am today the same way as I do now, feels like committing a disservice to what I've experienced so far. And yet, I also accept that such possibilities are part of growing older for I know that there are greater successes and accomplishments to come and more challenging struggles to prepare for. I look forward to seeing more highlights in my epic timeline someday and I pray that I will continue to grow in every aspect of my life.

Our Oasis in this Journey in the Desert

Cynthia Rodriguez, ME Class 129

God is so good and merciful, awesome are His ways. But also difficult to comprehend. A blind trust is key to withstanding the toughest of storms. For our 21st anniversary, Raf and I went to a Holy Land pilgrimage in February 2018. We didn't realize it then, but God was strengthening us ahead of the desert journey we were about to face. We have 3 kids and soon after we arrived from the Holy Land, we were led to the desert. Our 17-year old baby, Mika, was confined March 20, 2018. She was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.

Little did Raf and I know it was the start of a long desert journey for us. It's been a year-long struggle, a battle of wills, a battle of faith. Raf's long-held question has been, "When, Lord, will this desert journey end?" And he asked this all throughout the year as we kept getting plunged into meltdowns and again with despair, during January- as Mika's psychiatrist got sick and sought treatment abroad. And so we had to find other alternative options.

It's been a year of waiting patiently for a healing, for a sign... making sure she takes her daily medicines, arranging for regular visits to her psychiatrist, weekly CBT sessions with her counselor, family counseling to process each member, scheduling SoFA classes, enrolling in sign language, yoga classes, tennis, krav maga, etc... all in an effort to get our baby out of her isolationist stance and keep her engaged and active.

I too went on endless parenting seminars to equip me with new skills to cope and communicate better with a 'depressed' Mika. I talked both to psychologists and spiritual advisers; I read books on mindfulness and psych treatment of overcoming or coping with a new Mika. To myself, at some point, when human efforts were failing, I was holding on purely to my faith. I held on to Mama Mary and Jesus. I became so weak, most days it was the Lord in me, His strength sustaining my day. Exhaustion was setting in. As St. Paul cried, "I can only boast of my weakness, for when I am weak, He is strong in me." I lived these lines for endless months with hardly any reprieve.

Then our trip to explore Melbourne came this March 5 - 12, 2019. I booked some tours to get familiar with Melbourne, among them the Great Ocean road tour, Phillip Island and Penguin tour, Yarra River Cruise; but I left some days for the University of Melbourne tour, in particular Trinity College tour. First day pa lang, I was ecstatic seeing Mika light up. She was very much her old self. I haven't seen this Mika in a long time. I could hardly believe my eyes. I wanted to pinch myself as I was so elated and grateful to be witnessing this positive transformation in Mika. It was too fast. It was sudden. It was a miracle. It was our oasis in the desert journey as a married couple. Praise God! Thank you Mama Mary. She quickly made friends with the older couples in our tour group (Doug and Sue and Jeff and Linda) and she kept saying to them, you are both so cute. They became her adopted grandparents. They also found Mika adorable! She would even chat with the tour guide! This 180-degree change is night and day. From not wanting to even go out with us on weekends, preferring to stay by herself in her room the whole day to being very engaging with several grandparent couples in our tour! I almost had a



hard time digesting what I was seeing. Her excitement was genuine. Such a dramatic change! Then we went to meet with a counselor in Trinity College and Mika grew more excited with the Foundation Studies Program [This is a 1-year program where general subjects are taken to help international students adjust to the Australian educational system – their system is usually 3 years but all purely related to the specific course you choose. For example, Accounting is a 3-year program only] and again Mika was very interested in the campus tour. Shortly before our trip ended she said, "Mom, I want to live here. I love it here. I love the weather, the people are open and friendly," etc. She also asked me, "When are we going to buy my college wardrobe?" (Prior to this, after her breakdown, she always was disinterested in clothes when going out) And the miracles continue to come and surprise us. There are many more happy changes in Mika. Nakakataba ng puso.

It was our early Easter miracle from the Lord! Our gift and our oasis in this very long desert journey!!!! I wanted to share our joy with you who have been with us, praying with us, for Mika, in this exhausting period!!! Thank you. I felt your prayers sustain me in these decidedly tough times. Maraming salamat sa lahat ng dasal at suporta ninyo! Please continue praying as this is just the start of her healing and recovery. Still my heart is overflowing with gratitude and joy!!! I will have to move there with Mika and accompany her for a year. But hopefully she adjusts and maybe we can even reduce her meds and she gains stability so that I can leave her on her own after maybe a year of adjustment. She will be staying there for 4 years.

Lessons learned along the way. Due to my Mom, I am via Maria. My path was so easy due to my devotion to Mama Mary. In tough times, I call on her and pray the rosary. In dry times, I pray the rosary or just several Hail Mary's. She is my mold. And the fastest way to her Son. She is also the surest way. So even when I can't go to mass, I just talk to Her. She pondered the Word. I have done so and hold His word as my lifeline in critical times. His word sustains me.

These are the key Words I kept going back to in tough times:

"I have plans for you, plans to give you hope and a future."

"Remain united to me. For cut off from me, you will not bear fruit. But united to me you will bear much fruit." (Peace amidst chaos is my no. 1 fruit, hope amidst seeming hopeless situation.)

"Do not be afraid, I am... your Rock, life-giving water, your salvation, the bread of life..." etc.

May the Lord bless all families, strengthen and protect them from the evil one. May Mama Mary continue to guide us safely back to the heart of Her Son. May the Magis Deo community continue to bless all families who truly need help in our times. May the Holy Spirit pour down His gifts and graces upon us all to equip us in these trying times. And may the Father's love and mercy be our constant source of strength and consolation. Let us bear fruit to rebuild our family united in love, full of mercy and patience for one another, praying for each other.

Sacred Space

by Samaritans BCGG

Primary Bonds

Mark 3:31-35 (Jan 29, 2019)

by Delsa Sangalang

In the truest sense of the word, did I always do everything according to God's will to be appropriately called His child? Who are my brothers and sisters? This reading always strikes me as some kind of a reminder again from God to do my part as any good Christian should. And looking back at the year that just passed, it made me reflect if I've really listened to what God was saying to me, and if I did it right. Or was I too proud, engrossed in my own feelings of fears and doubts that I sometimes forget to lift everything up to Him? Or was I blinded by my own accomplishments and the material blessings that I enjoy now, that I sometimes forget to be contented and be grateful to Him and see others' needs? Did I really see God as family?

Because I left home at a very young age (16 years old) when I entered college, and went back to Cebu many years after, it didn't feel like home anymore. I didn't even feel comfortable anymore when I went back alone for business trips. Year after year, there were so many changes and new faces that I found it hard to keep up, and most of my relatives didn't even know me. My strongest link to my hometown were only my parents and siblings, and as years passed, the amount of belongingness also lessened. Yes, I do miss my parents and siblings but I now miss Cesar and the kids more when I'm not with them. Maybe, because they are my own family now and deeper ties have been forged between us since we live under one roof and have been together for more years than my total years of living in Cebu. Maybe, because of time and distance and other factors in between. Maybe. But then, maybe not. Maybe I cared and communicated less and that's why we grew apart. When I was still working, my justification was that I was too busy with my job and with surviving for my own family. I get to see my parents and siblings only at least once a year, and shameful as it is, I only call them once a month or sometimes only as needed (i.e., when my mother asks my sister for me to call them). And most of the time, I call my mother only because I'm asking them for something, because I'm requesting them to come visit us in Laguna because I need them to look after the kids or the house while we travel abroad. Yes, I do give them surprises sometimes but do these make up for my parents' longing for my presence? Was it fair to them who gave me life and sacrificed so much so I can be who I am today? Looking back, I guess I had it better when I was a student at UP Los Baños. Saving up from my allowance for my boat fares going to Cebu, I went home then three times a year, i.e., during the sem break in October, Christmas vacation in December, and

break after summer classes in May-June. With my current status, I shouldn't have any excuses anymore. I now have the means and the resources and most specially the time, as I am now retired from work. I'm trying to make up for lost time and that's why I included in my relationship goals this year to call my parents at least once a week and to see them (whether it's me going to Cebu or them visiting us at least every quarter). And I also included in my goals to see some friends/former colleagues at least once a month just to catch up and reconnect again. They too are my brothers and sisters in Christ.

And as I reflect, I guess that's almost the same relationship I have with God. I only remember and call Him when I wanted something. I only listened attentively to Him when I'm in need. The other day, during our coffee/tea bonding moments, I was sharing with Cesar that I wouldn't have my life any other way because every decision I made, I consulted with and prayed to God for this. Cesar asked me if and when I prayed because he hasn't seen me praying on my own. And my response was I don't have any definite time of the day since I can talk to Him always when I need to. Or did I? Really? I think my relationship with God is still a work in progress and my prayer time still needs a lot of improvement. Though I committed to have the daily Examen in my Spiritual goals, I still forget a lot of the time in exchange for internet surfing before I sleep. No thanks to technology (Sorry, I guess I'm making another excuse again). But I'm thankful to God that He gave me this opportunity of a very long break to urge me to change my way of thinking and living. I'm very grateful to Him that despite everything, His love for me as one of His children is never ending, always full of compassion and mercy. And I pray to God to always guide me, to be free from any concerns, to always find time for prayer, to love and help my brothers and sisters, and to serve God more.

My Bread of Life

Mark 8:14-21 (February 19, 2019)

by Mary Anne Naldo

Thank you Lord for finally inspiring me to sit down, meditate on Your word and write down my reflections. I am so glad that I have found time to reflect while waiting for my laundry to be done."Do you not yet understand?" This question in today's gospel hit me really hard. It directly speaks of my lack of faith, my stubborn refusal to fully trust God, my struggle to let go and let God.

My life has been a three-ring circus of ups and downs. Many times, I have been so down with despair and hopelessness that I reached out to God to take me out of the darkness... and never has He disappointed me.

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Magis

Group Prayer

Nancy B. Palmario, Psalm 98 BCGG

Nothing can beat the power of prayers, especially group prayers. And I am deeply grateful to everyone who prayed with me for intercession from the Great Healer.

I was awakened by the ringing of the telephone at half past two in the morning of March 6. It was my son Carlo, and he said he was going to the Emergency Room.

I asked who was with him and he replied his wife, and that he would text which hospital they were going to. I was scared. Several months back, he suffered an anxiety attack while in the MRT. He had a momentary black out and hazily recalled being helped out of the train and being brought to the station's first-aid room. Similar episodes happened two more times, but the doctors then could not find anything wrong – his tests came out normal.

As soon as we learned which hospital he went to, Kit and I followed. In the meantime, his wife texted that the IV did not seem to work as Carlo was still writhing from pain. When we arrived at the Premier Medical Center in Sucat, he was already sitting up, waiting for the laboratory results. The IV evidently did its job. The night duty nurse came in with the results and

relayed doctor's instructions for Carlo to have a KUB (kidney, ureter and bladder) ultrasound as his RBC (red blood cell) count was high. Formation of stones was suspected.

The less than 2 hours spent in the ER racked up over P9,000. My son has no job. He has a son with autism so he opted to be a househusband since his wife earned far more than he. So you cannot blame this poor Mama for asking help through prayers. Lord, let there not be stones. Hangin na lang, Lord, hangin na lang sana.

This morning, we went to Our Lady of Peace Mission Hospital in Parañaque and had the ultrasound done. We brought the results to Sr. Eva, a St. Paul sister and a surgeon, and a friend of Lito Gonzales. Thank God for miracles: the ultrasound came out clear (no stones). Carlo was prescribed antibiotics for a week and painkillers for 3 days. After that, the three of us asked Sr. Eva to pray for us. She said, "This is not me healing you, it is the Holy Spirit." And we were slain! I love you, Lord. I lifted my voice to you and You listened and heeded my call for help.

God is good. God bless us all. And thank you once again.

Sacred Space continued from page 16

He has saved me from so many moments of pain and sinfulness that I know He is my only source of salvation.

Yet, on those countless times when I experienced joy, when my life is all good, when trouble seems like a lifetime away, I often forget to thank Him and to acknowledge the blessings He has sent my way. I become too caught up in the euphoria of my good fortune that I tend to credit it all to myself.

Dear Lord, "I have eyes but do not see, I have ears but do not hear."

Your message to me today is to SEE, HEAR, and, most of all, I UNDERSTAND that only YOU can provide me with everything I will ever need in my life. That I should not fear to feel anxious about the daily demands of my earthly life. That to share love and compassion for others is what You ask of me, and that to let go and let God should be my foremost priority in life.

Be patient with me my God, as I struggle with my lack of understanding of how marvelous You are. Forgive me for having eyes that refuse to see, ears that do not hear, and a heart that doubts You in times of trials. Amen.

The Lord's Safe Embrace

Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24 (March 19, 2019)

by Mimi Santos

When Ramie left, I wanted to make sure he is in the safe embrace of the Lord. Hence, I decided to hear mass daily. Eventually, the daily masses helped fill up the void that Ramie left. I began to cling to the Lord in the Holy Eucharist as my Savior and my companion in my daily struggles. The Lord has been good. Then my mass became my way of showing my gratitude.

While I was at mass yesterday, I began to ask myself if, after a year of listening to His word daily, my relationship with Him has really deepened. It indeed has but not as much as I desire. The Lord is calling me to be with Him, still and listening. As I shared in a recent BCGG meeting, I felt this call of the Lord when I accompanied my brother-in-law in church before he left for the US.

Although I found it hard to wake up early this morning, I was able to hear the 6:30 am mass and visit the Blessed Sacrament, and listen to Him without any need to hurry. It was a blessed morning too as I was able to take care of physical self by walking to and from church, finally giving in to the cries of my children for me to do some walking as a form of exercise. God found a way as my son Enzo has a new work schedule that requires him to be at the office at 6:00 am.

I realize that this is what He wants and I just pray to Him to give me the perseverance to continue.

My Magis Journey

Mia Parada, Samaritans BCGG

Twenty-six years ago on a Holy Wednesday – April 7, 1993 – I gave birth to our second baby girl we named Mary Louise. We were all excited because Miny, our eldest, would be an “Ate” after 5 years of being an only child. We knew it would be a girl from the ultrasound. We prepared and bought new baby clothes and accessories.

Leony and I then were 3 years with Magis Deo (ME Class 14). We had just finished our Life in the Spirit Seminar, and were actively involved in the community’s activities. We had already chosen members in our ME Class to be the Godparents of our baby, our first Magis baby.

But our joy was short-lived. Mary Louise contracted an infection during birth and she survived for only 8 days. She is our angel. At that time, I was so depressed and felt guilty and asked God why this had to happen to us. But God had other plans.

After 3 months, I found out I was pregnant again with another baby girl. We named her Denise. I still felt the trauma of losing Mary Louise, but at the same time was happy because I knew Denise was God’s gift to us. He replaced what was lost. Our second Magis baby.

God’s plan for us was to have more children, and 3 months after giving birth to Denise, I was pregnant with our 4th child. God was really good because after 3 girls, we were blessed with a baby boy. We named him Maynard or Milo for short, our Magis altar server.

As I look back at life and my spiritual journey, I am truly grateful to God for bringing us to this community. The love and support of our ME Class 14 (which became Pilgrims BCGG, the majority of whom are now in Cana BCGG) helped us in our spiritual growth in those trying times. This was one of the reasons we stayed in this community and actively participated as a couple –we needed a support group to guide us.

God prepared us through the ups and downs of our daily challenges. We seek Him first. Our lives may change but one thing is constant: God’s presence in our lives. At times we may be unfaithful to Him but His love remains unconditional. We serve Him because we love Him and we care for the community. We have served in the Community Service Ministry (CSM) for 18 years, and twice in the Pastoral Council. We will always be committed to be of service to Him through others and where He calls us to.

We ask God for strength & wisdom. To you God be the glory!



Magis Deo Youth Ministry

Summer Youth Camp

18-19 May 2019, Mount Purro Nature Reserve,
Barangay Calawis, Antipolo City

PhP 2,300 (Magis Deo Youth)
PhP 2,500 (Non-Magis Deo Youth)
Inclusive of overnight accommodations,
meals/snacks, transport and many more

To register, send “Youth Camp” + full name
to 2019magisyouth@gmail.com
+639218821212 (Gin) or
+639453746761 (Cathy)
Deadline is on 5 May 2019

Paying It Forward

Jun & Liza Samilin, ME Class 128

My wife Liza and I are very thankful for our ME Weekend (ME Class 128) last year. After that memorable weekend we were told to pay forward by serving as auxiliaries for the upcoming ME Class 130.

We had mixed emotions then. At that time my work was demanding too much of my time, so I knew I couldn’t attend the practice sessions and preparations, and possibly even the ME Weekend itself. I also had this feeling that if I said NO, God would punish me and not give me my dream promotion in my company. With such premise, my service to the ME Weekend would be a “give-and-take” like relationship with our Lord.

True enough, we failed to attend most of the meetings and practices since my work takes me out of the country a lot of the time, and Liza had to attend to the needs of our daughter. We would try to catch up through our Viber group chats. I kept telling myself that the requirement was basically to get a couple attendee and be simply present during the ME Weekend, nothing more.

By the tone of our group chats, we knew everyone was pressured. First of all, we had 21 couples plus 28 singles registered for the Weekend, and we were only 6 couples from ME Class 128, plus our Shepherd couple, and some couple volunteers from Magis Deo who would be serving at the Weekend. Second, we knew we would have to multi-task since we were few, and had little or no experience at serving this kind of event.

On first day of the Weekend, we were late since we came with our invited couple. From then on, I was at a loss. Liza grabbed her camera and immediately took pictures of the attendee couples as they came in in, since Kuya Atoy Chia who was in charge of pictures, was also in charge of the food preparation. I basically did the running: bringing of couples to their rooms, helping distribute the questionnaires during the talks, and assisting wherever I might be needed. I was so tired, exhausted and drained. I could see that everyone felt the same. I volunteered to be one of the “Bell Boys” so I had to wake up early. If I had relied on my own strength and understanding during that time, I couldn’t have lasted the remaining days. I even wondered what I was doing; because in my line of work, I am used to being served rather than serving.



April 2019



The demands of the next days remained the same – tiring and exhausting. It wasn’t only me who felt that way, I could see it in my wife’s eyes; I could see and feel it with our fellow auxiliaries. Before resting on our last night, while reading bible verses on my downloaded app, I came across Colossians 3:23 which gave me inspiration and strength: “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.”

As I recalled the faces and expressions of our attendees and how they were blessed coming to this ME Weekend, I realized that it was all worth it, knowing they felt the same joy and blessing that Liza and I experienced and received at our own ME Weekend a year ago.

My personal encounter with the Lord during this Weekend was when I realized it is not through my serving that God granted me the desires of my heart, but through His grace and unconditional love for me. The lyrics of the song “Who Am I” by Casting Crowns – “Not because of who I am, but because of what You’ve done, Not because of what I’ve done, but because of who You are” – best describe how I felt during this recent Weekend, and I only have praises for and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we drove home after this Weekend for Class 130, we as a couple came to a worthy realization of God’s wonderful love for us. When we heard the messages of Fr. Gascon and the couple sharers, memories of our own Weekend a year ago would flash back: I was seated beside my wife and we were holding hands, looking at each other. There were no words spoken but we understood each other. Hearing the same teachings and the same messages that brought us together here and in the same place, made us realize that we became instruments of God’s love to other couples. We may have been exhausted during the Weekend, but the blessings each couple and each person received while experiencing the weekend surpassed all the sacrifices we endured for the success of this Marriage Encounter Weekend.

May God continue to shower the Magis Deo Community with more blessings as we touch the lives of more couples. To God be the Glory and Praise. God is good. God bless us all. And thank you once again.





ME 130 Couple Participants: Ruther & Neth ARAGO, Reggie & Tina AREVALO, Khel & Rica CERRERO, Rocky & Yen CHAN, Enzo & Lits CUEVAS, Dingo & Johna DELOS SANTOS, Lhon & Marge DE MESA, Yaye & Monette DOQUE, Binky & Star ECHAVEZ, Irey & Net ESCULLAR, Chito & Jeck GENEROSO, Ken & Meengloo JO, Patrick & Joy JOVEN, Paulo & Rynanne NG, Ramon & Nadine LOZANO, Robin & Janice MAGBOO, Nestor & Tzel MANLANGIT, Lan & Deb OSALVO, Mark & Anne TAMAYO, Allan & Yol URBANO, Karl & Berns ZAPANTA



ME 130 CEFAM Group - Anildes, Roner M., Bulanday, Denis, Burgo, Elizabeth S., Claver, Andrew K, De Jesus, Ronald A., Garcia, Jaymer L., George, Jincy A., Joseph, Joji, Jugarap, Jebie U., Kochupakambil, Vincechan, Lasrado, Robert, Nguyen, Huyen, Ogalesco, Mark Renzi S., Okoro, Chukwudi Joseph, Pama, Lea R., Phan, Tho T., Piangco, Benedict D., Simbajon, Joel T., Villanueva, Dennis C., Zafra, Ian Renz T., Gabayno, Nimpa D., Garcia, Christine Marie K., Idulza, Maria Sarah C., Nadua, Joseph C., Puda, Felbie L., Ramirez, Naomi E., Santos, Anna Katrina P., Troesch, Maria D.



ME 130 AUXIES: *(Left to right)* Bong and Grace Romero, Lito and Tes Adia, Bert and Nini Bugayong, Kaye Angeles, Atoy and Jenny Chia, Jun and Liza Samilin. *(Not in photo)* Keith Angeles, Vince and Vivi Satuito