

# Magis

*Formation for Mission*

Stewardship  
Simplicity  
Sharing  
Service

Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community  
April 2021 Issue



## Accompanying the shepherds

Gaining empowerment through various encounters with others

### Pagtibang at pagtugon

Small and ordinary acts of service and their extraordinary impact

### The Lord comes in our weariness

Where do we find consolation in moments of weariness?

### Lent for the youth

Deepening the Lenten experience through art, discussion and prayer

### Everyone needs a miracle

To heal is to strengthen our faith

# About the Cover



We are all familiar with the miracle: Jesus feeding a hungry multitude through a quantitative amount of bread and fish, halved into thousand pieces of life supply. Whenever we encounter this story, we are reminded of how a simple act such as this counts as a miracle. It's an all-encompassing story of hope in humanity.

Out of stories' past and into present testament, we may have heard this miracle again — not per se, but an emulation of it: community pantries. I believe I speak for many when I say that the Filipino people's volunteerism sparked a fire in our hearts. This fire, it's warm because of its outright selflessness, but also hot to the touch because of the questions that still linger until now: Why do we have to initiate such necessities? Why are good deeds dissected into more than what they simply are? Are we the only ones aware of Jesus' miracles?

Historic as it may be, it's still somewhat tragic. All these underprivileged people lined up for the pantries, each has a story of grief and survival. They aren't just numbers, they're humans too. For now, we can view the communal act as Jesus presenting Himself to other people. More than the five loaves and two fish, He was able to halve inherent good will in thousands of people. A people that deserves the purest, most concentrated miracle: living.

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## Calendar of Activities: May - June 2021

### May

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2 Community Celebration  
29 Marriage Boosters (Season 2): Marriage in Quarantine

### June

- 2 Community Celebration  
5 Accompanying the Shepherds series: Speaking of Couple Dynamics: What's Yours?  
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**May to June** INTERSECTORAL INTERFACE on Lectio Divina on Music

## “The Lord comes in our weariness.”



**T**he Scripture readings in the Easter Octave show Jesus appearing to his disciples in different situations. He appears to Mary Magdalene who did not recognize him in her grief. He travels with the two disciples who were walking dejectedly to Emmaus. From the shore of Lake Tiberias, he calls to the group of apostles who went fishing for lack of anything better to do. And he appears suddenly in the midst of the disciples, cowering in fear in a locked room. He comes to them in their grief, weariness, and doubts, gives them peace, no blaming, or scolding.

“The Lord comes in our weariness” was the theme of Fr. Ro Atilano, SJ’s homily at his mass the Friday after Easter. Pointing out how the Lord came to console his disciples on Lake Tiberias, he recalled his own experiences of the Lord’s presence in his own life, when he was in very difficult situations. Perhaps we can find inspiration from this homily and remember how the Risen Christ has been with us in the year of the pandemic and natural calamities.

More than a year after the lockdown, our emotions have run the gamut from anxiety, frustration, helplessness, anger, resignation, acceptance, gratitude, hope, and back again. Now, with the raging surge in Covid-19 cases, as we hear of more and more people we know getting sick or dying, there is also a resurgence of all the negative emotions, this time aggravated by fear as cases are getting close to home.

This is not to say that we have been passive victims in the onslaught of Covid-19 and natural calamities. On the contrary, we have bravely soldiered on, thriving in the “new normal.” We even saw the ECQs and MCQs as blessings! Nature has never been more beautiful as the environment cleared and the air

became smog-free. We have enjoyed the beauty of creation in our gardens and indoor plants and even prayed about it. Our life has become simpler. We focus on what is essential and share what we have with others. We are grateful we have resources to help others who are suffering or in dire need, despite our many limitations. We reached out to our stay-out house help who could no longer come to work, to the security guards in the neighborhood, to the farmers who needed to sell their produce, to the typhoon victims, and to those affected by the Taal eruption. We also sent donations to Caritas Manila, Tanging Yaman and Radyo Katipunan, not to mention the causes supported by Magis Deo. We supported food outlets in danger of losing their business by ordering through their Facebook pages.

We learned to work from home, doing virtual meetings in groups or one-on-one, continuing to serve in various ministries. We stayed connected with family through Zoom, Messenger, and Viber. We discovered new skills and interests: online banking and grocery shopping, experimenting with new recipes, venturing into baking, and becoming plantitos and plantitas.

We structured a daily routine. We attended to our responsibilities in our immediate households where we had to answer the perennial question, “Ano po ang lulutuin?” from our house help. While some were blessed and continue to be blessed with meaningful work or ministry, others had to struggle through the mundane routine of doing household errands, and others lovingly care for family members with chronic illness.

We took to heart prayer requests from our many Viber, Messenger, and Facebook groups. We made prayer lists for people who needed healing and for the repose of souls who had passed (majority from Covid-19), for the intentions and well-being of family, friends, and acquaintances, and even for the conversion of Duterte! Sadly, we frequently had to move people from the healing list to the repose of souls list. The heaviness continued as we felt compelled to attend all the novenas and masses (sometimes twice in one day) for classmates, colleagues, friends and loved ones, for healing, or for those who have passed. And from time to time we expressed our frustration to the Lord and ask, “Why Lord? How long is this going to last?”

And so, it has been more than a year since the first lockdown. We are once again in another lockdown. The vaccine is still a distant target for many of us. There is a feeling of being under siege: we cannot leave our homes to attend to even basic needs for fear of getting infected. Underneath the coping, there is a weariness that threatens to paralyze or worse, makes us want to throw caution to the wind.

And yet we continue to cope, to even live fully in the midst of this VUCA world (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous). How can we continue to hope and trust that all will be well? Where does our strength come from?

We can only point to the Source, the same Risen Jesus who appeared to his disciples and consoled them. We

encounter him in our daily prayer of the Examen and Sacred Space. We remember Him daily in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and meditate on his life, death, and Resurrection with our Blessed Mother in praying the Rosary, as we also intercede for those we promised to pray for. We experience Jesus’ friendship in the acts of kindness of friends and neighbors, in unexpected food deliveries from a family member, phone or video calls from apos to ask how we are. We feel strengthened after each BCGG meeting, or interface, or ComCel and other teachings in Magis Deo. As everybody can attest to, Magis Deo has never been so alive! We can also confidently say, God has never been so alive in Magis Deo. We are nourished by all the recollections and webinars on Ignatian Spirituality that have been made available so generously by the Jesuits from all over the World. We feel God’s gentle mercy in Pope Francis’ compassionate presence.

So yes, we are tired and weary. We don’t know how long the siege will be. We may be angry, frustrated and even depressed at times. But then we are always reminded that we are not alone. Jesus has been, is, and will always be with us. To paraphrase what Fr. Ro said, Dominus Est. It is the Lord! He comes in our weariness. He comes when we need Him the most. He comes to console us. Pay attention to Jesus coming to you in your weariness. Do not let despair and doubt overwhelm and blind you from recognizing the Lord. He may come to you in the most ordinary and unexpected way. And when your eyes are opened, you will exclaim with joy, “It is the Lord!”



## Surviving 2020; Thriving in 2021

Benz & Vina Dimanalata, Chaircouple, Francis BCGG

Reprinted from December 2020 Issue

**T**he year 2020 robbed the whole world like a thief in the night. It literally locked us down, isolating, distancing us from our support systems. The Covid-19 virus crept into our health, financial, emotional and spiritual well-being; shook us to our core, and tested our strength and resolve. Was there someone who was not affected? We all were. Was there someone who survived? We all did. Praise God!

We overcame the infectious desolation through our deeply-rooted values of sharing and service. God meets us where we are: in our living room, dining area, bedroom, kitchen; in Messenger, Viber, Zoom. In our own sacred spaces. Prayer meetings pushed through days after the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) announcement. Our first virtual ComCel with Holy Mass went live on May 2. Do you still remember Fr. James Gascon's teaching aptly titled: Transitions, Living the Easter Grace in a New and Abnormal World? Indeed, 2020 marks a different world out there. Magis adapts but remains intact.

And so we asked the first question in Examen: What were you grateful for this 2020? Overwhelmingly, Magis members acknowledged the community's relentless efforts in converting the regular in-person spiritual programs (Prayer Meeting, BCGG Interface, SDR, and AIR) to online sessions, despite and in spite of the most trying circumstances. The M.E. Ministry even got to introduce a whole new program, the Marriage Boosters, reaching in and out of Magis, in and out of the country, for five consecutive months. God moved us into new



directions, to change, to grow, and to embrace one another, even virtually.

What has Magis become then to most of us through these years, and through this most unprecedented 2020? Magis Deo, to many, has become more than our spiritual community. Magis Deo has become our Family – where we feel blessed and loved, where we find our sanctuary amidst the chaos.

2020 is the year we survived the pandemic. 2021 is the year we will thrive as one Magis family. Together, we will fulfill our mission of helping build God's community here on earth by focusing on three thrusts: (1) Deepen the Ignatian Family Formation; (2) Strengthen our Membership; (3) Organize Proactive Outreach.

The first thrust aims to continually grow our marriages and family life following the teachings and spirituality espoused by St. Ignatius, albeit this time there will be a conscious effort to involve all ages of family members including the young adults, with the hope that they will imbibe the Magis formation well into their maturity.

The second thrust enriches our community by attracting more married couples and former M.E. graduates to follow God and live our core values of stewardship, simplicity, sharing, and service.

Finally, the third thrust intends to put structure and mechanisms in order to have a more organized and pro-active approach to Magis outreach programs. When we put God at the center of our lives, there will always be room for others.

## Pagtabang at Pagtugon

A talk on Volunteerism and Service during the Pandemic  
by Fr. Manoling Francisco, SJ  
April 2021 Magis Deo Community Celebration

Written by Rhea Rosas Gaddi  
Outreach Ministry / Prodigal 102 BCGG

**F**r. Manoling Francisco, SJ, welcomed Magis Deo in his talk with these two words that struck me: “Pagtabang” at “Pagkawanggawa.” *Pagtabang* is a Cebuano word which means “to help,” while

*Pagkawanggawa* is a Tagalog word that means helping those in need or acts of service. Regardless of dialect or how it is defined, Fr. Manoling and the Tanging Yaman Foundation remain to be at the forefront of demonstrating *pagtabang*, especially responding to the marginalized affected by calamities, armed-conflict, and, last year, the pandemic caused by Covid-19. Fr. Manoling opened our minds and moved our hearts with stories of how TYF responded with its relief programs, the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration, the challenges of relief operations, and finding creative solutions to address these challenges.

### 1. Multi-Sectoral Collaboration

“Paano niyo po nalalaman kung sino ang i-prioritize na tutulungan ng TYF, sa dami po ng taong nangangailangan ng tulong?”

“Napakahirap sagutin ng tanong na iyan,” admits Fr. Manoling when he was asked this question during the talk. “Napakahirap noon, kasi ang needs are endless and our resources are finite. So we collaborate with people we trust. Kailangan may kakilala kami na pari, madre or NGO workers na mapagkakatiwalaan.”

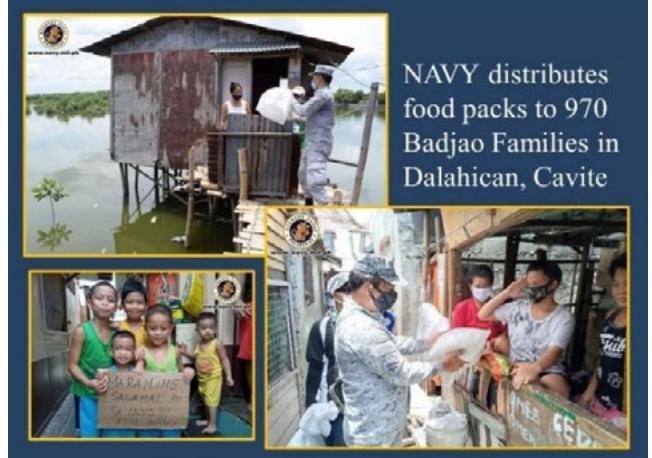
But many times, Fr. Manoling also shared that the groups who ask help from TYF are also people they do not know or are familiar with. Perhaps this is also the reason why collaborating with different sectors became a part of TYF strategy to be able to respond to those in need.

Multi-sectoral collaboration is an essential approach taken by TYF to effectively respond and provide relief to people, groups and communities in need during the pandemic. Relief operations involve many tasks, accountabilities, and expertise that TYF alone will not be able to perform. As the nature of need also varies depending on the crisis situation (e.g., Covid-19, typhoon, armed-conflict, etc.) and group of people (e.g., medical frontliners, calamity-stricken communities, unemployed



segment, etc.), the type of response, and even the problems that can arise, will also need different sectors and expertise to come together to help and find solutions to problems that TYF and its partners encounter.

“We need to collaborate with many sectors. In many places, hostile relations exist with some LGUs, military groups, politicians, the church. We need to select whom to partner with and need to nurture personal relationships. We partnered with the military, parishes and NGOs to deploy our relief goods to the beneficiary communities.”



## COMMUNITY SERVICE



### 2. Even those in need, can be a blessing and become a channel of God's grace.

Fr. Manoling shared the many challenges TYF encountered in their relief operations during the pandemic. His stories about the **Stranded Dried Fish** from the south, the dilemma of farmers from Central and Northern Luzon due to the **Oversupply of Vegetables** and the plight of Tarlac farmers caused by **Undervalued Rice** trade, captured how these problems emerged one after another. However, while these circumstances presented many challenges, it also opened opportunities for the people involved to **become part of the solution to alleviate hunger and poverty** that were the bigger problems caused by the ECQ to many poor communities. The oversupply of vegetables was transported to Metro Manila and sold through TYF to households for personal consumption or to donors who provided food packs. TYF purchased the dried fish to be donated as part of food relief to poor communities in Metro Manila. The rice farmers received higher profit from the sale of their rice by selling directly to consumers through TYF partners, thereby removing the cost of middlemen in the trade. In Metro Manila, jeepney drivers who lost income due to the lockdown, were hired by TYF to deliver the relief goods to its beneficiary communities or to donors who purchased the vegetables sold by TYF. Fr. Manoling, TYF and its partners did not only help the farmers earn income, but more importantly, they kept the dignity of the farmers by empowering them to become part of the solution.



JEEPNEY DRIVERS DELIVERING RELIEF AND HOPE

### 3. Leveraging on Friends/Network, TYF Creativity and Digital Technology to address challenges in Fund-Raising and Donor Care

*"The enthusiasm in donating has waned after the initial months of the COVID pandemic. How do you disseminate donation drives? Soliciting drives are not much visible nowadays."*

Fr. Manoling shared the same observation and admitted that this poses a challenge in sustaining funds needed for TYF's various relief operations. Even before Covid-19 and the lockdown, there were "low" periods during the year where donations will not be as much compared to the Christmas season where more budgets are allocated by donors such as families and corporate organizations.

To sustain and increase its sources of funds throughout the year, TYF leveraged on its network of friends and partners, and social media to reach out to more and new donors throughout the year. **"GATHER YOUR NEIGHBORS. HELP OUR FARMERS. ORDER NOW"** is an effective example of TYF's messaging in its publicity materials calling on its friends and friends of friends to come together and help the farmers through their purchase of vegetables. It is simple, transparent and engages community action. *"We need to find creative means to make donating accessible even to middle and lower income families."*



CLEAR PUBLICITY MATERIALS ON SOCIAL MEDIA



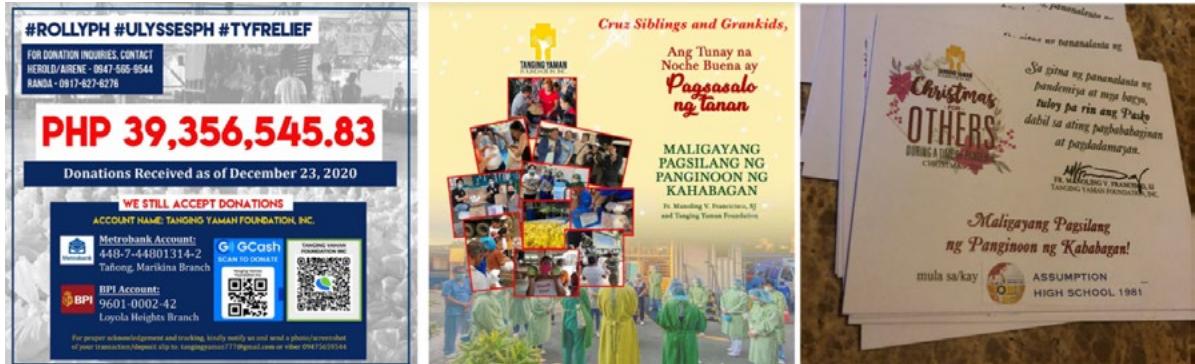
Allow people to donate according to their capacity

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

### 4. Transparency and Accountability are critical to Donor Care

Issuing official receipts, certificates of donations or certificates needed for tax exemptions for corporate donors, are backroom work that are essential in ensuring transparency and accountability of TYF to its partner donors. To maintain this commitment to its donors, TYF has put in place the proper

systems and even added manpower resources. TYF utilizes social media such as its Facebook page to provide timely and clear updates to donors and the general public on the status of its donation and relief operations.



UPDATING DONORS ON THE CURRENT DONATIONS RECEIVED ON SOCIAL MEDIA  
PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE ONLINE CHANNELS FOR CASH DONATION  
THANKING DONORS FOR THEIR DONATION AND INFORMING THEM OF THE RECIPIENTS

### LESSONS LEARNED

Fr. Manoling closed his talk with some lessons learned by TYF from their various relief operations:

1. There are so **many people of GOOD WILL**. People from various demographic backgrounds, ages, financial status, and capacity will come forward to help those in need. Fr. Manoling emphasized during the Q&A that the pandemic and lockdown should not limit us from responding to the call to help. We have our unique talents and creativity; and digital technology is available to enable us to reach out to family, friends, and our network to mobilize relief and donations.

*"There were a couple of senior high school students who performed songs online and asked their family and friends to donate during the event in exchange for their requested songs. These boys raised more than Php 20,000 and donated the money to TYF."*

*"We can help according to our capacity. We do not limit. We do not need to go out to help others. Connect to people and generate awareness. You need to connect people to generous channels. Generate awareness to credible groups who can help."*

2. To ensure transparency, accountability and maintain the trust of our donor partners, many NGOs still need to **improve the backroom work** of relief operations such as issuing required donor documents/certifications, providing timely updates,

and expressing gratitude to donors for their support.

3. Collaboration with other sectors such as **Government** and **Military** are key to deploy relief and reach more people in need especially poor communities in remote areas.
4. **Compassion and generosity thrive among the poor.** TYF's experience with the Epiphany Parish in Caloocan is an inspiring story where its lay leaders decided to divide the 500 food packs donated by TYF, repacking these to feed 1,000 families. This act of selflessness has been replicated by other relief groups and poor communities, reaching more families in need.
5. **The Roman Catholic Church is a witness and sign of God's kingdom of inclusive love.** *"We [the Roman Catholic Church] are not the Kingdom of God. The kingdom of God includes the Roman Catholic Church but transcends the Roman Catholic Church. All humanity, all people of other religions and cultures are invited into this kingdom of God. But through our work of charity, through our compassion for those vulnerable, for those in need during this time, then the Roman Catholic Church becomes a powerful witness, a sign of the kingdom of inclusive love. That we need to learn to work with others, to collaborate with them. And also to celebrate the good that non-Catholics are doing in serving those in greater need."*

Continued on page 11

## Accompanying the Shepherds

Philip & Malu Panlilio, Formation Ministry / Mustard Seed BCGG

**M**agis Deo launched a formation program for its shepherds on 6 March 2021 entitled "Accompanying the Shepherds Series." It is basically a *companioning the companions* program which aims to accompany Magis shepherds in light of their responsibilities as pastoral care giver, small group facilitator, and small group administrator. The program is also open to potential shepherds and members discerning their call to shepherding. The first session in March attracted 111 participants, with 21 out of 23 BCGGs represented.

Under the leadership of its Spiritual Director, Fr. James Gascon, SJ, the first session provided an overview on the responsibilities of Magis shepherds. Spiritual Accompaniment is the most important task, more than any others. Shepherds need to take care of their lambs through accompaniment towards psycho-spiritual growth and maturity. The task is most challenging since companionship transcends all aspects of daily living (towards Ignatian Spirituality). Fr. James called on the 111 participants of the 6 March session to be elders and spiritual leaders.

Since shepherding in Magis Deo is *companionship*, shepherds are not going to give advice or direct their lambs on what to do, rather, they will empower them to find solutions to their own problem. When there is need for professional help, shepherds are not going to offer treatment; rather, shepherds refer them to competent persons. Shepherds are not going to "problem solve" for them or take them out of their pain by offering financial help. Finances is a problem better solved by the couple themselves outside the BCGG.

Shepherds will journey with their lambs, not ahead, not at the back, but alongside them. Therefore, in companionship, although skills are important, what is of greater value is the

PERSON of the shepherd. Shepherds need to be PROPHETS and WITNESSES more than TEACHERS and AUTHORITIES.

The vocation of accompaniment involves recognition (a bit longer antenna than the lamb's for greater perspective); communion (union); and commission (call to vocation of shepherding).

The ultimate role of shepherds is to facilitate encounter. The four encounters in "encuentro matrimonial" Magis Deo are: encounter with self; encounter with spouse; encounter with God; and encounter with community. Shepherds will help deepen these encounters.



The shepherd formation series will include (i) sharing of experiences of shepherding BCGGs, our lights and shadows; (ii) learning some specific skills that will enhance the capacity as shepherds; and (iii) taking care of ourselves as shepherds and finding ways to gain support and encouragements. The program (with Fr. James as resource person except otherwise indicated) is as follows:

- Accompanying the Sheep Towards Mutual Psycho-Spiritual Growth (Orientations) (**MARCH 6, 2021**)
- Human Growth and Development: Formation vs Education (**APRIL 10, 2021**)
- The Couple's and Family Life Cycle (**MAY 1, 2021**)
- Speaking of Couple Dynamics: What's yours? (**JUNE 5, 2021**)
- Praying with Scriptures with Fr. Francis Alvarez, SJ (**JUNE 26, 2021**)
- Ignatian Leadership by Fr. Mon Bautista, SJ (**JULY 24, 2021**)
- How to Process Prayer in a Sharing Group (**AUGUST 7, 2021**)

- Understanding Psychological Issues Affecting the Sheep I – Common Mood Problems (**SEPTEMBER 4, 2021**)
- Understanding Psychological Issues Affecting the Sheep II – Personality Character, Style, Disorder (**OCTOBER 2, 2021**)
- Understanding Psychological Issues Affecting the Sheep III – Other Psychopathology in Marriage (**NOVEMBER 6, 2021**)
- Conflict Resolution: Feedback Giving (**JANUARY 8, 2022**)
- Boundaries: Setting the Limits to My Role as Shepherd (**FEBRUARY 5, 2022**)
- Self-care for Shepherds (**MARCH 5, 2022**)

See you!

## Accompany, Empower, Encounter, We are all shepherds to one another.

Susan Concepcion, Archangel Gabriel BCGG, Formation Ministry

**T**he Accompanying the Shepherds Series, a monthly learning session for Magis Deo shepherds, was launched last March 6, 2021, with the talk by Fr. James Gascon, SJ, "Accompanying the Sheep Towards Mutual Psycho-Spiritual Growth." One hundred eleven Magis Deo shepherds and members, representing 21 BCGGs, attended the online talk.

Fr. James' talk can be summed up in three words: Accompany, Empower, Encounter. These are the tasks of any shepherd.

Just as Jesus walked with his disciples on the road to Emmaus, a shepherd ACCOMPANIES his/her lamb. Just as Jesus talked to his disciples about the events of the day, shepherds, too, talk to their lambs about their human experiences, their feelings, their frustrations, and not necessarily about spiritual things. Like Jesus, a shepherd walks not in front nor behind the lamb, but alongside him/her.

In their conversations, shepherds do not give advice or direct lambs what to do, rather they EMPOWER them to find solutions to their problems. Their role is to be prophets and witnesses more than teachers and authorities to their lambs.

The third key word in Fr. James talk was ENCOUNTER. He explained that the ultimate role of the shepherd is to facilitate encounter. There are 4 types of encounter that the shepherd

### Pagtabang at Pagtugon, continued from page 9

#### "Why are you doing all these po, Fr. Manoling?"

TYF believes in two things: first, the transforming power of the biblical "widow's mite," and second, the grace of God who blesses our every effort at helping our brothers and sisters in need.

A mite is the Roman coin of least value during Jesus's time. In the parable found in Luke 21:1-4, we find Jesus praising the widow's act of putting in her two mites in the temple's treasury, saying that the widow has in fact given more to the temple than anyone who donated there before her.

TYF believes this is true also in our efforts at helping one another. What we can contribute may not be much in the ordinary sense, but when this act is coupled with the belief that God loves and blesses our acts, however materially small they may be, and transforms it to be able to effect significant change in the lives of the least of our fellow men and women.

The lyrics of "Tanging Yaman" were actually inspired by the spirituality of the great Carmelite mystics, Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross, according to Fr. Francisco. "It speaks of an aching for God of whom we catch glimpses of in the beauty of creation and the goodness of people, but whom we cannot see or touch," he explained.

In the Tanging Yaman Foundation website, its philosophy perhaps inspires the answer to the question for Fr. Manoling:

## Everyone Needs A Miracle

Yasmin Punzalan, Easter BCGG



**A** few days ago, I received a message from my mom that she was having stroke-like symptoms. Fr. James reminded us of our covenant with God. She had nausea, clammy hands and feet, high blood pressure, throbbing on the left side of her nape. She was alone in her condo and her barangay was one of the hotspots under enhanced quarantine. At that moment, so many fears went through my head: Would there be hospitals that could take her in? Being already immunocompromised, will she be exposed to the Covid virus when in the hospital? What if she doesn't make it?

What a really bad time to have an emergency. Only Petrik, my husband, could go out. He and my sister, who lived somewhere else, went to her. I tried calling her to say that help was on the way, but she wasn't answering. My heart fell. I prayed that it was nothing serious. I prayed for a miracle.

Thankfully, she was well enough to be brought to the hospital and be checked. Her vital signs were okay, and although no specialist was able to attend to her, she felt well enough to return home. But while she was at the hospital, I feared not only for her, but for Pet and my sister too – there was a great risk they could contract the virus and bring it home to our families.

The gospel about Lazarus talks about one of Jesus' greatest miracles. Imagine him bringing his dead friend back to life! In these uncertain times, each of us hopes for a miracle. It may not be as grand as what Jesus did to Lazarus, but miracles nonetheless. The miracle of healing, of turning misfortune into blessings, of being brought out of a bad situation. Each day

brings the possibility of such miracles. Each day gives us the gift of hope, and hope is what strengthens our faith.

Before this pandemic hit us, Petrik and I were already facing challenges. We lost a labor case despite our firm belief we were in the right. In the home front, our daughter was having anxiety issues and was undergoing therapy. Furthermore, I had to shift to a higher level of cancer treatment as my old medications were starting to lose their efficacy. Everything seemed to happen to us all at the same time. And then this pandemic befell all of us, making all those worries take a back seat. So yes, I have been praying for a miracle. Not only for myself, but for all who are fighting Covid-19, people we don't know and people we know dearly.

During Earth Hour last year, we had our daily 9 PM rosary with the children. Somehow it felt more intimate, with only candles as our source of light. It was more quiet, more peaceful. For me, there was a more palpable connection to God. I felt more hopeful for miracles to happen in my life. And even when Earth Hour was over and I announced we could already turn on the lights and the TV, my kids told me to keep them off. Perhaps they, too, felt more at peace. More hopeful. I guess this is what it takes to tune out the outside noise, for one to hear what truly needs to be heard. To believe that God is with us, even at the darkest times. Each of us needs a miracle; not grounded on superstition, but on pure hope and faith.

My prayer is, "May I always answer in affirmation to God's calling to Martha before the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead happened: Do you believe?"

## God's Gift: Baby Liam

Mina Tamera, Mustard Seed BCGG



**I** prayed for this child and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him.

1 Samuel 1:27

**Y**es, we really prayed to have a third child, a baby girl this time, because we already have two boys. I felt that the missing part of our family was a baby girl. Almost 10 years ago when I found out that I still had polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) and other health issues, my obstetrician told me it would be more difficult for me to have another baby. But it never stopped me from praying for my health to be okay and asking God, "Lord ibigay mo na sa akin before I turn 40, I know I still have chances; pag lumagpas pa ko ng 40 baka ma expired na po at di na kayanin." I prayed this countless times. It was just like talking to God as a friend na pwede kang magkwento ng paulit ultil lang at di siya magsasawa na makinig sa akin.

It was August 2019, on our 17th wedding anniversary to be precise, and a few months before my 40th birthday in November, when I found out I was pregnant. Di ba, God is true to His word pag nag pray ka. Ibibigay niya sa tamang panahon. I went immediately to my OB for a check-up and lab tests. I was given vitamins as I had high risk pregnancies before with my two boys. Months passed, then my pregnancy struggles started, despite the close monitoring and regular check-ups. Stress related issues added to the high-risk pregnancy. I was also diagnosed with gestational diabetes. Then the Covid pandemic compounded the situation. I almost lost my baby in March 2020. It was difficult to stay in the hospital because of increasing numbers of Covid positive patients; I was also required to have Covid tests. My OB was Covid positive then, but I was thankful I was Covid negative. I was advised to have bed rest at home until I reached my full term.

On May 12, 2020 at exactly 1:27 am, two weeks before my full term, I gave birth inside the car on our way to hospital. Thank God the baby and I were both safe. Inside the delivery

room while I held my baby, he looked at me eye to eye and gave me the cutest smile. At 1.7 kilos my baby was small, but I know he is strong because there was no need to bring him to the natal ICU with his strong lungs. Yes, another baby boy! Pero okay na ako dahil napakalaking blessing sa amin ang pagbigyan ni Lord. My baby Liam! Bonus na lang naman kung ibibigay sa amin ang baby girl.

We were excited to go home but baby Liam's pediatrician informed us of the need to stay for another week. Baby Liam has abnormalities in his hearing. He was a yellow baby and needed to undergo photo therapy for days. Worse, he had bilateral congenital cataract requiring surgery within 2 months or he may go blind. I was so worried about Liam, but I needed to be strong for him dahil alam ko gagaling at magiging okay siya.

But the pediatrician told us something na mabigat naming kakaharapin: Baby Liam has down syndrome. He had the common physical signs of down syndrome. Yes, I knew it from the delivery room pa lang but I was in denial until the pedia confirmed it and explained how this condition came about.

After that, nag-overthink na ako. Di ko alam kung saan ako magsisimula. Hinanap ko ang Diyo para tanungin kung bakit -- Bakit ako? Bakit si Baby Liam? Saan ako nagkulang? Paano ko haharapin? Paano kami bilang pamilya? Hindi ko mahanap agad ang sagot. Everyday nagdarastral ako para mahanap ko instantly ang sagot sa kanya.

Pero alam ni Lord kung gaano ko kamahal si Baby Liam. Lahat ng tanong at mga pag-aalinlangan ay para sa aking sarili lamang. Tumatakbo ang mga araw at kailangan nuna namin unahin na maging maayos ang lagay ni Baby Liam. Alam namin na kailangan namin ng maraming dasal kaya humiling na kami ng prayers sa mga kakilala namin for Baby Liam na umayos yung ibang condition niya. Family and friends reached out and especially my Mustard Seed Family na umalalay sa amin emotionally and spiritually.

Then suddenly, sa kakahanap ko ng sagot kay Lord ay biglang sinabi sa amin mag-asawa ng dalawa naming anak na huwag kaming mag-alala. Nandito sila para sa kapatid nila. Tanggap at mamahalin nila kung ano pa man ang condition ni Baby Liam. Wala silang pakialam sa sasabihin ng ibang tao na hindi nakakaintindi ng ganung condition. Sila ang magbibigay ng protection, gabay at magbibigay ng unconditional love para sa kanilang kapatid. Bigla talagang gumaan ang pakiramdam ko. Nadama ko ang presensiya ng Diyos. Bilang ina, naramdaman ko na hindi pala ako nag-iisa. Sobrang nakakaproud na napalaki pala namin ang aming mga anak na may ganung pang unawa at kayang magbigay ng unconditional love para sa kapatid nila na mas higit na nangangailangan.

Days passed, unti-unti gumagaan at natatanggap ko na ang condition ni Baby Liam. Dahil ito sa mga taong sumusuporta at nagdarasal para sa amin, para sa pamilya namin, at dahil sa araw-araw na nagdarasal ako at kinakausap ko ang Diyos at unti-unti binibigay Niya ang sagot sa amin.

Nag pop-up din sa utak at puso ko ang isang talk from one of our community celebrations about sa mga anak, hindi daw pantay-pantay ang pagtingin at ang pagmamahal natin sa mga anak natin, dahil mamahalin natin sila according to their needs. Nag-reflect ako sa sinabi ni Fr. James. Noong una ay hindi ako naniniwala dahil ayokong maging unfair sa mga anak ko. Pero ito na nga nararamdam ko. Ang Diyos ay ipinararamdam sa akin na ito na nga. May mga anak din na magpapaubaya at iintindihin kung mas higit mong bibigyan ng attention at love ang kanilang kapatid dahil bilang anak alam nila na mas kailangan ito ni Baby Liam.



I have lost track, my Lord, and I am sorry that You have to put me back together to understand. Some days I get overwhelmed and almost fall apart. But Lord, I know that even when I am at rock bottom, You never leave me. You know everything I am going through. You put me back together again. You rekindle my faith. One by one, You answer all my whys and what ifs for Baby Liam. You want me to give you all my trust on your plans.

I know that our journey has just started. You showed me clearly the purpose of all of these. You showed me the true meaning of what unconditional love is; the value of accepting things, and what will be my purpose and Baby Liam's. Even if Baby Liam makes me worried every day, You cast everything away whenever I pray.

It is just like You gave me a precious gift to take good care of, a gift that needs unconditional love to accept, just like Your plans for me, Your plans for my family. The love that You have given to me, by loving Baby Liam unconditionally, shows how much You love me, Lord.

And for all of these, who am I to question, who am I to have no faith, who am I to worry. There is always one great God whose love is deeper than mine as a mother could ever give. My children, especially Baby Liam, showed me that the foundation I have made between me and my God is getting deeper. I know, despite my doubt sometimes for all Your plans, You are still the perfect God who never abandons an imperfect child like me. My Baby Liam, my special child, is clearly God-sent as my gateway to heaven.

## God's Love in the Pandemic Experience

Ricky Perez, Tala BCGG



***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."***

Philippians 4:13

**W**ow! How can I forget the 15th of March 2020 when the government began to block land, air, and sea travel in and out of the Philippines' most populous region. That big word -- "LOCKDOWN" -- became popular since.

Well, kung lockdown experience lang naman, isa ako sa mga naunang nakalasap ng hindi kaaya-ayang karanasan sa unang araw mismo. Yes po, that was a Monday morning. Sobra akong naniwala the night before it was announced na yung mga may mahalagang pupuntahan at may dalang necessary documents can still pass kaya naman nagsubok ako magbiyahe papunta sa amin humble farm sa Silang, Cavite, at sa Laguna para mamili ng mga sisiw. Going there was really fast and smooth as I left our place around 5 AM. I thought everything would be as smooth like it used to be until I returned via Calamba SLEX. It took 3 to 4 hours to get to the checkpoint manned by soldiers. I really begged hard, teary-eyed, asking those in command to let me pass as I had papers naman and was carrying around 500 sisiw at the back of my car. They didn't listen. They did not let me pass !!!

I got so terrified with lots of thoughts and the fear of being stranded. In that moment of struggle I sneaked in some prayers. As I turned back and drove away from that horrible checkpoint, I felt the Holy Spirit come upon me... so I stopped my car for a moment to compose myself. Thank God, I realized I had several other options, and my path home became clearer.

Now, sitting and sipping my herbal tea, I can just smile and recall how I was touched by God's love at the very beginning, and up to now as this pandemic and the recent Covid-19 surge continue to greatly affect our lives. All I can say now are thanks and praise, as God is really alive, His miracles for us simply amazing.

The January 2020 eruption of Taal severely affected our farm, then this Covid-19 pandemic knocked out our remaining businesses. At some point ang mga halaman at mga alaga na lang namin ang meron kami. Dumarami ang mga ito pero ang funds namin ay unti unting nauubos. But God's miracles kept us going. These crazy challenges did not stop us from helping others and our barangay. Wala nga kaming big cash but we had farm animals and other crops that we shared every week during the intense lockdowns. As a father and provider, I had sleepless nights thinking about our diminishing funds kasi wala nang pumapasok, at halos lahat palabas. But I was resurrected and reminded to simply believe in HIM. That God is greater than all of this. My wife would always remind me of her favorite passage "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

You know what? I thought our pandemic season was going to be about just surviving. I envisioned life to be just sticking it out on the surface so we don't drown. These thoughts were completely the opposite of the plan God vested upon me. He gave us so much blessings that instead of the basic survival I thought earlier, it became a thriving season for us. Oh yes, He allowed us to build our dream house... Yeeeeees!! Our dream house after 16 years of marriage, of journeying with my wonderful and caring wife Nikkie. We have been living the dream since February 2021 with our two daughters at our farm which we call "Auspere Nature Farm."

God has taught us a lot and I know we will continue to learn more as we follow HIS plan. We know that we are not yet out of the woods; I am not perfect nor do I deserve His wonderful blessings, but we feel great joy as we know He is alive in our lives, that no matter how challenging and difficult life is nowadays; He is always around to LOVE us.

"Minsan hindi natin maintindihan, pero kapit lang, kapit lang sa Kanya, kasi hindi Niya tayo bitawanan."

# How Humor Can Ease the Pain and Stress of Covid-19

Rico Lim, Easter BCGG

**W**e've all heard the saying "Laughter is the best medicine." Does that really apply during a global pandemic? Is it even appropriate to crack a joke and apply humor in a delicate and uncertain situation like where we are right now? Obviously, the seriousness of Covid-19 is no laughing matter. The government-imposed lockdowns and the fear of the virus have added so much stress, pain, grief, loneliness, depression, and hunger to so many Filipinos. Our Magis Deo community is not spared from this depressing situation. We see and hear about friends, colleagues, relatives, and other people dying every day, and those in the medical field are stretched beyond limits.

I say YES, we need humor in our life especially during difficult times and situation. Humor and laughter ease the overwhelming fear, anxiety and grief we experience during this pandemic. Humor helps people take back a sense of control in a powerless situation, and furthermore helps them connect and reconnect with others. It brings people closer and helps them cope with the dangers and limitations we face. Laughter

activates the "feel good" hormones in the brain and reduces stress-related hormones like cortisol. Laughter also increases the number of antibody-producing cells in our body. It enhances our T-cells, which are at the core of adaptive immunity that tailors our immune response. In other words, it strengthens our immune system.

Laughter is free and is a stress management tool to lighten up the mood and improve mental health. All you need to do is have an open mind and be happy. Promote humor in our lives, it will save your life.

Here are jokes I accumulated and compiled at the start of the different lockdowns imposed by government: ECQ, GCQ, MECQ, and other MEGCQ with Ginkgo Biloba (hahahaha). I hope you enjoy them; may they help you lift your spirits specially during this dreaded pandemic. Remember to keep smiling, laugh even for no reason at all, and always be happy. It will save your life! But you might end up in the mental hospital (Hahaha).

## \*\*\*\*\*JOKE TIME\*\*\*\*\*

**A. The following is a compilation of Questions of Life that are very difficult to answer. Please help me find the answers.**

1. Convert kilogram to Instagram. Show your answer in scientific notation form
2. Kelan at saan grumaduate ang graduated cylinder?
3. Bakit di mapatay ng alcohol ang 0.01% ng mga bacteria?
4. Sa anong kingdom naghahari si Chowking, Burger King at Goto King?
5. Bakit tumatakbo ang mga zombies sa Walking Dead?
6. Anong meron sa Brand X at galit na galit ang lahat ng kompanya sa kanya?
7. Bakit hindi pens ang binebenta sa Penshoppe? At bakit hindi mga upuan ang binebenta sa Bench? Explain mo nga.
8. Sino ang kumagat ng apple sa logo ng Apple? Bakit hindi nya inubos? Defend your answer.
9. How did Adele Set Fire to the Rain? Show the chemical reaction.

10. Where do broken hearts go? Locate them using Google Maps. Bonus Question: Can they find their way home?
11. Kung walang kamay ang ibon then why do birds suddenly appear?
12. Gomit ang Google Maps, hanapin ang dulo ng walang hanggan.
13. Gomit ang iyong Monggol 2 Pencil, iguhit ang 50 shades of grey. No erasures.
14. Sa Kantang down on bended knees.... Do you agree na nabebend ang tuhod?
15. Magkano ang Mahal na Araw?
16. Bakit sa English, ang araw sa Mahal na Araw naging isang lingo - naging Holy WEEK?
17. Alin ang tunay, Royal True Orange or Minute Maid with real pulp? Defend your answer.
18. Paano mangulangot si Wolverine? Explain and illustrate.
19. Bakit wala pa ring tatalo sa Alaska? Explain briefly.

## \*\*\*\*\*JOKE TIME\*\*\*\*\*

20. Bakit square ang box ng pizza, samantalang circle ang pizza? Elaborate.
21. Nasaan ang Corn sa Corned Beef?
22. Gaano kataas ang lipad ng Whisper with wings? Please demonstrate.
23. Pwede bang lagyan ng ballpen ang pencil case?
24. Pagna-ban ang plastic sa Pilipinas, kelangan mo bang matakot at magtago?
25. Kapatid ba ni Swiper the Fox si Megan Fox? At pinsan ba ni Megan si Mozilla Firefox? Draw the family tree.
26. Ano ang susundin mo, sigaw ng puso mo, o sigaw ng nanay mo? Explain why.
27. Saang direction papunta ang One Direction?

### B. Bakit "Best Teacher" si Nanay? Dahil tinuruan tayo ng:

**MATHEMATICS:** "Isa, dalawa, dalawa't kalahati... kapag umabot ng tatlito tatamaan ka na!"

**COMPREHENSION:** "Ipasok mo sa tenza mo lahat ng sinasabi sa iyo para makaintindi ka!"

**ANATOMY:** "Mata ang ginagamit sa paghanap, hindi bibig!"

**HISTORY:** "Nuong bata pa ako, piso lang ang baon ko. Minsan wala pa. Maswerte ka pa nga!"

**REPRODUCTION:** "Hindi kita pinalaki at iniluwal sa mundo para maging barumbado!"

**AGRICULTURE:** "Kada butil ng kanin na kinakain mo, pinagpaguran ng tatay mo. Kaya ubusin mo yan!"

**HEALTH:** "Matigas na ba buto mo? Sabihin mo lang kung kaya mo na alagaan ang sarili mo."

**GENEROSITY:** "Ibigay mo 'yan sa kapatid mo kung ayaw mong malintikan sa akin!"

**Mrs. Tanoy is very kuripot.** When her husband died, she inquired with the newspaper about the price of an obituary.

The ad taker said: "300 pesos for 5 words."

She replied: Pwede bang 2 words lang? "Tanoy dead."

Ad taker: "No ma'am. 5 words is the minimum."

After thinking for a while, Mrs. Tanoy said: "Ok, para sulit, ilagay mo: "TANOY DEAD, TOYOTA FOR SALE"

**Boy: Nay, may ulam ba?**

Nanay: Tignan mo na lang dyan sa ref, nak.

Boy: Eh wala naman tayong ref, di ba?

Nanay: O, e di wala tayong ulam. Konting common sense naman dyan!

Caloy: Tay, di ba sabi mo bibigyan mo ko ng P100 pag pumasala ako saMath?

Tatay: Oo. Bakit, pumasala ka ba?

Caloy: Gud news, Tay! Di ka na gagastos ng P100.

**FASHION:** "Rampa pa more. Huwag kang tumigil hangga't di ka madala!"

**PSYCHOLOGY:** "Sumagot ka kung ayaw mong tamaan. (Kapag sumagot:) Kailan ka pa natutong sumagot?"

**LOGIC:** "Kapag di mo nakita, makikita mo ang hinahanap mo"

**SELF-ESTEEM:** "Ayan, diyan ka magaling!"

**THEORY OF EVOLUTION:** "Manang-mana ka sa tatay mong unggoy!"

**SPORTS:** "Tumakbo ka na. Siguraduhin mo lang na di kita maabutan, kundi magsisisi ka!"

**HYPNOTISM:** "Makuha ka sa tingin!"

**INDEPENDENCE:** "Kukunin mo ba o kukunin mo? Mamili ka."

**RELIGION:** "Uy pagdating ng grades mo, anak, magdasal ka na!"

**Man at 33 quits smoking. Will Power.**

At 43, quits drinking. Will Power.

At 53, quits gambling. Will Power.

At 63, quits having sex. Power Failure.

**Kano (trying to speak Tagalog): Meg-kanow isang kilow mang-gow?**

Tindero: One way.

Kano: Meg-kanow?

Tindero: I sed ONE WAY.

Kano: Aynowng ibig sabeyhin ng one way?

Tindero: Isang daan. Understand?!

Erap: Kalokohan! Di ako naniniwala! Walang taong ganun kataba!

Loi: San ang balitang yan?

Erap: Dito sa dyaryo. Sabi, "British tourist lost 2000 pounds."

MMDA (with pen and ticket to a traffic violator): Name?

Foreigner Driver: Wilhelm Von Corgrinski Papakovitz.

MMDA: Ahhh okay... (sabay tago ng ticket)... Next time be careful pls.

BF: Sunduin kita mamaya ha. Bubusina na lang ako pag nasa harap na ako ng bahay niyo.

GF: Sige. Anong sasakyang dala mo?

BF: Wala. Busina lang...

#### Nag-a-apply si Tomas na security guard...

Interviewer: Ang kailangan namin ay taong laging may suspicious mind, highly alert, insistent personality, strong sense of hearing with a killer instinct. Sa tingin mo ba qualified ka?

Tomas: Sa palagay ko po hindi. Pwede po bang yung misis ko na lang ang mag-apply?

**Always remember, when SHE cancels a date, she HAS TO. But....when HE cancels a date..... he HAS TWO.**

**Junior: Nay, bibili ako ng HIGH CAKE.**

Nanay: Hindi high cake, anak. HOT CAKE yun.

Junior: Ok nay, watever. Pahingi nalang ng barya.

Nanay: Sige, kumuha ka nalang dyan sa SOLDIER BAG ko.

#### Pasyente ... magkano ang face lift?

Doktora ... complete treatment ay P145,000.

Pasyente ... mahal!!! ano bang pinakamurang treatment para magmukha akong bata?

Doktora ... heto tsupon, P20 lang!!



#### ORDER

Customer ... Waiter! Bakit ang tagal ng order ko? Ilan ang cook nyo dito?

Waiter ... Ay, sir, wala pu kame cuk dito... pipse lang po!!

#### PROBLEMA NGA

Pasyente ... Doc, may problema ako... tuwing alas otso ng umaga dumudumi ako...

Doktor ... So, anong problema doon?

Pasyente ... Eh alas nuwebe po ako nagigising.

#### ACCIDENT

A lawyer driving on a highway notices a crowd at an intersection.

With his urge to get into the thick crowd and see the action, he shouted,

'I'M THE SON OF THE VICTIM.'

Upon hearing, the people made way for him to get through.

There he saw, bloody and helpless, lying in front of the people... a pig bumped by a trailer truck!

#### PINTURA

Erap ... Honey, nagpintura ako ng banyo.

Loi ... Bakit dalawa ang suot mong jacket, ang init-init !!!

Erap ... Sabi kasi sa label, for best results put on 2 coats.

## "What Now Jesus?" and "Zacchaeus"

Teresita O. Kosca, mother of Terry Lim, Easter BCGG



#### What Now, Jesus?

I woke up this morning  
With this question in mind  
I knew it was you  
Asking me what now.

I wondered and wandered  
Listlessly today  
Afraid to look at the answer  
Straight in its face.

Before the sun went down  
Your message came through  
Problems, more problems  
Will surface anew.

You said your harvest is great  
But your workers are few  
And we refuse to open  
Our doors to you.

In my nothingness I beg of you  
Give me the strength to follow  
And to pull through for you.

#### Zacchaeus

Up on a tree climbed he  
That the Savior he might see  
He knew nothing of charity  
He was a stranger to poverty.

"Zacchaeus, come down!" said he  
Who knew the man intimately  
"Give your riches to the poor  
And follow me."

He did as he was told  
He came down the tree  
And emptied his coffers of gold  
He fed the hungry and clothed the cold  
Filling his soul with worth

He finally knew what it  
Meant to be empty but full.

## Quaresma 2021

Chacho Angeles, Thessalonians BCGG

(1)

Much has been written about Jesus' passion and death, with various images used such as the scapegoat, the sacrificial lamb, the redeemer, the savior, the messiah-king mocked by Pilate's crown of thorns and the sign on the cross above Jesus' head - INRI. Another image is that of the cross as the doorway to heaven. As I start contemplating on the image of Jesus nailed to the cross, a different image comes to focus where the pain, the blood, the wounds and the thorns fade into a blur. What remains is an image of the outstretched hands of Jesus, open to everyone, calling and welcoming all of us to union with His pierced and loving heart.

From the birth of Jesus till His betrayal, suffering and death, through His resurrection and ascension, the Jesus story is a story about the lengths to which God will go to help us return to Him, to love Him, to love our brothers and sisters, to love the whole of creation. This gives me great joy, and provides more than a consolation in the light of a raging pandemic one year hence, constricting lockdowns, very slow roll out of the vaccine, and a government which just adds to the anxiety and grief by undertaking manhunts on dissenters that resulted in several deaths, going after those perceived to be enemies of the president, promulgating laws totally irrelevant to the welfare of the people during this pandemic, continuing extrajudicial killings, and so many other extraneous irrelevant activities. I can only pray for myself, my family, my country, and for all the peoples of the world.

Mahal na Ama,

Alam kong mahal mo kami at inaalagaan mo kami,  
Sa kabilang mga nangyayaring sakuna sa aming  
Bansa, at sa buong mundo. Minsa'y nahihirapan  
Akong tanggapin at unawain ito dahil sa pasakit,  
Problema, abala na dulot nila sa akin, at sa ibang  
Mga tao, nguni't alam ko din naman na hindi mo  
Kami pinababayaan. Alam ko din ang ibang sakuna  
Ay kagagawan ng tao, at ang iba'y dahil na rin  
Sa nag-aalburotong kalikasan. Sa kabilang lanat na  
Ito, hiling ko po ang iyong grasya at unawa upang  
Mamulat ako sa mga dapat kong matanto, at ihanda  
Ang aking puso upang ako'y magbago, at makilala  
Na ang pagmamahal sa iyo ay bali wala kung hindi  
Ko mahal ang aking kapwa gaya ng pagmamahal  
Ko sa aking sarili, at sa buong kalikasan na aming  
Tahanan habang kami'y nabubuhay sa mundong ito.

Patawarin mo po ako sa kakitiran ng aking isip, sa  
Aking pagkamakasarili, mga kasalanan sa sarili, sa  
Kapwa at sa iyo, mapagmahal na Ama. Nawa'y  
Magtiwala ako sa iyo, umasa sa iyong kalinga, at  
Mabuhay na sinusunod ang iyong kalooban, na  
Naaayon sa mga turo ng iyong anak na Si Hesus,  
Kasama ng lakas at inspirasyon na biyaya ng  
Espiritu Santo. Ikawnawa.

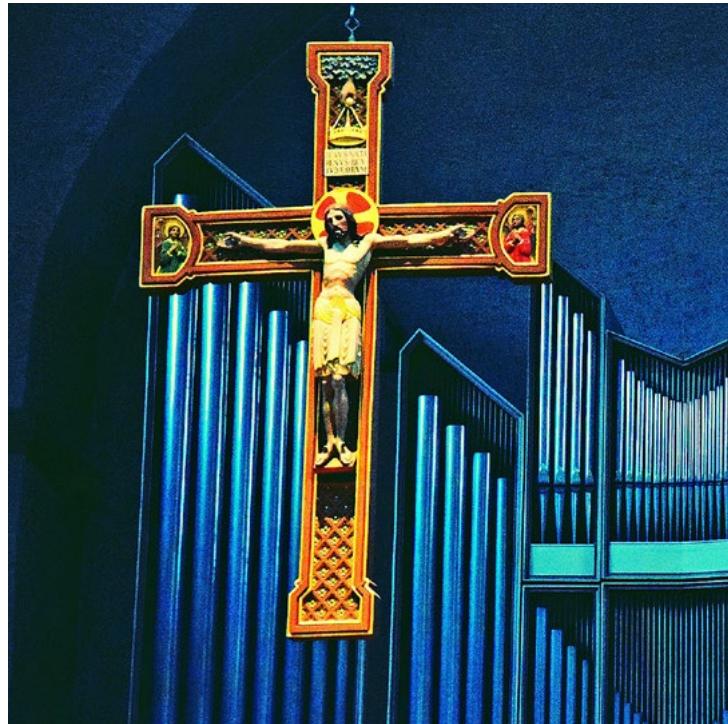
Naaayon sa mga turo ng iyong anak na Si Hesus,  
Kasama ng lakas at inspirasyon na biyaya ng  
Espiritu Santo. Ikawnawa.

(2)

Life is light and darkness, day and night,  
joy and sadness, comfort and difficulties,  
wealth and poverty, love and hate.  
In these times of the pandemic that entombs us in darkness,  
this government adds casualties from its wars  
against small time drug personalities and against  
dissenters of conscience, all those tagged in its  
unverified, extra-legal and color-coded lists,  
and most likely from its "excellent" handling  
of its response to the pandemic.

God is nowhere in sight, forgotten, entombed somewhere,  
and this is the reason why such things are happening.  
Jesus You were betrayed, unjustly tried, tortured, died on  
the cross and was buried for us, the cost to God made  
man that You may teach and show us the Father's  
extravagant love for us.

This Holy week, it seems like we are doing this to  
You again, as if we have not learned anything.  
Lord we pray for Your grace that I and my "kababayans"  
may wake up from this darkness of being entombed  
in our egoism and selfishness, and wake us up from  
our religious indifference.  
Teach us to see that our sufferings will end as surely  
as the dawn comes after the night, but we must  
wake up! And do our part.



Give us the perseverance to constantly discern Your will for each one of us, what we have done wrong and what to do each day we wake up that we may respond in ways that will show our love for You, for our neighbors and for ourselves. As we face our day-to-day concerns, help let us try to rise above them especially when they keep us locked up in a dark place.  
Grant us the wisdom to select leaders who are sincere in their desire to serve and not to exchange our votes for 30 pieces of silver, and to speak out with love whenever these leaders forget their humanity and the suffering they cause or fail to address.  
Most of all, we pray that You continue to shower on us the love and the life that flows from Your pierced heart, a heart that is most self-sacrificing, pure, gentle and compassionate, for we are weak and frail, forgetful and proud, that the light of this love guide us back from the darkness of death and sin into a risen life of peace and joy.  
Most of all, we pray that You continue to shower on us the love and the life that flows from Your pierced heart, a heart that is most self-sacrificing, pure, gentle and compassionate, for we are weak and frail, forgetful and proud, that the light of this love guide us back from the darkness of death and sin into a risen life of peace and joy.

(3)

As the sun is rising early morn,  
I stand there in amazement,  
With what this new day brings.  
Will there be some more cases  
Of this deadly virus plague  
In my city and in the world?  
Will this day just bring more pain,  
More death and much more misery  
To this overburdened world?

But there is beauty that abounds  
In this daily glorious rising,  
There are colors that push back  
All the darkness and the gloom.  
And these days I fail to see  
This beauty and the miracle  
Of new life that is aborning  
For I'm in grief, with copious tears  
Blinding my eyes from seeing  
The seeds of change in me,  
And in the world.

My faith gives birth to hope  
Of union with my God,  
In the now and hereafter,  
Inspiring me to live in dedication  
And devotion to His words  
Of truth, love and life.  
Giving me the strength  
To live the day like Him  
And awaiting sunset's rest.

(4)

Mga matang nabubulag sa luha ng dalamhati,  
 Mga pusong balot ng takot sa kababayang galit  
     at sa pangitaing akala'y multo.  
 Nguni't Siya'y tao rin gaya nila, at nang tawagin  
     Niya ang pangalan ni Maria Magdalena ay  
     Tuwang-tuwang nakilala Siya ni Maria. Nang  
 Kanyang kunin ang tinapay, basbasan, biyakin at  
     ibinahagi, buong kagalakan at kilig na nakilala  
 Siya ng dalawang disipulo sa Emmaus at dali-daling  
     bumalik sila sa Herusalem. At nang nagpakita si Hesus  
     sa mga disipulo doon, natakor sila dahil akala nila'y  
     nakakita sila ng multo, nguni't pinakita ni Hesus ang  
     mga sugat Niya at humingi ng pagkain, at buong  
     saya ang mga disipulo sa muling pagkabuhay ni Hesus,  
     at sila'y na-buhay-an ng loob, tumibay at tumatag.

Galak, tuwa at ginhawa sa isip at puso din ang aking  
     nadarama tuwing ako'y pinapatawad ng Diyos kapag  
     ako'y nagkakasala, sa Diyos at sa tao. Ang muling  
     pagkabuhay ni Hesus mula sa kamatayan ay hudyat  
     na ako'y maaaring bumangon muli mula sa dilim at  
     kamatayan na dala ng kasalanan. Lahat ito'y mula  
     sa maawain at mapagmahal na puso ni Hesus, na  
     nagkatawang tao, namuhay gaya natin upang tayo'y  
     maturuan Niya ng daan pabalik sa mapagmahal  
     nating Ama. At ang buhay ko sa mundong ito ay  
     pansamtala lamang, paghahanda sa buhay na  
     walang hanggan tapos ng kamatayan, na walang  
     katapusang kagalakan, kapayapaan at pagpapatotoo  
     ng aking pagiging anak ng Diyos, nilikha sa hugis  
     at wangis Niya. Ang aking buhay ay nagsula sa  
     Kanyang hininga, diwa, espiritu at kalooban.

HALLELUJAH! THE LORD HAS RISEN!  
 WHAT GREAT JOY, HALLELUJAH!

HAPPY EASTER TO ALL!



## Lent 2021 for Magis Kids, Teens, and Young Single Adults

Zarah Gagatiga, Emmanuel BCGG/Mark & Cathy Maulit, Prodigal 102 BCGG, Youth Ministry

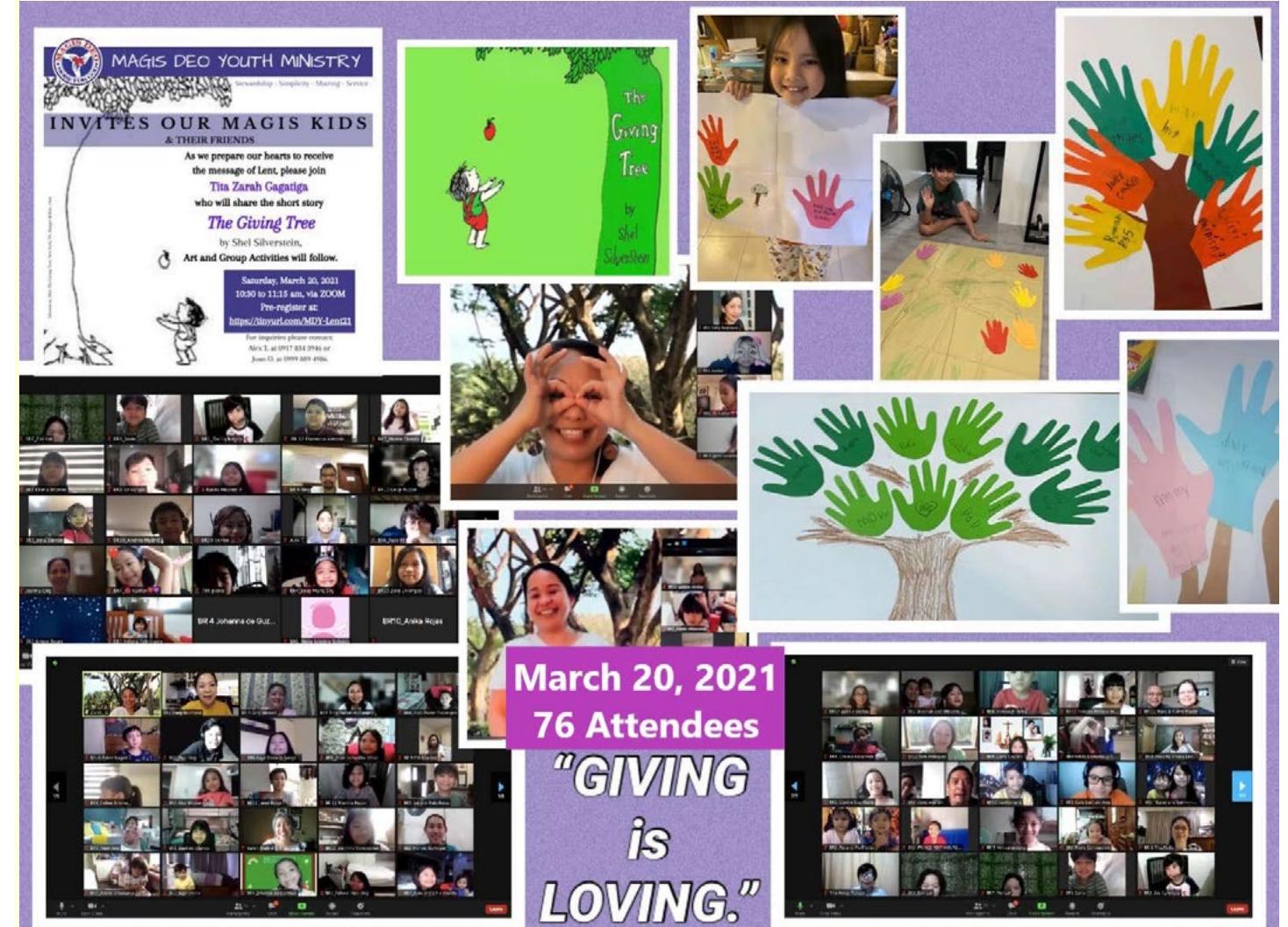
Last 20 March 2021, there were back-to-back Lenten events organized by the Magis Deo Youth Ministry.

### The Giving Tree

In the morning, Magis Deo Titos and Titas led by Tita Zarah Gagatiga accompanied 76 children for an online activity on the short story "The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein. After Tita

Zarah read the story to them and showed illustrations by the author, the kids were assigned to small groups to deepen their experience through artwork or discussion.

The following are examples of the artwork of the younger kids:



The highlights of the older kids' group discussions are:

The tree, with her boundless generosity, reminded them of their parents or family members and God who always give them what they need without any conditions. They felt challenged to be more humble and grateful to those who love them. Some of them also felt inspired to be generous givers themselves to

those who ask them for help. They prayed for these virtues as well as the continued health and safety of those who care for them especially during this pandemic.

It was a morning graced by God's abundant love and generosity.

A collage of images from a Lenten Recollection event. At the top left is the Magis Deo logo with the tagline 'MAGIS DEO • MORE FOR GOD'. The main title 'Magis Deo Youth Ministry' is in large purple letters, with the subtitle 'Stewardship Simplicity Sharing Service' below it. To the left, a large image features a portrait of Jesus and the text 'Friendship with Jesus' in yellow and white. Below this is information about the online recollection with Fr. Eric A.S. Escandor, SJ, on March 20, 2021, at Magis Deo Youth. The collage includes a screenshot of a Zoom meeting with 47 attendees, a video of Fr. Eric Escandor, SJ, speaking, and a grid of participant portraits. A large red heart at the bottom right contains the text 'To grow in a heartfelt knowledge of Jesus Christ so that we can love him more deeply and follow him more closely.' Below the heart, the text 'Lenten Recollection March 20, 2021 47 attendees' is displayed.

## Friendship with Jesus

In the afternoon, Fr. Eric Escandor, SJ gave the *Magis Deo* young single adults and teens a Lenten recollection entitled "Friendship with Jesus." Fr. Eric offered four statements or images of Jesus Christ and invited the 47 participants to reflect on the truth of these images in their own lives. These are the four images of Jesus:

Jesus sees through our sins and still cares for us;

He provides abundantly;

He reveals the depth of mercy; and

He desires our healing.

After explaining each of the images, Fr. Eric asked the participants to share their reflections in 10 small groups. Each group was assigned a youth facilitator who made a thematic summary of their group discussions. Here are a few of the summaries:

“We view Jesus Christ as someone whom we can open up to easily, or as a friend and someone who is solid as a rock to help us not to stumble easily when we encounter challenges in life.” -Aira Gascon

“ In spite of the lockdown affecting everyday situations, it was heartwarming to see how the youth, no matter their age, live the spirit of magis by keeping their trust faith in the Lord.” ~Joaquin Aldeguer

“ We feel Jesus in prayer or worship, in other people, in art and in nature. The measures taken to slow down the spread of Covid-19 have reduced opportunities to enjoy those things so most feel distant from God during the pandemic. Despite this, we are putting in the effort to get closer to God – like attending this Lenten recollection and praying on our own. We try to make it a habit to pray for gratitude since our lives have been protected during the pandemic.”

## en Tumbocon

“ We see this image of Christ in our youth, as our support system. Our happiness and our growth heavily rely on our friends. Jesus Christ’s warmth has touched molded us to be better persons through the guidance of friends. There is no doubt that in different stages of our , we will experience different images of God, but Jesus st has always been a friend to us.” **-Jeric Sun**

“ Sometimes, our relationship with God is inconsistent but if we continue to trust Him, we will learn to be closer to Him one step at a time. We know that He

always wants what is best for us." -Justine Reantaso

“Jesus is like a friend, someone to talk to at all times, someone who accepts us and our imperfections. Our relationship with Jesus isn’t a one-way thing. Like my friendships, it’s give and take. We can’t keep relying on Him when we are not able to show Him the love He deserves.”

-Janais Aldeguer

For everyone in the group, Jesus provides abundantly. Despite the pandemic, we feel very blessed as He continuously provides for our families. We feel that we are called to share these abundant blessings to others in any way we can. Jesus also wills our healing. During these times, we feel isolated – unable to see our relatives and friends. It is difficult for many, but we feel that He wills our healing – emotionally and spiritually. We see this as He acts through our family, who helps us and guides us. Lastly, we see the merciful Jesus who knows we are sinful but calls us. For one of the members, not being able to confess and physically go to mass feels like carrying a heavy load that he/she wants lifted off him/her. Despite this, the member believes that Jesus calls him/her to spread kindness and love to others, encouraging him/her to do his/her best.” **-Timmi Aguirre**

For our group sharing, we each had our own interpretations of our relationship with Jesus and His image that we've experienced in our lives. Some said that Jesus seemed most like a father who guides and protects them in life's challenges, especially these recent ones. Others view Him as a best friend with whom they can share their most cherished moments and all their highs and lows, a best friend who understands them the most, sees through all their masks, and still stays by their side. Everyone held different images of Jesus, but what was common for us all was that Jesus was and always has been what we needed in our lives. A best friend who stays by our side through the good and especially the bad, an adviser who inspires and guides us through our endeavors, a father who protects us from pain and suffering; He was and always will be these and so much more for us, and we are thankful for the opportunity to be able to acknowledge and appreciate that through our sharing." **-Reanna Lat**

The participants found the recollection very meaningful and fitting in preparing their disposition to see the love behind our Lord's sacrifice which we recount during Lent.

## A Birthday Prayer for Lola

Therese Martine (Timmi) C. Aguirre, Magis Youth

**H**eavenly Father, I praise and glorify You... I have many things to thank You for, but I'll group them into two.

First, I'd like to thank You, Lord, for blessing my family with an amazing Lola who continuously cares, unconditionally loves, and endlessly supports. Thank You for giving me a grandmother who gives and gives. Yes, that means all the grand big things like money, clothes, gadgets, jewelry, cool trips and countless more (of course with Lola's help). But I also mean the most mundane but even more special things like her time, presence, support, encouragement, and love. I thank You for giving me a grandmother who is always present my achievements, whether big or small. Thank You for giving me a grandmother who thinks I'm a winner even when I lose, and even when there's no competition at all. I thank You for giving me a grandmother who cheers for me and roots for me. I thank You for giving me a grandmother who believes in me and my abilities. The list can go on and on.

Next, I'd like to thank You, Lord, for blessing me with a grandmother who serves You and her community. I thank You for giving me a role model – living proof of a person for others. Thank You because I believe that my willingness to help and to dedicate my time for my community came from her. Thank You because my eagerness to serve You comes from her as well. In a dark world, it is easy for children to get lost or walk astray, but I am glad that I am not too far from the light because besides my parents, my Lola serves as my light, leading me closer or guiding me back home to You.

Lord, besides all the things I mentioned, I am grateful for as simple as her being alive and well, healthy physically and mentally.



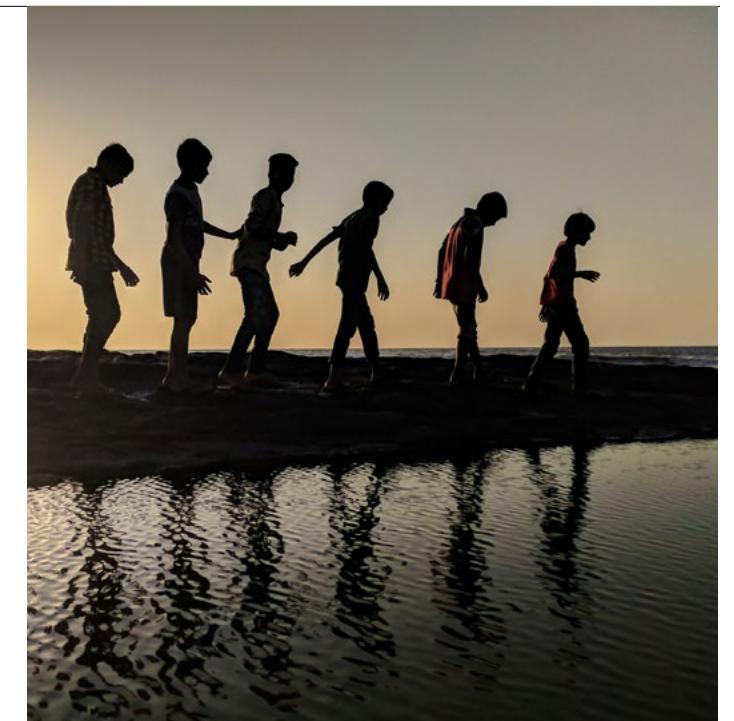
Please continue to bless her with good health. Touch her with Your healing hands and take away whatever pain she may feel. Fill her with a lot of strength and hope to help her find meaning and joy despite difficult times like these. Send her Your Holy Spirit, so she may continue to find ways not just to serve her family, but also her community and You, even as we are all far from each other and unable to physically meet.

Lord, they say You are mysterious and beyond understanding so You reach out to us through Your people – our family, relatives, and friends. Your love has reached sooooo many people because of Lola. This time, I'd like to help Your love reach specifically her. I want to help her understand and feel Your love today (and every day) through a big embrace, a kiss in the cheek, a shared breakfast meal while we talk about our week, and bonding by going window shopping together in the mall after a family lunch. But that's not possible now.

I ask You, Lord, to please turn things around for me even just today. Instead of me helping her see and feel Your love more, please help her see and feel mine as I cannot physically give it right now because of the pandemic. Embrace her for me with Your loving arms and kiss her in the cheek as well. Please fill her heart with love as she has filled many with Yours. Bless her with many more years, so we can spend more time loving and helping each other. Bless her with more years so she may continue to be an inspiration to others, and so she may continue to help Your love reach more. This I ask through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## YSAs Seek Formation, Community, and Service

Mark & Cathy Maulit, Prodigal 102 BCGG, Youth Ministry



**I**t should come as no surprise how the Magis Deo Community has grown over the years since it began with the first marriage encounter weekend in the

**Philippines in 1986.** The couples who had that first encounter and every other couple after them might have had families consisting of just the husband and the wife then, and they may have children now; or any young children of theirs at the time may now be already grown up, or married, or even have children of their own. In any case, as the families who are part of the Magis Deo Community grow, so does the community. This is because we treat members' children as part of the community as well – welcoming them to community celebrations, BCGG get-togethers and other Magis Deo activities.

With this practice of inclusiveness, we eventually began organizing activities tailored for them. These efforts evolved into the Youth Ministry, as the community's other ministries do not address maturing children's needs. To better understand their situation and needs, an assembly for young single adults (YSAs) was organized. As part of the invitation and registration process for the assembly, a survey was conducted on what would make them feel part of the community, and how the community could serve them given their current life circumstances.

Forty-seven YSAs – including those who have just been introduced to Magis Deo and those who have known the community for up to 20 years, with ages ranging from 19 to 33 years, residing not only in Metro Manila but in other parts of the country and the world as well – responded to the survey. In summary, the survey revealed that:

1. The name "Magis Deo Community" to them predominantly means "family."

2. Their feeling of being part of the community is tied to:
  - a. Their parents or other members of the community,
  - b. How much they feel welcomed and encouraged to participate and contribute to the community; and
  - c. The holistic formation they receive through the community.
3. The community could serve them by providing:
  - a. Tailored formation,
  - b. A sense of community; and
  - c. Opportunities to be of service.
4. Majority (35) are interested in having regular activities
5. A significant number (20) would like to help in the community's ministries, specifically the Outreach, Youth, and Community Services Ministries (in this order).

Follow-up questions and a live poll by Susan Concepcion of the Formation Ministry zeroed in on the types of activities they would be most interested in, and the topics they would like to cover. The majority expressed interest in socials or community-building activities. A big number would like to network among themselves on special interests such as sports or hobbies, and professional expertise. Attending workshops and recollections or retreats together was also of interest for many. There was significant interest in providing peer support or counseling for each other and listening to talks and having prayer meetings. The topics they would like to cover, in order of priority, are wellness, leadership, prayer and personal vision-mission. They also mentioned music and other arts, social awareness/action, and social media as possible topics.

The assembly culminated in a celebration of the Holy Eucharist for the First Sunday of Lent by Magis Deo Spiritual Director, Fr. James Gascon, SJ. During his homily and short inspirational message after the mass, Fr. James acknowledged the YSAs' expressed need for a community, and hoped that they would find community in their group. He pointed out two things:

The YSAs are searching for community as they strive to become who they really are; and

"Community" means both "compassion" and "unity." In other words, a community achieves unity when its members have compassion for each other and to those outside the community as well.

Lastly, Fr. James encouraged them to be more than "spiritual" in the narrow sense of that word (pious or outwardly religious) because all of life is spiritual in a broader sense (pointing to God and contributing to a relationship with God) and that they should face all aspects of life together as a community.

In response, Jeric Sun, representing the YSAs, said:

**“**I have known Magis Deo for about 12 years. I am glad that I filled up the survey and attended this assembly. I'm pleasantly surprised that we opened this assembly to those who are not members of

..

**MAGIS DEO YOUTH & FORMATION MINISTRIES**

**FEBRUARY ACTIVITY**



Inviting all single adults to a **SINGLES' ASSEMBLY** culminating in a **holy mass** with Fr. James Gascon, S.J.

stewardship=simplicity



**Live from Rome**

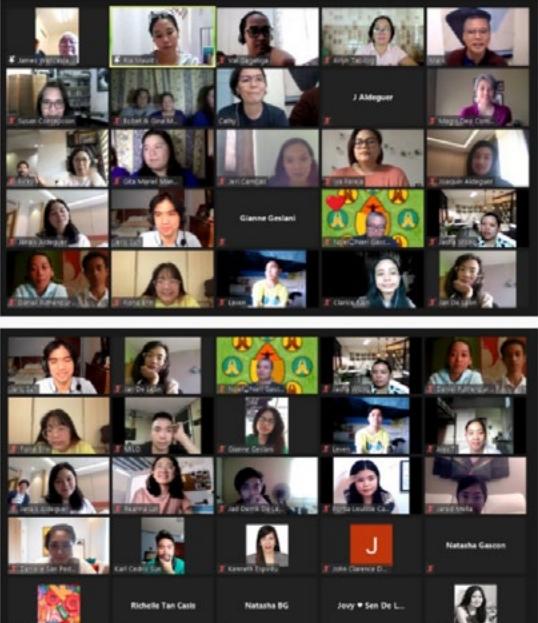
Sunday, February 21, 2021  
2:30 to 4:00 P.M. Philippine Time  
Via ZOOM

To register please text/Viber:  
Arlyn Tablog at 09184153680  
Cathy Mault at 09453746761

February 21, 2021  
30 Magis young single adults  
3 non-Magis

33 attendants

*...searching for community as we strive to become who we really are...*



Magis Deo, and I fervently hope that they will eventually join our community.

Truth be told, I haven't been active in recent years; nonetheless, I was very excited to have heard of Magis Deo's new vision to focus and support our journey as young single adults. Although many here are my friends from the previous years, I see unfamiliar faces and names on the screen whom I hope to see more often in the upcoming months and activities. I am encouraging everyone to take part in and contribute to the programs and activities that the different ministries of our community have to offer. Hopefully, sooner than later, we in Magis YSAs will comprise a second family where we will travel together and grow spiritually. We have nothing to lose, but definitely a lot more to gain."

The YSA Assembly turned out to be a fitting "launching" of Magis Deo's new YSA Program. With the right support from the whole community and, more importantly, the fresh ideas and potent energy of the YSAs themselves, the program will eventually – hopefully sooner, rather than later – evolve into a self-driven ministry.

**What single word or short phrase comes to mind when you hear the name Magis Deo Community?**



**In what way/s do you think/hope/wish the Magis Deo Community could serve you?**

**Provide**

