

# Magis

Formation for Mission

Stewardship  
Simplicity  
Sharing  
Service

Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community  
February 2021 Issue



## The wisdom of the heart

February isn't just about chocolates and roses, it's also about loving divinely

## A different kind of love story

His story is the eternal truth of the creation's entirety

## The God I encounter in prayer

Redefining true love through finding the calm in the chaos

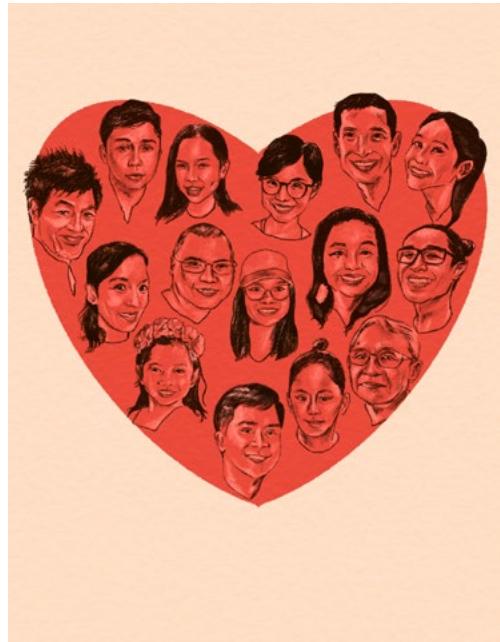
## My personal story of conversion

We are all still a work-in-progress, our journey still continuing

## Parental love

Cherishing, growing, and protecting the marital union

# About the Cover



Last February 14, popularly known as Valentine's Day, also celebrated Love Live!; a fundraising concert helmed by the Community Service Ministry, which featured a musical lineup of solos, duets and even quadruple acts. Being musically inclined myself, I was part of it too — and so we found ourselves apart yet harmonically together during Fridays and weekends, to finetune some cogs and gears. Full disclosure: Music, lyrics, and words could not describe how proud I am of all of us involved.

Because apart from the technicalities, what transcended beyond our individual talents was the ever-present fiery passion piercing through screens and hearts. Truly satisfying from behind the curtain towards the virtual stage, we were able to raise not just funds but also the spirits of other people at home. We found ourselves filling in a huge, figurative heart with joy and color — a close-knit community consisting of the Magis Deo family and our respective loved ones, all willing to extend hands for health & education, for love and life. A small and successful genesis for us, and in the horizon: a bigger picture.

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# Editorial Board

<i>Magis</i>	<b>Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community</b> 2/F RMT CeFam Bldg., ADMU Campus, Q.C.		
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			<b>17</b> Getting Ready for Mother's Day (Kids activity)
			<b>13</b> Interface Meeting (Prodigal 102-Thessalonians, John)
			<b>14</b> Interface Meeting (SOR-St Peter-Tala)
			<b>14 &amp; 21</b> Online Suyuan Reunion in Antipolo
			<b>19</b> Interface Meeting (Magnificat-Sirach-James)
			<b>20</b> Lenten Activity for Kids
			<b>March - April</b> Watch out for Teens and Young Single Adults activities

## Calendar of Activities: March - April 2021

<b>March</b>	
<b>6</b>	Google Workspace Learning Series 1 Shepherds Formation Workshop
<b>7</b>	Community Celebration and Lenten Recollection
<b>13</b>	Interface Meeting (Prodigal 102-Thessalonians, John)
<b>14</b>	Interface Meeting (SOR-St Peter-Tala)
<b>14 &amp; 21</b>	Online Suyuan Reunion in Antipolo
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	Watch out for Teens and Young Single Adults activities

# The Wisdom of the Heart



**A**fter celebrating the gift of Christmas, the season of Love continues with the celebration of what others call the heart month of February.

It is unfortunate that in the past 50 years, emphasis has been given to its commercial value rather than to what it really means. Because Love is an abstract term, commercial establishments have found ways to show how this could be experienced through the senses, through material things. There is nothing wrong with this for it is through our sensual experience that we experience emotions and find meaning in them.

But love is more than just the roses, wine and chocolates, and the heart is associated with these romantic expressions. The heart is also known to some as the convergence of one's mind, emotions, spirit, the center of being. Contrasted to the brain, which is known to focus on logic and thinking, the heart has its own wisdom, which evokes love.

The wisdom of the heart looks beyond success metrics, for it knows man is not a machine. It seeks to deepen relationships through LOVE, a love shown and taught to us by no less than the Lord. It starts with seeking the Lord and loving Him, and moves from there to loving others as shown in how we interact with one another. The wisdom of the heart tells us that this is the only way to live happily and meaningfully.

Perhaps this is the reason the Greeks have around seven words to express Love. I remember only four: Philia (love for friends, affection), Storge (instinctual love such as the love of a mother for a child, familial love), Eros (one that almost everyone is familiar with, erotic love) and Agape (unconditional love for others, the word most used for love in the bible).

The wisdom of the heart invites us to find meaning in our life through LOVE. And love manifests itself in so many ways beyond the bouquet of flowers and wine. Through generosity of spirit, through forgiveness, compassion for all that God has created, service, sacrifice for others – the heart shows us the reward of love is love itself, the joy of being in communion with others and with the Lord.

And as guide on how to love, St. Paul summarized this in his letter, 1 Corinthians 13:4-5: "Love is patient, kind, without envy. It is not boastful or arrogant. It is not ill-mannered, nor does it seek its own interest. Love overcomes anger and forgets offenses..."

February is a fitting month to celebrate LOVE in all its form. It is a precursor to LENT and the culmination of God's manifestation of Love. February reminds us how to love humanly, and prepares us for the ultimate challenge to the heart: to love divinely.

## Forming Ignatian Community (formicom)

Cesar & Delsa Sangalang, Samaritans  
BCGG / Praxis Ministry Overseer

In our 2nd tour of duty in the Pastoral Council, we are blessed to be assigned as the overseer of Praxis Ministry, headed by Levy and Roxanne Espiritu. Backing up the ministry are three equally hardworking and dynamic Sector Heads: Jojo & Jane Aldeguer (North Sector), Ferdie Joson (Central Sector), and Lilit & Abby Tumbocon (South Sector). With a clear direction and thrust from the Council, the team immediately held a series of virtual meetings to review the mission and vision of the Magis Deo Community, leading to the establishment of BCGG goals for this year. To make it easy to remember these goals, they are summarized by the acronym **formicom 114226** (special thanks to the Aldeguers for coming up with this brilliant idea).

As we are reminded what we are in Magis for, our goal is to fulfill our individual/couple mission. Hence, every BCGG and its members are well guided as to how best we Magis members can contribute to the mission and vision of Magis Deo, and how we can best contribute to building our community. The identified BCGG goals are also aligned with the goals of all the ministries. In a nutshell, each BCGG member should be able to attend at least one (1) formation program (e.g., AIR) in a year, two (2) prayer meetings a month, two (2) Interface meetings per year, and six (6) ComCels in a year. Further, each BCGG must be able to sponsor or participate in at least one (1) Outreach program or activity, and recruit or invite at least four (4) non-Magis members to the Marriage Booster for the year. With these minimum targets, we believe the community will continue to thrive as one family.

To start the year on the right foot, the Praxis Ministry revisited and updated the BCGG Guidelines. After a series of consultations with the Sector Heads and the Pastoral Council, a few of the provisions were amended and are now being cascaded to the BCGG members through the BCGG heads.

In close coordination with the other Ministry Heads, the Praxis Ministry continues to monitor and ensure that all programs of the community are properly and timely communicated to all members. As we continue to find ways

**formicom**  
FORMING IGNATIAN COMMUNITY

**#BCGGGoals**

<b>formation</b>	<b>1</b> formation program / activity per member
<b>Outreach</b>	<b>1</b> outreach per BCGG
<b>Recruit</b>	<b>4</b> Marriage Booster recruits per BCGG
<b>Meeting</b>	<b>2</b> Prayer meetings per member per month
<b>Interface</b>	<b>2</b> Interface per member
<b>com</b> cel	<b>6</b> Comcels per member





to deepen our prayer life, the best practices of each BCGG, especially during prayer meetings, are constantly shared with other BCGGs through the sector heads. We were amazed to know that one BCGG has come up with creative ways like using PowerPoint materials, and Filipino/Tagalog versions of the readings during their BCGG meetings to further encourage the participation of all members.

With almost one year now without physical gathering among the community members, interface meetings were immediately scheduled, and some BCGG groupings have already met as of this writing. We followed the same system last year, wherein each group consists of BCGGs from the three different sectors.

In the coming months, a lot of activities and programs are expected from the different ministries, and Praxis Ministry will continue to be the arms and legs in ensuring that all these programs are effectively communicated to elicit support and participation from all members of our community.

## State of Magis Address (SOMA)

Fr. James Gascon, SJ  
Spiritual Director



**t is an understatement to say that 2020 was a difficult year. It was unprecedented and arguably the most catastrophic year since World War II. Surviving a deadly pandemic was a new experience in various ways.** It determined our way of life, no, controlled our mode of existence. We were helpless over an unknown force that infected and annihilated hundreds of thousands of people. Whether as a family or a barangay or a city or a whole country, we've never been limited and restricted as we are now. We were robbed of our precious freedom. The limitlessness of life, the cultures of "just do it," and "do what I want" were thrashed. Regardless of the size of our houses, we felt we were holed up in the smallest spaces we've never imagined in our life. And yet, what this pandemic affirmed was that we were not a people without a God. As we were reminded, when God closes a door, He opens more windows. And only those with faith can see that there were indeed more windows opened.

So, as a family, we found ways of coping. We adapted. Sabi nga sa Tagalog: habang maikli ang kumot, matutong mamaluktot. True, but there were more... MAGIS.... We saw that it was not enough to endure. We labored, yes, but we discovered as well that there were more blessings than curses. We realized we were never alone. We had each other. In fact, the limited spaces became an opportunity to discover the wonders of and in each other's person. Children got to know their parents more; parents understood their children a little bit better. Siblings got to live in harmony by becoming more patient and understanding. As one youth commented, "I got to know my sister more; I never thought she was such a nice person." Cooperation was a word that was meagerly experienced in homes before but this time it was a key to harmony.

Each one had to cooperate with whatever was needed to be done in the family. Otherwise, conditions at home would have become even more difficult than they already were outside the home. Therefore, from a virulent pandemic, homes became a manger of blessings.

The pandemic was not the only challenge though. Calamities, fiercer than before, shook us and routed us, literally and figuratively. But then again, just like when a tree teeming with fruits is shaken, harvest! This harvest came in the form of generosity manifested in relief efforts, great and small. People shared even the little they had with those who had close to nothing, who were left with nothing. Families and communities showed the world that not even the most virulent epidemic nor the cruellest storms would snuff out the flames of Filipino generosity. Who would have thought that a simple desire to do something out of a situation of helplessness could raise 1.7 million just by posting a call for donation on Facebook? I received donations, not only from friends and relatives, but even from unknown people abroad, who out of their generous hearts gave significant amounts.

The woeful condition around revealed miracles from God bestowed through our own community. For years, gathering members to community celebrations was always a challenge. Commitment was at its lowest. The common excuse was traffic. Ayan, nawala ang traffic kasi hindi na tayo makalabas. So, we went online... and lo and behold, we discovered that the digital highways were wider, better paved, and traffic-free! Through online community celebrations, all you needed was desire. And Ignatius was right: what shape this world are desires. Holy desires give birth to holy works. We also discover that since the ME face to face was impossible, the digital platform was the way to go. This gave birth to the monthly Marriage Boosters. We were able to reach out to more couples who benefited from this program. We had an unprecedented reach to couples desiring to nourish their hunger for God, and revive the marital spirit. They joined us from different parts of the country and abroad. All it needed was Viber or Zoom. Totoo nga ang kasabihan, na may pera sa basura – perhaps a businessman's way of framing "finding God and graces in all things," that no matter how bad a situation can be, there will always be goodness in it. Amidst the curse of a pandemic, graces were overflowing, "siksik, liglig, umaapaw."

Right now, having committed ourselves to this beloved community who loves us, we pause with a question: where are we going from here? To begin His ministry, Jesus went down the Jordan river to be baptized and rose to go where the Father called Him. I have shared earlier, baptism is a covenant, a communion and a commission. As a community of faith, then, we continue to commit ourselves to our mission: stewardship, simplicity, sharing and service.

First, we move towards deeper, stronger, and grounded faith through our BCGG. This is the foundation of our mission. Let me remind you that it is not an exclusive club where we go to pour out our emotions and ventilate our exasperations. It is not merely a social gathering where we satisfy our narcissistic needs. Rather, it is a community who prays together, who discerns how God is present and active, and who nurtures personal and couple relationship with the Lord. BCGGs are a home and wellspring. They fill our hunger and quench our thirst. Always bear in mind that the BCGG is where the five loaves and two fishes are blessed, broken, and multiplied. So please don't ever be remiss on your commitment to prayer and daily examen. Without regular prayer and examen, we risk losing touch with God who never loses touch with us. So, it is our loss.

Second, we need to reach out more to those who, like us, hunger and thirst for God. Not because we have found the only way, but what we have is a proven way to God, one of the means that couples take to find God in each other. Our Ignatian treasure puts us on the path of saving souls as well as our own. Our outreach programs may have to be more creative using the digital highway for greater reach. Just be guided by what Ignatius said: non multa sed multum, not many but much. It's not about how many projects we can do or how many people we can reach out to that is success. Rather, it is the depth and quality of our apostolic character and spirit that is a measure of our fidelity.

Third, after forty years in the desert, just like the Israelites, we are in the threshold of our own "promised land." The Loyola Retreat Center in Angono seems to be where the beacon has led us. Our dream of having our own home is almost a reality. The place is ready for renovation, to start with 30 ME proof rooms. We hope to call it "Loyola Retreat Center: Home of Magis Deo." We dream to celebrate Magis Deo's 40th birthday in this new home. So please be a part of this dream: first, support it with your prayers, and secondly, if you are so inspired, share your talents, time, and treasures. Remember, "no one is so poor not to give." And a home is only so because we are part of it.



Fourth, we have a responsibility to the society. Our faith is faith that does justice. Although we live in a world made imperfect by corruption, social inequality, injustice, poverty, and destitution, we are not cowed by these challenges as we uphold the Gospel values. In two years, election na naman. Will our faith be contented with the status quo? Are we to remain socially or civilly apathetic? Do we count ourselves as perpetrators and enablers of the unnecessary suffering especially of the poor by doing nothing? Remember that Magis Deo was born from the seeds of the EDSA Revolution. It is a people who saw no fences between faith and the duty to justice. Our faith in Jesus Christ demands that we live out the Gospel values here and now. Jesus is busy at work not only on private families but on human societies. The Kingdom of God does not only reign in heaven, as a future reality. The reign of the Kingdom begins here on earth finding its fulfillment in heaven. Magis Deo is More for God, on earth as it is in heaven.

Many people expressed their hatred for 2020. In fact, one of the FB posts says, "flush 2020 into the bowl." On our part our response is not hatred but gratitude. We say, thank you 2020 for you have taught us many lessons about living and to be more resilient in 2021. As we move to face the challenges and the graces of a new year, we keep this in our hearts: God will protect us from nothing, but God will sustain us in everything. As God has shown us this past year as well as in previous years, we are not typhoon-proof, nor earthquake-proof, nor flood-proof. Definitely neither pandemic-proof nor disaster-proof. But one thing is sure. With God who is Emmanuel, the God with and in us, we will prevail, we will survive counting graces because God will always sustain us.

God's blessings to all of you and the people you love.

## Celebrating Valentine's Day with the Community

Ojay and Yang Reantaso, Community Service Ministry / Samaritans BCGG



**U**p to now, Ojay and I are still overwhelmed by the love and support that everyone has given to Love Live! On behalf of all the performers and the people behind the show, who selflessly shared their time and talents with us (Imagine! We had a total of 4 rehearsals and we enjoyed every single one of them!!), we are grateful to all the sponsors and to all who watched and pledged last Feb 14. Because of your generosity, a substantial amount was raised to support the projects of the Youth, ME, and Outreach Ministries. Serving the Lord by serving the community has never felt this fulfilling until Love Live! landed on our laps. Despite some frustrations and sacrifices, a different kind of JOY outweighed all of them. Thank you Lord for this opportunity to celebrate LOVE with our Magis Deo family on Valentine's Day.

### ***Prayer before the Love Live Concert***

Rico Lim, Easter BCGG/CSM Overseer

Father, we thank you for the opportunity to come together tonight for this digital musical Valentine concert called "Love Live" We give thanks for the gift of music, and for the performers who have worked so hard in pursuit of their artistic excellence and inspired for their love for the Magis Deo Community who have been their guiding light and mentor to their faith which helps them draw closer to you, our Lord Jesus Christ. May your presence and beauty be found in every note and may the words that are sung tonight reach and touch the hearts of your people. May the love be stronger in faith and music during this concert.

**“Contrary to popular belief, my family and I do not sing or jam at home as often as we want.** We all love music and our inclination to the arts is something we all share. But the practicalities of life often get in the way. The kids are in college. Domeng and I are still working. When the pandemic came, we had to lock down at home and we found common ground in music and the arts again. When the invitation from the Reantosas to join in the Love Live concert came around, we said yes in recognition of graces to be had. We are blessed to be given the opportunity to sing and serve as a family for the Magis Deo community once more."

– Zarah Gagatiga, Emmanuel BCGG

**“Such an enjoyable evening!** Congratulations and thanks to all who organized it."

– Monchito Mossesgeld/Cana BCGG

**“**The excitement continued from seeing Leven and Kaye and all the participants becoming more alive for each rehearsal, to immensely enjoying it on Valentine's Day itself. I guess in our 25 years of celebrating it—either out of town, in dinner dates or concerts—I've never been as moved as the extraordinary celebration of Magis talents from all ages. We've been witnesses to the exhausting role of our CSM leads Ojay & Yang, but all their efforts paid off. I'd like to congratulate and thank them from the bottom of my heart for directing us to that wonderful event, not just to raise funds, but to gather the community of friends and extended families to celebrate and thank God for the gift of love."

– Delsa Sangalang, Samaritans BCGG

**“**BRAVO to the CSM Team headed by dynamic couple, Ojay & Yang Reantaso!!! BRAVO to all Magis performers and surprise guest singer. Truly a night to remember for the Magis family! Thank you for such a heartwarming event. Salamat salamat! God bless our community".

– Benz & Vina Dimanalata, Chaircouple / Francis BCGG

**“**The Magis value of "sharing" was all over last night – from the performers to the donors/benefactors, to the organizers. While we were all tracking (and listing) the pledges and total amount raised, we were equally astounded by the number of people who were engaged and participated—those online watching, those who chatted, those who donated...even the kids/youth! We lost track sa dami at sunud-sunod...Indeed, the blessings of a community and a good segue to Father James' talk on spousing community. Awesome!"

– Jojo Aldeguer, Chronicles BCGG



**“**Congratulations to CSM and all the organizers of last night's event. It was a resounding success! Everything went smoothly. Best of all, we totally enjoyed the songs from our very talented performers!! Galing ninyong lahat. May God continue to bless Magis in future endeavors!"

– Jun Ahyong/Sirach BCGG

## LOVE LIVE Chat Box...

22:24:12	<b>From Pinky Abejo:</b> Congratulations and thank you for sharing your time talents and blessings. Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam Amen.	22:28:09	<b>From 17 Noel &amp; Neri Gascon:</b> Thank You Lord and to all organizer!
22:24:40	<b>From 08 The Gagatigas:</b> Thank you so much for your donations and pledges.	22:28:15	<b>From Fely and Benj Santiago:</b> Thank you Magis Deo! Thanks CSM
22:25:31	From Leony & Mia Parada: CONGRATS COMMUNITY SERVICE MINISTRY!!!!	22:28:23	<b>From 02 Levy and Roxanne Espiritu:</b> Beautiful work of love and life, CSM.
22:26:27	<b>From kaye angeles:</b> May Diyos tayong nagmamahal palagi!	22:28:24	<b>From 08 Ney &amp; Pinky Rosas:</b> Congratulations! Super galing!
22:26:40	<b>From Leony &amp; Mia Parada:</b> Akala ko si Ojay ang surprise guest.... Kayang kaya mo yan Ojay... Congrats JOB WELL DONE....	22:28:29	<b>From Ian &amp; Elaine Serranilla:</b> Congratulations!
22:26:43	<b>From Lito Ramos:</b> congratulations everyone!	22:28:41	<b>From Teng:</b> CONGRANTS PO., GBU ALL
22:26:45	<b>From Yang Reantaso:</b> THANK YOU ERIK SANTOS!!!!	22:28:45	<b>From Ting Puzon-Yupangco:</b> We offer this to our Almighty God and Creator.
22:26:53	<b>From 13 Lilit &amp; Abby Tumbocon:</b> Congratulations, CSM !!!	22:29:05	Thank you for the talents you have given to all the performers and organizers.
22:27:12	<b>From Yang Reantaso:</b> He especially recorded that song for our fundraising event tonight!! what a talented man with a big heart!!!!	22:29:11	<b>From 01 Benz &amp; Vina Dimanalata:</b> Congratulations CSM Ojay and Yang!!!
22:27:28	<b>From Jun and Ellen Coronel:</b> Congratulations CSM! Ang galling!	22:29:12	<b>From Ting Puzon-Yupangco:</b> Congrats, Ojay and Yang! So proud of you!
22:27:36	<b>From Monchtio and Tina Mossesegeld:</b> Congrats CSM for a very enjoyable evening!	22:29:15	<b>From Rudy Ebardo, Francis BCGG:</b> Wow Magis Galing. Love you all
22:27:55	<b>From Emmanuel Gagatiga6:</b> Thank you!!!!	22:29:23	<b>From Doy and Rina Papio:</b> congratulations Magis Deo!
22:27:56	<b>From Ting Puzon-Yupangco:</b> CONGRATS!!!	22:30:14	<b>From CANA-CASTILLO 1/ED:</b> Congrats to the organizers!
22:28:02	<b>From kaye angeles:</b> Congratulations, CSM!	22:30:19	<b>From 07 Sonny Maroon:</b> Congrats Direk Ojay!
22:28:03	<b>From Djarna P. Pestano:</b> Congratulations CSM! Thank you !!! i enjoyed the evening!!	22:30:16	<b>From Ligaya- Vicente:</b> Congrats po sa lahat..Gbu All
22:28:05	<b>From Ting Puzon-Yupangco:</b> THANK You for all your love and support!!!	22:31:05	<b>From 09 Cesar &amp; Delsa Sangalang:</b> Congrats CSM, especially Ojay & Yang!
22:28:08	<b>From SHIELA MARIE ABERIA:</b> thank you po and congrats po	22:31:17	Thank you very much for all your support!

## Parental Love: An Eye-Opening ComCel Talk by Fr. Allan Abuan

Winston Cruz, Matthew BCGG/Marriage Encounter Ministry



**F**r. Allan Abuan graced our February Community Celebration with an enlightening talk on Parental Love. This subject was chosen by the Marriage Encounter Ministry, sponsors of the February ComCel, because it appeared as one of the most requested themes from last year's Magis Deo Community Survey. And with the ever enthusiastic Fr. Allan delivering this topic, it certainly delivered to our community's expectation!

Prefacing the presentation with the tagline Fail Proof Parenting, Fr. Allan shared a secret to mastering this elusive skill: there are simply ten rules that you should follow day in and day out:

1. Love your spouse
2. Love your spouse
3. Love your spouse ...
10. Love your spouse

It was a simple but effective message to all of us that parenting is very much dependent and intertwined with how much you take care of your marriage bond and treat each other. What your children see is what they will absorb, be inspired by, and follow. Fr. Allan then shared further 10 practices that demonstrated why focusing on the marriage bond first is so important. "Children cannot be your solace after an argument." "The source of your happiness cannot only be your children." "You are entitled to marital fulfillment even if it means doing less for your children." "Insist on marital privacy and do not allow children to invade it." While initially seeming counter to the obligation of parental responsibility, Fr. Allan explained how such couple behavior has a strong and lasting effect on our children. Focusing on your spouse and giving your relationship

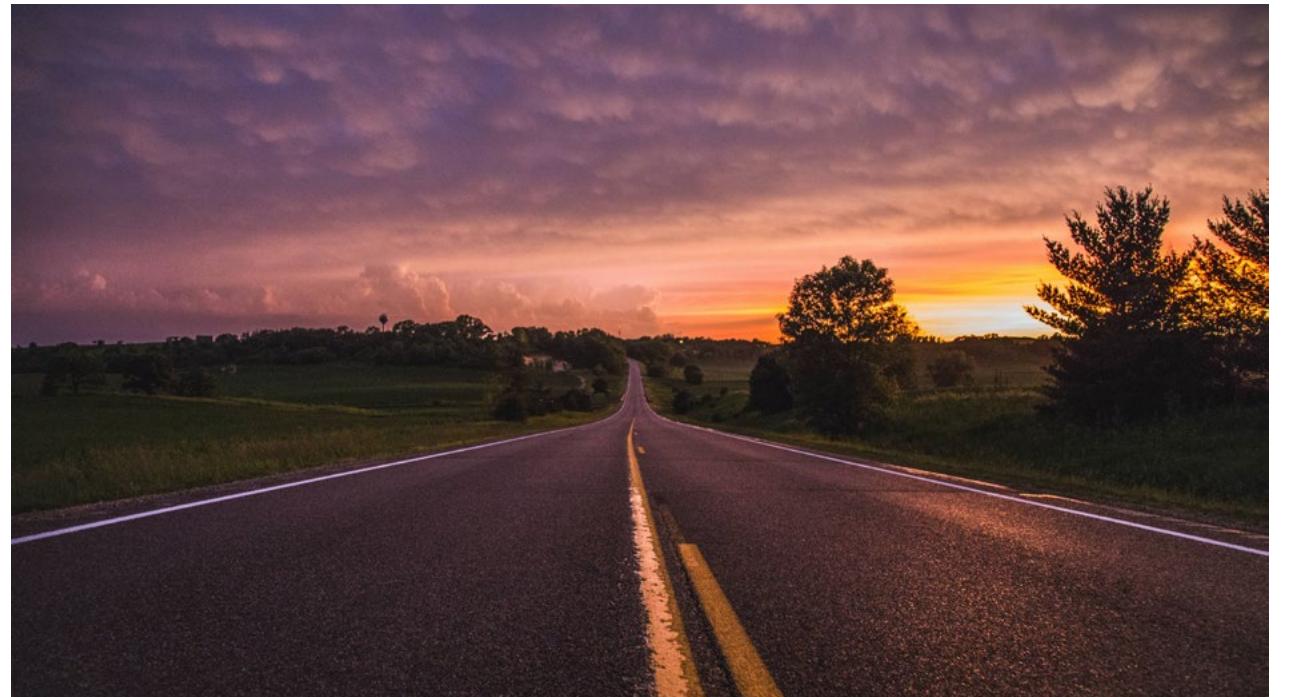
that much importance shows your children how spouses should treat each other, and this would help them in their growth by being more mature in their perspectives on relationships, affecting their own social attitudes and ultimately on their future marital relationships. Fr. Allan continued giving further advice on building the couple bond: "Confide in your spouse about your dreams and wishes." "Share many interests – this has bonding effect." "Keep your marriage strong by doing thoughtful things to each other." Fr. Allan leaves you in no doubt that building the couple bond is the essence of bringing up children properly.

But Fr. Allan continues with advice on how to treat children specifically. "Store inner resources – pray together and invite a power greater than your own." "Openly express affection and let your children see the warmth between you." Promoting prayer and letting the children bask in the affection you show your spouse help build an environment that is loving and inclusive in your home. As Fr. Allan relates in his closing slides, "living your day to day lives as loving spouses who cherish and sustain the marriage bond results in a winner child who is physically healthy, socially adjusted, morally strong, wise and self-confident."

Fr. Allan closed with a final word: "Children drink from the life of their parents." And so, as a loving Magis Deo community of couples, we receive once again a compelling validation from Fr. Allan regarding our mission to strengthen the couple bond, to cherish, grow, and protect our marital union, and to understand how this forms the basis of the Christian family and ultimately, the proper growth and well-being of our beloved children.

## The God I Encounter in Prayer

Zarah C. Gagatiga, Emmanuel BCGG



**I**n many an Ignatian retreat, at the last session of the day the spiritual director often asks retreatants about the God they encountered. This is a beautiful, often poignant experience. The God that one discovers during a time of selected silence and reflection in prayer lends great consolation to the searcher. Knowing God strengthens one's spiritual moorings as he or she sets out into the world once more.

Attending the Annual Ignatian Retreat (AIR) can be life affirming indeed -- opening to more growth in discernment and in developing a deeper, more personal relationship with God. After fifteen years of spiritual journey of prayer and service in Magis Deo, I found out that I need not wait for the scheduled AIR to encounter God. The daily prayer and journaling, the Examen and the sharing of fruits of reflection, insights, and the response to action during BCGG prayer meetings, are processes that involve finding God in every possible way.

I asked myself a long time ago the reason and the necessity of finding God. Why is there an emphasis in *finding God in all things*? Isn't God, like love, all around us? Such is the line in a popular Beatles song.

Over time I realized that there is grace in the act of finding God. It is hard work. It is discipline. It is faith in action. It is fidelity. It is, in itself, an act of love. Opening and offering these

graces at a BCGG meeting makes God real, authentic, living, and moving. There lies the affirmation of His unending love and presence in each form of life. Creation is awash with His magnanimity. His generosity is so overflowing that it squashes the ego and pride.

In a recent joint BCGG prayer meeting I was struck by the God I encountered at that moment. How I share this image of God with the rest is awe-inspiring as it gave me an assurance that I am not alone in this relatively new journey known as mid-life. The following days inspired me to lengthen my prayer time and to consistently develop an awareness of God moving in my life.

What I discovered, in that process of prayer and reflection, was surprising even for me.

There is a sense of calm amid chaos. Detachment. Being painfully honest with myself and with others. A new meaning of true love. A desire to understand and experience the peace in God's presence.

And so, as a pilgrim, I continue to journey on with a grateful heart, as companions in prayer and service are plenty to meet at every pitstop. In each step, at every turn, and at rest there is God.

God is with us. Emmanuel.

## Keeping Magis alive

Levy & Roxanne Espiritu, Praxis Ministry/Transfiguration BCGG



**L**ast Sunday's State of Magis Address (SOMA) and this week's analogy of the coal in the fire made us reflect on our journey in Magis. Fr. James reminded us of our covenant with God. One text message from Cesar Sangalang made me turn around. It was a reminder on the value of community involvement given the circumstances. As if living is not complicated enough, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted everything I know as normal and manageable.

As God's children, we are committed to live a life that will bring us closer to God and that He has commissioned us to help Him spread His gospel.

The past year has made us think a lot about our life's purpose or our calling especially for this year. Though we may have known that all along, we just need the courage and the confidence to embrace it and somehow know the direction to undertake it. Our commissioning rites, as well as our recommitment rites reminded us of the importance of the community in our spiritual and personal growth, in the same way that our participation and cooperation are vital in the continuity of this community that has been a source of our strength, inspiration and blessings for the past 35 years.

Last Sunday's celebration was undoubtedly well attended. Fr. James' SOMA was filled with so much enthusiasm and fervor that members feel proud and abundantly blessed to be part of this vibrant and highly spirited community.

Working in the Praxis Ministry allowed us to study and evaluate the performance and participation of each BCGG, especially in 2020. There was relatively a remarkable improvement in membership attendance and an increase in the frequency of meetings undertaken.

For this year, as we update the community directory, we noted an increase in membership, comprising of new and Balik-Magis members, whose Shepherds made sure that they be part of the commissioning rites. We have new names of BCGG leaders who wanted to take part in community building. We were in a phone conversation with a formerly active Magis member who intends to revive their once active and involved BCGG.

These developments are the lumps of the burning coal that helps ensure and cause to ignite the desires of the members to have a well-meaning relationship with God. These are the lumps of coal that rekindle our desire to participate in the community's vocation to promote marital spirituality in the Ignatian spirit as our way of bringing God's love, mercy, and compassion to families and to their homes.

Giving our support, cooperation and participation in community building is our humble way of keeping Magis alive, active and enable it to succeed in its advocacy. It is important for us to continue to feed on that desire to please God by remaining grateful, sharing the experience of having God in our lives, and reaching out more to others who hunger and thirst for God in their lives.

Today, the priest in his homily reminded us that undertaking a mission in life is not without disappointments, frustration, trials, and challenges. We only have to be reminded of the Paschal mystery embodied in every vocation we pursue. What is important is our awareness that Christ will always be a step ahead of us and will accompany us in our ministry.

Today's gospel showed how relentless Jesus was in starting off His ministry. Despite how full His day was in going about His work, He still gathered enough energy to wake up early in the morning to go to a quiet place to pray and commune with God for His guidance. This reminded us of the importance of maintaining a prayer life, especially if we have set ourselves to do God's work.

So, with the support and prayers of our BCGG and the Magis Deo Community, let us continue to grow in our faith and to be companions for each other in prayer so we can all do our share in bringing the gospel to others through our life testimony and service for others.

## My Personal Story of Conversion

Jon Sta. Maria, Transfiguration BCGG

**T**he story of my conversion must have started when I just followed praying the sinner's prayer when I was 9 years old. They say nothing happens by coincidence, but young as I was, I did not understand the call to mission.

In 1977, the Lord knocked at my heart again. I had followed my family when they became born again. Here, my yearnings about God found answers. I savored the teachings, yet the understanding was not heart-felt. It was mostly head knowledge. The Lord slowly molded me, satisfied my hunger, but my mission remained unclear. Events in my life helped me depend more and more on Him and on prayers. I did not realize that these were already my being prepared for what He would finally ask me to do. My husband needed a personal relationship with Him so I returned to the Catholic faith.

Praising Him through music became a tool where my spirit was lifted, and I found myself connecting my spirit to Him. As I matured spiritually, He made me die to self through my life experiences. I was subjected to betrayals, depressions, and physical pain, but I always saw His hand in the difficulties I went through. He always gave me answers to whatever I was going through. But my surrender to Him was still only superficial.

Then my mission was revealed to me. In a dream, I had a vision which made my mission clear as day – I was to be an intercessor.

He is still guiding me because when I did the "Gaze Upon the Cross Prayer Journey", I saw His crucified face and a tear that fell from His eye. I could not fathom what it meant for me. I thought it was because I was instrumental to the pain and sorrow He suffered on the cross but the image of our Blessed Mother at the foot of the cross made me ponder how she endured everything in silence.



Then my BCBP community had the "33 Days to Morning Glory" and I finally understood what the tear I saw was for. It was the sorrow of Our Lady as she beheld Him on the cross. It was not only Him whom I pained but also His mother and my spiritual Mother.

He wanted me to know Our Lady too. To be close to her as I was to Him too. It is a process I am still undergoing but a very interesting journey as well.

Like my hunger for the word, there was a hunger to know Our Lady more. It has led me to more teachings about her and to the Divine Mercy. I realize that all these are connected to my mission as an intercessor.

I continually thank God for being patient with me. He is making me understand that only in full surrender to Him can I fully follow Him. It is not easy cause my humanness makes me want to do things as I perceive I should, but full surrender means to let go and let Him take care of it for me. I am still a work in progress but by His grace and Our Lady's help and guidance I look forward to the day when I can really say that the surrender is complete and my trust in Him is full and complete.

## Prayer at our February 2021 BCGG Meeting

Judith E. San Juan, Song of Ruth BCGG

Dear Lord,

We remember with gratitude those people who generously sowed the seeds of faith in our lives – our parents, teachers, mentors, and our shepherds.

Above all, we recognize how you have blessed our lives with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We confess the times we fail to involve ourselves in planting the seeds of faith in the lives of others, the times when our personal agenda become more important than Yours; the times when our lives become so

entangled with worldly things that we forget what You have said and promised.

Lord, we know that when we become disconnected from You, our faith becomes stunted and dry. Please continue to bless and renew our lives and strengthen our faith. Make us Your instruments of love and grant us enough wisdom to reveal Your greatness to others.

Amen.

## Growing, Blooming and Blessed in the Time of Covid

Andrea Louise E. San Juan, Magis Youth



**T**he mustard seed represents our faith in ourselves and in God's plan for us. He entrusted us gifts such as talents, skills, and even the blessings that we receive each day for us to cultivate our purpose in life. Just like the mustard seed, these gifts have all been sitting in that unnoticeable corner in the room, waiting to be seen and used. Oftentimes, we get so obsessed with glitz and glamor that we forget about the gifts that are inherent in us.

Now that we are in the middle of a pandemic, we are cooped up in our homes. With this, we get to reevaluate our purpose in life, revisit old hobbies, and even catch up with family and friends (virtually). Prior to the pandemic, we had no choice but to exhaust our twenty-four hours in a day by drowning ourselves in a sea of work. The pandemic has put all of us to the test. It has exhausted every single one of us the core. Everything suddenly seems uncertain. But now that we have more time, we get to finally reconnect with ourselves and with God.

We also notice some things that we have overlooked in the past – even the way we eat and the way we take care of our bodies. You suddenly realize that what used to fill your bank account wasn't really what made you feel alive but only kept

you alive. It suddenly dawned on you that you missed playing your guitar but before the pandemic, it was just sitting on the dustiest corner of your room; yet when you picked it up again, you felt the need to collaborate with your musically inclined friends, even in a virtual setting. You may have also found the need to tweak your coffee recipe just to fuel you and add some excitement to your day. Or you may have forgotten about your baking skills which took a back seat for quite some time but now you have ample time to enhance and even profit from.

It is only when we allot time for ourselves that we get to really understand who we are and what we are in this world for. Most of the time, things go beyond our control but that is also when our faith strengthens. Although sometimes we feel that we are stuck in a rut, we allow our faith to grow when we make the most out of our God-given gifts and leave our future in His hands. All will be alright in time, with the right amount of faith and hope that we put in ourselves and in Him. Someday, this mustard seed that we planted in each one of us during this pandemic will grow into something that will make us congratulate ourselves for being patient and hopeful amid trying times. Indeed, "Not my will but Yours be done".

## Magis Deo Youth Ministry's January Activities



## YOUTH

## Magis Deo Youth Activities in January

Mark & Cathy Maulit, Youth Ministry/Prodigal 102 BCGG

Mark & Karen Madrid, Youth Ministry/John BCGG

**A**s the world continues to face the Covid-19 pandemic the Magis Deo Youth Ministry opened 2021 with two very timely activities open to the youth of the community and outside as well (even those of other faiths)!

For the kids, there was the talk on Mindfulness on 23 January given by Karen Madrid. All 39 children who participated were eager to share their feelings and experiences during the pandemic. Some of them voiced out their frustration and sadness with the pandemic, particularly the community quarantine and distance learning. They appreciated mindfulness as something they can practice anytime to help them cope with their emotions.

This is evident in the following photos of some creative work the kids did after the talk. The second youth activity was for the teens and young adults: The Hero's Adventure workshop facilitated by Ruziel delos Reyes. Youths Ria Maulit and Janais Aldeguer were the emcees and Val Gagatiga provided beautiful live music.

The workshop helped the 46 participants identify adventures in their lives and recognize typical elements in each such as the hero (themselves), magical helpers, dragon battles, supreme ordeals and finally the ultimate prize or gift they won at the end of their adventures.

**“ The Hero's Adventure inspired me to be more of a hero. To be a hero, there are many things that cause one to suffer greatly but at the end people will see us in a different light. In Lord of the Rings when Frodo succeeded in his adventure with Gandalf, everyone began treating him as a hero. In Avengers Endgame they found Ant Man who helped by telling them about the quantum realm. Everyone has their own adventure and I want to help them with it too, just like a magical friend. A lot of people love to help others and that can also be their adventure.” – Juanjo Aldeguer, 13 years old**

**“ While listening to the talk, I realized that my current adventure is how to learn to love myself more and how to take care of myself as I grow older. What I loved most about the talk is, I am reminded that I always have my magical helpers who can help me through whatever adventures I am going through, and they are my family and friends.”**

– Justine Annika Reantaso, 16 years old

The following closing prayer prepared by Ruziel and read by participant Mitos delos Reyes summarized the gifts everyone received from their adventures:

“Heavenly Father, we thank you for helping us remember the adventures you have allowed us to take, for granting us the courage to take that first step and gain the treasures and gifts at the end of the journey. Thank you for resiliency, self-acceptance, discipline, time management, self-confidence, silver medal, inner strength, teamwork, stronger faith, patience, independence, consistency, new learnings, winnings, self-improvement, self-strengthening, unexpected relationships, maturity, knowledge, advancement to new heights, material blessings, ability, appreciation, kindness, self-love, willingness to experience new things, becoming an effective teacher; advice, mental, and emotional stability; and new-found talent. And for the magical helpers you sent our way, we are truly grateful – for with them, the dragon battles and supreme ordeal were less scary and easier to fight. Please be with us in the next adventure.”

Indeed, in this time of limited physical interaction, prolonged isolation and gnawing uncertainty, mindfulness and a sense of adventure can be useful allies in remaining positive, productive and a blessing to the world.

We look forward to more youth joining and sharing themselves in the ministry activities in the coming months!

## A Different Kind of Love Story, and Love Poems

Chacho Angeles, Thessalonians BCGG

**T**he “Jesus Story” did not stop in Nazareth where Jesus grew to maturity (and which His townsmates mistakenly thought so), but it continues to this day, hopefully in my, in all our lives. His teachings, His miracles, the example of His self-sacrificing life, and His presence, live on in my life and will continue to do so in the lives of many others to come. Neither did it end in the crucifixion. The Jesus story starts “In the beginning...” and ends, no, it does not end, at least not in the sense of endings as we understand and know them.

When I was younger, there was more of “My Story” ruling my life. What I wanted, what I thought, my plans, actions, and later my ambitions and desire for recognition, career and financial success, made up most of my life and I felt like a failure when things did not go my way. Maybe I needed this that I may be able to push my “physical, emotional, mental and worldly growth,” especially during these years of progress towards maturity.

But there is another story that sort of exploded during early college, “Our Story.” This story folded into My Story and changed me a lot. It is about the larger story of my family, neighborhood, the culture and social economic status of my country and that of the whole world. It is about concern for the poor and underprivileged, about working for their upliftment, about helping bring about justice and peace. It gave more meaning to My Story because My Story received a new focus outside of myself, the welfare of my family and the larger society of my country, and the hardships of the people. After college, I got married and started working and Our Story got scaled down a bit to cover mostly my life with a family.

In my early fifties, my wife and I started learning more about the Jesus Story in a way that is deeper and more personal, which taught me how relate to it more than when I was younger. I started to understand Jesus, His teachings, the miracles He performed and His mission, and His relevance to my life and to the world. As this story reveals more of Jesus to me, I get to see that it ties the two other stories into one united story that provides meaning and purpose to My Story. The Jesus Story has been called many names like “The Story”, the “Truth Story”,

the “Creation Story”. Now, I am realizing that the Jesus Story is the eternal truth of the whole of creation, which is the story of our eternal and loving God. The “Greatest Love Story” ever!

(1)

Loving Jesus,  
I too am afraid of facing Your love,  
Used to the light of an empirical mind  
Ever suspicious of that which I myself  
Have not experienced with my mind and  
My senses. But I am also afraid of the  
Consequences of drawing ever closer  
To You and Your ways, for this entails  
Changes in the way I do things, my  
Way of thinking and my comfort.

As I move from early dawn darkness  
To the coming of the light, I slowly  
Begin to see things, hazy, and without  
Form, afraid to move about because  
I cannot see the way clearly, not seeing  
Where I am supposed to go, stumbling  
Over stones, plants and obstacles.  
As the sun slowly gives more of its light,  
I can see better, am more confident in  
Safely navigating my way. And I can  
See my destination. But with the full  
Light of day, everything is revealed,  
My path, the obstacles, and all the  
Beauty around me. In the dark, golf  
Is impossible, and so is my life.

I would love to sit on the grass  
And receive nourishment from You,  
Not only bread and fish for my  
Body, but especially food for my  
Spirit, my heart: Your teachings,  
Your admonitions, Your presence.  
These will give me light, and show  
Me the way, Your way, not mine.  
The food of Your presence will  
Strengthen me, help me persevere.  
Though I fall, I will rise, though  
Facing challenges, I am at peace,  
Though hurting, I can still love,  
As You, my God loves me from  
The beginning of time, to the end.

(2)

The vista of my life is forever changing,  
As the sun changes its hue from light to  
Yellow to orange and red, then darkness.  
I see both light and darkness, and I will  
Not forget that one begets the other. I  
Also see life and death, a great chasm  
Separating the two. Yet joined together  
Forever by a bridge called love.

My nature is worldly, yet is divine,  
Different yet the same. I cannot tell  
One from the other. Can I tell one flower  
From another in a field filled with beauty?

Father, let me see You in all of creation,  
Let me love You where I am, how I am,  
By sharing this self with others, family,  
Workmates, my friends and neighbors,  
With mercy, understanding, inclusion,  
Tolerance, simplicity, patience, humility,  
Self-sacrifice. Let me see this door as the  
Way to the fulfilling life with You, my  
Ever present and loving Father.

(3)

I am amazed at the beautiful sunsets  
With the calm and peaceful sea shore,  
The mysterious beauty of coral reefs,  
The flowers and trees atop mountains,  
Their deep valleys and dizzying heights,  
Magnificent in their heft and grandeur.  
Yet after the calm, the storms come.

I am amazed at people helping others  
Spending great resources, or just using  
The talents bestowed on them, or at  
Little gestures like helping old people  
Cross the street. Yet I know that they  
And I have scars and wounds from  
Many pains, hurts, past and present.

I press on, following a path that forked  
Into a life of knowing that my God is  
Greater than anything I ever imagined,  
More caring and understanding, ever  
Merciful and total in His unconditional  
Love. This He asks that I return, through  
The roundabout way of loving, caring  
For others and for His mysterious and



Wonderful creation. Along the way I  
Continue to prepare myself to know Him  
More, to give more of myself to Him,  
That I may not stray from the path to  
Being one with Him, now and forever,  
In Love.

(4)

Father,  
I found it very difficult contemplating  
Your Son's betrayal, torture and death.  
It was so human and yet so inhuman,  
Emotionally and physically heart-rending  
And painful to re-live. Was this the only  
Way to show us Your love, and Your  
Desire for us to be united with You?

Over the years, the Gospel of Your sacrifice  
Has been drowned by my indifference and  
My preoccupation with worldly things, with  
Work for my and my family's sustenance.  
I got blinded by an addiction to gold and glory,  
By modes and methods that govern my life,  
And by my inflated sense of self-importance.  
I am so weak, distracted and hard-hearted  
That I cannot see past the tip of my nose.

Please teach me to listen to You with my  
Heart, and let Your grace touch me, even  
If just ever so lightly, that I may recognize  
You in everyone, in all things and situations,  
To see and feel Your ever-present love for me,  
To love as Your compassionate heart loves  
To the point of great pain and death,  
And save me from my unworthy self.

(5)

I meet Jesus in the silence of my sanctuary,  
I meet Him in the bustling and noisy crowds.  
I meet Him in the mountains, in the cool air,  
The scent of trees and the rustling leaves,  
Beside the rushing river and the silent pond,  
I meet Him in the trees and the wild grass,  
In the orchards and the farms, amidst the  
Tall buildings and the vehicles rushing by.  
I meet Him in other people, in their eyes and  
In their smiles, in their words and in their  
Deeds, in their joys, pains, hurts, suffering,  
Their triumphs and their struggles, in their  
Moments of clarity or confusion. In all these  
I meet Jesus for He is in me too. I, others, the  
The whole of creation are one with Him, in  
His compassionate heart and in His love.

(6)

Mahal na Ama,  
Hilumin Niyo po ang aming mga puso at ang aming  
Mundong nagdurusa dahil sa pandemya, mga sakuna  
At pasakit na nagdulot ng kamatayan at malawakang  
Pagkawasaki, at dahil na rin sa aming mga kasalanan  
Na inilalayo ang aming puso sa iyong pagmamahal.

Ako at marami sa iyong mga anak, sa mga panahong  
Ito, ay maihahantulad sa mga ketongin, nasapian ng  
Masamang espiritu, mga paralitiko at merong sari-  
Saring sakit na dumulog sa iyong anak na si Hesus,  
Upang sila ay mapagaling sa kanilang karamdaman.  
Alam ko po na iyong pagmamahal sa amin ay walang  
Kupas, at Ika'y kasama namin sa aming paghihirap.

Dasal ko po na ang apoy ng pagmamahal ko sa Iyo  
Na hinihipan ng mga unos na ito, ay iyong palakasin  
Upang malabanan ko ang takot, kawalan ng lakas,  
Kainipan at pagkatuliro; manumbalik ang sigla ng  
Aking pagmamahal at paglingkod sa Iyo, sa bagong  
Mga kaparaanan na dulot ng mapanirang pandemya;  
Ikalat ang kulap na nakatakip sa mga mata ng aking  
Panamanpalataya; at pukawin ang lamig ng amihan  
Na bumabalot sa aking puso. Di ko man alam kung  
Ano ang kahihinathan ng mga nangyayari ngayon,  
Ako'y nanalig na di Mo kami pababayaan, at sana'y  
Naghiihintay sa amin sa kabila ng kadiliman ang  
Apoy at liwanag ng iyong pagmamahal samin.

