

Magis

Formation for Mission

Stewardship
Simplicity
Sharing
Service

Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community

August 2019 Issue



Miracle in marriage

Let God into your life and
watch what will happen

Seasons of love

Bonding, renewal, and fun
in the Magis Deo spirit

What makes us Ignatian?

How can we become truly and
authentically Ignatian?

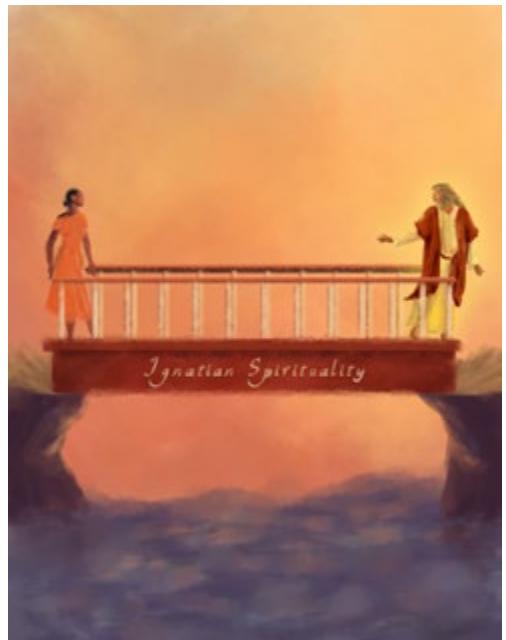
The mystic in us

Awaken your mystic through
St. Ignatius' exercises

Igniting hearts

How the monumental retreat
moved the Youth closer

About the Cover



To celebrate St. Ignatius and his teachings' impact, Levenspeil R. Sangalang from Magis Youth decided to illustrate an image that consists of the following: two cliffs' at two ends, a bridge, and water under it. On the bridge are a woman, and across her stood God — lending a hand wide open.

This is to signify that Ignatian spirituality is like a bridge, a journey towards the next step in life, amidst rough and unpredictable waters that we may face. We build our bridges strong because of the people that we love, and because of reasons, dreams, aspirations. According to St. Ignatius, the key to a strong relationship with God is to reflect and ponder within, to dive deeper. The more we know ourselves, the more we'll learn to love others.

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Magis

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The Eyes of God



Photo by Matt Bays

When I was a child, I used to watch black and white World War II movies where piercing searchlights would sweep the skies for enemy planes. The people called them the Eyes of God, no planes could escape their scrutiny. I realize it is a very accurate image for the divine eyes under whose gaze each of us passes our life, moment by moment, those eyes which Scripture calls a flaming fire. "From Him no creature can be hidden, everything lies bare, everything is brought face to face with Him, this God to whom we must give our account" (Heb. 4:13). The searchlight of God's eyes is always on me, concentrated on me as if I alone existed. And I can never escape it (which is why sin is so terrible; it is always and necessarily an insult flung in the very face of God).

O where can I go from your spirit,
or where can I flee from your face?
If I climb to the heavens you are there.
If I lie in the grave, you are there.

If I take the wings of the dawn
and dwell at the sea's farthest end,
even there your hand would lead me,
your right hand would hold me fast.

If I say: "Let the darkness hide me
and the light around me be night,"
even darkness is not dark for you
and the night is as clear as the day.

(Ps 139:7-12)

The good Sisters taught me about God's unceasing scrutiny, probably intending to deter wrongdoing, but child that I was, I sometimes got the feeling God was watching me for the sole purpose to catch out my sins and to weigh all my failures against the day of judgement! I don't remember this wrong

notion of God keeping me good or making me rebel, though I was good, as any child is. But it certainly didn't draw me to the love of God or make God's presence the delight of my life. It wasn't till many years had passed that I felt the eyes of God gaze, knowing all, seeing all including evil, but not willingly looking for it. "Your eyes are too pure to behold evil, and you cannot look into iniquity" (Hab. 1:13).

No, the gaze that is turned on me is that of love.

"He beholds you wherever you are. He calls you by your name. He sees you. He understands you. He knows your peculiar feelings and thoughts, your weakness, your strength. He views you in your day of rejoicing and your day of sorrow. He notes your countenance. He hears your voice, the beatings of your heart, your very breathing. You cannot shrink from pain more than he dislikes your bearing it. And - he is God" (Newman).

I am never alone then; I cannot be alone. Even in the darkest night, when no human eye may be upon me, no human heart may be concerned with me, the eyes and heart of God are upon me always.

"Behold the time is coming," our Lord said to the apostles as they were about to forsake him, "nay, has already come, when you are to be scattered, each of you taking his own path, and to leave me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me" (John 16:32).

This promise is offered to each of us.

"Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

Adapted from The Presence of God by Anselm Moynihan O.P., pp. 13-15, by Joy Uy-Tioco, Sirach BCGG

What Makes Us Ignatian?

Fr. James Wenceslao U. Gascon, SJ
Magis Deo Spiritual Director

A few days ago, we celebrated the feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the fallen soldier who found God in all things. As a community, Magis Deo prides itself on practicing Ignatian spirituality, one of the few Marriage Encounter Communities faithful to the Ignatian tradition. Being faithful to Ignatian calling is a struggle and a challenge, especially convincing each other to come and be faithful to Magis' activities and bring us closer together as one body.

Perhaps we may ask: "But what makes us Ignatian?" How does one emulate and live up to the life that Ignatius of Loyola lived?

It is NOT the Examen prayer that makes Ignatian. When we spend as little as 15 minutes of our time, twice a day, going back and reflecting how we responded to a God of the ordinary present in our life; caring, challenging, and even chasing us every second and every minute hoping that our awareness is in God alone who is integral to our being... does this make us Ignatian? When we rejoice in gratitude as we are able to positively respond to God's goodness, does this make us Ignatian? When we see our failures, ask for forgiveness, and promise to do better next time, does this make one Ignatian? NO.

It is NOT the Annual Ignatian Retreat (AIR) that makes Ignatian. For forty-eight hours, we withdraw from the market place of ordinary life. We sacrifice productive time for work and income, and spend much money for the cost of a retreat. We don't talk to anyone, we spend hours of prayer, we meditate, we contemplate and even celebrate the Eucharist together. And at the end of the sessions, we gather into small groups and share how God moved us in our prayer periods. Sometimes, we even sit down and start writing our experience, journaling what moves us in our prayer. At the end of the retreat, we go back to ordinary life, refreshed, ready to face the challenges of what life brings along our way. We feel holy. That's good. That's nice. But, does this make one Ignatian? NO.

It is NOT the weekly BCGG prayer meetings that make Ignatian. Taking away precious time from our already very busy day to spend some time praying with our BCGG is such a challenge, not to mention the heavy traffic that we have to endure just to get to our venues. It takes so much will power and determination to be present, much more come on time, for the BCGG prayer meetings. Afterwards, we get consoled or challenged by what our companions shared about how God worked in their lives, allowing us even to confront our issues and answer questions we have been avoiding answering. Just before going home, you share a meal and enjoy each other's company. Does this make one Ignatian? NO.

It is NOT the Interface gatherings that make Ignatian. Two to three BCGGs gather together quarterly. We pray together. We hear from each other. We share meals, which, though simple, are bounteous and delicious when shared with each other. Afterwards, we listen to inputs on praying better or spicing up our

lives as married couples. At the end of the night, we feel we have shared a lot, and received a lot too, looking forward to another interface in a few months. Does this make one Ignatian? NO.

It is NOT the outreach Suyuan that makes Ignatian. Gathering our resources as a BCGG: time, talents, and treasures, we troop to our outreach area where couples are waiting for our Suyuan. We facilitate their adapted ME Weekend; we share our experiences as couples. We guide them in each and every step to the module. At the same time, we enjoy each other's presence, work together, and at the end of the day, we tap our shoulders and say to each other, "we did good." And we thank the each other and the Lord for giving us the opportunity to serve, "without counting the cost." Does this make one Ignatian? NO.

It is NOT the monthly Community Celebration (ComCeleb) that makes Ignatian. On a Sunday morning, we wake up early hoping to be on time for breakfast. Not so much for the food but for the company. It is a time to say hello, chit chat and banter with friends and companions we haven't seen for a month. Our children have their own grouping. They have activities lined up uniquely for them. We move up for the silencing which prepares us to hopefully gain something from inputs given to us. Announcements, reminders and sometimes temporal things like collections and community duties are followed up. But before we say goodbye, only to see each other and meet again next month, we celebrate the Eucharist, meaning Thanksgiving, as a body of Christ. We bring home to our families the body of Christ in communion. Does this make one Ignatian? NO.

In the end, what make us Ignatian?

It is NOT these things we do regularly as a community that make us Ignatian. For these are all means; ways by which we find God and nourish our experience of God in our life. What makes us Ignatian, really, are ALL of them. This is even more evident and relevant when we return to our ordinary lives, beyond our Magis Deo experiences. It is more evident and relevant when we live our faith in and with God who in the end is Jesus Christ. We are truly Ignatian when we become the other Christ, alter Christus, in respective contexts and situations. Most importantly, becoming Ignatian is a gift. Grace builds on nature. Grace is nurtured, that is why ALL of these, not just one, or two, or three, make us Ignatian.

So, in the end, what makes us Ignatian? It is JESUS himself who makes us Ignatian. To be such is a calling that becomes a reality when we see Jesus more clearly, love Jesus more dearly, and follow Jesus more nearly. All that are mentioned above serve as tools in our search that began as a thirst and deep longing for Jesus. The more that we participate in these means, the more that we realize that only Jesus, only in Jesus, it IS Jesus, who can make us become truly and authentically Ignatian. It is then that we are worthy of the name, CHRISTIAN, which we received in baptism. Happy feast to all!

Being and Becoming in Prayer

Susan Concepcion, Archangel Gabriel BCGG



Photo by Shutterstock

These past months, prayer deepening sessions have been conducted during BCGG interfaces. How can a single, simple word have such a heavy meaning. It is easy to get married, propose (hopefully, the girl will say “yes”), save, plan, and say your “I do’s,” but keeping the marriage happy is an entirely different thing.

As one of the assigned prayer facilitators, I had the privilege of echoing the teachings of Fr. James Gascon on prayer to two BCGGs. One of the topics we talked about was how one should pray in a way that comes most naturally. Many of the BCGG members are comfortable with Lectio Divina, the praying style where, upon reading a passage from Scripture, one finds meaning in a word or phrase that stands out or touches one’s heart. Some enjoy Ignatian contemplation, that prayer style where one uses the senses and the imagination to make a Gospel scene come to life. Several, however, have difficulty using this praying style. Some regularly pray the Examen of Consciousness, a prayer where one reflects on the events of the day in order to detect God’s presence and discern his direction for us. And still others find comfort in the traditional praying style and use rote prayers such as the rosary.

Because of our uniqueness, we relate to God differently. For St. Ignatius of Loyola, it is not so much what we do in

prayer but who we are in God’s presence. Prayer should be a comfortable experience thus we can sit, stand, walk, kneel. We can choose our place of prayer and type of prayer. When we pray, it is necessary to just be ourselves. When we are true to ourselves, we do not wear any masks. We become more open to God and our relationship with Him becomes more genuine.

Regardless of whatever form of prayer we choose, to make our prayer more fruitful, we need to review what was significant about our prayer. What were the messages we received? Are there any actions we need to take? Our prayer needs to move from our head, to our heart, and to our hands and feet.

I am reminded of a quote attributed to C.S. Lewis, who is most famous for having written the widely-read children’s book, *The Narnia Chronicles*. In the movie *Shadowlands* (directed by Richard Attenborough and produced in 1993) that tells of Lewis’ and his wife’s story, Lewis says to his friend, “I pray because I can’t help myself. I pray because I’m helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn’t change God, it changes me.”

In prayer, we start by **being** ourselves with God, but we end with **becoming** more like the person He wants us to be.

List of Pastoral Council Eligible

Guided by the Magis election guidelines, these are the names of the Pastoral Council Eligible couples. We beg and pray for openness and to let God’s will be done come October Comcel elections. We enjoin you to pray as couples and as a Community for God’s guidance and providence.

NORTH Sector:

Agnus Dei

1. Charley and Jay NgSy
2. Claro & Linda Santos
3. Fred & Cora de Guzman

Archangel Gabriel

4. Noel & Yayette Ventigan
5. Jhun & Ellen Coronel
6. Mon & Glo Umali

Prodigal 102

7. Jojo & Rhea Gaddi
8. Mark & Cathy Maulit

Song of Ruth

9. Danny & Lillian Collado
10. Randy & Cecile Rivera

Chronicles

11. Ney & Pinky Rosas

CENTRAL Sector

Easter

12. Edwin & Jes Gumila
13. Rico & Terry Lim

Matthew

14. Winston & Mae Cruz
15. Ian & Elaine Serranilla
16. Ricky & Trixie Sun

Samaritans

17. Leony & Mia Parada

Sirach

18. Ferdie Joson

Transfiguration

19. Levy & Roxanne Espiritu
20. JayR & Leila Leccio

Thessalonians

21. Chacho & Marlyn Angeles

SOUTH Sector:

Francis

22. Benz & Vina Dimanalata

James Brother of John

23. Noel & Nerissa Gascon
24. Boy & Merl Cruz

Psalm 98

25. Mon & Alice Go

Tala

26. Joey & Maricel Suarez

Magis Night 2019: Seasons of Love

Marcia Balderas, Manuel Ahyong Jr., Jane Aldeguer, Cesar Sangalang and Fortunato de la Peña

The June 1, 2019 celebration of Seasons of Love, the theme of Magis Night 2019, can be described best by the comments and feedback of Magis Deo members:

1. The Magis Night was well-attended, enjoyable, and a major bonding event among Magis Deo members. The Mass was very solemn with music only from Father Gascon's singing. His voice was fascinating. Most attendees danced the night out. I danced the boogie with Philip Panlilio. So sorry na lang to the others who wanted to dance with me because I left early. The Magis Night was very well organized and successful in all aspects.
2. We always have our prayer meetings, our ComCels, and our outreach programs. These community activities and our personal prayer time help us grow spiritually as individuals, couples, and family. But every so often, we come together in joyful celebration as one indivisible family under God. And so on a warm summer evening last June 1, the Magis Deo community showed up in full force in colorful outfits to celebrate love and life, and thank God for His countless blessings. It was Magis Night with the theme "Seasons of Love."
3. The Magis Night was a much-awaited date and fun night for Magis members. Dubbed "Seasons of Love," this was hosted by the North Sector headed by Sec. Boy and Kit dela Peña. Attendees came with their season of choice... Rainy, Sunny, Winter, Spring, Autumn, with some complementing their spouse's attire. The theme was evident with the perky decorations by Song of Ruth. Agnus Dei, Mustard Seed and Exodus assisted in ticket distribution and registration; Archangel Gabriel handled the mass preparations. The Flashback Band (c/o Dr. Leslie Gatchalian, Psalm 98) filled the Acropolis Clubhouse with Magis' favorite songs, and kept us on our feet. Exodus, Magnificat and St. Peter handled food preparations. Prodigal 102, Chronicles and Matthew helped in the program. The night was full of life and laughter with Trixie Sun and Ian Serranilla of Matthew as hosts; they also conducted the games.
4. It was a well-attended and highly-participated couple's night. The dance instructors were a big help in getting more members on the dance floor. And yes, the Flashbacks Band provided music that all enjoyed dancing and listening to, and singing with. The program enabled everyone to have more time to party and bond with members of the community. The lechon baka made everyone excited and was queued on at dinner time. The evening was a well-planned event, and having the major elements of the evening planned, handled and sponsored by the different sectors proved to be effective.

St. Peter BCGG was tasked to take photos of the event. We found a photographer to take beautiful and memorable pictures that evening. Though the weather was hot and humid, everyone enjoyed the food, the games, the dancing and of course the fellowship. God's love is ever present in our lives and if we can only imbibe in our hearts the love God has given us, our love is truly, definitely for ALL seasons, 365 days a year, 24 hours a day! God must have been smiling at us, cheering, clapping and celebrating with us. For in that evening, I saw God's love and image in each who attended, young and old. What a wonderful evening indeed. Should memories fade, we have the pictures to remind us how beautiful the evening was and how blessed the Magis Deo community has been all these years.

To sum it up, Magis Night met its objectives – bonding, renewal and fun – all in the spirit of Magis Deo.



Magis Night 2019: Seasons of Love



Shepherding the Domestic Church

Levy & Roxanne Espiritu, Group Praxis

Fr. James Gascon gave the first of two parts of the topic “Shepherding the Domestic Church.”

As Christian parents, we are called on to be shepherds to our domestic church which is our family.

Being a parent is a very important undertaking and an on the job training. It entails a lot of hard work, patience and conviction.

Fr. James further expounded on the role of parents and the importance of being effective in the role we play. (Note: *The slide presentation provided by Fr. James was mostly in Tagalog; we translated them to English for ease and brevity.*)

We become effective parents by being aware and by being present to our children. Inasmuch as we learn from our dealings with them, we in turn continuously find ways to guide them in their growth and development.

Before we can become effective in our roles as parents, we should be able to do the following:

1. Be a good spouse to our wife/husband.
2. Know how to listen.
3. Know how to pray.

Parenting style varies depending on the age, the personality and the development of the child.

The developmental stages of the child are:

Psycho-social development <i>Planning Stage (0-6): We build habits, we instill values.</i> <i>Children learn what they see and hear.</i>					
	Very important person	What the child needs	What the child learns	What the child discovers	What the child develops
Infancy (0-2)	Mother	Bonding	“I am what I receive”	Trust vs. Mistrust	Hope
Play Age (3-5)	Family	Feeling, sensing, imagining, moving	“I am what I imagine I will be”	Initiative vs. guilt	Purpose
School Age (6-10)	Teacher	Doing, producing	“I am what I can do & learn”	Industry vs. inferiority	Competence
	<i>Teen brain: Emotional brain rules, raging hormones, brake system not fully functioning, and thinking brain last to develop.</i>				
Adolescence (10 to 20)	Friends/Peers	Finding self	“I am ME”	Identity vs. Role confusion	Fidelity

Parents also go through their own mid-life crisis and transition. Despite this, if we know ourselves, we can be better parents to our children. Our parenting styles matter, and it is important that we are aware of the kind of parents we want to be to our children. More importantly, in parenting our children, we should be aware of, and do the following for them:

1. Help develop their self worth and self esteem.
2. Help develop their Intelligences: IQ, EQ and AQ.
3. Promote positive relationships.
4. Instill discipline: intrinsic vs. extrinsic.
5. Motivate them.
6. Teach responsibility through tasks and chores.
7. Instill in them values: family's high values as well as the non-negotiables.

As God has gifted us with children and entrusted them to our care, we as Christians and as parents are called to be shepherds commissioned to spread God's good news beginning with our family, being the domestic church.

Continue on page 11

Satisfy the Soul

Levenspiel Sangalang, Magis Youth

Days before the July community celebration, I was asked to facilitate the Youth session. Truth be told, I'm not really a good speaker — I'm better off expressing my thoughts on paper since this way I wouldn't have to stutter, or think of the next words to say. But I accepted it. With almost a year of not being in a social environment, something about this invitation challenged me. Plus, I've never really actually talked to my fellow Youth members. I guess in a way, as an ambivert I wanted to break my walls through it.

The session's theme was Ignatian Spirituality, coined from St. Ignatius of Loyola who was the first Superior General of the Society of Jesus. And so as I rummaged his life and his impact, I came across this quote that seemed really timely — not just for the session but personally:

“For it is not knowing much, but realizing and relishing things interiorly, that contents and satisfies the soul.”

— St. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises*

He was all about introspection, to dig deep into one's spiritual self. And boy, did I dig deep on what activity the Youth members should do. Then the “Eureka!” moment came: that spirituality is a bridge to Christ. I went ahead and

Shepherding the Domestic Church, continued from page 10

The following poem shared by Fr. James aptly sums up the importance of our role in raising our children:

Children LEARN what they LIVE

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn

If children live with hostility, they learn to fight

If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive

If children live with pity, they learn to be sorry for themselves

If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy

If children live with jealousy, they learn to feel envy

If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty

If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence

If children live with tolerance, they learn patience

If children live with praise, they learn to appreciate

If children live with acceptance, they learn to love

If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves

illustrated two ends, a bridge, water under it, and called it the “Ignatian Spirituality Bridge.” Luckily, it was approved!

The first Sunday of July came. In a flash, I was in front of around 25 Youth members, with my hand shaking and grasping a mike. Confrontation was once something that I avoided, but now it was looking at me straight in the eye. I repressed my shyness and remembered this wasn't about me, so I glossed over what St. Ignatius' legacy and spirituality meant to a lot of people. Afterwards, I let them reflect and express: (a) illustrate oneself on one end, God on the other; (b) draw what makes their bridge strong, what keeps them determined to go through life's challenges; and (c) state what they are willing to detach themselves from in order to move forward in life towards God.

After half an hour, I let them share their insights within groups. Some eventually shared their conclusions with everyone. It was ultimately refreshing to know who these kids are, even if just for a pinch. I thought to myself that I wasn't alone with my feelings and experiences. It made me feel we were all in this together, our bridges connected and strong.

“Go forth and set the world on fire.”

— St. Ignatius of Loyola

If children live with recognition, they learn it is good to have a goal

If children live with sharing, they learn generosity

If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness

If children live with fairness, they learn justice

If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect

If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and in those about them.

If children live with friendliness, they learn that the world is a nice place in which to live.



YOUTH

Magis Deo's Ignite Weekend

Compiled by Mark & Cathy Maulit, Youth Ministry, Prodigal 102

On 20-21 July 2019, the first Magis Deo Ignite Weekend was held at the Sacred Heart Novitiate, Novaliches, Quezon City. It was facilitated by Fr. Roseller Atilano, Jr., SJ, Campus Ministry Head of the Ateneo de Manila Junior and Senior High Schools. Assisting Fr. Ro were two of his campus ministers, Bro. PJ Banaybanay and Josh Jalrione. Mark and Cathy Maulit and Noel and Neri Gascon were auxies at the Weekend.

Fourteen youth participated in the overnight retreat designed by Fr. Ro and his team: about love, forgiveness and Christian commitment. It was Fr. Ro's personal offering for the Year of the Youth. At the end of the retreat the participants were asked to describe their feelings before and after the retreat, what the highlights were for them, and why. This is what they shared:

♥ Janais Aldeguer

I didn't have any feelings coming into this retreat because I have been to a lot of retreats prior to this, and a couple of them were with Magis Deo too. But it surprises me that each retreat is different. It sounds cheesy but I'm coming out of this retreat a little happier because it came at the perfect time for me. I have been struggling with myself and with my peers lately. I think what helped me is I'm aware now of all my blessings especially when it comes to myself, my siblings, and my parents of course. I'm really grateful for it and it surprised me to see that those whom we see during ComCels are also going through a lot, and it's nice that we go to go through this retreat together and got to know each other better.

♥ Joia Aldeguer

This retreat was my very first retreat because I am in one of the younger batches in my school and retreats are for the older batches. Through this retreat in just one day, I learned a lot about life and about others. I realized how much love I receive from my siblings and my parents.

The highlight of the retreat is receiving letters. I know what happens because I write letters to my siblings when they went to retreats in the past, but I didn't expect it during this retreat. It was nice to be on the receiving end this time and to receive letters too from people I'm not really close to. I think letters are one of the highest expressions of love so I really appreciate receiving letters. Another highlight was hugging my siblings. It was a different feeling and it was my first time to experience it. I didn't like it but I like it now.

♥ Joaquin Aldeguer

So I guess I was scared because I was asked to share and I wasn't sure what I was going to talk about. But I knew that with the grace of God and as long as I trust in Him, I would be able to give a good talk. This retreat has inspired me to keep motivating myself and to keep striving to be the best person, friend, sibling or son that I can be.

I believe that there are things we can't control but we control how we look at things. I'm just being grateful for the

gift of humility, spirituality and discernment. I can't thank God enough for everything I have received through this retreat and hope that everyone else can be equally blessed.

♥ Ria Maulit

Prior to this retreat I've been feeling like just another ordinary day because lately everything has been me struggling to get through every single day but after this retreat I feel more whole, like the elements that make me are in harmony. And like I said last night I definitely still feel lost but not a hopeless kind of lost.

♥ Raffa Maulit

Before I came here it was just like a normal day and after this experience I was much more motivated because sometimes you feel like you are in this world and you don't have a purpose and because you don't see what you mean to others. Now I feel much better knowing that I can do something out of my life.

♥ Denise Wee

Yesterday before coming to the retreat and until last night I felt really lost. But this morning I woke up feeling a lot lighter. I felt blessed and grateful. I think the most meaningful thing for me in this retreat is how I got to listen to everyone's stories. I felt God's love through everyone.

♥ Allen Wee

I came here feeling like something was missing. I knew I was loved. I knew God was there. But I never emphasized it. After yesterday's retreat I feel really loved and that I'm not alone and that we're all special in our own little ways. The most meaningful thing for me was the sharing last night. I realized I am not alone facing these problems and there are probably people like me who are going through the same things. I hope we also get to meet and get closer.

♥ Jessa Gavilla

Before the retreat I felt really troubled but after the retreat I felt somewhat calmer. I was reminded of God's love and God's never-ending grace and at the same time I was reminded that it is okay for you to be tired and to be patient with myself.

♥ Jeri Cambas

The most meaningful for me was that I was reminded again and again that we are God's Beloved. And for the things that are important in life like forgiveness, we only have to pray for God's guidance. I feel very blessed and thankful that I went through this retreat because my last retreat was when I was in Grade 5 and I've been through a lot of changes when I started college last year. But I feel very grateful and blessed that I met all these people because their sharings have inspired me. And I am very thankful that I met kuyas and ates like Ate Fiona, Kuya Joaquin, Ate Jessa and Ate Gita because I feel their sharings really helped me to be a better ate to my siblings as well.

Continue on page 14

Grace and Wonder with Magis Deo Kids

Zarah C. Gagatiga, Emmanuel BCGG

As far as I can remember, my family and I have facilitated sessions with the kids and the youth of Magis Deo. In several occasions Domeng and I led the singing in talks designed for them, after which we assisted in activities of the assigned facilitators. A year ago, our eldest, Nico, joined me in the clay workshop for Magis Deo Kids. Last month, it was couple power time again as Domeng and I led a pop-up card making activity for the children.

The grace in taking part in these activities is plentiful. As a family, we get the opportunity to work together outside the comforts and confines of our home. To be called upon by friends and companions in the community to serve and to share our talent is another. We grow as persons when we share and serve the community. This is an experience I personally value. The love and devotion we learn and apply in the family should spread out to the bigger society and to the world in general. Often, parents need the help of others in teaching their children. I am thankful that Magis Deo, in its own way, has helped us raise our children well.

Lastly, it is a wonderful experience knowing the young children of Magis Deo members and companions. They are diversely talented, confident and respectful kids. Being with the Magis Deo children fills me with hope. Imagine the programs we can design for them. Think about continuity and formation as a developmental program. The fish and bread are multiplying before our eyes and we only need to discern more to know what to do with these graces and wonderment.

Magis Deo's Ignite Weekend, continued from page 13

♥ Gita Manuel

Before I went to the front, I was already crying because my mom showed me the letter for my college scholarship. Prior to this retreat I was anxious at the same time exhausted. My prayers were answered because I got a 100 percent scholarship. In itself, the scholarship is a big help to my family and besides that I get to study in the school where I already feel at home. It really feels great. And after this retreat I feel really, really energized. I want this energy to radiate to everyone because I feel everyone has become so tired and so busy striving to achieve more and more, and we tend to forget ourselves. I want everyone to remember that chargers don't only work for smart phones, cell phones and gadgets; they also work for us people. Chargers can come in the form of people. For me it came in the form of this group – the people around me, my family and God. And it helped me become a more understanding person and I got to understand myself better. You can't just keep striving and striving without taking a break and this retreat was it – a long charging break for me and I hope it was a charging break for everyone else too.

♥ Kim San Jose

The whole retreat, and at this moment, my heart is pounding because there are a lot of emotions that filled the last 24 hours. Because we look inside ourselves to express ourselves. I learned that despite our age differences we have similarities. Last night we had so much fun hanging out with each other because it was our last chance to do that. I'm also happy that my roommate was Ate Fiona.

♥ Yesha Gascon

Forgiveness is not an emotion but a decision. If you had a fight with a friend and you want to be friends again, you can simply decide to forgive your friend and not let yourself be ruled by your emotions so that you come back to being on good terms instead of bad terms with each other.

♥ Leven Sangalang

Before this retreat I felt comfortable being alone and now I feel comfortable being part of a group. After graduating I really felt dormant. I was at home every day and doing the same rhythm. I never really got to meet and talk to you guys because I was really shy. After graduating I forgot how to be myself and how to talk to people and how to share my feelings. This retreat could not have come at a better time in my life because I'm preparing to go to the next stage in my life and the retreat really made me feel confident. And when I heard the different stories from other people it was really comforting. Hearing these things really changed me and inspired me. I am very thankful for this experience and wish for more.

Finally, Fr. Ro challenged the participants to impart the fire that was ignited within them to the other youth of the Magis Deo Community as well. We look forward to these 14 youth serving as auxies at the next Ignite Weekend.

Ignite

Magis Deo Youth Retreat / July 20 - 21, 2019 / Sacred Heart Novitiate, Novaliches





Magis Deo's 2nd Annual Ignatian Retreat for the Year 2019, entitled 'Bringing Out the Mystic in Us (The Ignatian Way), was held at the Sacred Heart Novitiate in Novaliches last August 02 - 04. The retreat was directed by Fr. Mon Bautista, SJ and participated in by 43 retreatants (not in particular order):

Ney & Pinky Rosas, Noel & Yayette Ventigan, Lito & Mona Ramos, Ferdie Joson, Pam Narciso, J-Gab Gabriel, Lito & Anne Naldo, Laney Ricohermoso, Uriel & Yella Castillo, Regie & Daisy de Guzman, Jojo & Jane Aldeguer, Marcia Balderas, Joe & Myr Serranilla, Rey Mella, Lillian Collado, Eugene & Ethel Araullo, Randy & Cecille Rivera, Benjie & Fely Santiago, Mimi Santos, Ricky & Trixie Sun, Tony & Benny Vistan, Monchito Mossesgeld, Rhea Gaddi, Emil Dabandan, Dodo and Jon Sta. Maria, Rudy & Lyn Ebardo, Roel & Nette Wong



Bringing Out the Mystic in Us

Annual Ignatian Retreat (AIR) || Fr. Mon Bautista, SJ
August 2-4, 2019 || Sacred Heart Novitiate

Coming off from an emotional and "teary" ME Weekend for our presenting couple duties a week before the AIR, we headed off to "bathe" ourselves in God's loving presence. Classes and work might have been suspended that Friday, but the heavy rains did not dampen the spirit of the 43 retreatants from 10 BCGGs and 1 ME Class.

My sister Ruziel, a graduate of CeFam, an attendee of the MEW, and who once attended an AIR with me a couple of years back, regretted that she found out too late that I was going to attend an AIR. She would have joined. She has been looking for a retreat this year. While it is true that aside from the suggested 1 retreat or formation program in our 2019 Thrust of 111223, we truly thirst to be nourished in this well – our AIR.

It was unclear to me on what exactly "Awakening the Mystic in Us" meant, and what to look forward to. But I found this AIR rich and enriching. Rich because it was like taking 4 mini-retreats after having gone through the 4 key aspects of St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises as Mystic:

1. Marian (go to Jesus through Mary) – This was instantly a very enlightening Marian Retreat. We were also able to "look in" and define the true disposition of our hearts.
2. Eucharistic (go to celebrate the Eucharist with much meaning) – Understanding and deeply appreciating the beauty of the Eucharist. We looked at how St. Ignatius maximized the Eucharist:
 - a. As his primary prayer of Petition
 - b. As his primary prayer of Gratitude
 - c. To draw consolation, courage and assurance
 - d. To dispose himself better – when doing actual discerning and choosing
3. A Mysticism of Loving Surrender (entrust and surrender to the Lord with much love) – Learning to open our hearts and minds to God's loving hands. Keeping in mind the pre-conditions to loving surrender:
 - a. Healing – we are broken because of pride, attachments, fears, insecurities, hurts, etc.
 - b. Trusting – which is not a feeling but a choice, such as if we thank much, we trust much.
 - c. Remembering – if we forget our blessings, we start to be discouraged.
4. A Mysticism of compassionate service (serve with much compassion) – Begging to see as Christ sees, feel as Christ feels, and love as Christ loves. Shared also were indicators to help us in the act of choosing / discernment:

- a. Look at our desires (our deeper, holy desires)
- b. Look at our talents and treasure
- c. Look at our personal experiences of pain and sorrow
- d. What is the most compassionate thing to do? Where compassion is strongest, there God's will is.

I said too that the AIR was enriching. Enriching because of the realization, enlightenment and reflections which make me look at things in a different perspective, moving me to be appreciative, humbled, purified, hopeful, and feel tremendously loved.

There was a sharing portion before we ended. And one suggestion for sharing is what you wish to say to the community. I thought I would share mine here in the newsletter. **Where compassion is strongest, there God's will is.** I guess this is why we said yes to being part of the council candidates in 2017, or why we are active in different ministries. It is because **Magis is where our heart is.** And with the different sharings during the AIR, and even in our BCGG prayer meetings, we can clearly see how deeply people value Magis... how we draw strength from each other, how we find enlightenment and hope in the faith sharing, find value and learnings in the different teachings, drawn closer to God and our inner selves through our various formation programs, how we are one with the challenged couples in our outreach activities and Suyuans, and how we find affection and consolation in the friendships built.

As we give, we also receive...

So dear Magis companions... We know that deep in our hearts, there is Magis Deo. This is God's will for us. This is where our compassion is, the many people who call Magis Deo their home. We pray and hope that we will open our hearts and minds, **to give**, to share our time and talents, in whatever way we can in building and enriching our home, our Magis home.

It was a rainy Sunday as we ended AIR, spirits recharged, "soaking" in God's love as well as the from our Magis companions.

"You are very fortunate to have a community that feels with you, and supports you. Truly unique in Magis Deo."

Fr. Mon Bautista, SJ

Jojo & Jane Aldeguer
Chair Couple / Chronicles BCGG

Knowing God

Chacho Angeles, Thessalonians BCGG

(1)

Father send Your Holy Spirit
That I may continue to live my faith,
In the midst of chaos and suffering,
Despite my inability to do something
About it. Make me persevere and with
Patience, live as Your son teaches.
For the fruit comes even as I do not
Know how a plant grows from a seed
And bear much fruit. Let the fruit of Your
Love guide my life that others may taste the
Sweetness of Your love. Let the clouds hiding
The divine mystery never stop me from
Seeking Your truth and reaching for the
Fruit that is always within the reach of my
Heart, for Your love envelops all, and its
Light will forever guide my way. Amen.

(2)

From the sea water rises to the heavens
Forms dark clouds heavy with moisture, and
From high up in the heavens fall to earth,
Come together and form a unity of purpose,
The rivers rush to union with its source.

There must be purpose to all conventions,
After weeks of preparation, only to forget?
Father help me remember, help me live the
True end of all these everything, your love.
My rising, my falling, my rushing are all
Towards one end, union with You. Help me
Transform this cloud of forgetting into a
Cloud of unknowing, for this world is but
A shell, and my flesh is not my true self.
I humbly pray reveal to me Yourself as
You revealed Yourself in Jesus, the man.

(3)

Loving brother Jesus,
Help me understand that my salvation
Is gradually knowing in my heart that
You are fully human and fully divine,
That I too have in me Your divinity and
Humanity, a unified child of a loving
Father – of the earth, and of Heaven,
That I may live as You lived and taught,
Unfettered by sins that You have taken up
In Your merciful and compassionate heart,
And thus come gradually my salvation,
As I start to realize my true nature.
Amen.

(4)

Let me learn to touch You
When I touch a flower's petals,
When I touch a tree's rough trunk,
When I touch the wet moist soil,
And the wet sand of the beach,
When I touch my apo's soft skin,
When I shake hands with someone.

Let me learn to see You
When I see a plain cultivated with golden rice,
When I see a river flowing down to the sea,
When I see a mountain side bare or with trees,
When I see a volcano spewing smoke and ash.

Let me learn to feel You
When I feel the earth shake under my feet,
When I feel the cold amihan wind on my face,
When I feel the warm sea on my feet,
When I feel the pain of somebody who
Suffered a tragedy of death of a loved one,
When I feel my wife's love and the warmth
Of her embrace,
When I feel the joy in somebody's smile.
You're not really absent in my life, in this world,
You are in my world, in everything and everyone,
And most of all, in my heart.

Let me love You as You love me,
Let me love others as You love all of us.
Let me love You as you love Your creation.
Let my reason for being be Your love
And sharing this love with others.
Let me be my true self, You in my flesh and
In my heart.
Amen.

(5)

Father,
The desire for worldly things come easy
To me for I am of this world, fleeting and
Passing. But I too am of You, eternal, loving,
Out-pouring Your self to all, the opposite of
My selfish desires. Your blessing and grace
I need to overcome my desires, and lead me
To that loving path that Your son has laid out
For us to follow. He has all the power to rule the
World as worldly leaders do, but His kingdom
Is not of this world, and this path will lead me
To His kingdom. I pray for the wisdom to
Discern this path, to know this love, and for the
Strength to persevere despite the weakness
Of my flesh. Grant me too the humility to
Obey You, depend on You, and need You
In all my undertakings. Amen.

Rock Bottom

Zarah C. Gagatiga, Emmanuel BCGG



Photo by Examined Existence

sunset. Night and day. Consolation and desolation. I have acknowledged this duality and continue to seek the graces to be had when journeying through peaks and valleys. It is an adventure where God often surprises and lends humor to my often serious take on life. He wants me to smile and laugh. What a wonderful way of loving.

I have been hearing the term rock bottom too many times recently. Late in July, NBA player Jeremy Lin openly admitted that he has hit rock bottom in his athletic career. A friend who has been struggling financially described to me his current situation as hitting rock bottom. The commencement speaker in our graduation ceremonies last June shared her rock bottom experience in the past with the audience of graduating seniors, parents and the faculty and staff of the school. In social media, there are more depressing news and posts about the state of the country and the world. I couldn't help but think that humanity and the world have hit rock bottom.

In personal, local and global contexts, the doom and gloom of hitting rock bottom is inescapable in this day and age. Like everyone else, I do have moments of doubt, worry, fear and anxiety. Events in my life of late made me feel I have hit rock bottom. I sometimes ask, is this part of the transition to midlife? My husband who seems to have a stronger resolve in the changing cycles of life simply called it growing up and growing old. What I find funny in the midst of all these is my acceptance of this inevitable pull of gravity towards a place called rock bottom.

One cannot always stay at the zenith. What goes up will eventually go down. It is the law of nature. Sunrise and

Pope Francis continues to preach about smiling through tough times. Easy for him to say? Look, the man has only one good lung. Go to the Pontiff's Twitter page and his message of hope and faith is like a Patronus charm casting away Dementors. I turn to my Ignatian prayer app, the 3 Minute Retreat, and there I find assurance when reading the Scripture and reflections of the day. In prayer meetings and deep conversations with friends, I discovered that everyone has fallen into that pit of loneliness and desperation. Yet, I see them regularly continuing on, keeping the faith, sharing their spiritual travels in the darkness and in the light. At some point, I realized that our purpose, really, is to become guardians to the isolation that others feel. Companions in the journey, indeed.

So what of rock bottom and the forces that pull us down to it? We have all been there and so is Jesus Christ, God's only Son.

My Journey to Fitness and Good Health

Atoy Apo, Exodus BCGG



Photo by Pxhere

was in my early 50's when I got the idea that my sickly body can still be improved. Sickly because I easily catch colds, which means having health problems almost everyday. After my graduating from my second course, B.S. Nursing, in 2006, I decided to sell our Honda City and buy a cheaper mode of transportation. I replaced our car with a motorcycle, which is a bit harder to drive and maneuver, and... I didn't know how to drive one then.

There are many reasons why I decided to buy a motorcycle, the most obvious reasons being: it is cheaper and uses very little gasoline. It was very economical and apt considering our meager finances, and very useful for our small computer shop business. That was when I realized I can be more physically fit by riding our bike every day. I used our motorbike to run errands, buy goods for our small business, to bring and fetch our daughter from school, and buy food for the family.

After just a few months of driving the motorbike, I felt the good effects: I had less episodes of cough and colds. But as the saying goes – all good things must come to an end. After three and a half years of driving my bike, I decided to sell it because we were in a financial crisis. In 2009 I had to let go of our only means of transportation.

Fast forward to 2015. I was 60 years old and got my SSS pension and my Pag-ibig Fund Contributions. I decided to use part of my retirement money to buy a bicycle in order to have some exercise. From September 2015 and thereon I regularly biked from our house to UP Diliman or to the Quezon Memorial Circle. I slowly but surely became more fit and have good health. Also in 2015, 2016 and 2017 I joined the annual Tour of the Fireflies, a 30 km bike ride around Metro Manila Cities: from Marikina to Pasig to San Juan to Quezon City.

After the Tour was scrapped in 2018 I decided to experiment with other fitness regimens. I tried power walking, trail running, nordic pole walking and slow running. It was slow running that I felt most advantageous for my age as senior Citizen and as one who experiences frozen shoulders once in a while. When I was still a newbie, I only started at 1 km, then 2 km, and then 3 km. Then I reached the 5 km mark during my weekly slow run. Because I felt confident I could do more, I tried 6 km, then 7 km, then 8 km, until I achieved the 14 km mark in some days. Nowadays I slow run 2 to 3 times a week in the UP Diliman oval, averaging 9.3 km. I feel more fit than when I was in my 50's or maybe even in my 40's. I feel stronger, feel healthier and my metabolism is faster (I believe) and I feel more sexy. Sexy because at 64 going 65, I and my wife Malou are still very intimate with each other... Thanks to my physical fitness journey that started when I learned to drive a motorbike in my early 50's.

ME Weekend

July 26 - 28, 2019 / BLD Covenant House
Dasmarinas, Cavite



ME Class 131 with Fr. Allan Abuan, Josie Llamas, Jojo & Jane Aldeguer, and Ian & Elaine Seranilla



ME Class 129 (Auxies), not in particular order: Sonny & Sheila Maroon, NJ & Vem Sancho, Miguel & Paula Barretto, Rafa & Cynthia Rodriguez (not in photo), Cesar & Delsa Sangalang, Viven & Gayle Valdez, Kel & Mitz Sumalinog (not in photo), and Topher & Shiela Aberia (not in photo), with Fr. Allan Abuan, Josie Llamas, Domeng & Zarah Gagatiga, Winston & Mae Cruz, Jojo & Jane Aldeguer, and Ian & Elaine Seranilla

ME Class 131 Couples



Jerry & Tina Villanueva



Gian & Tala Cea



Mac & Lori Bernal



Ariel & Eva Lopez



JR & May Dalmacio



Carlo & Luziel Joven



Gene & Mavic Napiza



Cerwin & Kaye Diaz



Elvin & Clara Santiago



Ralph & Marianne Salvilla



Willy & Mhina Aborca



Jhun & Jhing Jumadiao



Fred & Hazel Adolfo



Andy & Evelyn Pagtalunan



Romel & Ruth Lat



Nida Ibaso



Charles & Meann Unidad



Jojo & Keyti Jarder



Efren & Cristy Agustin



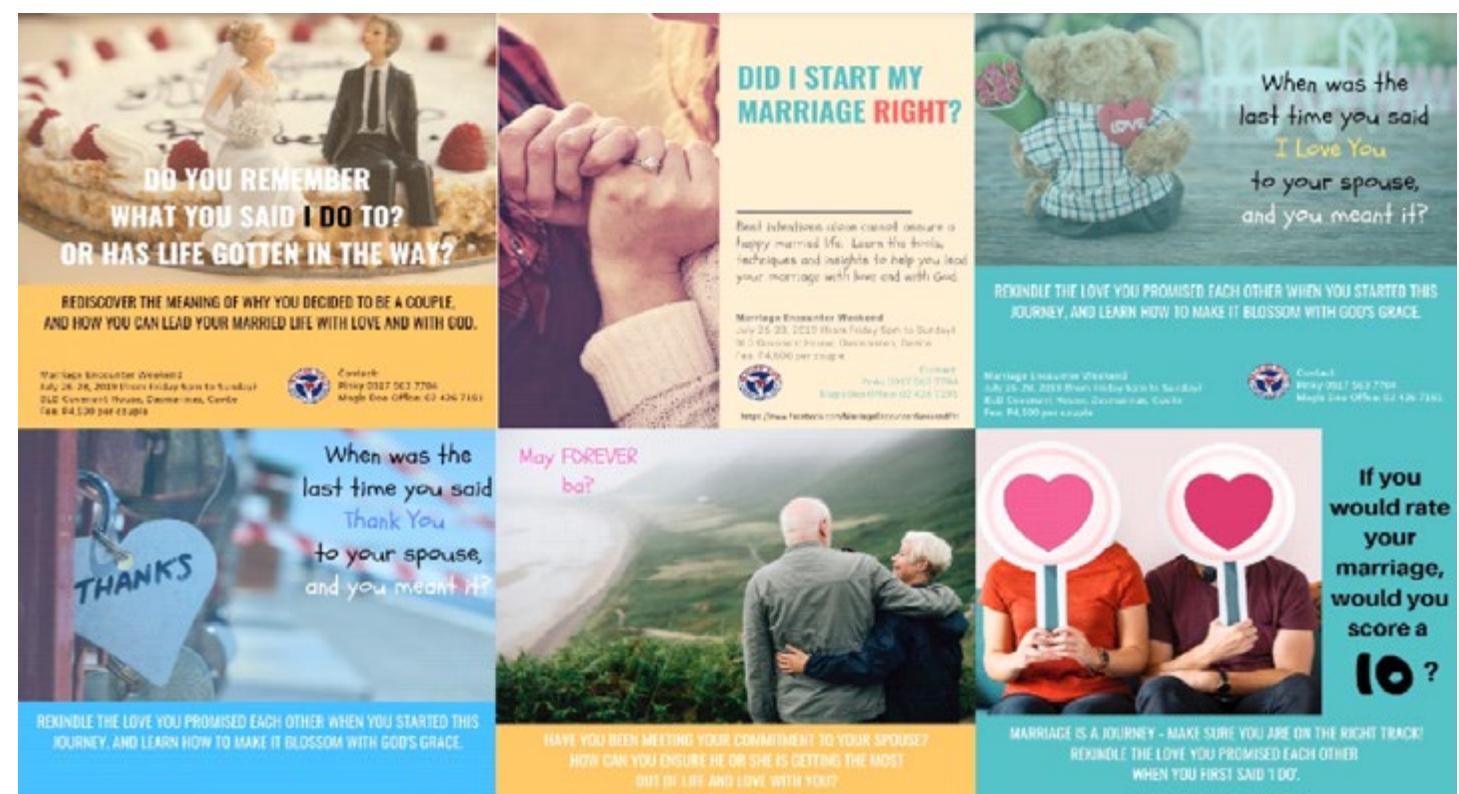
Marvin & Tintin Martinez
Dimanalata (Shepherd)

Leveling Up Social Media Presence

Winston Cruz, Matthew BCGG

When my wife Mae and I joined the ME Ministry under Josie Llamas, we hoped to contribute by modernizing the image of ME Weekend and bringing it into the era of social media. Most of the material that we had seen at that point were flyer-based imagery that probably worked effectively enough for older generations (including ourselves ☺) but there was a more urgent need to update the image to make it more relevant and speak to both old and young generations, particularly couples who grew up in the digital and social media age.

Faced with this challenge, we discussed with our ME Ministry team (Kaye and Keith Angeles, Pinky and Ney Rosas and Mimi Santos) focused targeting for our campaign. We all agreed that we should speak to several couple profiles: the empty nesters who may have already achieved what they need materially but are now looking for sense of purpose and meaning as individuals and as a couple; the newly married who are struggling to raise children and busy with their careers to have enough time for each other, and the mid-40s that may already have achieved success in their careers but may be neglectful of their relationship or spirituality. With this, we came up with six campaign posters with provocative taglines that ask the readers to reflect and look inside themselves. Can you guess what age group each poster is speaking to?



We then used these for the last two ME Weekends, by spreading it through Magis Deo Viber groups and posting this in the FB Page for Marriage Encounter Weekend: www.facebook.com/MarriageEncounterWeekendPH

Coupled with this social media campaign, the ME Ministry invited the recent graduates of ME Class 129 to give testimonials at the July 7 ComCel to further engage the Magis Deo community to recruit people. We then asked the BCGG heads to promote these in their own Viber groups.

Miracle in Marriage

Sheila Marie Maroon, ME Class 129

Before the ME Weekend, our marriage was rocky. In fact, it was about to collapse and I didn't think of rebuilding it. I was full of hatred, anger and resentment. I couldn't respect my husband and my trust for him was totally gone. His unfaithfulness destroyed our family, and for me ours was a hopeless case.

November 23, 2018, 5:00 pm was our schedule to attend the Magis Deo ME Weekend. A few hours before, I was about to back out because I thought, "What's the use? Nothing will change anyway." I was half-hearted in joining my husband at this ME Weekend. So, while waiting for him to meet me in the building beside his office, I prayed hard, asked for forgiveness, strength and wisdom to tell him how I felt. Seconds later, it rained very hard, as if God was telling me something. I took that as a sign simply because the rain wouldn't let me go back home on my own.

And just when the rain stopped, I saw my husband walking from his building to meet me. I never would have thought that the end of the rain would be the beginning of something NEW.

I was not expecting anything as I entered the Retreat house. As time went by, something suddenly changed. Every activity, every dialogue, and every word from Fr. James helped me release all the pain, anger and worry that I had in my heart. In the couple dialogue, we were able to address our issues and this helped us understand each other more... we were reunited as a couple. We became closer to each other and to God. I felt His presence in each and every activity we had. The Holy Spirit was present within us; I knew we were being guided every step of the way, and it was then that I knew things would get better.

Because of the wonderful experience we had, we decided to be part of this community so we could help other couples and share the experience we had. Indeed, when God steps in, MIRACLES really do happen.

Leveling Up Social Media Presence, continued from page 23

We are happy to note that the campaign seems to be working slowly but surely. Our July FB posts reached 9,400 people (using FB Boost) and 1,700 engagements. While this increased awareness of our ME Program, we got a handful of participants in the ME July Class that said they learned of us through our FB posts, with some inquiring about future conducts. We would like to think that the other solicited participants from our ever-reliable Magis Deo Community also got attracted through our marketing posters and campaigns.

Contributing to the ME program has been a fulfilling experience for me and Mae, and we are committed to continue promoting ME Weekends and reach the right couples through the most effective and relevant media available. In the meantime, we ask our members to like the ME Weekend FB page and to share their experiences and testimonials through the review page or comments box in the FB page.



Touched, Blessed, Thankful for the MEW

Viven Valdez, ME Class 129



Dear God,

When we planned to participate in the ME 131 Weekend as auxiliaries, I expected my wife Gayle and me to be in the main conference hall most of the time, passively participating in all of the marriage encounter exercises... like a refresher course, or a renewal of the lessons previously learned. But that was not Your plan for us because we were fortunate to host a large group – 19 couples and a single. And it was the responsibility of our batch (ME Class 129) as auxiliaries to provide the incoming batch, ME Class 131, with the best resources and experience so they may easily discover Your plan for them.

I was at fault for being impatient. For believing everything could be on-demand, and that returning to the Marriage Encounter would be like clicking a Netflix episode of the highlights of our past experiences.

I'm sorry God, that I have been lulled by the idea that it is easy to expect things to happen for us right now, on our terms. Thank you for providing Gayle and me the patience to understand Your plan for us and give us the opportunity to give back to others so that may also find their blessings from the Weekend Retreat.

I understand that now, after receiving a message from You during the weekend while we were able to escape the busy work we encounter daily. It was at the retreat where I found the stillness in my mind away from vices; where my heart healed from resentment, jealousy and hatred just

long enough to see the signs of the Holy Spirit and hear the fleeting whisper of your message for me.

It was an unexpected moment when I was overcome with great emotion after hearing a stirring story from Tita Josie. I felt that my heart was open to grace and when she was re-reading a love letter she had written several years ago to her deceased husband, I felt I had to share a personal message with her.

I tried to convince myself I didn't have to share the message with her. But when we sang Dahil Sa Iyo my voice began to quiver and I started to cry, overwhelmed by the emotion in the room, even though I did not understand the words I was reciting.

Tita Josie and I shared a heartfelt conversation and afterwards I realized that when strive to be our best selves and share that version of ourselves with others we can heal.

Thank you Lord for bringing Gayle into my life when I least expected it. As a couple we believed it was serendipitous how we met, but in your plan she is a precious gift from you and our shared experiences will be eternal.

Your son,
Viven

MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER



ME Weekend / July 26 - 28, 2019

