

Magis

Formation for Mission

Stewardship
Simplicity
Sharing
Service

Official Publication of the
Magis Deo Community
August 2021 Issue



Ama sa Gitna ng Pandemya

Our roles may be challenged, but our Father will always embrace us

Praying the Scriptures

Exploring the world behind, within, and in front of the text

St. Ignatius of Loyola: A Saint Twice Canonized

The spiritual impact of St. Ignatius' literal canonization, from the words of our youth

Nurturing Family Relationships

Tips on being constant with your constants in lockdown

Miracles In My Life

Understanding why God performs miracles can help us recognize them in our lives

About the Cover



Amidst the passing days of panic in a pandemic, Hidilyn Diaz struck gold one day at the Olympics, a feat for the first ever Filipino athlete to do so. Everyone saw how she lifted 127 kilograms of weight and launched an emotional climax of victory in headlines everywhere. If you listened closer to her gleeful scream, and peeked into her streaming tears, you'd know that this was a very passioned catharsis — it was as if an elephant's foot was lifted off her mind and body. The journey here wasn't easy, she (and other athletes whose talents were either: not supported by the government itself; was not widely regarded; or was heavily gendered by society) had to lift literal and proverbial luggage to train.

As expected, this win reaped rewards, which is good for her, but pre-support would've been more humane and could've met the barest of minimums. An image of her golden and bruised hands surfaces, and immediately it was a symbolical definition of her faith in herself and in God, fueled by the few people who believed in her, just as she believed in Him. She gave it to God, and in return she gave us healing, in a world where it is hard to find hope. We need more good news, stories of opposition against people who do not support humanity. Just like Hidilyn's journey, it won't be easy, but one day we will have our own catharsis as individuals, as families, and as an overall nation.

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3 *Pastoral Council Election and Community Celebration*

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It is I, Do Not Be Afraid



In recent weeks, so much has happened. One moment we are celebrating, then in another, we are faced with anxiety over the hard lockdown and the rapid rise of Covid cases, that our friends and members of the community got infected with the virus. Amidst all these, we seek the Lord's presence and assurance, holding on to His promise that He is with us. Much like He was with his apostles during that stormy night out in the sea, His presence in our hearts assures us everything will be fine.

He sends us inspiring stories such as the unwavering faith of Hidilyn amidst all the odds she had to tackle on her road to Tokyo. Despite the obstacles she faced, she kept soldiering on because, in her heart, she believed in the Lord and her deepest desire. The lack of funds, her fear of being tagged in that infamous oust-Duterte matrix, her anxiety at the trolls that mocked her, did not deter her from focusing her sights on what mattered.

It would have been easier to give up after being assured of the silver medal. She was getting old and the pandemic made it challenging to train in a country that is not her own.

She had to settle on what was available and she did everything she could humanly do. Then, she surrendered the rest to the Lord.

The Lord provided help along the way through people who cared for and loved her. The night before her performance on stage, her team prayed, and the end was clear. Surrender, and the Lord will do what He does best. In the end, the Lord showed how He would shower His grace on the simple and stout-hearted lady who believed.

What a remarkable story that the Lord shows us! It prepares us for the more challenging days ahead. It is human to be scared, to be anxious, yet one constant in our hearts will save us: our faith and trust in the Lord who loves us profoundly and watches over us. He who has planted our deepest desires in our hearts accompanies and teaches us to trust in Him. In His time, He will shower us with His grace and show us His glory.

And so let us continue to pray and entrust ourselves to Him. In the process, may our faith in Him deepen and become stronger.

Formation Programs

Cesar and Marivic Pareja, Formation Ministry Overseer / Prodigal 102 BCGG

As Council Overseer for the Formation Ministry, we are pleased to inform the community that last August 7, 2021, we conducted another workshop (part of the Accompanying the Shepherd Series) entitled: "Finding God in Shared Prayer" with Fr. James Gascon, SJ, as moderator/facilitator.

We likewise share the following schedule of on-line formation retreats for the interested members of our community.

Annual Ignatian Retreat (AIR)

August 27-29, 2021:	"Christ's Self-Kenosis" (Weeks 3 and 4 of SPEX) With Fr. Bob Buenconsejo, SJ
October 8-10, 2021:	"God's Love and Mercy" (Week 1 of SPEX) With Fr. James Gascon, SJ
December 17-19, 2021:	"Christ's Humanity" (Week 2 of SPEX) With Fr. James Gascon, SJ

Spiritual Deepening Retreat (SDR)

September 10-12, 2021:	"Finding God in all things; Deepening your Spiritual Roots" With Fr. James Gascon, SJ
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SDR prerequisite: "Prayer Orientation" (PO) is necessary for members to attend. For those who have not yet attended any prayer orientation seminar/workshop, kindly inform your ME Shepherd or BCGG Head. The Formation Ministry will schedule a PO before the SDR.

Our Spiritual Director, Fr. James Gascon, SJ, reminds us that the ultimate goal of Magis Deo is the formation of families, foremost of which is the spiritual aspect, and TOTAL HUMAN FORMATION. We need to always remind ourselves that Ignatian Spirituality (which is the foundation of who we are) lives its faith in the world. Our spirituality is Faith in Daily Life, in ordinary life, in the world.

Mainly through prayer meetings, the basic unit of formation is, as the name implies, our Basic Christian Growth Group (BCGG). Our BCGG structure is supplemented by interphases, community celebrations, outreach activities



(among others). These further ground the prayer experience and facilitate formation, not only of the person, but more importantly the couple, who will cascade what they receive to their own family.

This is why it is important to be an active member of a BCGG.

To paraphrase Fr. James: "As a Magis Deo Member, you must belong to a BCGG and attend the prayer meetings as regularly as you can. How can you be formed if you are not present?"

The Prayer Workshops, SDR, AIR, Outreach, etc., are all supportive structures to the BCGG foundational formation. What will these structures support if there is no basic formation happening with the individual who is not a BCGG member?

As to the BCGG itself, our ongoing Accompanying the Shepherds Program aims to equip BCGG Heads in strengthening the basic and foundational Ignatian formation that happens in the BCGG. As Fr. James emphasized: "If there is nothing that happens in the BCGG, there is nothing to support."

Formation begins in the BCGG.

BASIC, CHRISTIAN, GROWTH, GROUP. Each word defines what the BCGG is all about.

Stay safe, Magis! God bless us all!

Nurturing Family Relationships during the Pandemic

Reflections on the talk of Ms. Lei Lopez,
Lecturer/Professor at CEFAM

August 8, 2021 Community Celebration

Yang Reantaso, CSM Head/Samaritans BCGG, and other Magis members

I had the blessing and privilege to be the host and moderator during the talk of Ms. Lei Lopez entitled "Nurturing Family Relationships during the Pandemic." Lei is a Lecturer and an Assistant Professor of Family Ministries and Pastoral Counseling in CEFAM. This timely talk had a big impact on me especially in the area of effective communication. This allowed me to reflect on what is currently happening in my family, so my husband and I can discuss how we can improve, reinforce, or adjust things that work and do not work, with the goal of being on the healthy side of the spectrum.

Lei shared 11 tips for nurturing family relationships:

1. Establish CPR (Consistency, Predictability, Routine)
2. Connect
3. Contact
4. Cheer-up
5. Communicate (and really listen)
6. Converse
7. Respect Boundaries
8. Chore-sharing
9. Celebrate
10. Chill
11. Self-care

For those who were unable to tune in during the ComCel and Lei's talk, I highly recommend that you watch it. It has been uploaded to the Magis Deo Community Celebration FB Group page; you may even share it with other families.

At the end of her talk, Lei encouraged us to share our TIL's (Today I Learned), and these are just some of them:

Rhea Gaddi – "Setting boundaries is part of self-care and self-respect. Thank you, Dr. Lei! Yes, I agree to have more open



Seed

Maricar Tariman, Samaritans BCGG



conversations to build trust and teach them skills how to be responsible when kids go online. I also agree that we should give kids house chores to build responsibility and empower them. Saka para maka-day-off din si Mommy at Daddy."

Vina Dimanalata – "That we swing between healthy and unhealthy, and that's alright. Be aware so you can accept and adjust."

Maricel Suarez – "Boundaries are not only for family members but also for kasambahays when we give them space on rest hours."

Abby Tumbocon – "The reminder that we are all KSP, so be generous about showing your love to your family and do not forget to demonstrate your love according to their individual "Love Language."

Bib Chi De Guzman – "Give quality time to our family members – connect and communicate."

Miriam Yco Tan (ME Booster participant) – "I learned that even though we are busy, we should always make time to listen to our kids. This will boost their self-esteem and personal development.... (guilty ako diyan) I've also learned the appropriate words or script that I can use with my children whenever they behave unfavorably, in a manner that they won't get hurt and they will be able to take my words constructively."

Jay and Toni Sebastian (ME Booster participant) – "I think what stuck to us was the importance of communication within the family. Knowing the love languages of our children and spouse allows us to show our love through ways that can make them feel more special and appreciated. Sometimes, stress and work frustrations prevent us from filling these up so we should continue to remind each other about our two boys' love languages. I also loved the talk because it was something we also constantly share with our school's parent community. It was great to be reminded and validated by a specialist."

Just as the seed must 'lose its life' to fulfill its ultimate purpose, so does each person need to 'lose' their worldly life to gain eternity."

This parable teaches me that in my life and literal world, when I came to Christ, I died to my former self and assumed a new life in Jesus Christ, the kind of life that allows me to bear fruit.

I have to die to my old self in order to live for God. This verse in the bible is not new to me. In Bible Study Fellowship I attended a class on the Book of John. Every parable, every teaching in this book is about God's love and the ways I can love and serve Him, and how to be a true Christian. Kaya nga walang palusot na "Hindi ko alam paano sumunod sa kanya," o "Hindi ko alam paano ko ba siya mahalin." Kasi nakasulat naman. Hindi ko lang ginagawa. Or hindi ko lang kaya gawin. Ang tagal ko na nagba-bible study pero hanggang ngayon seed pa rin ako. Mas madaling humingi sa kanya kaysa magbigay. Ang taas kasi ng standard ng pagmamahal ni God. Agape. Selfless Love, with a capital L, the highest level of love to offer.

It's given without any expectations of receiving something in return. Yes, I still am a seed, but He continues to water me, nurture me, until I become a plant that will bear fruit.

He never gets tired of giving me a purpose to live my everyday life. Thank you, Lord, that I do not have time to get bored. Alam ni God madali lang ako ma-depress kaya ang dami niyang hinain sa akin na pagkaka-abalahan. Dalawang beses ako naglipat ng bahay, nagbenta ng mga gamit at kung anu-ano pa. Nawalan ako ng maid kaya halos lumilipas ang araw na di ko namamalayan. Thank Lord you for all your provisions.

Lord, I struggle with sin but thanks to you, I'm a work in progress. May I never forget your sacrifice that gives me life. From being a seed, help me to grow and bear fruit. Use me to provide comfort, encouragement, and hope to others.

What God is telling me, is to see my smallness against His greatness and my need for Him in my life. To open my eyes to those who might need my help. He wants me to provide encouragement and hope to others.

Ama sa Gitna ng Pandemya

Doc Geslani, James, Brother of John BCGG



Ngayong panahon ng pandemya hindi ko maiwasang maging sentimental sa mga karanasan ko sa aking buhay. Ako'y nasa loob ng aming tahanan buong araw at gabi at maraming alaala ang bumabalik sa aking isip. Mga alaalang nagsasabi sa akin na sa kabilang ating nararanasang pandemya ngayon, ako at ang aking pamilya ay pinagpapala pa rin dahil kami ay nasa magandang kalusugan, nakakabili ng aming mga pangangailangan, nakakakain ng maayos, nakakatulong sa kapwa ayon sa aming makakaya, at higit sa lahat, kami ay buo at nananatiling masaya sa kabilang ating mga pinagdaanan noon at pinagdaraanan ngayon.

Sa buhay na ibinigay ng Panginoon sa atin, hindi natin masasabi kung anong naghihintay sa muling pagmulat ng ating mga mata sa bawat umaga. Karaniwang magandang buhay, magandang bahay, magandang kinabukasan ng ating mga anak, ang ating laging dalangin. Bilang isang asawa at ama na tinutukoy na haligi ng tahanan, marami akong pinangarap para sa aking pamilya. Ngunit ito'y mga pangarap na hindi ko napagplanuhan at hindi ko napaghandaan dahil ako'y nalingaw ng landas, lumayo panandalian sa Panginoon, at naging abala sa nakaraan sa napakaraming bagay. Mga bagay na hindi ko dapat pinag-aksayahan ng panahon at hindi ko dapat hinayaang bumalot sa aking pagkatao.

Maraming hinanakit sa mga pangayari sa aking mga magulang, pagkabigo sa aking pinagtapsusang kurso, pagtrabaho para sa kumpanyang hindi masuklian ng tama ang aking mga pagsisikap, at pagbaba ng tingin ko sa aking sarili dahil hindi ko mapantayan man lang sa karera sa propesyon ang aking maybahay. Di ko namalayan na ako'y nalulunod na sa lalim ng aking mga hinaing sa buhay at nalimutan kong

kumapit sa Panginoon para sagipin niya ako. Hinayaan kong lalo akong malubog sa pinakamalalim hanggang sa malapit na akong bawian ng buhay. Ngunit sadyang mabait ang Panginoon na kahit ako'y makasalanan, lumusong sya sa lalim ng aking kinalulunuran at hinila niya ako paahon upang maisalba. Ginusto niya akong sagipin, patawarin, at bigyan ng bagong buhay. Marahil marami siyang nais ituro at ipagawa sa akin na mga bagay na hindi ko pa nalalaman at hindi ko pa nagagawa para sa kanya.

Sa aking buhay, sinasabi sa akin ng Panginoon na kung anuman ang mga nangyari sa nakaraan at mga nagawa kong pagkakamali sa buhay ko, ako'y binibigyan niya ng pagkakataon na iwanan na ang mga ito at hayaan nang mamatay ang aking buhay makasalanan. Baguhin ko ang aking sarili patungo sa kabutihan at alisin ko ang aking pagiging makasarili. Hindi ako pwedeng mabuhay para sa sarili ko lamang. Kailangan kong mabuhay at isipin din ang kapakanan ng aking kapwa, ng mga taong nakapaligid sa akin, at higit sa lahat ang aking pamilya. Kung gusto kong makapagbagong buhay, kailangan ko sundin ang kanyang mga turo, sundan kung saan niya ako gustong dalahin, at gawin kung ano ang kagustuhan niya para sa akin.

Sa aking karanasan, nakagawa ako ng mga bagay na aking pinagsisisihan, nilihim ko sa matagal na panahon, at hindi na ako nakabalik sa trabaho ko noon na pansamantala ko lamang sanang iniwan at gustong balikan matapos kong ayusin yung naging problema sa aming negosyo. Ang mga bagay na ito ay sadyang naging napakabigat na pasanin para sa akin. Pero hinarap ko ang mga ito sa abot ng aking makakaya. Mula noon, pinagsabay-sabay kong ako'y maging negosyante, asawa, at ama. Kasabay ng lahat ng ito, kami ay naimbitahan at nakapasok sa Magis Deo Community at naging miyembro ng James, Brother of John BCGG.

Dito nagsimula kong kausapin ang Panginoon at magkaroon ng mas makabuluhang relasyon sa kanya kasama ng aking pamilya. Biniyayaan din ako ng bagong anak noong taong 2018, si CK. Ang mga ito ang naging life-giving moments para sa akin. Dahil hindi ko inakalang darating ang pinakamalaking pagsubok sa akin at sa aking asawa. Sa Panginoon sadyang wala tayong maililimut at kung gugustuhin niya, ipararamdam niya sa iyo ito at ito'y kanyang ibubunyag. Nabigo ako bilang asawa at nawalan siya ng tiwala sa akin. Para na din akong namatay.



Pero dahil alam namin na kami ay nasa piling ng Panginoon sa pamamagitan ng Magis Deo at dahil kay CK, unti-unting ako'y nabigyan ng pagkakataon na itama ang aking mga pagkakamali at mapatawad ng aking asawa. Dito rin ipinaramdam ng Panginoon ang pagbibigay niya ng kapatawanan sa akin.

Nagpatuloy ang aming buhay habang naghihirom ang mga sugat ng aking mga pagkakamali. Biglang dumating ang pandemic, kinailangan naming itigil ang aming negosyo. Parang sinabihan ako ng Panginoon na, "Hindi ka pa magaling mag-negosyo, itigil mo muna yan, halika dito sa asawa at mga anak mo, pagbutihin mo muna ang pagiging asawa at ama, bumawi ka sa kanila." At para sa akin, para hindi ko ipagpilitan yung "ego" ko at matuto akong tanggapin ang sitwasyon namin ngayon, pakiramdam ko na sinusunod ko ang gusto ng Panginoon para sa akin. Sa ngayon dito niya lang muna ako dinala sa bahay at wala syang gustong ibang gawin ko kundi ang paglaanan ko ng oras at pagsilbihan ang aking pamilya. Ipinararamdam niya sa akin na ang pagsisilbi ko ng taos-puso sa aking asawa't mga anak ay isang paraan ng pagsisilbi at pagsunod ko sa kanya. Isa't kalahating taon ng pagiging "houseband" at "hands-on dad" ay isang karanasan ng hindi mapantayan para sa akin. At kung gaano pa katagal na gugustuhin ng Panginoon na ito ang aking gawin, buong

pagpapakumbaba lang akong tatalima sa kanyang kautusan at gagawin ko ang lahat ng ito ng may ngiti sa labi at kaligayahan.

Kung anuman ang inilalaan nya para sa akin sa hinaharap, tatanggapin ko ang lahat. Kung ito ba ay mas marami pang pagsubok, haharapin ko dahil alam kong sasamahan at tutulungan naman niya ako. Marahil marami pa siyang gustong ituro at iparamdam sa akin upang mas maging kalugod-lugod ako sa kanyang paninig. Kung ito naman ay mga biyaya para sa akin at sa aking pamilya, bagong trabaho or bagong negosyo, nagagalak na ako at ipinagdadasal ko na sana sa pagdating ng araw na yun, handang handa na ako at mas pagbutihin ko at mas gagalingan pa. Lahat ng ito kasabay ng pagpapatuloy ko sa king mga natutunan mula sa Panginoon. Ngunit ang higit sa lahat kumpara sa mga ito, ang aking pinaka-mimithi ay yung pagdating ng oras ng pagharap ko sa kanya, sasabihin niya sa akin na, "Anak, halika sa aking kaharian, ikaw ay karapa't dapat na makasama ko dito."

Sa panahong kailangang kailangan ko, ang Panginoon ay naging Ama para sa akin. Hindi niya ako pinabayaang tuluyang maligaw ng landas ngunit dinisiplina niya ako at pinangaralan. Ngayon sa panahon ng pandemya, patuloy siyang nagiging Ama sa akin na nagtuturo kung paano ako mananatiling mabuting asawa at ama sa aking pamilya. Ang pagmamahal ng ating Ama sa langit ay walang kapantay.

(JUAN 12:24-26 – Noong panahong iyon, sinabi ni Hesus sa kanyang mga alagad: "Tandaan ninyo: malibang mahulog sa lupa ang butil ng trigo at mamatay, mananatili itong nag-iisa. Ngunit kung mamatay, ito'y mamumunga nang marami. Ang taong labis na nagpapahalaga sa kanyang buhay ay siyang mawawalan nito, ngunit ang napopoot sa kanyang buhay sa daigdig na ito ay siyang magkakaroon nito hanggang sa buhay na walang hanggan. Dapat sumunod sa akin ang naglilingkod sa akin, at saanman ako naroroon ay naroon din ang aking lingkod. Pararangalan ng Ama ang sinumang naglilingkod sa akin.")

Do You Know the Song?

Kaye Angeles, Genesis BCGG



first heard this as one of the final antiphons in the eucharistic celebration led by Pope Francis in March last year. The voice of the choir and the music were so enchanting that even if I didn't understand what was being sung, I was moved by the song. Fast forward to this year, starting in June, this song became more and more familiar to me in the daily online mass with Fr. Dave Concepcion.

Not knowing what to write for this month's newsletter and with the past days being too occupied by reporting deadlines, I contemplated on not submitting anything. But the call to commitment got the better of me, and Mama Mary led me to this inspiration to share with you.

SALVE REGINA – the title of the song became known to me the first time I heard it. But it was not until this morning's episode of 'Di po ba, Fr. Dave?' that I took real interest in knowing what this song is all about.

The **SALVE REGINA** is the most popular of the four Marian antiphons sung throughout the liturgical year. It is sung at Compline (night prayer) on the Saturday before Trinity Sunday until the Saturday before Advent. The other three Marian antiphons are the **Alma Redemptoris Mater** (Advent through February 2), the **Ave Regina Caelorum** (sung from Candlemas until Easter Vigil), and the **Regina Caeli** (sung during liturgical Easter). The **SALVE REGINA** is also prayed/sung after Compline and at the conclusion of the Rosary. To most of us, we recite it often as the **HAIL, HOLY QUEEN**, as we pray the Rosary.

The **SALVE REGINA** comes to us from the ancient monasteries (11th and 12th century) in France and Germany, from the Cistercians and the Benedictine monks. In the 13th

century, the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Carmelites took it into their chanted "office," the prayer they sing together as communities and which forms part of their community life. It is a hymn more than a thousand years old already, about Mary the Queen.

SALVE REGINA. HAIL, HOLY QUEEN. The hymn right away calls Mama Mary "mother of mercy." It tells us what the truest might is, what the truest power is. It is a move from outer dominion and rule to inward greatness of heart, to mercy, to compassion, to tenderness. **Vita, dulcedo et spes nostra, salve.** Hail our life, our sweetness, our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.

Turn then, most gracious Advocate, your eyes of mercy (misericordes oculos) toward us. **Advocata nostra: she who will greatly plead our cause before our God, "now and at the hour of our death."** Yes, she is our firm but gentle defender, her "eyes of pity" ever upon us, even now while we live and labor, "in this valley of tears." Again, this is not so much "the powerful woman" but the mother of infinite loving and tenderness in rescue from all our difficulties.

And after this our exile—we think upon the hour of our death too, the ending of our exile—show unto us then, the blessed fruit of your womb, your Son and God's own Son, and bring us home to Jesus!

The **Salve Regina** hymn is sung daily in monasteries and religious houses, especially in the evening when the monks end their night prayer. They sing it, as they leave the Church; they kneel as it ends, to receive their abbot's night blessing. It is a prayer for the day's ending, and also for life's ending.

It is said also that one evening the great Saint Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, known for his passionate love for Our Lady, was in the Cathedral of Chartres. And as the choir was singing the **Salve Regina**, so beautifully and so movingly, Saint Bernard fell to his knees, crying out, "O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria! Oh clement, oh loving, oh sweet Virgin Mary!"

The **Salve Regina** ends on a triple note of love, tenderness and sweetness. This Queen of our hearts is a gentle, loving, tender Mother: she is **vitae dulcedo**, sweetness of our lives, our

hope. This is the Queen of all the heaven and earth, our life, our sweetness and our hope!

Today, as this prayer is one of the final Marian Antiphons that conclude Compline in the Divine Office and used in conjunction with the Rosary, a partial indulgence is granted to the faithful who devoutly recite this prayer.

Imagine that the **Salve Regina** is being sung by all the Catholics all over the world, from religious orders to the humblest ordinary family, isn't it a song to behold?

SALVE, Regina, mater misericordiae,
vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve. Ad
te clamamus exsules filii Hevae. Ad te
suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac
lacrimarum valle.

Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos
misericordes oculos ad nos converte. Et
Iesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.

O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.
Amen.

V. Ora pro nobis, sancta Dei Genitrix.

R. Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus
Christi.

Oremus

Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, qui
gloriosae Virginis Matris Mariae corpus et
animam, ut dignum Filii tui habitaculum
effici mereretur, Spiritu Sancto cooperante,
praeparasti: da, ut cuius commemoratione
laetamur; eius pia intercessione, ab
instantibus malis, et a morte perpetua
liberemur. Per eundem Christum Dominum
nostrum. Amen.

References:

The Roman Breviary

The Catholic Encyclopedia

The Blogs of Dominican Friars – England and Scotland

Salve Regina by Ambassador Howard Dee

HAIL holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our
life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee
do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To
thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and
weeping in this valley of tears.

Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine
eyes of mercy toward us. And after this our
exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy
womb, Jesus.

O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.
Amen.

V. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the
promises of Christ.

Let us pray

Almighty, everlasting God, who by
the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, didst
prepare the body and soul of the glorious
Virgin-Mother Mary to become a worthy
dwelling for Thy Son; grant that we who
rejoice in her commemoration may, by
her loving intercession, be delivered from
present evils and from the everlasting
death. Amen.

Miracles in My Life

Rudy Ebardo, Francis BCGG



believe God created me for a purpose, and this tells me I am a mortal creature, and the purpose of my life is to know, love, and serve God.

I am PCol. Rodolfo B. Ebardo, a native of Salvador, Lanao del Norte. I retired last April 14, 2005, after serving the military and the police for 33 years of dedicated and loyalty to the government with distinction. I celebrated my 72nd birthday a month ago and was very grateful to our God almighty for giving me another year to live a healthy and happy life in spite of the lockdown due to the pandemic. I am happily married to Hevelyn A. Ebardo, a native of Pandan, Antique. We are blessed with five children – four boys and a girl – plus a bonus of seven grandchildren, who are the sources of our amazing happiness.

I grew up in a Catholic family. My father Raymundo Ebardo is a farmer, and my mother is a schoolteacher. My parents implanted in us the core values of love of God, hard work, honesty and simplicity, with emphasis on education as our way towards prosperity. I am the sixth of eight siblings of 5 brothers and 3 sisters.

I finished my secondary education at the Immaculate Concepcion College – La Salle University in Ozamis City, where religion was first introduced. It was my first formal formation and education as a Roman Catholic. All the teachings about God were to me just part of the curriculum and were just taken for granted. Even going to mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation were made mandatory by the school. I took my bachelor's degree in Criminology in U. V. Cebu City, and on Saturdays and Sundays attended the R.O.T.C. advance course where I realized that my interest is in the military, and my original plan to take up law was set aside for financial reasons.

I started my military career as a constable or private, the lowest rank in the AFP, when I took my oath as regular member of the AFP on Dec. 16, 1971. Though not part of my plan, I had no choice but to swallow my pride for me to survive since I had no means to live here in Metro Manila. It is very hard to stay in a big city without work and worst, no place to stay in and no relatives to take shelter with. All those hardships, challenges and sacrifices were made bearable to me not because of my ambition to become an officer but because of my trust and faith in God that He will never abandon me.

I served the Military/PNP for 33 continuous years with dignity and honor. I was assigned in the different parts of the Philippines from the jungles of Lanao del Sur where I started my career as rifleman, to Sultan Kudarat, to Panay Island, to Metro Manila as Chief of Police of Sta. Ana Police Station, and lastly in Abra where I rendered my last tour of duty as Provincial Director and concurrent TF ABRA Commander. Our mission was to neutralize the private armed groups of the warring politicians in that area.

All my assignments are critical except my stint as COP of Sta. Ana Police Station. Fighting an enemy is not an easy task. Because it is not just a simple enforcement of laws and the maintenance of peace and order. On many occasions, I encountered people who are in authority and who are the ones violating the law. In some instances, the enemy of the government is the government itself. On one occasion my Provincial Headquarters in Abra was surrounded by two truckloads of Phil. Army soldiers, in full combat gear, led by their Battalion Commander, to rescue their asset who was arrested during our checkpoint operations, for carrying illegal firearms. We were outnumbered, but without me knowing my men were already tactically deployed waiting for my order to fire. There was a standoff, we stood our ground. Sensing they were surrounded, they left the camp without the arrested suspect. I am a very peaceful person and I always consider the consequences of whatever decision or action I will make. It could have been a tragedy in the magnitude of the Mamasapano massacre had my decision not been guided by the Holy Spirit. I have experienced more miracles than I can imagine. I am humbled and awe-struck by God's love, mercy, and grace. When I think about it, I know it is not because I am worthy or special, but because I made a decision to trust God, this led me to a life where God wants me to be, knowing that the profession of arms is full of sacrifices, danger, and possibly offer my life as an ultimate sacrifice.



What are the Miracles in My Life?

Miracles come in many forms. Sometimes miracles heal, comfort, or physically protect God's children, but these outward effects are not only the reason for miracles. Sometimes a miracle does not prevent suffering or tragedy at all. God performs miracles for two basic reasons: to strengthen faith and to accomplish good deeds. Understanding why God performs miracles can help me recognize them in our lives.

Miracles of Physical Protection

In 1976 I was in a military jeep with three of my men, after enjoying the nightlife in Ermita. Having drank one too many we went back to the camp. While travelling along J. P. Rizal St. going to Fort Bonifacio, under the Guadalupe Bridge our jeep and a passenger jeep coming from Pateros had a head-on collision. My men who were seated at the back were thrown in different directions and suffered multiple injuries. We were brought to the Fort Bonifacio Station Hospital for treatment. But because my driver was in more critical condition, he was transferred to V. Luna Hospital, but was pronounced DOA. I suffered injuries in different parts of my body but survived. However, I have to bear the blame for the death of my driver, and I felt guilty and responsible for that tragedy. Looking at the heavily damaged jeep, my survival was a miracle.

In 1980 I was driving our first car, a Ford Cortina Automatic. Northbound along SLEX, just before the Sucat exit, my car was bumped by a Muntinlupa Police Patrol Car running at high speed, coming from the opposite direction. It crossed the island

and hit my car. At that time there were no concrete barriers at the center of the expressway. It was raining hard at that time and the road was slippery. My head was hit by the broken glass of the windshield, and I was bleeding profusely, but my bodyguard was not seriously injured. Thank God I was strong enough to climb the cyclone wire fence separating the expressway from the service road, because nobody stopped to help us along SLEX. Fortunately, a good Samaritan, a jeepney driver, brought us to the Paranaque Doctors Hospital for treatment. After analyzing the incident, I asked myself, "Sa dami daming sasakyang na aking sinusundan bakit kami pa ang binangga?" It can be viewed from different aspects: it can be human error, or mechanical factor, or weather conditions, or a combination of all. But to me, it is God's message of love and continued protection, for as long as I pray and ask for it.

Miracle of Protection in the Service of our Country

On December 4, 1989, the fifth day of the Coup de Etat, I was leading a Battalion of four hundred men with 2 V-150 Armored Cars. We were part of TF Makati whose mission was to clear the high-rise buildings in Makati occupied by the Rebel Soldiers mostly from the Ranger Regiment under then Capt. Danny Lim who were occupying the Pacific Plaza Twin Towers along Ayala Ave. Most of the high-rise buildings were occupied by the snipers of the Rebel Group. We hopped from building to building to avoid the line of fire from snipers. I was positioned at the Mandarin Hotel and was ordered to move closer to the Pacific Twin Towers.

We were tactically crossing by waves the open space between the Mandarin Hotel and Atrium Building.

It was on the second wave that my Radio Man was hit by a sniper. It was clear to me that I was closely monitored by the Rebel forces, who hit by mistake my Radio Man instead of me. It was also at this time that the snipers from Camp Crame led by the Lt. Col. Noe Andaya, arrived to reinforce us. We were in the open without any cover, so we moved back inside the concrete fence of the village for cover. Just seconds after we moved back and changed our position, a loud explosion hit the ground from where we came that shocked us, and then felt relief. Lt. Col. Andaya shook his head and told me "Bata tama yung desisyon mo to change location kung hindi baka napulbos tayo." Looking back at that situation, it seemed that somebody was telling me "Umalis ka dyan agad." At that time, I made the sign of the cross as my way of thanking the Lord. For my role in liberating Makati from the rebel forces, I was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Star Award, the second Highest Military Award given to a soldier who has displayed leadership and distinguished himself in conspicuous acts of gallantry in the presence of armed enemy.



Of course, I was very proud of my accomplishment but most all grateful to our God almighty that I survived the biggest challenge and test of courage in my military career. It was a challenge that separated a man from a real man. Those challenging events in my life happened according to the will of God and my faith in Him. Having faith allows me to see the good and bad things in my life as the work of God, rather than as coincidences or good luck. Recognizing a miracle is part of the miracle itself. If we view life through a lens of faith in Jesus Christ, our eyes will be opened to the many miracles all around us. However, the size, timing, and result of a miracle are not a measure of our faith.

"God says, I save those who love me and will protect those who acknowledge me as Lord. When they call to me, I will answer them; when they are in trouble, I will be with them. I will rescue them and honor them. I will reward them with long life; I will save them." -- Psalm 91:14-16.

Remember God comes through where there is no hope. We worship a God who can turn ugly situations, evil things to good. Even during this pandemic, in the midst of trying times we should continue to worship God.



Magis Deo Youth Ministry

Stewardship Simplicity Sharing Service

Magis Deo Kids



Collage Art and Music

June 12, 2021

42 Magis Deo kids relaxed and had a wonderful time singing songs with Kuya Val (Magis Youth) and making collage art with Tita Zarah (BCGG Emmanuel).



Learnings from Magis Deo and St. Ignatius

Enzo Gaddi, Magis Youth, son of Jojo and Rhea Gaddi, Prodigal 102 BCGG

Q1: As you start with a new school year, what do you look forward to? What teachings of St. Ignatius can you apply to help you with the new school year?

Q2: What did you learn from Magis Deo during the school break that can help you with the new school year?

A1: I look forward to encountering new lessons and topics, and to challenge myself to strive even more. There are some things that I can't do alone, and that's where I ask God for His guidance. Asking for help isn't something I do

Magis Deo Kids



Andi (9 y/o)
daughter of Mon & Ting Yupangco,
Transfiguration BCGG



Czyan (9 y/o) and Ameachy (5 y/o)
grandchildren of Nadeia Sarte,
Prodigal 102 BCGG



MJ (6 y/o) and RJ (5 y/o)
children of TJ & Ana Pestaño,
James brother of John BCGG



Magis Deo Youth Ministry

Stewardship. Simplicity. Sharing. Service.

OUR GAMEMASTERS:

TITO DONG (BCGG CHRONICLES)
& ATE RIA (MAGIS YOUTH)



Tito Dong Galang

Ria Maulit (she/her)

MAGIS DEO TEENS' COMMUNITY BUILDING
SATURDAY, JUNE 26, 2021
5:00-6:30PM

Pre-register at:
<https://tinyurl.com/TeensComBldg>

21 YOUTH ATTENDEES



CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE WINNERS!



For the first time, our 21 Magis Deo Teens had their own community building activity. Our gamemasters Tito Dong Galang and Magis Youth member Ria Maulit had an hour of kumustahan, bonding, games, chilling, and fun. Winners got treated to their favorite creamy drinks.

St. Ignatius of Loyola: The Saint who was Twice Canonized

Talk by: Fr. Gilbert Emmanuel Levosada

Reflections of Mark & Cathy Maulit, Youth Ministry Head / Prodigal 102 BCGG, and Magis Youth members

The Magis Deo Teens spent an afternoon with Fr. Gilbert Emmanuel "Nono" Levosada, SJ, last 24 July 2021. Fr. Nono entitled his talk "St. Ignatius of Loyola: The Saint who was Twice Canonized." He explained it as a joke among Jesuits that long before St Ignatius was canonized as a saint, he was also hit by a cannonball and therefore "cannonized." While most of us know that his cannonball moment led to his conversion and his eventual development of the Spiritual Exercises and founding of the Society of Jesus, Fr. Nono's talk somehow contrasted Ignatius' life before the first "canonization" and after that. The lessons he points out from this contrast, which we can apply to our own lives, are:

1. Ignatius had big dreams for himself, but God had bigger dreams for him;
2. Ignatius had a checkered past, but God called him to change for the better; and
3. Ignatius' cannonball moment was an opportunity to grow.

The following are reflections of some of the youth who listened to Fr. Nono's talk:

Eli, son of Caloy and Charmaine Ang, Tala BCGG

At this stage of my life, I feel like St. Ignatius before his first canonization. He dreamt of catching the eye of a prestigious woman, wooing his way into fame and fortune, but I'm not so

sure of my dreams yet. Sure, I want to be rich and possibly even famous, but I don't know if that's part of God's plan for me. I suppose what I'm trying to say is that I don't really know what I'm supposed to do yet, but I guess that's normal for my age.

I'm just a young 14-year-old boy who (hopefully) still has a long life to live. I know that I'll eventually find my path, and I'm sure that I'll make lots of mistakes along the way, but I hope that, in the end, I won't regret the life I've lived and that God will be proud of me.

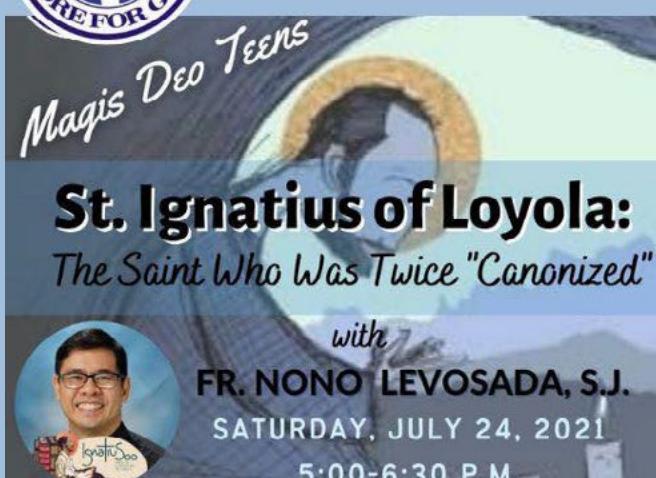
Kristen, daughter of Gilbert and Chare Espiritu, Prodigal 102 BCGG

Do you have deep desires for others? – This question sounds a bit vague, but from my interpretation of this question, I do have empathy, compassion for others. I do care about my family or friends' feelings, and I help out whenever I can. But just like any other human I am also a bit selfish in terms of my well-being, and I think that's okay. You don't really want to be losing yourself in the process of helping as many people as you can with their problems. I think putting your mental as well as physical well-being is okay, I think that focusing on yourself before others first is okay, especially if you have a lot to work on. But other than that, I genuinely care about others from my circle or from complete strangers.



Magis Deo Youth Ministry

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23 Reantaso, J...



Inigo Santos



06, Ria Maulit

Magis youth emcees, Justine Reantaso, Inigo Santos & Ria Maulit



56 TEENS ATTENDEES



Justine, daughter of Ojay and Yang Reantaso, Samaritans BCGG

I learned not to despair whenever unfortunate things happen to my life because I know that God always has a special purpose for everything. Just like the "cannonball experience" of St. Ignatius. He had a bad fracture on his right leg and damage to his left after being hit by a cannonball. We can see how devastating this was but because of this his journey toward a saintly life started.

Natasha Aira and Noelle Aeisha, daughters of Noel & Nherrie Gascon, James Brother of John BCGG

As of now there is nothing we want more than that to have everything back to normal, wherein we can already conduct face-to-face classes and go outside without all these anxieties and fears to meet other people. Truly, the pandemic has been a cannonball experience for us. The first year of the pandemic was very hard for us and our family. There are so many things to adjust to. And it made us appreciate our family even more and to treasure every second we spend with them because tomorrow is never assured in this pandemic.

Enzo, son of Jojo and Rhea Gaddi, Prodigal 102 BCGG

I would say that the pandemic is a cannonball experience for me. At the start of 2020, I was excited to see what the new year would offer me. I was looking forward to meeting new friends, finishing my exams. My family began planning for a vacation, and I was looking forward to joining the various upcoming football tournaments. So many opportunities right in front of me. But, at the start of March 2020, Covid arrived in the Philippines. Lockdown was imposed, no one was allowed to go out. Everything I hoped for, dreamt of... gone. Just like that. Time went by, days became weeks, weeks became months, eventually all of us were stuck in a pandemic for a year now. Despite the situation, we had to find ways to cope with it, to start recovering from it, step-by-step. Just like St. Ignatius, we don't have to panic or rush things. He didn't rush his recovery after his injury, did he? No. He just took time to heal, and in his case, ask for God's guidance. We all should do the same. I know that everyone has exciting, fun, even crazy plans for the summer, but right now, staying indoors and keeping healthy is our top priority, something that we shouldn't be rushing about. Most importantly, we should always pray to God, ask Him to continue watching over us, protect us, heal those who are sick, and help us see the positive side of things.

Accompanying the Shepherds Series

Re-examining the Venice Experience of St. Ignatius and Companions in Ignatian Charism and Spirituality Today

A Report on the Talk of Fr. Ramon Bautista, SJ

Yoling Sevilla, John BCGG



On the 500th anniversary of St. Ignatius' conversion (Ignatian Year May 2021-July 2022), Fr. Ramon Bautista, SJ, spoke to the Magis Deo Community on 24 July 2021 (feast month of St. Ignatius). He emphasized the need to study, speak, pray, and live out Ignatian Spirituality if we want the gifts and charism of St. Ignatius. Fr. Mon's talk focused on the Venice experience of St. Ignatius and the First Companions. One hundred thirty-four Magis members from 22 BCGGs (out of 23 BCGGs) attended the talk.

The journey of St. Ignatius and Companions, all graduates of the University of Paris, began in 1534 when they were still students. The fruit of their daily spiritual conversations and communal discernment was a plan to go to Jerusalem in January 1537. Their meeting place was Venice en route to Jerusalem. This was Plan A.

While waiting in Venice for a ship bound for Jerusalem, these friends served in two hospitals doing menial jobs, giving themselves to humble and degrading tasks, exposing themselves to the filth and stench of the hospitals, risking infection from dreaded diseases. This too was the fruit of their communal discernment, in the spirit of Magis, in serving where the greatest need for their services was.

Since a ship bound for Jerusalem had not arrived in Venice by the end of a year, Ignatius and Companions came up with Plan B, which was to proceed to Rome to present themselves for missioning by the Pope if they still could not set sail for Jerusalem. Thus, they went to Rome and presented themselves to Pope Paul III for missioning.

Here we see a shift in the missioning process. In Plan A, they chose and decided their mission – they missioned themselves through communal discernment. In Plan B, they offered themselves to the Pope for missioning, in complete surrender and availability.

What is there to learn about Ignatian charism and spirituality from this "Venice Experience" of St. Ignatius and friends?

A Short Reflection

What challenges do these three features of St. Ignatius' "Venice Experience" pose for us in the Magis Deo Community, we who profess to practice Ignatian Spirituality?

Spiritual Conversation in Prayer Meetings

We need to deepen our practice of prayerful introspection, speak the language of the heart, and focus our faith sharing on our consolations and desolations, what bring us closer to or farther away from God, what nourish or deplete our intimacy with God and His ways.

In this manner we will form bonds of spiritual companionship characterized by transparency and trust as we meet for prayer meetings weekly, interfaces quarterly, formation talks monthly.

Service in the Spirit of Magis

We need to communally discern what the crying need of our times is. We are called to look and see the signs of the times, discern the call of the times and act where the need is greatest.

Having formed bonds of solidarity and spiritual companionship, we will be able to communally discern how we, as individual members, as small prayer communities (BCGGs) or as the whole Magis Deo Community are called to respond to the needs of our times.

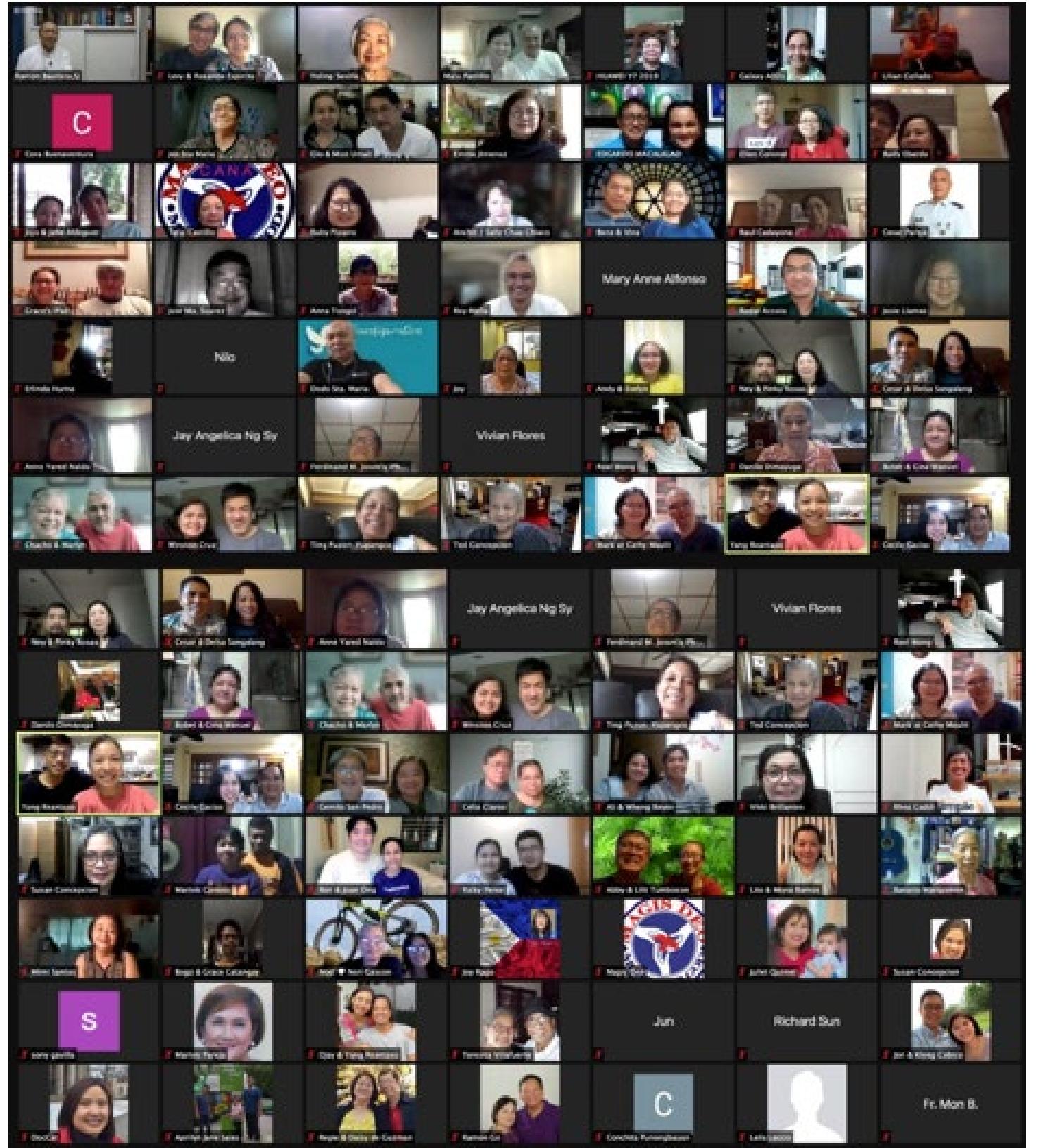
Surrender and Availability

Our primary mission is as married couples and parents. However, within this primary mission can be other missions, invitations to sharing and service in the spirit of surrender, St. Ignatius' "Susciere."

Fr. Mon's guidelines for discerning our mission or call from the framework of our primary mission as spouses and parents, are helpful: examine our deep desires, gifts, pains, and great consolations. To that we could add our physical constraints whether due to other obligations, health conditions, or safety concerns in the light of the pandemic.

What are crucial are the desire to entrust all that we are and all that we have to God for Him to govern in accord with His will, and the spirit of availability, both of which are the fruits of spiritual freedom and holy detachment.

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam!



Accompanying the Shepherds Series Praying the Scriptures: A Summary

Trixie Sun, Formation Ministry / Matthew BCGG

The fourth session of the *Accompanying the Shepherds* formation series was held on June 26, 2021 with 127 participants from 23 BCGGs. Fr. Francis Alvarez, SJ, spoke on *Praying the Scriptures* with the objective of guiding the shepherds on how to read the Scriptures and help the Community grow through our faith sharing. Fr. Francis is a Professor of Biblical Theology and Religious Education at the Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University.

I. How Do You Read Scripture?

- Be Humble
- Be Daring

B E HUMBLE because our interpretation of verses may be wrong as we do not fully understand the meaning of the scriptures. Even Bible scholars cannot know everything.

Fr. Francis gives a hypothetical situation: Your neighbor's stay-out driver complains to you that his employer wants him to work until 12 midnight, extending beyond his 8-hour work schedule. He has spoken to his employer about this, and the latter's response was "Matthew 5:41".

Matthew 5:41 reads: "Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles."

It is obvious the employer wants his driver to willingly extend his working hours despite the inconveniences it will cause when he replied "Matthew 5:41." But did Jesus mean that we should allow ourselves to be enslaved or that we can enslave others and expect them not to complain or question us? He DID NOT.

During Jesus' time, the Roman soldiers could command anyone to carry their load and that person had to obey as this was the law. However, to avoid abuse by Roman soldiers, the law also stipulated that the Roman soldiers could conscript people for only 1 mile (there were mile markers) so that if anyone went beyond 1 mile, the Roman soldiers could be imprisoned. Therefore, when the person carrying the load would continue walking beyond 1 mile, the Roman soldiers would start begging that person to stop. The moment this happens, the tables would have turned – the person carrying the load (the oppressed) now has the power to have the soldier (the oppressor) sent to jail.

Jesus meant this verse to convey CREATIVE RESISTANCE in the hope that the Roman soldiers would feel how it was like

to be the weak person, the person with no choice. Jesus says we have a responsibility to teach others, in a creative way, to be better people and to not abuse others.

Without knowing the history behind Matthew 5:41, a person may take this literally and this can lead to oppression and putting other people's lives in danger. The same danger likewise exists when people misinterpret Matthew 5:39 "...if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also." Therefore, it is important that we know the world behind the text.

A. The World Behind the Text

... studies the time and culture that gave rise to the text and inquires about its original text; asks about the history in the text, and about the history of the text: the world of the time in which the text is set and about the world that produced it...

... looks at the prevailing historical, cultural, and religious situation; the geography, the likely author, and community; the history of its transmission

The Bible was written in a certain culture and not even the top scholars know everything about the culture that produced the Bible.

Fr. Francis then goes on to read Matthew 26:6 - ff: Now when Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster jar of costly perfumed oil and poured it on his head while he was reclining at table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant and said "Why this waste? It could have been sold for much and the money given to the poor." Since Jesus knew this, he said to them, "Why do you make trouble for the woman? She has done a good thing for me. The poor you will always have with you; but you will not always have me."

The line "The poor you will always have with you" has been interpreted to mean that there will always be poverty and that the fight against it is futile so one might as well direct his efforts on something else. Is this interpretation accurate? No, it is not.

To expound, Fr Francis gives a scenario. A parish priest tells the congregation to raise funds for a new "retablo" but then a parishioner responds that the money raised would be put to better use by helping those who have been adversely affected by the pandemic.

PRAYING The SCRIPTURES

By Fr. Francis Alvarez, SJ
June 26 at 8:00pm



If the parish priest quotes “the poor you will always have with you” so he could justify having the new “retablo” made, does he understand what Jesus really meant by that? No, he does not.

When Jesus said this, he was actually quoting another line of scripture from the Old Testament: “The land will never lack for needy persons; that is why I command you ‘Open your hand fully to your poor and to your needy kin in your land.’” (Deuteronomy 15:11). Jesus, therefore, was saying it’s true that the poor will always be there, and we will always need to help them.

However, Jesus also says “You will not always have me,” alluding to his death which was going to happen very soon, so he told his disciples to allow the woman to do what she was doing because there is a time for everything (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8).

Hence, going back to the scenario in the parish, it is important to know what time it is – is it the time to build a new “retablo” or is it the time to help the poor? At this time, amidst the pandemic, it is definitely NOT the time to build a “retablo.” The Bible should be interpreted in our time, we just cannot quote individual verses. This leads us to The World of the Text, something else we need to understand when interpreting scriptures.

B. The World of (or Within) the Text

...does not just concern one chapter or book; it involves the whole Bible. Verses reference each other. Books “talk” to one another. Passages should be in a dynamic relationship with each other. We do not know the whole Bible and all the connections within it.

(Fr. Francis showed the connection among Mt 26:6-ff, Deuteronomy, and Ecclesiastes)

Finally, verses should be interpreted in terms of The World in Front of the Text.

C. The World in Front of the Text

...is interested in how the reader responds to a text, how personal experiences or viewpoints, or cultural influences shape meaning for the reader, the contemporary relevance of the text, interpretations apart from those intended by the author, and how text can be re-contextualized in today’s world.

This would therefore refer to our world, how scripture talks to us and hits us. The world in front of the text tells us that we can BE DARING because God wants to enter our world. Scripture is the door to an encounter. God wants to connect

and talk to us in a very personal way so we can BE DARING, BRAVE, COURAGEOUS and CONFIDENT.

II. How Do You Enter Scripture? How Do You Enter God in Scripture (and yourself and others also)?

Fr. Francis briefly mentions the Ignatian Tradition of Meditation which is very similar to Lectio Divina (“chewing on the word”) and how to go about it. He shares his slide of the Responsorial Psalm for the following Sunday’s mass and asks us to:

1. Read the Psalm;
2. Identify the word, phrase, verse, or image that strikes us (we need not immediately figure out why these strike us);
3. Read the Psalm a second time and see if other words strike us; and
4. Now ask “Why did this word, phrase, verse or image strike me?”. Trying to answer this might lead us to do some research into the different worlds of scripture (world behind, of/within, in front of the text).

Did Jesus rescue me this week? How did God help me last week? Perhaps an experience in the past or a situation we are currently in will make certain words or phrases affect us more profoundly than others (world IN FRONT of the text).

A line Fr Francis gave as an example was “For his anger lasts but a moment.” Does this line speak of an angry God? Now let us enter the world OF the text. The next line reads “...a lifetime, his good will.” This line contrasts how long God’s good will lasts to how momentary his anger does, thus, describing a loving God. If someone, however, focuses on “an angry God,” that person might be experiencing something at the moment (the world IN FRONT of the text).

Someone asked, “If we are doing Ignatian Meditation, how will we know if our interpretation is wrong or right?” Fr. Francis advised that we should always pray with community, share our fruit of prayer with community (“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” Mt 18:20) and ask the experts. This way, there will be less space for error.

Fr. Francis then quotes G.K. Chesterton, “If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly.” We should not wait to do something until we can do it perfectly because if we do, then we will never do it. He encourages us to do things constantly, despite committing mistakes, until we get better and better.

These last points are essential elements in the growth of faith as one Magis Deo Community.

Meaning from the Past

Chacho Angeles, Thessalonians BCGG

(1)

Hiking is fun, trekking through the roads and trails of Pampanga and Tarlac with classmates during high school, watched over by a priest, going to rough and raw places like up in the hills overlooking Clark Air Base with breathtaking views, or the rice paddies in Magalang, the foot hills of Arayat, bringing nothing but a change of clothes, eating where hunger catches us, swimming in mountain pools only to find out there are leeches in them, or in deep paddies where carabaos cool off. Yes, these treks are tiring, but the reward at the end of the hike, and the companionship of classmates and friends, more than compensate for the tiredness, the thirst and the aching legs.

In college, there were still many treks of a very different kind – like walking from one place to another because public transport is paralyzed by storms or a transport strike, walking in a protest march, walking round and round in a picket line.

When working and raising a family, I learned to play golf, preferring to walk rather than use a golf cart, till because of age, I can only walk short courses.

These also describe my life’s journey, pulled towards different destinations, tiring, challenging, stressful, many failures but with many rewards, significant, small, disappointing yet fulfilling, hurtful yet also loving. And I always come home, to my physical home and to my heart’s home, my God.

(2)

In seminary school, sleep we did in a huge dormitory, in a large refectory eat our meals, study in a hall the size of our dorm, do things according to a schedule – sleeping, waking up, hearing mass, eating, classes, studying, even free times to wash our clothes, play board games, or just hang around.

Almost all that we do, we do together as a Community, or as teams, on schedule, all in one place or scattered all over the seminary, but we are not to leave the grounds unless with a priest or when we go home for a monthly weekender.



Looking back, I now find meaningful some rules, like we are not to keep money, but leave it with our rector until needed, and another is to put all the food we receive from visitors in the refectory, and share it with our tablemates during mealtimes.

Sounds like the instructions that Jesus gave the twelve for their test mission, that they live simply, relying on Him and the community for their needs; to share our gifts with others by serving and loving without conditions. As Jesus did when He died on the cross to save us.

(3)

After high school, my life has been truly exciting, with cannonballs flying in all directions, hitting me from all over, as I was from nowhere, going to everywhere.

At the start of college, there was our singing group where I was the guitarist; there was the Drama Guild, Community Development Group in school, all of these going on at the same time;

There was the activist anti-dictatorship movement where I got involved with community organizing, learned different ideologies, and on the side, helped organize our movement’s cultural group;

Because I saw the need midway through college, I dropped out, an explosion that caused my parents much pain and anxiety, and worked full time in the movement, all that time experiencing a kind of joy and fulfillment that filled my days;

By this time, religion had become irrelevant to me, and I stopped going to church and engaging in spiritual activities;

I just decided to be a good man, not hurting people in any way, and everything just flowed one into another, with no pain, no regrets – cannonballs from the left!

I returned to college, left the seminary, graduated, worked, got married to a comrade in arms, had children; Until my six-year-old daughter asked why we didn't go to church; did not debate with her because we enrolled her in a Catholic school, so we just started attending Sunday mass; But bad things in my culture and my pride got in the way of a loving relationship with my wife, and trouble erupted, almost rupturing a union that we put in the back seat, that we exchanged for work, for other things – cannonballs from the right and from below!

Twenty years ago, a reunion in the seminary started a process of returning to a spirituality that pushed me to leave, wrongly now I see, augmented by another that enriches relationships, horizontal, as well as the vertical ones;

Until a decade ago during a retreat, a visit to the grave of the priest who inspired me and several others to serve in the communities, hit me hard, making me cry the whole weekend, and inspired me once more to work as hard and as determined as I did during my radical late teens, though this time around, the cannonball hit me from above!

I have been nowhere, but now I am everywhere
I am sent.

(4)

I miss the silence in the study rooms, daytime and nighttime, with only the sound of rustling pages, the occasional grunt; all seemingly focused on books, doing homework, studying Latin, Pilipino, English, Spanish in the higher years, both grammar and literature, and then some; and aside from doing school work, some were doing other things like doodling, or daydreaming, me authoring poems or something when not studying.

I miss the solitude in the belfry of the chapel in Angeles, that I unfortunately discovered only in my later years there during manualia, with a breeze caressing my face and birds flying around me; with bird droppings all around, on the steel ladder going up, on the floor, on the bells, and the not so fantastic view of the highway and rooftops, where up in what I call my nest, I wrote some poems and stuff.

I miss the retreat site in Mirador Hill in Baguio, with its panoramic view of the city nestled in and around the mountains and hills, the fog rolling in, covering parts of the city, until it reaches my spot, enveloping me in its cold embrace, isolating me.



Yet in these of moments of seeming aloneness, my innermost being is in touch with something greater, more wonderful, vastly more valuable than all the kingdoms and empires the world has ever known, not needing any words of petition, or requests for help, nor grandiose words of praise; I feel content, joyful and complete, and I feel this loving being in me as I am in communion with Him, fulfilling me in every way; my God!

(5)

Mahal na Kuyang Hesus,
Buksan mo ang aking puso upang
Tanggapin ang iyong mga pangaral,
Na mababasa ko sa banal na kasalutan, at
Aking matatanto sa nakapaligid sakin,
Sa mga taong nakakasalamuha sa aking
buhay, sa kanilang mga asal, salita't kilos,
Na sumasalamin sa mga turo mo ukol sa
Pagmamahal sa Diyos at aking kapwa.

Tulungan mo akong maisaloob ang
Mga aral na ito upang maging gabay
Sa aking pang-araw-araw na buhay.
Hiling ko rin ang tulong mo upang
Maituon ko ang buo kong kamalayan
Sa iyo lamang at sa iyong mga turo,
At kasama ang iyong grasya upang
Mahalukay ko mula sa kaibuturan
Ng aking puso ang liwanag at galak
Ng iyong pagmamahal at pag-aaruga,
Dahil ang mga ito ay ang magbibigay
Ng kapanatagan at kapayapaan s'aking
Pusong natatakot, nababagabag ng
Pandemiya, ng kawalan ng hanap-buhay
At kapangyarihang naglalayo sakin sa iyo.
Ikaw Nawa.