

Magis

Formation for Mission

Stewardship

Simplicity

Sharing

Service

Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community

December 2019 Issue

What can I give you this Christmas?

Let these powerful words be
the heart of what you do

Magis memories

Thirty years of Magis' past,
and the promise of our future

A celebration of love and thanksgiving

Father Ruben Tanseco's legacy
is forever etched in our hearts

Simple acts of love

Heartwarming realizations
from the recent youth outreach

Christmas musings

Let love light the way
towards the new year

About the Cover



The oft-quoted line says (although cliché it may sound, it rings true): sunrises and sunsets are living proof that beginnings and endings can be beautiful too. There's something symbolical about this natural phenomenon; how every element of our days become mere silhouettes, shadows etched in our memory. And in the darkness, we find that there are things we regret that we did and didn't do. But even so, God asks us to rest and to let our negative thoughts wash away to the seas. For by the beautiful, glistening morning, the waves will slowly bring us back to shore.

As we enter the new year, let's look at the past and future in a different light. The shadows of our past can be beautiful vignettes, where we learned something. The light of our future, z bright and mysterious, is something to be hopeful and thankful about. Here's to more sunrises and sunsets!

Editorial Board

<div><div>Magis</div><div>Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community 2/F RMT CeFam Bldg., ADMU Campus, Q.C.</div></div>		
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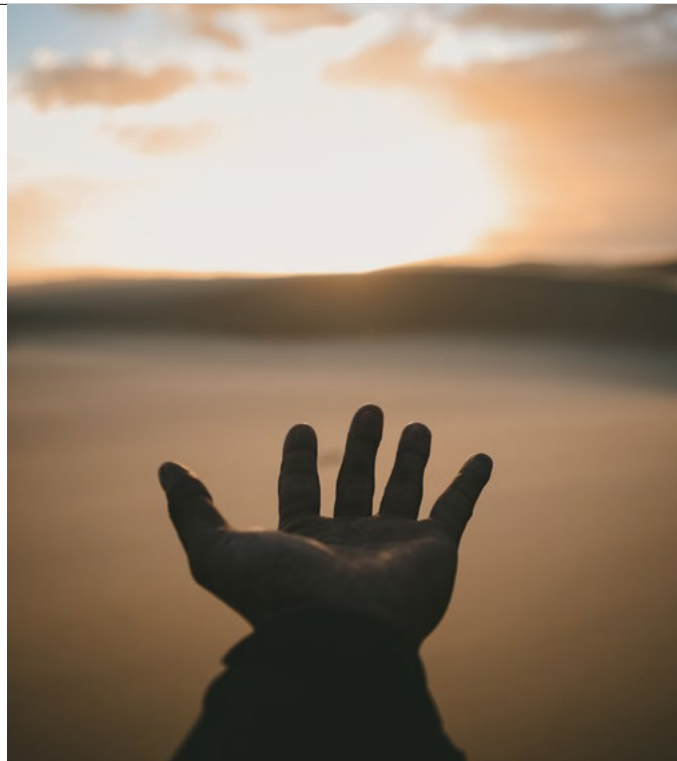
Calendar of Activities: January - February 2020

January	February	March
5 Community Celebration	2 Community Celebration	1 Community Celebration
	3rd or 4th wk Magis Orientation and Prayer workshop for ME classes	13-15 ME Weekend
		27-29 Spiritual Deepening Retreat

What shall I give You this Christmas?

There's so much to be busy with at this time of year, but let these powerful words be at the heart of what you do.

*By Christine Ponsard
visit Aleteia.org, a site for Catholic spirituality*



Decorating the house and the yard with lights, hunting for presents and baking cakes; attending holiday parties, and putting up the Christmas tree... There are so many things you need to do before Christmas. But let us not forget the most important ones.

Love

It is what all people – especially our children – need the most. **It's not enough to have a lot of love in your heart – you need to give it away every day.** Let us show our children how much we love them. This should not consist of lavishing presents; it is the gift of ourselves. And the most tangible way to do so is to give of your time. The most modest of toys takes on great value in their eyes if you take time to play with them, and the cake tastes so much better if you bake it together.

Generosity

The Magi brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. **What are you going to offer Jesus? What present does He want to receive from you? What Jesus really wants is us.** Let us offer ourselves to Him as we are, with all our faults, sins, limitations, and infidelities — but also with all of our wealth, and the wonderful things God has placed in us. Let us give it all to Jesus without separating our worries from our joys, our achievements from our failures, our desire to love from our inclination to betray.

So this offering does not remain an idea, but takes on a very concrete and tangible form, let us encourage our children to choose what they wish to give to Jesus. If they wish, they can write a note, choose a pretty stone or make a star and deposit it under the Christmas tree. And more importantly, they could offer it to the Lord, in the secret of their hearts, at the moment of offertory during the Christmas Mass.

Poverty

No amount of riches obstructed the shepherds from running to the manger and nothing could sway their minds: they simply believed. The mystery of Nativity was revealed to the humble and the meek. What riches may be holding us back, preventing us from freely doing the same?

Let us be concrete. These riches might be a project we're so attached to that we refuse to give it up, or maybe it's a prized possession. The reason why it's important to encourage our children to give one of their toys away for Christmas is not because other children don't have any toys at all — although that's important — but because it's an act of detachment, of stripping oneself of something, on the condition that it is something we still value.

Brotherhood

Jesus came to reveal to us that God is our Father, and that we are all sisters and brothers. What can we do to experience this closeness at Christmas time? Some families have a tradition of sharing the joy of Christmas with neighbors or friends they made in the course of the year. Children can draw their own Christmas cards and deposit them in the mailboxes of all your neighbors on Christmas Eve, or help you bake cookies they can offer to fellow parishioners. In some parishes, people ban together and collect money to distribute hot meals to the less fortunate. **Of course, all these small acts of kindness are not enough but they are done with a love that deeply transforms all those who take part in them and those who benefit from them.**

“Don't be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” (Lk 2:10-11). Let us prepare ourselves for a joyful Christmas by giving all of ourselves to the One who is coming, so He can offer his love to us.

The Youth Ministry in the Year of the Youth

Mark & Cathy Maulit, Youth Ministry Head

Francis & Dolly Llamas, Council Overseer



A year ago we were tasked to head the Youth Ministry. The outgoing and incoming overseers met to level off and brainstorm for the 2019 Youth thrust and goals. To aid the brainstorming process, prior to this meeting an indicative profile of the youth was drawn up based on data collected over several years by previous ministry heads.

The Magis Deo Youth was very visible in our Community Celebrations. An average of 50 members attended the 10 community celebrations with youth activities prior to the mass based on the liturgical calendar and church feast days which also included personal, family and group topics.

We had 3 activities which we outsourced at a very

minimal cost, namely; Summer Youth Camp, Mt. Purro Nature Reserve, Barangay Calawis, Antipolo City; Retreat themed “Ignite” at the Sacred Heart Novitiate, Novaliches, Quezon City and an Outreach Activity at Haven for Children wherein our youth interacted with the less fortunate children and handed them a bag of goodies. These activities promoted greater camaraderie and engagement among our Youth.

We give credit to the support of the Magis Deo Community and to the overseers of our Youth Ministry for the success of our 2019 activities. Our heartfelt thanks to Mark & Cathy Maulit, Ron & Joan Ong, Alex Teehankee, Don & Gin Galang, and Bobet & Gina Manuel.

Magis memories

Flor Pison and Joy Uy-Tioco

“To understand the living present, and the promise of the future, it is necessary to remember the past.” – Rachel Carson



Has it been thirty years? The seeds of Magis Deo were planted in 1979, when a series of Marriage Encounter weekends were held monthly at Villa Adelaida in Tagaytay. The series was later renamed the Alpha Omega Sector of the Marriage Encounter Foundation of the Philippines (MEFP) in 1984. Much later, the Magis Deo Community was officially incorporated and became a legal entity in 1988.

How simple post-weekend follow-ups were then – Nina Yuson remembers Josie Sison, one half of a presenting couple, calling to ask “Have you done your 10/10?” The 10/10 was the daily encounter of spouses – an exercise in taking turns first listening, then mirroring your spouse’s sharing back to him/her. For many of us, the MEW – and the 10/10 – was the first time we carefully listened to feelings that, unknown, unexpressed, unlistened to, could become either a stumbling block, or a spur to greater love and intimacy. Unknown to many of us, these were the basics of Ignatian prayer adapted by Fr. Ruben Tanseco, for a community of married couples and espoused into a lifestyle expressed as the 4 Ss – Stewardship, Simplicity, Service and Sharing.

Among the couples in the first three BCGGs were Joey and Nina, George and Joy, Sonny and Rae, Arnold and Lydia, Ike and Josie, Pewee and Mia, Tony and Flor, Tony and Bambi, Monchito and Tina, Ed and Claire, Vic and Ning, Chito and Nadeia, Vic and Ellen. Later on as more ME weekends were held, more BCGGs were formed and we were joined by more couples, among them Bobby and Marcia, Jun and Mila, Tony and Aida, Bayani and Cathy, Rene and Chary, Eli and Edith, Egay and Djarn, Fil and Mary Anne, Jun and Cora, and many more. Time has separated a number of couples; many are with us still, but others now watch over us as our angels in heaven.

As we near the end of the year, we would like to honor the lives of our members who have gone before us. Starting this December issue of the newsletter, The Magis Deo Members Memoir invites the community to look back and *re-member* each one – to make them part of our *present* once again. And, in the retelling of their stories, perhaps we will find a guide and promise for the future.

Fil Alfonso – The Servant Leader

Mary Anne Alfonso, John BCGG

Fil and I made our Marriage Encounter with Father John Chambers in Betania, Quezon City, in 1976, long before we joined the Magis Deo Community.

There were no follow up meetings then or growth sessions to keep us involved. Between raising our children, running our pre-school, Fil’s career, life was full and busy; we thought we had everything we could want.

Then in 2003, our youngest child Rina left to study in Japan. Suddenly, we were empty nesters and we began looking for a spiritual group to join.

Every morning, Fil and I would walk around the block of our street in Alabang. Every day, we passed the house of Sally and Anchit Chua Chiaco. Anchit would be sitting in a chair on the driveway reading the morning paper. Fil had been Anchit’s professor in the Asian Institute of Management, and Anchit would always stop reading and greet Fil, then he and Fil would start an animated conversation. This went on for a year or more – we didn’t realize it, but Anchit had a plan in mind for us. Before long, he invited us to attend the first formation program, the only formation we had previously had were annual retreats.

What really convinced us was Aida del Rosario’s waiting outside the door of our church, St. James, every day after mass. At that time, her mom was still with her. I noticed her because Aida’s mom was tall, beautiful and very fair. She finally talked me into joining the Magis Deo Community. Our BCGG, John, met in the Tahanan home of Yoling and Boy Sevilla.

Anchit and Aida never used a hard sell approach. The idea of joining Magis Deo was not pushed down our throats. It was pure gentle persuasion. They were always polite, kind, patient and, most of all, persistent.

We got very involved once we joined John BCGG, and specially when Anchit and Sally became the chair couple of Magis Deo. We never hesitated to travel from Alabang to Ateneo for our council meetings. When we were appointed Praxis head, we made it a point to visit many BCGGs as far north as Commonwealth. Fil loved being involved because he is the kind of person who commits wholeheartedly when he believes in a cause.

Those years were very busy and challenging for him – he was the president of Asian Institute of Management and chairman of Meralco at the same time. Though his work involved traveling half of the year, he never failed to attend our weekly BCGG meetings, community celebrations and retreats once he was back in the country.



Many times he would fall asleep as our meetings would last long into the night. A tall feat for someone who rose daily at the crack of dawn. Fil would say he still wanted “to be there.”

He gave his fair share of assistance to our GK Aya, the outreach arm of John BCGG, to the golf tournaments in terms of sponsorships and other fund raising events. In AIM, he was known as the champion fund raiser.

Not many knew of Fil’s many hats because he was simple, humble and quiet. He liked working behind the scenes more than in the spotlight. He was in every sense of the word, a true Servant Leader. In fact after he passed, a special edition of the Inquirer called him that – “a Servant Leader.” Fil was a servant of God first, just like St. Thomas More. Not surprising because he had studied in San Jose Seminary for nine years. I don’t think he would have had it any other way. He loved Magis Deo and everything it stood for; most especially he loved the Johns and God.

This devotion was repaid a hundredfold when our lives and that of our children were shaken to the root: our life savings were stolen by a real crook. How it happened, we could never understand since Fil was an intelligent and very capable person especially in matters of finance. But it did. And God allows bad things to happen. We had fallen into a deep pit; like Joseph, we thought. And like Joseph, God never left us. Though we never recovered our money, we never even thought of retaliating. I remember a vague thought of leaving flit through my mind, but I also remember saying “we lost money but I am not willing to lose you because I love you so much.” As a result, we became even closer and more active in Magis Deo. God has never abandoned us.

The family has set up a therapies, wellness and healing center, Magis Creative Spaces. It is located inside our school in Alabang. The name Magis means a lot to the family of Fil Alfonso.

Remembering Joey

Nina Yuson, Sirach BCGG



It has taken me a while to write this short piece on Joey. I had to reflect on what our kids had to say about him and Magis Deo friends who knew him. I also kept imagining if Joey were alive today and he came to visit the Magis Deo Council, what would he say about our Community?

He would, I am almost certain, be very proud of Magis, how it has evolved through the years. How despite many changes in our society, Magis has remained steadfast in supporting family life, live the 4 S's as far possible and how true servant and stewardship, a needed leadership style, has transformed our members, including our Youth sector.



Joey and I took the ME in 1982. Our Zak was a newborn baby. Zak is the youngest of our 4 children. Joey, to me, was passionate in all he did. His career (banker), his family as a loving father and husband and Magis Deo. Fr. Ruben Tanseco and Joey were a tandem and sometimes I think, Joey would've been a good Jesuit priest, if he hadn't met me. Significant to our family during Joey as MEFP Chair and Fr. Ruben's term were the Parenting for Peace and Justice and Family Encounter. I deeply thank God that we went through these weekends as a family, as those were the roots of our spirituality and response to nation building. I don't think we could have survived Joey's early departure in 1991. He was 50 years old when he died of cardiac arrest. I was 44 years old.

He would, I am almost certain, be very proud of Magis, how it has evolved through the years. How despite many changes in our society, Magis has remained steadfast in supporting family life, live the 4 S's as far possible and how true servant and stewardship, a needed leadership style, has transformed our members, including our Youth sector.

I am grateful that through these years without Joey at our side, physically, he has given a part of himself to our family. Tanya most likely got Joey's flair for the creative films she is into, soon a Netflix series she is co-producing; Nikki for being an efficient and methodical mom and entrepreneur, Chino is a medical doctor, something which Joey aspired to be; and Zak, they say, is a miniature Joey, in looks and leadership style. I hope they got from me the persistence and perseverance, for what they are today.

We try to live the 4 S's, as we never really have more than we need, and the sharing is always there in our small and humble ways. These values and other similar values are learned early in life and Magis contributed to this, a prayerful and reflective life and acting in response to these reflections.

As Christmas approaches once again, we always miss Joey. And although my kids and I don't voice this out, I pray we get to comprehend God's love for choosing us, putting us together as His family.



A celebration of love and thanksgiving for Fr. Ruben Tanseco, SJ

Levy and Roxanne Espiritu, Transfiguration BCGG



We were singing "*Minamahal*" as Fr. Ruben walked into a surprise gathering lovingly prepared for him by the Magis Deo Community on his 88th birthday. One can't help but feel emotional as he slowly walked in, stooped and frail, but with brightly lit eyes as he acknowledged the presence of familiar faces. The group lined up kundiman songs, reminiscent of the love songs we used to sing on ME haranas. Given the limited time we were given to celebrate his birthday with him, we tried to stick to the sequence of songs but Father would interrupt us in between songs to express his appreciation and delight. As we continued with our repertoire, he would sing along with us with so much gladness and fervor you could almost imagine his heart bursting with joy!

We tried to hold our tears, especially when we sang "*Saan ka man naroroon!*" With memories of how we were with this man who has been instrumental in strengthening our marital bonds, fortifying the family values we used in raising our children, and how our spirituality evolved through the years under his inspiration and guidance, we couldn't help shedding tears of joy. We know too well how blessed we are to have known him and to have had the opportunity to work

alongside him in building Magis Deo.

Father Ruben's acknowledgement will not be complete without his usual spiel about how his life will be over soon; of course we tend to take everything in jest, as we have been used to hearing him say this since his retirement many years ago. On another thought, we know that we will miss him, and words are not enough to describe how valuable Fr. Ruben has been to all of us.

Truly this man is so well-loved and well-appreciated by the community he helped put together. His legacy will be forever be etched in our hearts, and as we closed the harana with our theme song "*Gaano Kita Kamahal*," we all felt his love, as much as we are sure he felt ours.

Thank you, Fr. Ruben for being God's instrument and for allowing us to see God's compassion and mercy through your person. We will forever cherish the formative and growing years we had with you. We will always be grateful for everything you have done to save us, our marriage, and more importantly, our spirituality.

May God continue to be kind in your advanced years and may each day remind you of how loved you are for blessing us and loving us the way you do.

17 November 2019 Advent Recollection



Photos by Anchit Chua Chiacco

17 November 2019 Advent Recollection



Advent Recollection
Nov. 17, 2019

Photos by Anchit Chua Chiacco

Magis Deo Youth thanksgiving

Youth Ministry



During the community celebration last November 17, 2019, the Magis Deo Youth gathered to reflect on their activities in 2019 and the blessings they received as well as their hopes for the coming year. Each was asked to summarize in a word, short phrase, sound or image the fruits of their reflection. They put them on metacards and made a collage with them. Afterwards, led by fellow Magis Deo Youth Kuya Joaquin and Ate Janais Aldeguer they spent the rest of the session preparing their presentation for the Magis Deo Family Day on December 1 inspired by their reflections.



Reflections on Magis Youth outreach at Haven for Children

Last October 27, 2019, we had our Magis Deo Youth Outreach that was held in Haven for Children in Alabang. The Haven for Children is the national center for street children recovering from substance abuse.

There were 30 to 40 boys selected to be part of the activity and we were randomly assigned to different groups. The first thing that we did was introduce ourselves to each other and I was able to ask them what they want to be in the future. Most want to be a soldier; I asked why and they had same answers, "Because I want to be able to help and protect other people." They told me their idol is Cardo Dalisay since they watch the television series every night. I was really amazed how they think and how the national center takes care of them.

"Afterwards, we made group cheers and played few games. They had so many ideas and they became really active.

Finally, the most awaited part of the program, the mural painting, began. I witnessed how excited they were to paint and we had so much fun filling up artwork with different colors. After painting, we ate lunch with them and then gave them some helpful items that they could use daily. I can see in their eyes how happy and grateful they were for everything they received.

I am very glad to be part of this experience and share some time and blessings with the kids. With this experience, I realized there is nothing I should be complaining about because I am already blessed with a good family and a comfortable life. Instead, I should be grateful because everything, small or big, is a blessing. Moreover, I was impressed with how the Haven for Children molds the character of each child, that despite the bad

things that happened to them in the past, they still choose to do good and serve other people."

- Veronica Ricohermoso, Magis Youth

"The kids from Haven blessed me that day by showing how resilient they are, and that I should never be put down by any problems. Imagine you're a child from Haven, no one to comfort you when you have a problem, no one to answer your burning questions, no one to teach you the ways of life, no one to push you to be better when you can't push yourself, no one who loves you quite like a parent does. (They may not have all of these problems, but I think that some of them do.) God is there for them, but it takes time and faith to understand Him, and build a friendship with Him, so it's really amazing that these kids can handle it all.

Even though the children from Haven have these problems, they still have their smiling faces. They showed me this when we were just getting to know each other. Each child from Haven looked so happy, so at peace. And they were creative too.

After we got to know each other we were tasked to make a team name and cheer for a competition, so we got to work. The children from Haven had so many ideas. Our team name was The Red Dragons, and our team cheer was great. Though we didn't win the competition, I was proud of the kids from Haven for making our lively, happy cheer with us. They showed me that you should never let problems bring you down, and that you should always persevere in life, and always trust in the Lord."

- Eli Ang, Magis Youth



Paint a smile

Joaquin Aldeguer, Magis Youth



As I woke up on the morning of October 27, I tried my best to open my eyes and get out of bed to prepare for our Magis Mural Painting event.

Being the son of the chair couple, I had to make sure everything went smoothly; and, more importantly, I had to make sure I wouldn't be late. On the way I kept wondering how interacting and doing activities with the kids would be. "Would they be my age? Would I have to speak fluent Pilipino? What if we cannot relate in anything?" However, after a few hours, I can say this was one of the best and friendliest interactions I have had. I can say that this experience opened my eyes to the fact that blessings and genuine happiness can be found anywhere if we are open to accepting anything with love.

After an hour's trip, we arrived in Muntinlupa City and we went in a gate that led us to a huge basketball court. On the way to the court, I saw trees and three huge school buildings where the kids studied. We were greeted by the heat of the boiling sun. I was fortunate to bring my water jug, to stay hydrated. As I walked around the campus, I noticed all sorts of paintings on the walls, mostly of animals, churches, nature and the like. I then saw a blank one, and I knew this was the one we were going to design and paint with the kids. My mood changed. From a groggy and sleepy feeling came an exciting, heart-pumping, motivational one. I felt happy, and became more excited to paint with the kids. I knew this would make their day, and I looked forward to making them happy as well.

To my surprise, the kids were very talkative, and entertaining. I met seven of them, and together with other Magis Youth, we

became one group. The thoughts continued to revolve – what to talk about and what to say. And then, this thought hit me: I knew anime was a big thing for a lot of Filipinos, so I started talking about Naruto. As I got into the topic, a huge circle of kids formed around me, and before I knew it, we were talking about the same thing. It was crazy, we were so loud. Even during the games, the hosts told us to quiet down and play because we were so talkative. In short, I really appreciated everything we talked about; and this shows how big an impact it made to myself and the kids.

After the activities, we headed to the wall to paint and re-decorate the campus. I was sweating so much, but that no longer mattered because of the fun we had interacting with each other. And I remember being in awe of how talented, skilled and artistically inclined some kids were. Some mentioned they had a passion for drawing and painting; and to see them work on the wall was truly astonishing. As I stood back and saw the mural, I felt we needed more time to paint, but through it all, I knew it was going to look good, creative, and colorful. Despite our interacting for only an hour, I grew to love these children – their attitude, respect for one another, their love for others despite the hardships, and most importantly, their finding genuine happiness in the simplest of things.

This experience opened my eyes to appreciate even the littlest of things, and to see the blessing in each of them. I feel truly fortunate, and moreover blessed to have experienced this, and I can say that through this, I have also learned what it means to be happy.

Simple acts of love

Ysabela Tyne E. Tabilog, Magis Youth



Last October 27, 2019, the Magis Youth had an outreach program at Haven for Children. With the help of U! Happy, a non-governmental organization that aims to connect partners with marginalized children, we were able to interact with the boys of Haven. We had a chance to talk and play with them. We even had a mural painting activity. And after all these, we had a little salu-salo with our own groups.

The activity was very short. In fact, it lasted for only two or three hours, but it had a big impact to me. I grew up knowing that my parents are part of a community called Magis Deo and I can clearly see the good it brought our family. But this is the first outreach activity I have done. As I grow up through the years, I learned the values of God, but never did I have the chance to put these learnings to practice.

Seeing those children made me realize a bunch of things. At an early age, they already faced a lot of challenges. I don't know their stories but they wouldn't be there without a reason. Realizing how much pain and discomfort they have experienced, I learned to appreciate what I have. I have always been thankful for the blessings I have but because of the influences of the world, I tend to want more and forget what I already have. Those kids don't have any luxury. They can't have the clothes and toys they want; they do not have the kind of education they deserve, and, most importantly, they are not with their families. I cannot even see myself in their situation.

Honestly, I don't know what will happen to me if I were one of those children. But despite all, you can still see them smile. You can see strength and determination in their eyes. I've seen a lot of kids like them but not all are in good condition. The kids I met in Haven are fighters. They might not know it but they are blessed. They know how to appreciate whatever they have. The gifts we gave them were really simple but they were so happy. They were very enthusiastic and appreciative. The simple humble things we did meant a lot to them and hearing their Thank You and seeing them smile warms my heart.

And when we were leaving, I asked myself, "Bakit ngayon ko lang ito ginawa?" I am so blessed but I never had the chance to share what I have. It feels good to help. Not only because it is right but because I can make them feel the happiness I have. Those kids deserve more. They didn't choose to be in that situation and they must experience the joy children like us have. And that's what motivates me. I hope children like me realize we should not live only for ourselves. There are a lot of people in need. People who deserve love. We just have to look around and be sensitive. Even with simple acts of love, we can already help. Giving money isn't the only way we can help. Giving love and putting Jesus' words into life are way better. Serving isn't just for the rich and for the old, anyone can serve. And when we do, we do not just serve our neighbors but also our God.

27 October 2019 Magis Youth Outreach



22-24 November 2019 ME Weekend



Starting my Journey as a Shepherd of ME Class 132

Winston Cruz, Matthew BCGG

ME Class 132 had its Marriage Encounter Weekend last November 22 - 24 at the BLD Covenant House with Fr. James Gascon, SJ as Spiritual Director. As members of the Marriage Encounter Ministry, my wife Mae and I are already used to the processes of the ME Weekend which we assist in from time to time. But we had to pay special attention to this particular weekend as we were going to be the shepherds of this class.

As we went through the weekend, we eagerly observed all 14 couples in attendance... were they a bit too quiet? My concern was quelled later when I learned from Fr. James that this was among the most behaved and attentive classes he gave a weekend to. Nevertheless, we continued the ME Weekend agenda and, while we are already familiar with the process, the sharings, this time from the Parejas and the Gumilas, never cease to instill new insights and touch my heart again.

As we prepared for the first reunion, it was clear that

many of the couples were similarly touched, many relaying the good the weekend had brought to their relationships. And here is where I face the challenge of shepherding an ME Class for the first time. Certainly, I would first have to look past the difficulty of inviting everyone and get as many participants as I can gather for the first reunion, amidst the graduates' competing professional and domestic priorities. Yet we were able to get a good number for our reunion, with many expressing strong intentions to attend the next one.

Being fairly new to Magis Deo myself, I chose to open up to the group and talk about my own feeling of humility vis-a-vis the challenge of leading this flock, and I prayed for guidance and enlightenment in front of everyone, at the same time asking for everyone's support in making our journey a successful one. Not much yet has happened since – as we prepare to start 2020 with our series of reunions. But I look ahead with optimism and hope that no matter where this journey leads us, God touches these good couples, and that they are able to build and sustain strong, nurturing bonds in their marriage – as part of God's magnificent plan for them.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Olping and Emmy Bersola, Richard and Mayet Gonzaga, Ron and Rose Dumlao, Nico and Glajie Nicolas, Jun and Anac Padilla, Philip and Leah Crizaldo, Thur and Kris Zapanta, Ed and Jess Gumila, Fr. James Gascon and Mimi Santos, Cesar and Marivic Pareja, Fernan and Jigz Lacanilao, Larry and Gina Manalo, Ato and Riza Kabigting, Nick and Ann Foley, Gie and Cynch Belen, Rey and Tiyen Tumali, Robert and Malu San Andres

Love in Marriage

Compiled by Tony and Tita Kosca



All that has been said about love in marriage would be insufficient to express the Gospel of marriage and the family. Love is experienced and nurtured in the daily life of couples. The grace of the sacrament of marriage is intended before all else to perfect the couple's love. *"Even if I have faith so as to move mountains, but not have love, I am nothing."* (1 Cor 13:2-3)

Saint Paul wrote a lyrical feature about love and explains what each line means.

Love is patient. God is slow to anger. One who does not act on impulse and avoids giving offense. He calls us to imitate him within the family. His mercy towards sinners is a sign of his power.

Love is at the service of others. This means a good person, one who shows his goodness by his deeds. St. Paul wants to make it clear that "patience" is not a completely passive attitude, but one accompanied by activity, a dynamic interaction with others. It allows us to experience the joy of giving.

Love is not jealous. St. Paul goes on to reject as contrary to love the verb jealous or envious. This means that love has no room for jealousy at another person's good fortune. Envy is a form of sadness provoked by another's prosperity. Whereas love makes us rise above ourselves, envy closes us in on ourselves. True love values the other person's achievements. Love means fulfilling the last two commandments of God's law: "you shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife... or anything that is your neighbor's property" ...

Love is not rude. Love is also to be gentle and thoughtful. Love is not rude or impolite, or harsh. Love abhors making others suffer. Loving kindness builds bonds, cultivating and building a neat social fabric.

Love is generous. Saint Paul explains it thus: let each one of you look not only to his own interest but also to the interest of others. (Phil 2:4 loving ourselves is only important as a prerequisite to love others. Saint Thomas explains "it is more proper to charity to desire to love than to desire to be loved."

Love forgives. The opposite of resentment is forgiveness, which is rooted in a positive attitude that seeks to understand other people's weaknesses and to forgive them. Any mistake or lapse of the spouse can harm the bond of love and the stability of the family.

It requires, in fact a ready and generous openness of each and all to understanding, forbearance, to reconciliation. We need to learn to live with our limitations and even to forgive ourselves in order to have this same attitude towards others. Otherwise our family will no longer be "tranquil" but one of constant tension and mutual criticism.

Love rejoices with others. Negativity deep within a person's heart is a toxic attitude of those who rejoice at seeing an injustice done to others, and for those who must always be comparing and competing with others and rejoice at their failure. On the other hand, when a loving person can do good for others, or sees that others are happy, they themselves live happily, and in this way give glory to God "for God loves a cheerful giver."

God appreciates those who find joy in the happiness of others. The family must be a place where, when something good happens to one of its members, they know that everybody will be there to celebrate it with them.

Love believes all things. Trust is not to be taken in its strict theological meaning but more in the sense of what we mean by "trust." This is presuming that the other is not lying or cheating. Trust enables love to be free. It means we do not have to control the other person lest they escape our grip. Here hope comes fully into its own because it embraces the certainty of the after death. There, truly transformed by Christ's Resurrection, every weakness will pass away.

Love endures all things. This means that love bears every trial with a positive attitude. It stands firm in hostile surroundings. It has endurance, which involves the ability to tolerate aggravations or any challenge. It is a love that never gives up.

Growing in Conjugal Love

This is the love between husband and wife, a love enriched, sanctified and illuminated by the grace of the sacrament of marriage. It is an affective union spiritual and sacrificial which combines the warmth of friendship and erotic passion, and endures long after emotion and passion subside. This powerful love is a reflection of the unbroken covenant between Christ and humanity that culminated in his self-sacrifice on the cross. Conjugal love is the greatest form of friendship possessing all the traits of good friendship: concern for the good of the other, reciprocity, warmth, stability and a resemblance born of a shared life.

The Love of a Mother and a Father

Children once born, begin to receive along with nourishment and care, the spiritual gift of knowing that they are loved. This is shown through the gift of their name, show of affection and smiles. Such is love and it contains a spark of God’s love and in a sense they are God’s interpreters. Mothers are the greatest antidote to the spread of self-centeredness and individualism. It is they who testify to the beauty of life. Dear mothers, thank you! Thank you for what you are in your family and for what you give to the Church and the world.

God sets the father in the family so that by his masculinity he can be close to his wife, and share everything, joy and sorrow, hope and hardship and to be close to his children as they grow, when they work and when they play, and to be a father who is always present. Fathers who are too controlling overshadow their children, they don’t let them develop. Some fathers feel they are useless or unnecessary, but the fact is that “children need to find a father waiting for them when they come home with problems.” It is not good for children to lack a father and to grow up before they are ready.

An expanding fruitfulness. Adoption is a generous way to become parents. Those who cannot have children can expand their marital love to embrace those who lack a proper family situation. They will never regret being generous. Adopting a child is an act of love, offering the gift of a family to someone who has none. Adoption and foster care, correctly understood, manifest an important aspect of parenthood and raising of children. Families who are properly disposed and receive the Eucharist regularly, reinforce their desire for fraternity, their social consciousness and their own commitment to those in need. Their fruitfulness expands and in countless ways makes God’s love present in society.

Being sons and daughters. We are all sons and daughters. And this always brings us we did not give ourselves life but that we received it. The great gift of life is the first gift we received. A society with children who does not honor parents, is a society without honor. It is a society destined to be filled with surly and greedy people. In some marriages, one spouse one keeps secret from the other confiding them instead to his or her parents. As a result, the opinions of their parents become more important than the feelings and opinions of their spouse. This situation cannot go on for long. Both spouses need to make the effort to grow in trust and communication. Spouses need to find new ways of being sons and daughters.

The elderly. “Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake not when my strength is spent.” (Ps 71:9). This is the plea of the elderly who fear being rejected and forgotten. God asks us to hear and respond to the cry of the poor, so he asks us to hear the cry of the elderly. The Church cannot and does not want to conform to a mentality of impatience and indifference to the elderly. We must reawaken the collective sense of gratitude, of appreciation, hospitality, which make the elderly feel part of the community. “The elderly help us to appreciate the continuity of generations” by their charism of bridging the gap. A family that fails to respect and cherish its grandparents who are its living memory is already in decline, whereas a family that remembers has a future.

Being brothers and sisters. In the family we learn to live as one. Perhaps we do not always think about this, but the family itself introduces fraternity into the world. Nourished by affection and education at home, the style of fraternity radiates upon the world. Growing up with brothers and sisters makes a beautiful experience of caring for and helping one another. Fraternity in families is especially radiant when we see the care, the patience, the affection that surround the brother or sister who is frail, sick or disabled. Parents who have only one child have to find ways to ensure that he or she does not grow up alone or isolated. We cannot forget that the larger family includes fathers-in-law, mothers-in-law, and all the relatives of the couple. Larger families are not to view one another as competitors, threats or intruders. Caring for them and cherishing them while maintaining the privacy and independence of the couple. The conjugal union demands respect for their traditions and customs. Being willing to do so is an exquisite expression of generous love for one’s spouse.

Towards a Better Education of Children

Parents always influence the moral development of their children, for better or for worse. It follows that they should take up this role and carry it out consciously, enthusiastically reasonably and appropriately. Since the educational role of families is so important and increasingly complex, Pope Francis discusses it in detail in his Exhortation, “*Amoris Laetitia*.”

Where are our children?

Parents need to consider what they want their children to be exposed to and this means being concerned about who is providing their entertainment, who is entering their room through electronic devices, and with whom they are spending their free time. Only if we devote our time with our children, speaking of important things with simplicity and concern we will be able to shield them from harm.

What is most important is the ability lovingly to help them grow in freedom, maturity, discipline and real autonomy. Only in this way will they be able to fend for themselves and to act intelligently when they meet with difficulties. The real question then is not where our children are physically, but where they are existentially where they stand in terms of their convictions, goals, desires and dreams. “Above all, dear parents, do we want to know?” Education involves forming persons who readily understand that their own lives, and the life of the community is in their hands, and that freedom is itself a great gift.

Children who are lovingly corrected feel cared for. Parents who treat their children like an object or an enemy would lead the children to frustrations and discouragement.

There are two equally harmful extremes of discipline. One would be to revolve around the child’s desires. Children will grow up with their sense of their rights but not their responsibilities. The other would be deprived awareness of his or her own identity and rights and a need to carry out other people’s wishes.

The family is the first school of human values, where we learn the wise use of freedom. Certain inclinations develop in childhood and become so deeply rooted that they remain throughout life either as attractions to a particular value or a repugnance to certain ways of acting.

Sad to say, some television programs or forms of advertising often negatively influence and undercut the values inculcated in family life. When children learn and realize that they must be responsible for themselves, their self-esteem is enriched.

The family is the primary setting for socialization since it is where we first learn to relate and make the young people relate to others, to listen, to help one another and live as one. The family is the principal agent of an integral economy, because it is the primary social subject which contains within its two fundamental principles of human civilization on earth: “the principle of communion and the principle of fruitfulness.” And education that fails to nurture people who are sensitive to human illness makes the heart grow cold. It makes young people anesthetized to the suffering of others.

The educational process that occurs between parents and children can be helped or hindered by the increasing sophistication of the communications and entertainment media. When well used this media can be helpful for connecting family members who live apart from one another. Still it is clear that this media cannot replace the need for personal and direct dialogue, which requires the presence or at least the voice of the other person. To help expand parental relationship to broader realities, “Christian communities are called to offer support to the educational mission of families,” particularly through catechesis associated with Christian initiation.

The need for sex education

The Second Vatican Council spoke of the need for “a positive and prudent sex education” to be imparted to children and adolescents “as they grow older” with due weight being given to the advances in psychological, didactic and pedagogical sciences. It is not easy to approach the issue of sex education in an age when sexuality tends to be trivialized and impoverished. The sexual urge can be directed to a process of self-knowledge and self-control capable of nurturing valuable capacities for joy and for loving encounter. Sex education should provide information while keeping in mind that children and young people have not attained full maturity.

Young people need to realize that they are bombarded by messages that are not beneficial for their growth towards maturity. They should be helped to recognize and seek out positive influences, while shunning the things that cripple their capacity for love. A sexual education that fosters a healthy modesty has immense value. Modesty is a natural means whereby we defend our personal privacy and protect ourselves from being turned into objects to be used.

Without a sense of modesty, affection and sexuality can be reduced an obsession with genitality and unhealthy behaviors that distort our capacity for love, and with forms of sexual violence that lead to inhuman treatment. It is true that we cannot separate the masculine and the feminine from God’s work of creation, which is prior to our decisions and experiences and biological elements which are difficult to ignore. But it is also true that masculinity and femininity are not rigid categories. It is possible that a husband’s masculinity can be adapted to his wife’s work schedule. This does not make him any less masculine or imply failure.

Passing on the faith

This begins with baptism, in which Saint Augustine said, mothers who bring their children “cooperate in the sacred birthing.” Education in the faith has to adapt to each child since older resources and recipes do not always work. “It is beautiful when mothers teach their little children to blow a kiss to Jesus or to our Lady. How much love is there in that! At that moment the child’s heart becomes a place of prayer.

The family is thus an agent of pastoral activity through its explicit proclamation of the Gospel and its legacy of varied forms of witness, namely, solidarity with the poor, moral and material solidarity with other families, including those in most need. All these is an expression of our profound Christian belief in the love of the Father and manifested in the total self-gift of Jesus Christ, who even now lives in our midst and enables us to face together the storms of life in every stage. “We come to believe in the love that God has for us.” (1 Jn 4:16).

Author’s preface

“The glory of the young men is their strength, but the beauty of old men is their grey hair.” (Prov 20:29)

In his Post-Synodal Exhortation, Pope Francis wrote a letter to the youth of the world, entitled CHRISTUS VIVIT – CHRIST IS ALIVE. First of all, he talked about a God who is love. It’s easy to say, “Oh my God!” in times of darkness but do we really know how to “live” the meaning of those words, most often easily and jokingly said. Some of us do not really know nor appreciate the meaning of God’s love. In his exhortation, Pope Francis wrote some scriptural passages that explain clearly what God’s love is and what it really means to all of us.

Although his letter is addressed to the young, he knows it is extremely necessary to talk about how the generation gap between the youth and the elderly can coexist and bear much fruit. They need each other and can help each other in their particular journey: to reflect the love of God in their families and communities.

Our family started “small.” Every night after dinner we gather around the table and pray the Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus – a devotion which my family started after the Japanese war. Each child has the image of the Sacred Heart enthroned in their home.

A few months before we finished writing this, my husband was struck with cancer of the liver. After talking to several doctors, he decided not to have another operation. He knew it would be useless. The family sat down at table and tearfully discussed the issue. On his deathbed, all the children and grandchildren were around him. To ease the pain a little, the children sang his favorite Sinatra song and we were all surprised when he sang with them. He died with a smile on his lips, holding the cross tightly in his hands.

Perhaps if the familial relationship was one of isolation, an absentee father and a domineering mother, he wouldn’t have gone as he did. The children knew what was expected of them and they did what they had to do.

We have nothing to bequeath to them but God’s precious love that never grows cold. - Teresita O. Kosca

Christmas Musings

Chacho Angeles, Thessalonians BCGG

(1)
The unfolding of the advent season proclaims
The glorious rising of Your Son.
He is the light that dispels the darkness
From the night and from my spirit.
His compassionate heart will
Wipe away the tears from my eyes.
Send me too Your Holy Spirit
With the fire that takes away the chill
And the sinfulness covering my heart.

Guide my mind that my thoughts be attuned
To the words of Your Son;
Guide my tongue that my words enlighten the spirit;
Guide my hands that they may continue your creation;
Guide my feet that they may bring me to You,
My final destination; guide my heart that it may
Find compassion and be one with Your heart.

By Your grace may I hear Your guidance
In the silence of my heart, or in the experiences
That will come my way. I am forever grateful
For this constant renewal of Your love, and my desire
To reciprocate this love, not because I owe You,
But because this is the purpose of my life, and
The reason for my being. Amen.

(2)
Loving and caring Father,
I was once a baby, vulnerable
Like all children, like the babe
Born in a manger in Bethlehem.
With the help of my caring parents
And a lot of other people, I am now
Past my golden years, and well into
My senior years. Nothing seriously bad
Happened to me, despite an all around
Busy-ness with a very liberal dose of
Rash and reckless derring-do. I even
Turned my back on you for decades
Thinking you absent and irrelevant.
You turned me around, and brought
About a change of heart. I could not
Imagine being able to do it myself, and
Plod on, not knowing what the future
Holds for me, except that I am loved.
All I have to do is trust in that love, and
Embrace You, my known unknown.
Amen.

(3)

Father,
How I wish I were a child again.
With no cares, no worries, no work,

No responsibilities, no ambitions.
They just want to eat, go out, play
With the kids, or with their toys.
They call out to others to show a
Discovery, or to ask for help,
For company, for comfort.

They cry when they are hungry,
Do not get what they want, when
They hurt, or when they feel bad,
Or even for no apparent reason.
They have very simple needs,
Around which their world revolves.
And among them is a desire to be
Loved, to cuddle, to be cared for,
To share their joy and happiness.
They trust the love of their parents
And other adults or all their needs.
They are so transparent that
You will know when you do right by them.

I wish I could be like them,
No ambitions, no deceit, no trickery,
No duplicity, no pride. I pray that I
Learn to trust You unconditionally;
I pray for simple joys, simple hurts;
For Your companionship and care.
I pray for a simple love to rule my life;
For You love us, Your children,
Far more than any mother does.

(4)
How beautiful to behold my “apo” when she plays.
She runs around, plays with toys, plays games,
Laughs out loud, shouts, and even sometimes
She cries when she stumbles and hurts herself,
And when she gets into a fight and gets hurt.
She is so innocent, and without worldly cares,
Knowing that she has parents who take care of
Her food and other needs.

Father, is this how Your son wants me to be?
To enjoy Your love, leaving everything to You?
Is this the kind of joy You envision for us
Though much deeper and more profound?
Is this the grace you shower on me every day
Of my life, that when I hurt, fail and fall,
You are there to catch me, and heal me,
To wipe away my tears and embrace me?
And all You ask is that I love you by loving
My fellow men and the whole of Your creation?
Is this the heaven that You are bringing me to?
Let me then be as You wish. Amen.

Continued on page 23

Family Day

Leo Soliman, Corinthians BCGG



It seemed all the stars aligned and pointed to the DATEM office, site of the most successful (yet) Magis Deo Family Day last December 1, 2019. Cora and Ria, aided by Leila Leccio and her lovely daughters had their hands full at the registration table.

As early as 8:00 am there already was a sea of blue and white amid the merry colors of Christmas decors inside the venue. As announced, the total attendees reached a record number 293!!! Hats off to CSM and Central Sector (event host) for pulling this off.

Father James delivered a heart-warming Christmas message during the mass, which was received by the community as clear as crystal.

Emcees Winston Cruz and Jun Gacias started the ball rolling with welcome speeches from the Chair Couple, Jojo & Jane Aldeguer. The production numbers from North and South sectors were well received. Central had a kundirana singer in the name of Sonny Maroon of ME Class 129. Magis Youth wasn't to be outdone with their performance. But the surprise package came from a young, petite, dynamite singer, Sam Erika Fideles.

The passing of the symbolic staff to our new officers signified the continuity of our activities. With able crew steering, our ship will be captained this coming year by Ted and Susan Concepcion, we can look forward to a smooth sailing on our journey of faith.

A surprise appearance by Santa Claus (in the person of Manolet Rodriguez) brought joy to the young ones who trooped for their gifts be they naughty or nice. Photo ops can't be missed whenever Santa is around.

The food catered by Queensland was superb. All had their fill. Funny thing is, the ordered food was for 250 pax but after 293 ate, seven baskets full were for leftovers. Hmm. Another multiplication miracle? With Jesus around, why am I not surprised?

And for the first time, fantastic prizes were raffled off. Donations from DATEM and various BCGG's were taken by lucky winners. Lady luck smiled on Boy de Leon of James brother of John BCGG who won the 34" LED TV donated by Corinthians BCGG. Luckiest was Gary Canoso of Magnificat BCGG who bagged the 43" LED TV donated by DATEM.

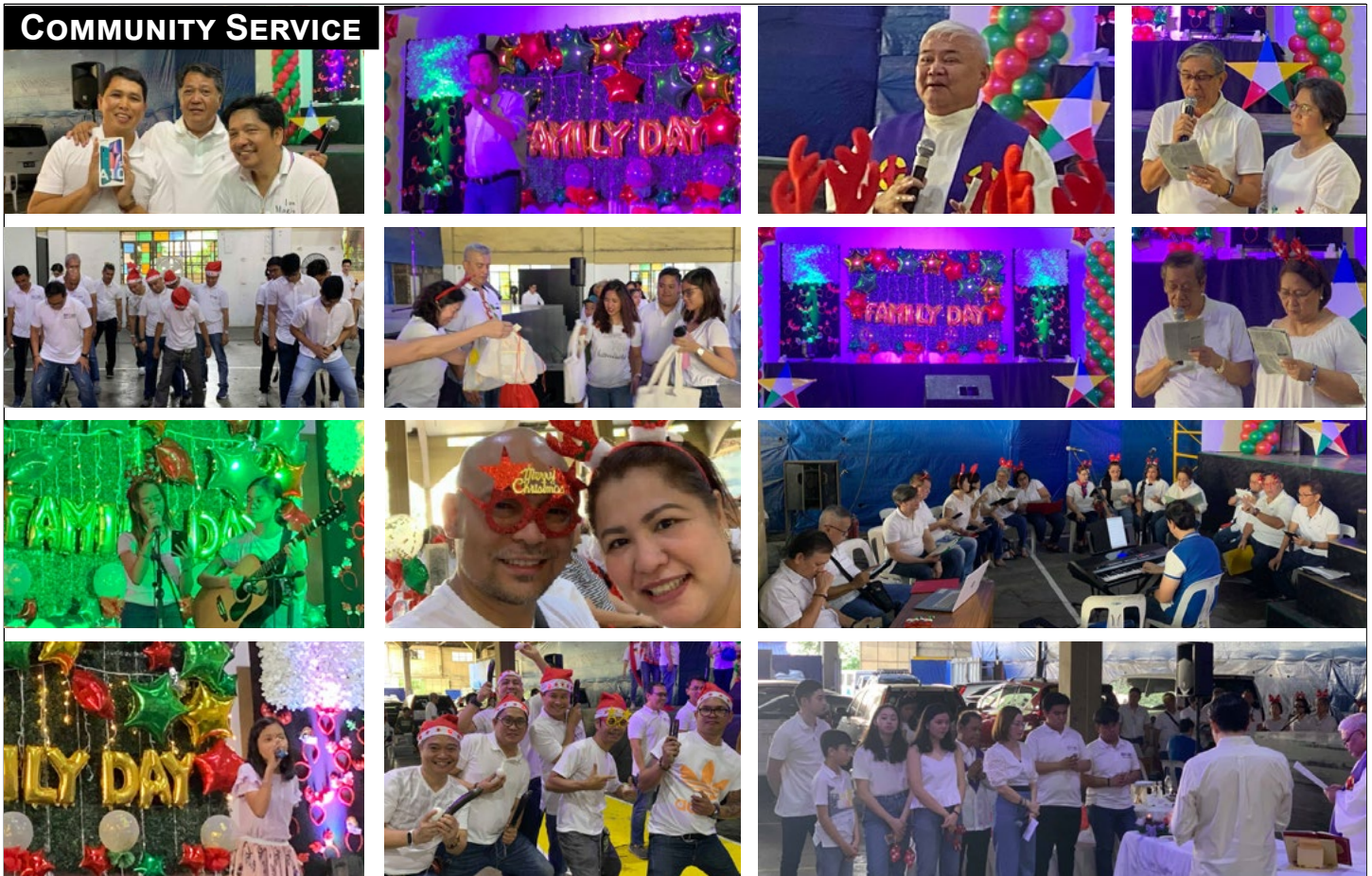
All went home with happy smiles and joy in their hearts. And all eagerly await our next Community Celebration.

Christmas Musings, continued from page 22

(5)

Father, how my heart melted when I saw a tear roll down my four-year-old granddaughter's cheeks when she did not light the first candle in the advent wreath in church. This is something I was telling her on the way to church, which her Lola and father opposed. I had to make amends after the mass so I told her Lola and father to wait for us in the car, and I brought her to the sacristy where we borrowed the matches and the small candle used in lighting the advent candle.

We went back to the wreath and I asked her to hold the small candle which I lit, and I carried her so she could light the advent candle. After a short prayer, I asked her to blow the candle, and give me a kiss. Afterwards I felt forgiven even though my granddaughter probably did not understand all that we did. And I pray for forgiveness for being so nonchalant about the lighting of the advent candle. What a way to start Advent!



Family Day / December 1, 2019

