

Magis

Formation for Mission

Stewardship
Simplicity
Sharing
Service

Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community

February 2020 Issue



Believe and you will see

In life's challenges, choose to see colors even when it gets dull and gray

Living a Christian life

Amidst all chaos, knowing Him shall give you peace

Going back to the roots of our Community Tree

Let's stay grounded with the roots of our compassion: Ignatian Spirituality

Stages of loving

The warmth of falling in love, the inevitability of falling out, and the need to stay in love

Outreach beyond Suyuan

Giving hope rehabilitates people caught up in life's troubles

About the Cover



It's been more than a month after Taal volcano's phreatic eruption, and it was disheartening to witness the massive effects caused by one of the smallest volcanoes in the world. Imagine your home, a once safe space, vanishing like rising smoke — chaos, anger and loss that's roughly tangible and visible, in dull gray vision.

But in every devastating moment, Filipinos know that they only have each other. Even now that it's February, citizens are still volunteering to help affected residents — our *bayanihan* transcending whatever misfortunes that are brought upon us. The cover's illustration translates just that: a hand in hand that forms a heart, looming over Batangas' island. Sometimes, love isn't just about being romantic, it's also about our inner fires burning in compassion to help those who need it, and that's the purest, most concentrated kind of love.

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Magis

Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community
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Calendar of Activities: March - April 2020

March

1 Community Celebration
13-15 ME Weekend
20-22 Annual Ignatian Retreat

April

5 Community Celebration & Lenten Recollection

Love erupts



In the afternoon of January 12, 2020, the people of Batangas were shocked when Taal Volcano started spewing ash, prompting the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) to raise its alert status from Alert Level 1 to Alert Level 4 (hazardous eruption imminent) in a matter of hours.

According to the news, the ash and rock fragments column reached up to 15 kilometers. Frequent volcanic lightning was also felt in the areas near Taal Volcano. In less than 24 hours, the province of Batangas was covered with thick ash and rock fragments, including parts of Calabarzon and Metro Manila. As a result, thousands of residents were evacuated, classes were suspended, and almost all businesses in the affected areas were unable to operate. Electricity and water supplies were also interrupted in most parts of Batangas province and in some areas of Laguna.

The Taal Volcano eruption gave our *kababayans* the opportunity to show again our *Bayanihan* spirit. Truly, love erupts in this time of calamity as everyone showed their support in many ways. Apart from government institutions, private companies and individuals came to help and support affected residents. Evacuation centers were overloaded with relief goods. Posts and calls for help flooded social media. And even after the evacuees returned to their homes, many groups continue to help the affected with their urgent needs.

With this year's mission of Reaching Out Beyond Magis Deo, our community was also quick to respond to the situation. Upon hearing our chaircouple's invitation to help, our community raised substantial donations in just 48 hours. These enabled us to conduct our own relief operations in the towns of Tanauan and Laurel, both in Batangas, and in Alfonso, Cavite. But it didn't end there. Immediately after the first relief operations, a Taal Planning Team was formed to provide long-term assistance to a selected barangay or a small community of around 50 families, by helping them restore their houses, find livelihood, and provide them formation programs. To date, there are two site candidates in Laurel, Batangas. The Planning Team is still working on and considering a number of factors before executing their plan. With God's grace, Magis Deo hopes to share its blessings once again by being a blessing to others.

Love continually flows back and forth between God and me because that is the nature of love – it is reciprocal. Such love begins with God, and in freedom I am invited to accept this love to make my corresponding loving response. Each day I desire to know with ever-increasing joy that I am loved unconditionally. My response to this deepening interior knowledge of the heart is to love God in return through my praise, reverence, and service.

- Casey Beaumier, SJ, *A Purposeful Path*

Going back to the roots of our Community Tree in 2020

Ted & Susan Concepcion, Chaircouple, Archangel Gabriel BCGG

At the October 27, 2019 direction-setting meeting, Fr. James U. Gascon, SJ, suggested that the 2020 theme for Magis Deo be “Going back to the Roots of our Community Tree. What exactly is the Magis Deo Community Tree? This is best illustrated below.



The roots of our community tree can be found in the mission and vision of our community, which Fr. James explained as follows:

We are a Community of Christian families formed in Ignatian Spirituality, committed to a life of stewardship, simplicity, sharing, and service.

The vision of the founders of Magis Deo was to focus the Community's spirituality growth on the relationship between husband and wife and among the members of the family, and the faith relationship with the larger community beyond the family.

The most significant characteristic of Magis Deo is its commitment to follow Ignatian Spirituality.

With Fr. James' inputs, the 2019 and 2020 Magis Deo Pastoral Council and the members of the Magis Deo Council of Elders went through a discernment process where the following

common themes emerged as focus areas for 2020:

Growth/Formaⁿ - We need to reinforce our Ignatian Spirituality and deepen our relationship with God. This should be done for all levels – Youth, Couples, Families and Elders, and would involve formation for both members and shepherds/leaders.

Change, twist or polish our practices to be more relevant to the times while remaining true to the values and ideals of Magis Deo founders.

Reach out beyond Magis Deo with more outreach programs (not just limited to Suyuan activities) and a greater passion and commitment to serve.

The above focus areas are being translated into programs by the Ministries of our community and we are hopeful to transform 2020 into a Year of Mission for Magis Deo as it enters its 33rd year of experience.

Edgar “Egay” Q. Pestaño

14 August 1958 - 5 August 2002

Joined Magis Deo Community Feb. 14-16, 1991 (MEW)
Djarn Pestaño, Sirach BCGG



As I was reflecting and praying on what to write about my late husband Egay, I was moved to look for the album of our Suyuan days and the album when he passed away. (I made an album of our pictures in the Suyuans we helped conduct; I also made an album of the pictures and the articles that some members wrote in our Magis Newsletter when Egay died. Here are some excerpts:

====

“How do you say goodbye to Egay?” – by Tita Cathy Rafael of Agnus Dei BCGG

Egay's heart has always been with the underprivileged, and he was always involved with the Outreach of Magis Deo. He and Djarn became a Suyuan team, going to far places like Davao, GenSan and Calawis. He was good at it and so he trained many couples aspiring to be in the Suyuan team. For years, he dreamed of an SDR (Spiritual Deepening Retreat) version to complement the Suyuan program. Working with Fr. Kit Bautista for months, they designed a new version of the BEM (Buhay Espiritwal Mag-asawa) conducted by Ugat Foundation for Magis Deo's BEM seminar. Last June 2002, he realized this dream when we launched our first BEM at Malabon, followed by another at Payatas. This program is now part of our Outreach.

“The man with an oversized heart” – by Erlinda “Lyn” Cruz of Gentiles BCGG

His 6-day vigil was a proof that he has done his mission well. People from all walks of life gave witness to how Egay touched their lives. Many priests who met while doing God's work said Mass for him, all in praises as they reminisced Egay's generosity with himself, his talent, time, and treasure. He could leave everything behind whenever God calls. He loved the poor and loved everyone he met on his pilgrimage. He really had an oversized heart. Egay and Djarn were the perfect “couple for others.” They walked the talk, religiously practicing the 4 S's of Magis Deo. They had been a part of so many activities and ministries of the Community. Egay's pet project – BEM or

Buhay Espiritwal Mag-asawa – had its debut last June 2002 at Damayan, Malabon.

“A bear of a friend” – by Norman & Lelet Abastillas of Fishers of Men BCGG

If you measure success by properties, career, or bank accounts, Egay was a complete failure. His idea of an “investment” was buying a hamburger and having his children give it to a street child peering in from outside the windows of a fast food restaurant. He would hopefully see the return on investment of such an act in the generosity and kindness extended by his own kids. Suyuans, Magis class reunions, BEMs, and still they found time for themselves and their family. Sometimes though, I wish he would just take it a little slow. But Egay's life was Magis – always a life of service in the purest form.

“Egay is alive!” – by Monchet Albert of Agnus Dei BCGG

Egay is alive. Egay is alive in the hearts of those who love him. Egay is alive in the minds of those he loves. But more importantly, he is alive in the heart of God... forever. In a special way God lived in Egay's heart. Now Egay lives in God's heart.

Greater love than this no man has, that he lays down his life for his friends. God is his friend and he risked his life to be a true and loyal witness.

Our last conversation, occurring less than ten hours before he died, was all about the final draft of the report to the Foundation's Board of Trustees. Over the weekend, Egay burnt the midnight candle on a loan program he dubbed SELF (Small Enterprise Loan Fund). This plan was designed to make entrepreneurs of the unemployed in Payatas and other poor communities. The work he put into this project surely had a toll on his health. The stress of meeting deadlines contributed to his massive heart attack. Hopefully his death will be a distinct reminder to those who will approve the SELF, that he gave up his life so that some may have a better future.

And Egay will be alive in the hearts and minds of those who will be beneficiaries of SELF.

continued on page 13

Antonio F. Pison, Jr.

1929 – 2002

Flor Pison, John BCGG

When I met Tony 58 years ago, I was coming from a failed relationship and Tony was nursing a broken heart. I believe it was God's grace, His hand that brought us together - destiny worked its magic on both of us and love set us in a complicated but colorful love story. We were married just a year later - he was 34, and I was 20 years old.

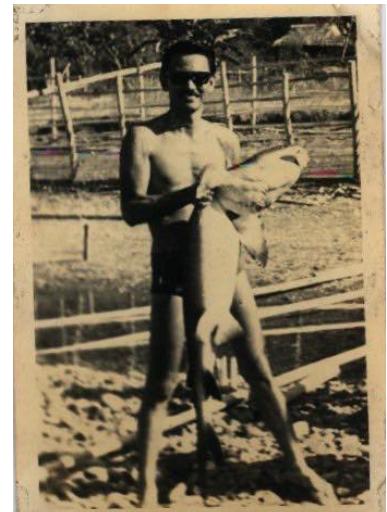
Tony was a lawyer, a quiet figure and very private person, but he lived his life well. A close friend describes him as "a man with great capacity for friendship, gallant, with a manly gentleness". He was something of a renaissance man - loved to read books on great philosophers, enjoyed watching opera and listening to classical music. His classmates and friends describe him as a brilliant man. His grade average in pre-law at UP Iloilo was 1.05, and I think it is still a record to this day.

He served his country as a commissioned naval officer, with the rank of Lt. Commander. He was the lawyer of a family of businessmen, and joined their company, United Philippine Lines, in 1961, an association which lasted his lifetime. His employer describes him as a quiet worker, with fierce honesty and unparalleled integrity. When the family would need someone *de confianza*, Tony was always called first, and it was like calling for a member of the family.

He was an avid watersports enthusiast. A self-taught scuba diver, he dove almost weekly in Batangas (I had to learn how to dive with him), and later sailed Hobie Cats and windsurfed. He volunteered in several sea disasters, working to salvage dead bodies underwater. When not diving, he spent his time in the tennis courts.

Among his many commitments, where he found most peace was in Magis Deo. We took the Marriage Encounter at Villa Adelaida in Tagaytay in 1982, followed by the Spiritual Deepening in 1985, and CPPJ in 1986. The ME led us to hunger for something more, and we found that "more" during the Spiritual Deepening weekend. It was the beginning of our journey to live our Christian life in constant striving to put God at the center of our marriage and family.

For years we served in the Secretariat of Magis Deo, and Tony was also among the original incorporators of the community. We became regular auxiliaries for the Spiritual Deepening weekends for years. Tony took special pride in his meticulous, methodical preparations for the retreat, calling candidates, preparing materials, going to the retreat house three hours early to set up the place. He told Fr. Ruben that



serving in the retreat gave him peace and serenity and brought him closer to God.

He also served the choir with the same kind of dedication, meticulously preparing, practicing his tenor part, and never resented it when the choir director corrected his singing - it only inspired him to work harder to practice. He was happy to offer his voice at mass.

His dedication in service to his community was repeated in how he took care of the children of our maids, working mothers who brought their kids to live with us. He treated them like our own children - paying for their schooling, bringing them to the park or shopping. Some of these kids stayed with us for a few years when we found opportunities for their mothers to work abroad. To this day, several of them who now have families of their own visit his grave yearly to bring flowers to their adopted "Lolo".

I suppose he hungered for grandchildren of his blood, but he never pressured our own kids, who all followed his footsteps and married fairly late in life, and took their time procreating. When our oldest brought him her first child, in the last months of his life, you could see the joy in his eyes as he cradled her. She was the only *apo* he ever met, which is a pity as I now have a total of five; he would have been so proud.

Lia wrote this of her dad: "We remember him as a quiet presence at home, a man of steady routines. Arriving from work, he would first head to the fridge for a bottle or two of San Miguel beer. He would drink quietly on the porch or by the bay window, sitting calmly on a gently rocking chair, sometimes with a Pavarotti aria playing loudly in the background as he hummed along. On early weekend mornings, we would wake to find him sitting outside the lanai on a yantok upright hammock, tossing bird seeds onto the grass until birds gathered around to complete the St. Francis-esque scene."

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My very special Valentine

Mary Anne Alfonso, John BCGG

For many years, my funny valentine was not just Fil, it included Fr. Joseph Galdon, SJ. So to speak, the symbol of my valentine was not a heart but it was a triangle.

It was kinda roundabout how I met Fr. Joseph. His brother, Fr. Richard Galdon was the parish priest of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in Newark, New Jersey. I lived there for two years while going to graduate school. I also taught in their parochial school.

When I said goodbye to Fr. Richard because I was going back home to the Philippines, he asked me to look up his brother; Fr. Joseph, at the Ateneo in Quezon City.

As soon as I settled back home, I went to see Fr. Joseph.

I was amazed when I met him. I thought I was meeting Bob Hope, the actor in person. In fact, this was the name he was given by many people: Fr. Bob Hope.

He became the priest-friend our family loved.

When I introduced Fil to him, he talked with Fil a while and then left the room. This meeting happened in San Jose Seminary in the Ateneo Campus. When he came back, he was smiling naughtily. He said he had peeked into Fil's seminary records. Then he said, "Mary Anne! He's a good man! You can marry him right away." As an aside, Fil was a seminarian for 9 years in San Jose Seminary before he decided he was not meant for the priesthood.

I almost fell off my chair! Fil and I were "MU" but with no marriage plans in the immediate future.

Fr. Joseph Galdon didn't marry us. But he baptized 3 of our 4 children. The youngest was baptized by Bishop Teodoro Bacani. As Fil's first cousin and his replacement in the seminary, Bishop Ted HAD to marry us and baptize the youngest. No two ways about that.

Every year on Feb. 14, we took Fr. Galdon out for dinner. We were given weird looks but we couldn't care less. He loved the steak in Alfredo's in Quezon City, the wine, the flowers and the attention we gave him.

He joined us in several trips to Baguio. I made sure there was a cooler of San Miguel Beer beside him. Once during Holy Week, he gave us a recollection and all our beach neighbors in Batangas loved that we had a priest as a house guest. It made us popular in Tali Beach.



Father taught for thirty-five years in College. He taught Theology and English Literature. In the classes he taught, "The Great Books" had a long waiting list. He wrote several books: The Mustard Seed, Jubilee, and a book for teachers who taught English in the Philippines.

He gave the collegialas of my time retreats and recollections. He was sought after because of his wit, his style, and his down-to-earth practical advice; always referring to the parables and Scripture.

He studied in St. Andrew's Seminary in Poughkeepsie, New York. It is now the Culinary Institute of America where my son finished his culinary degree. My son shares his birthday on Sept. 24.

We met Father's family. They were from Bayonne, New Jersey. We invited everyone for lunch when his parents and his brother, Fr. Peter visited the Philippines. How blessed parents they were to have three sons who were priests!

For many years, Father wrote a column in a Sunday newspaper called "The Mustard Seed."

I continued to visit him even after he developed Alzheimer's. I cried buckets when he was buried in the Sacred Heart cemetery in Novaliches.

My grandson, Quintin Alfonso was born on Feb. 14, 2012. He is my current precious valentine because he is in many ways like his lolo. I am told he loves the mass. He loves books too.

Happy Valentine everyone!

Believe and you will see

Ricky Perez, Tala BCGG



Enlightened after Fr. Bob's talk on Stages of Love, I am sharing my story how I almost gave up and fell out of love with God and my wife... yes, my wife and even my kids.

Allow me to share photos of Auspere Nature Farm, our family farm, the day after the phreatic eruption of Taal last January 12, 2020.

The moment I saw the aftermath, big tears, just like Taal volcano, simply erupted. I told God it's so unfair! I was extremely frustrated – in a snap, 11 years of hard work became a huge mess. Properties were severely damaged; plants and rainforests almost totally wiped out. Only a few of our 3,000 cacao trees, our main crop, survived. This year was to be our first of many tons of harvests after 5 years of nurturing these trees. Pineapples, papayas, coconuts, vegetables... they were all gone. A week without electricity and water. Guests canceled their bookings, reservations were down; it was a waiting game on Taal alerts. Our main source of livelihood as well as our fellow farmers', were destroyed.

When you're a father of two, and responsible for 8 other families in the farm, and Taal's next alert level can send us all to evacuation centers... it's just so traumatic!

How I wish I could just give up, but I can't... I just can't! Someone has to be the source of strength and lead, while monitoring Taal, and communicate protocols for evacuation and continue our normal farm lives despite the odds.

This situation is really damaging. The feeling of impending bankruptcy. We put our hard-earned money in developing the farm for many years. Savings and loans were poured into this, our major source of livelihood and that of our

staff. So much hard work and time... I was in tears because I felt all these were wasted, and I feel I just don't have another 5 more years to replant and revive the farm.

Why me? Why us? Haven't we been good servants? Haven't we done good for others? So why? These were my questions, my frustrations that time. I was exhausted and very low-spirited. A week without electricity and water, and in the next alert and my family will be evacuating posthaste.

I was overwhelmed and my emotions burst. The next Sunday morning, January 19, I told my wife I was really tired. I remember saying, "Mie, ito ba talaga ang buhay? Ikaw ba minsan naiisip mo ang life after death? Ito na lang ba talaga ang purpose natin sa buhay? Parang walang katapusang pagtitiyaga para maitaguyod ang pamilya natin?" Naiyak na lang ang asawa kong si Nikkie.

Luckily, our Tala BCGG family came over that day to help us clean up, and we had our prayer meeting too. It was so uplifting. God works in mysterious ways. May mga questions pa ako but I know God is so alive. He answered right away after we attended our community celebration and Fr. Bob's talk about the 3 stages of love.... that you have to fall out of love to stay in love. Love regardless of your feelings. Be Faithful, Believe and you will see =).

As to our farm, it was all gray but now it is starting to show colors again. Taal alert level is down from 4 to 3, and we pray that this continues to lower in no time. We've been rehabilitating the farm and are hopeful to bounce back soonest. But then one day at a time...

All Glory to God.

5 January 2020 Community Celebration

Magis Deo Community Celebration - Jan. 5, 2020



Photos by Anchit Chua Chiaco

5 January 2020 Pastoral Council

Magis Deo 2020 Pastoral Council



January Birthday & Wedding Anniversary Celebrants



Magis Deo 2020 Ministry Heads



Photos by Anchit Chua Chiaco

Stages of loving

Talk by Fr. Roberto Ma. Buenconsejo, S.J., S.T.L.

Summarized by Kaye Angeles, Genesis BCGG



3 Stages of Loving

1. **Falling in Love**

- Collapse of ego boundaries
- Unconscious regression
- Falling in love – not act of will
- Illusion
- Genetically determined instinctual component of mating behavior
- Lack of thought about the other's spiritual development

Fr. Bob, as he is called by many, opened his ComCel talk with this prayer by Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland:

Keep us, Oh God, from pettiness; let us be large in thought, in word, in deed.

Let us be done with fault-finding and leave off self-seeking.

May we put away all pretense and meet each other, face to face, without self-pity and without prejudice.

May we never be hasty in judgment and always generous.

Let us take time for all things; make us to grow calm, serene, gentle.

Teach us to put in action our better impulses – straight-forward and unafraid.

Grant that we may realize it is the little things of life that create difficulties; that in the big things of life we are as one.

Oh, Lord, let us not forget to be kind.

Touched by this prayer, I was spurred to know and read about Queen Mary, as to what led her to write this inspirational prayer. She was a Catholic, had a short and turbulent reign, was imprisoned for 18 years, and was publicly beheaded at her cousin's command. Queen Mary was known not only for her political status in the 16th to the 17th centuries but also for her writing skill. Some 39 poems are attributed to her; some circulated in manuscript, some written on the margins of her prayer book, others published and circulated widely in those centuries. She was among the most widely-read women writers of the 16th century. She was a poet who offered insights into her bloody, passionate and tragic life and a martyr whose political and religious power extended after her death. She must have found solace in prayers... despite her loss of status,

imprisonment and public vilification, she fought for her cause until death.

The discussion on EGO BOUNDARIES and DEFINITION OF LOVE in Fr. Bob's talk brought a better understanding of the STAGES OF LOVING.

EGO refers to a person's ongoing bodily and psychic experience, the "I," the self, one's identity. EGO BOUNDARIES, a key concept in the theory of Paul Federn, form a necessary basis for distinguishing the real from the not real. The purpose of EGO BOUNDARIES is to protect the self. And having these boundaries in place, one will know the difference between who he/she is, and who someone else is. They allow for one's inner space to be protected and looked after. EGO BOUNDARIES are either Weak/Porous, Rigid, or HEALTHY:

- Fragmented Self: those with porous boundaries
 - people who have difficulty differentiating ego boundaries;
 - deep sense of helplessness and loss; unable to integrate;
 - overwhelmed and ready to fall apart;
 - addictive behaviors – self-destructive ways to soothe oneself;
 - tendency to cathect.
- Healthy Self
 - Sense of cohesion – sense of self over time;
 - Has stable boundaries: not too porous, not too rigid;
 - Positive, reliable and stable self-esteem;
 - Has the ability to regulate and modulate experiences of anxiety, able to self-soothe;
 - Has ability to pursue realistic, ambitious goals;
 - Ability to develop relationships with mature others.

What LOVE is – LOVE is the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth.

1. Teleological definition – love defined in terms of end (Greek: *telos*) or purpose
2. Love – evolutionary process
3. Definition includes love of self
4. Act of extending one's self – effortful
5. Love is an act of the will

What LOVE is not –

1. Over-dependency leading to no sense of identity
2. Masochism – martyr complex
3. Purely Feeling
4. Belief that "falling in love" is love

2 problems:

- a. Sex-linked erotic experience
- b. Invariably temporary

Three STAGES of LOVING

1. Falling in Love
 - a. Collapse of ego boundaries
 - b. Unconscious regression
 - c. Falling in love – not act of will
 - d. Illusion
 - e. Genetically determined instinctual component of mating behavior
 - f. Lack of thought about the other's spiritual development
2. Falling Out of Love
 - a. Ego boundaries begin to snap back
 - b. Existential loneliness returns

- c. Disillusion
 - time to assess relationship

3. Staying in Love
 - a. Commitment – not based on feelings
 - b. Act of the will – decision
 - c. Committed and thoughtful decision
 - d. Effortful
 - e. Permanently self-enlarging: real extension of boundaries
 - f. Reality-based: not on delusions
 - g. Concerned with other's well-being and growth

Genuine love exists when there is:

- a capacity to genuinely give and receive
- true acceptance of one's own and the other's individuality
- moral affinity; soul mates
- deep mutual respect, gentleness between them
- uncompromising fidelity

And there is no better way describe LOVE than what is written in St. Paul's 1st Letter to the Corinthians 13

LOVE is Patient, KIND, Not jealous, Never boastful, Not rude, Does not seek own interests
Not quick-tempered, Does not brood over injuries, Does not rejoice over wrongdoing
but Rejoices in the Truth. LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS, BELIEVES, HOPES.
LOVE Never FAILS.
FAITH, HOPE and LOVE remain. LOVE is the greatest.

Edgar "Egay" Q. Pestaño continued from page 6

Indeed, Egay is still alive in my heart and our children's hearts.

He is our angel. My four children and I always feel his presence, like when I was invited to bid for the cleaning/housekeeping services of The Medical City. After discussing the bidding details, I asked the person I was talking with for his e-mail address. His reply: edgar@themedicalcity.com. "Oh," I told him, "My husband's name is Edgar but he died already." Egay's reply was "Ay, buhay pa po ako!" My eldest son TP called me when he was negotiating with the representative of the owner of the house in Nuvali that TP was buying. TP said, "Ma, guess what's the name of the owner of the house who is now in Canada? Edgar!" When my second son TJ had a motorcycle accident (he and his motorcycle went under a jeepney), he was saved. TJ is the closest to Egay and he would always ask his father's help. Angel was in a remote island in the Visayas and prayed to her dad to protect her and her friends, when people they met told them the island was occupied by the New Peoples' Army, and was dangerous for travelers. When they arrived in the

island, the owner of the resort they stayed in was Egay! David, the youngest who was just 10 years old when Egay died, shared that one of his clients who is helping him with his new business is like his papa, big in size, and talked to David they way Egay did. This made David comfortable doing business with this client.

By the way, before Egay died, he had an 8-day silent retreat with Fr. Mon Bautista (brother of Fr. Kit) in the Sacred Heart Novitiate. Egay shared with me that he asked Fr. Mon what would happen to his family when he is gone. Fr. Mon's reply was, "God will take care of your family." Indeed, God really took care of us the last 17 years and continues to take care of us. All my four children are now professionals; two are married. TJ and Ana are members of James, the Brother of John BCGG.

If Egay were alive, it would be our 38th wedding anniversary this February 25. And although God welcomed him early into His arms, I am truly grateful of the time and blessings we have shared together, with our family, friends, and the Magis Deo Community that he loved so much.

02 February 2020 Community Celebration



Magis Relief Operations for Taal



Living a Christian life

Chacho Angeles, Thessalonians BCGG

(1)

Father,
How often have I wondered how I can be holy like you
Here on earth. This life is filled with many excitements
Of the material, emotional and spiritual kinds. Often
They overwhelm me like the sun shining brightly, that
I make them the center of my life. I know that they
Are baggage I carry on my back like camels' humps.
I must shed these attachments so that I can follow
Your Son and enter the eye of the needle. Yet Your
Mercy and love, Your grace I call, to help me part
The heavy temple curtains that separates You from me.
That even in this life, I live in heaven, Your realm.
Amen.

(2)

Father,
From a mass of atoms, You created a person in me.
Transform me, as the sculptor turns a block of
Marble into a sculpture of finely chiseled beauty.
Turn this palette of isolated colors into a painting
Showing a harmony of light, color and darkness;
Turn this mass of words into a rhythmic song
Of pain, suffering, compassion and love; all these
Speak to and reach out to the heart, touching
Souls, transforming all into a glorious likeness
Of Your mercy and love, forgiveness and giving,
Humility and serenity, presence and companionship.
Amen

(3)

Though without sin, Jesus became like me, a man,
Who came to know the emotions that fill my heart,
Feeling the pains of my humanity, suffering as I do.
He transcended this pain with His compassionate
Heart, both human and divine, showing me the way
To Love the Father, and my fellow men as what the
Father wills for me, to have a heart that loves with
No limit, as He is prodigal in His mercy and love.
Father grant me the grace to know this heart, and to
Transform my own frail heart into this loving heart,
Both human and divine, infinitely merciful and loving.
Amen.

(4)

Kuya Jesus with a compassionate heart,
What is this peace that You promise me?
There is in this world chaos brought about by
The clash of self-interest and national interest;
By ideologies, modes of thinking and living
Cutting across the whole spectrum of the mind,
Emotions, the soul, the heart; of the material,

Physical and spiritual realms; of the palpable
Suffering being experienced by young and old,
Male and female, the poor and even the rich,
The end of which is promised by ideologies,
Religions, real leaders and scoundrels, like the
Mermaid's enchanting song and call, still a
Vision and a goal that has so far remained
Unattainable in this world, forever beyond us.

Amidst all this chaos, how will knowing You
Give me peace? Poor Adam and Eve, for some
Blame them for being the cause of the world's
Suffering. Maybe Eden was not lost, but is really
My goal, the destination of my journey here on
Earth. Human nature makes me what I am,
Like the prodigal son and his brother, like the
Pharisee praying in the temple and those Jews
Plotting against Jesus. I am by nature selfish, weak,
Frail, bringing suffering upon myself. But the
Father, prodigal in His love, sent a human version
Of His person, to show and teach me His love
And mercy, a self-giving that runs counter to all
That my human nature represents, the Father's
True nature, the Eden that I will attain, the peace
That I will have. And for me, there will be nothing
More important than being with You in this life
And beyond. Jesus You continue to show me that
The Father loves me just the way I am. And as He
Promised, He is with me all the days of my life,
In this world and in the next. Amen.

(5)

Let me know You, loving Jesus, my God,
In my pain and in my hurts, in my grief and
In my suffering, in my failures and in my
Mistakes, in my happiness and in my joys,
In my successes and in my triumphs.

You have been there, shared these emotions
With us, for You, though from the Father,
Became man like me and showed me the
Way to transcend my humanity, and sanctify
This with Your sacrifice and obedience to the
Father's will. This is truth and guidance,
For You did them despite wanting to do away
With the bitter cup of Your passion and death,
Knowing that the Father will raise You to life
Eternal and open the gates back to Eden lost.
I pray for the strength to persevere, the wisdom
To know the Father's will, and His grace to
Willingly die with You and bridge the chasm
Between mankind and the Father. Amen.

Magis Relief Operations for Taal

PAGASPAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LOCATED AT TANAUAN, BATANGAS
1ST SITE MAGIS WENT TO GIVE TAAL RELIEF GOODS
Relocation Site of families from Talisay
78 families with a total of 244 pax



Staging Area: LMDR Farm in front of Pagaspas Elementary School



Goods brought inside the school premises



Goods inside covered multi-purpose hall

SALA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LOCATED AT BRGY. SALA, TANAUAN, BATANGAS
2ND SITE MAGIS WENT TO GIVE TAAL RELIEF GOODS
Relocation Site of families from other town nearby Talisay
70 families with a total of 279 pax



Milo Parada distributing plastic bags to evacuees to put the goods given to them.



Brgy official talking to evacuees to just stay in line while Magis distribute goods



Noel & Nerie Gascon taking pics

Antonio F. Pison, Jr. continued from page 7

And because he was a father of few words, when he did speak, we would listen -- to accounts of the war and liberation day when the American soldiers tossed cans of Spam to cheering folks, to mini lectures on Hitler and World War II facts which he loved to watch on the History channel, to stories of his underwater rescue adventures or the early years spearfishing with scuba gear in Anilao, Batangas.

He was eager to share his love for the sea with us, and we all took to the water with equal love. Anilao was a second home, and we all shared in a fascination of the marine life whose names he could tell us: nudibranch, parrot fish, anemone, fire coral, moray eel, bioluminescence. Of his newly rekindled faith in his later years, he spoke only a little but his actions said more. We did not need to hear about the value of prayer, we were shown it in his morning quiet time on the lanai; we did not hear about commitment, we watched it every time he prepared for the ME retreats (and misunderstanding children that we were, we complained when he recruited us for little chores like making nametags or signage for these weekend affairs). And social justice? He extended a hand to those in need of employment and welcomed the poor into his home as family. All these he taught us, even if we didn't know it then."

Monchito Mossesgeld said during his wake, "Jesus's description of greatness is 'whoever will be great among you must be your servant'; this description fit Tony to a T. Tony was

simple and unassuming, not wanting to bring attention to himself, preferring to serve the best he could without need for honor, recognition, or fame. He lived an ordinary quiet life, lived deeply and extraordinarily. He was not afraid to die because he knows clearly and unmistakably that God loves him."

Tony's faith was so deep, his heart so big, and his love for his kids, life, music and adventure was second only to his love for God. I remember when he broke the news to me that he had cancer. He said it calmly, perhaps to assuage my fears: "It's prostate cancer. Although it is stage 4, we have time, time to prepare because it is slow-growing. And besides, God has been good to me, coming in this time of my life when the children are all settled. I am ready." Six years after, during his last days, already bedridden, braving the pains of the cancer that had spread to his bones, we talked openly about the inevitable, about death. I asked him if he was afraid and he answered emphatically, "No, I am not afraid." And added, "In fact I am grateful for my pains now as it allows me to share even just a fraction of Jesus's pain for us." Tony's answer, even as I teared up, a part of me felt awed by my love's words. He was gifted with the grace of acceptance and gratitude for the opportunity to find and love God, in the most terrible, humbling way, in the worst possible circumstance. In the end, remembering that moment, I can't help but think we had both been given a glimpse of God's face.

James BCGG's Outreach Program

November 9, 2019

Cat Geslani, James, Brother of John BCGG



It was a fine Saturday morning on November 9, 2019, and we were blessed with a good weather on this day, our BCGG's outreach at Mary Mother of Mercy Home for the Elderly and Abandoned. This charity organization of the Sisters of St. Francis Xavier, is in San Pedro, Laguna

When we arrived, we were welcomed by aged women, eagerly waiting for the activities in their outdoor hall. The Home was very clean and well-maintained with an air of serenity all around. This is the current home for at least 18 elderly women and is managed by a few nuns and volunteers.

The James BCGG wives started with a welcome message and their children regaled the elderly with songs to the accompaniment of a ukulele. Music was indeed a common ground. Everyone sang along and got warmed-up. The elderly began requesting for songs and they graciously volunteered to sing. They sang with feelings and heartfelt emotions. Thanks to Spotify, we were able to play all the songs they requested as they reminisced their younger years. Amazingly, when the beat turned into dance mode, most of them danced. Even those in wheelchairs managed to move their bodies and enjoy the beat. Afterwards, the lolas were serenaded by the men of James who then to slow dance. Most of them obliged!

Of course, we didn't miss introducing ourselves as couples, the Magis Deo way. We stood up pair by pair, sharing with them a thing or two about each other's endearing quality. Our shepherd Tito Lito Gonzales gave a speech too. We then shared the food we lovingly and generously prepared. It was a sumptuous and delicious meal. We were pleased and glad that some of the elders asked for more servings. As we bade goodbye, we were thankful for their time and warm reception, and we hoped they liked the hygiene kits we gave.

It was a moving experience, as we had the chance to get a glimpse of their lives – stories of being separated from their families, their infirmities and sickness, to name a few – are hard to bear. It's hard not to get emotional and be compassionate. For whatever reasons they were there, they have survived and continue to make the best out of the life they have.

The activity was not just about us being able to give time for them. It was two-way – we also received valuable lessons from the experience. As I reflect on it, Tito Lito was right when he said we can also learn from them. They have wisdom and they the gift of having lived longer.

Let's make each moment count and take care of each other, especially those who are in need.

Outreach beyond Suyuan

Ferdie Joson, Sirach BCGG



During the Outreach Ministry's initial planning session last January 12, 2020, our Ministry Overseer, Noel and Neri Gascon, relayed the Pastoral Council's vision of exploring other avenues and getting the community involved in outreach projects. 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)

Just a few hours after our session ended, Taal Volcano erupted and our Chaircouple, Ted and Susan Concepcion immediately mobilized the community and in just a few days, cash donations for the affected families reached P318,344.11, in addition to substantial donations in kind.

Considering the magnitude of the work to be done, the Magis community responded by with its initial relief mission on January 16, 2020 at the evacuation centers in Barangays Pagaspas and Sala in Tanauan, Batangas. Volunteers from various BCGGs joined our chaircouple in distributing basic and essential relief goods badly needed by the evacuees.

A Taal Planning Session was organized on January 27, 2020 to ensure that efforts are properly coordinated with the

government agencies. DOST Secretary Boy Dela Peña and PHILVOCS director Rene Solidum gave the Taal Planning Core Group an overview of the current and possible developments within the calamity area.

Jun Sison shared his previous experience in Sitio Anduyan in Northern Philippines, which was beyond the reach of government aid. A round trip to that site took at least 10 hours. His BCGG embarked on a long-term plan to rehabilitate that community of 50 families by rebuilding their houses, coming up with livelihood projects and conducting value formation activities. The entire Magis Deo Community eventually participated in the rehabilitation program that spanned three years.

The current core group is now coordinating with the proper government agencies to select a community that can be rehabilitated, and manageable within the capacity of the Magis Deo community. Various committees are now in place for this long-term undertaking, and we invite everyone to join us in this endeavor.

Another relief mission was conducted in Alfonso, Cavite on February 5, 2020 which was spearheaded by Leony Parada and Cesar Sangalang.

This is the Magis Deo Outreach Program where our community moves as one to help those in need.

Interface Meeting and Prayer Deepening

Levy & Roxanne Espiritu, Praxis Ministry Head

The direction for 2020 is to continue to promote prayer deepening among the BCGG members and interface with other sectors of the Magis Deo Community. The interface will be conducted as follows:

1. There will be at least 3 BCGGs at each interface, with each sector (North, Central and South) represented.
2. There will be 2 Interface schedules for this year covering the following periods:
 - First interface should be scheduled between March to July.
 - Second interface should be scheduled between August to November.

3. For each set of interfacing BCGGs, a Prayer Facilitator(s) will be assigned who will lead the group in the prayer deepening activity.

The Prayer Facilitator(s) and the Shepherds of the interfacing BCGGs will determine the schedules.

4. The Prayer Facilitator(s) will conduct and manage the time of the prayer deepening activity and sharing.

Ideally, there should be pre-assigned sharers per sector and additional sharers can be considered subject to time availability.

5. In as much as an interface has 3 or 4 BCGGs, **consider the venue and the schedule of the interface.**

For big groups, 2 facilitators will be assigned and, depending on the venue, the group can be divided into 2 sharing groups.

6. Following are the listings and the number of registered members per BCGG.

Consider the greatest number of attendees based on the list provided, depending on the average attendance per BCGG.

The BCGG interface assignments (including the number of registered members) and Prayer Facilitators are as follows:

Group	BCGG	No. of Registered Members	Total members per group	Facilitator
1	Agnus Dei Corinthians Cana Song of Ruth	10 13 10 11	44	Lilian Collado / Tina Mossesgeld
2	Archangel Gabriel Transfiguration Francis	16 12 13	41	Suni Rodriguez / Susan Concepcion
3	Chronicles Easter Genesis	14 17 7	38	Jane Aldeguer
4	Exodus Matthew James	12 14 19	45	Ricky Sun
5	Magnificat Samaritans John	11 15 12	38	Monchito Mossesgeld / Ted Concepcion
6	Mustard Seed Sirach Emmanuel Psalm 98	13 14 6 7	40	Djarn Pestaño / Virgie Abella
7	Prodigal 102 Thessalonians Tala St. Peter	15 6 14 8	43	Marivic Pareja

Outreach activities

Mustard Seed BCGG and Chronicles BCGG



Kasalan Bayan and Christmas gift-giving

December 7, 2019

Nativity of Our Lady Parish
Marikina City

Olandes Suyuan

Recommissioning/recommitment
of members with
Fr Christopher Gonzales

January 19, 2020

Immaculate Concepcion Chapel
Olandes, Marikina City