

Magis

Formation for Mission



Stewardship
Simplicity
Sharing
Service

Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community
June 2017 Issue

Broken But Friends of Christ

Kickoff Session for the “Amigos del Señor” Formation Series

Dear Dad

An open letter to an exemplar of Christ



Living With One Foot Raised

Become grounded in reality
and remain optimistic

Magis Youth Camp

Reflections from the
fruitful and fun camp

Root and Wings

Teach your precious child how
to soar high

A Year After My Stroke of Luck

Have faith & learn how to become
more hopeful with the challenges of life

About the Cover



As your fathers' and mothers' respective days have come to pass, illustrator Levenspeil R. Sangalang from Magis Youth cover illustration comes back to one of your parents' most quiet and cherished moments: your birth.

Ultimately, illustrator Levenspeil paints the parents in more contrasted and bold strokes, compared to the infant in between them. It is because throughout a child's growth, we are shaped and molded into being Christ-centered, and stewards of all His creation.

May we always remember how much our parents sacrifice for us just to keep us alive in love, life, and laughter. For every single day, is your parents' day. Never forget to give back to them.

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Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community		
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May Wedding Anniversaries

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11	Bong+ & Emma Punzalan	Sirach
12	Leo & Marilyn Soliman	Corinthians
13	Arnel & Bernie Isip	Corinthians
14	Boy & Merl Cruz	James, Brother of John
15	Franco & Tippi Reyes	Archangel Gabriel
16	Lito & Anne Naldo	Psalmaritans
17	Sheldon & Icy Alcudia	ME Class 123
18	Rommel & Marnee Antonio	ME Class 124
19	Fil+ & Anne Alfonso	John
20	Atoy & Malou Apo	Exodus
21	Rico & Terry Lim	Easter
22	Gary & Marivic Canoso	Magnificat
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Calendar of Activities: June - November 2017			
June 3, July 1, Aug 5, Sept 2	July	November	
Community Celebration	21-23 AIR – God's Love (SD: Fr. Mon Bautista)	24-26 Marriage Encounter Weekend	
June	28-30	Marriage Encounter Weekend	
17 Sat Magis Night			
23-25 ME Weekend 2 (by: Fr. Allan Abuan)	16 Magis Golf Tournament		
	27-29 AIR		

Living With One Foot Raised

Susan Concepcion, Archangel Gabriel BCGG



The Magis Deo Community Celebration held last April 8, 2017 at San Carlos Lay Formation Center in Guadalupe served as the community's Lenten recollection. Xavier Alpasa was the guest speaker and Fr. James U. Gascon was the mass celebrant.

Xavier Alpasa is a former executive of San Miguel Corporation, the co-founder of Heroic Leadership Philippines and a former Jesuit priest. He currently heads his consultancy firm, Xavier and Associates, and is also a TED Global fellow, a member of the Board of Trustees of St. Paul's School, a faculty member of the Ateneo Graduate School of Business, Chairman of the Board of Rags2Riches; and Director for Strategy at Solar Solutions. Xavier's talk was entitled "Living with One Foot Raised."

What does it mean to live with one foot raised? According to St. Ignatius of Loyola, a person who lives with one foot raised is someone who is grounded in reality and optimistic, ready to seize the next opportunity. It is about squarely facing all problems and difficulties, doing something about the situation we find ourselves in, while constantly believing that we will prevail in the end.

When we have both feet on the ground, we feel stable but when we raise one foot, we lose stability and start

swaying. In the same manner, when life is smooth sailing, we feel confident and secure, but when we face difficulties and challenges, we lose confidence and become unsure of how to proceed.

Xavier cited a quote from Eckhart Tolle: "It is the nature of the world of form that nothing stays fixed for very long – and so it starts to fall apart again. Forms dissolve; new forms arise. Watch the clouds. They will teach you about the world of form." Xavier said that in life there are no guarantees. Just like the clouds, sometimes everything is fine and stable then something happens and our stability is gone. Sometimes our problems are long-standing and seemingly unbearable and we don't know what to do. Life is the opposite of school. In school, we are taught the lesson first then we take the test. In life, however, we are tested first then we learn the lesson. So, when we are totally lost and cannot find our way, when we have nothing left, whom do we turn to?

When we ride a plane, we put our 100% trust in the pilot to get us safely to our destination. In the journey of life, do we also put 100% trust in Christ to be with us and help us navigate through problems and trials? When we have nothing left, God is there to provide us with the answers. Gabrielle Bernstein says, "The second you say, 'I'm willing to see things differently, I'm willing to know more,' what you need will be given to you."

Quoting C. S. Lewis, Xavier said we are like a living house that God is building. Will we allow him to build for us? Letting God in to build our house requires a leap of faith because we don't know what he will do. We can't see where he will lead us. We do not try to understand God to believe but rather we believe to understand.

Knowing life is constantly changing and has its ups and downs, how can we live with one foot raised? How can we be grounded in reality but optimistic and ready to take the next steps with God as our builder? Xavier said that the tool to use is Discernment. He defined discernment as the art of appreciating the gifts we have been given, and discovering how best to use/share them. It is discovering where our talents meet the world's deepest hungers. It is **NOT** finding the divine blueprint then complying with it.

What are the steps for discernment? First, we ask for God's presence. Then we imagine the outcomes of a particular decision. We examine our feelings. Which scenario brings us consolation? Which brings desolation? For Ignatius, feelings are God's words. Feelings of consolation lead to growth, creativity, courage, strength, peace, and inner and outer harmony. They bring us towards God.

On the other hand, feelings of desolation result in hopelessness, inner darkness, restlessness, sense of alienation, guilt, remorse, failure. They bring us away from God. In step four, we pray for the confidence to listen to the Spirit and the courage to respond to an inner call, which is manifested in talents, heart wishes, personal situations, and opportunities.

To be able to practice discernment, we need to know our truest self. We can do this through regular reflection, journaling, conversations with a trusted friend and daily recognition of God's presence in the feelings and actions of our day [examen of consciousness]. Regular reflection reveals our deepest desires. It is in our deepest desires where we find God and where we find solutions to the situations we find ourselves in. It is in knowing our truest selves that we learn to live with one foot raised and grow in grace to become the palace God meant us to be.

"Come, Holy Spirit, disturb us!"

**Joy S. Uy-Tioco
Sirach BCGG**

Never speak, act or make a decision without first listening to the Holy Spirit, who moves, troubles and inspires the heart, Pope Francis advised during a May 29 morning Mass in the Chapel of the Casa Santa Marta.

Knowing God and his commandments, and being good are not enough, the pope said. One must also receive God's gift of the Holy Spirit and let him "trouble" the heart.

If people were to get a "spiritual electrocardiogram," the pope asked, would it be flatlined because the heart is hardened, unmoved and emotionless; or would it be pulsating with the prompting and prods of the Spirit?

"Am I able to listen him? Am I able to ask for his inspiration before making a decision or saying something or doing something? Or is my heart serene, without emotion, an immobile heart" – like the hearts of the Sadducees and Pharisees of Jesus' time.

"They believed in God, they knew all the commandments, but the heart was closed, immobile, they didn't let it become troubled," the pope said.

A Christian cannot just listen to their head and calculated reason, he said. They must learn to listen and discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to their hearts, too, because the Holy Spirit is the master of discernment. "A person

who does not have this movement in the heart, who doesn't discern what is happening, is a person who has a cold faith, an ideological faith," he said.

The pope asked people to reflect on their relationship with the Holy Spirit and pray that the Spirit guide them in the choices they make. "I ask that he give me the grace to distinguish the good from the less good because good can be distinguished from evil easily," the pope said.

At morning Mass the next day, May 30, Pope Francis reflected on how pastors and bishops must be ready to leave their flock and follow God's call to head somewhere completely unknown.

A real pastor, he said, knows how to let go of the church or community he once served because he knows he is not the protagonist or "central focus of the story." He must see his life as having no importance to himself, and do everything to serve God and his people "without compromise" and with courage, the pope said. Priests and bishops must be open to and obey the Holy Spirit because "the pastor knows that he is on a journey."

Ministers will be like Paul, who was

inspired and called to leave the church at Ephesus and head to Jerusalem, where "what will happen there I do not know," except that he had been warned hardships and trouble would await him.

Every apostle of Christ must guide

his flock without compromise, being ready to leave everything behind and head into the unknown, the pope said. He always must serve the people without ever misleading or unconsciously using them by making them think he (the pastor) is the "central focus of the story" and that the community cannot do without him. A pastor who does not learn to leave his post well, has not developed a good relationship with his flock and has formed "a bond that is not purified by the cross of Jesus," the pope said.

This can also be true for a lay community like us in Magis Deo. Often enough, are we not so comfortable with our BCGGs – which is good – but at Community Celebrations or haranas, two of the few times we have an opportunity to meet members we do not know, we automatically converge with our BCGG – again, a good thing! But we could be losing an opportunity to stop, reflect and notice that the Spirit is already disturbing us. Come, let go of your group, do something new, different, introduce yourself to this person you do not know. And stay and chat a while.

Let us ask ourselves, then: Do we allow, invite, even pray for the Spirit to move us, trouble us, and inspire us to do something new, something different, dare to travel where we have not gone before, filled with faith and hope and excitement that He will renew us and the face of the earth?

Youth Ministry Plans and Goals

Rhea & Jojo Gaddi
Council / Youth Ministry / Prodigal 102 BCGG

A pleasant 2017 to all Magis Deo members!

Before we lay out the activities the ministry has planned for this year, allow us to first inform everyone of the volunteers of the ministry for 2017:

- Rhea & Jojo Gaddi – Overseers/ Head
- Malou & Ronnie Tabuzo: Song of Ruth
- Joan & Ronald Ong: Prodigal 102
- Grace & Raul Cadayona: Prodigal 102
- Nherie & Noel Gascon: James, Brother of John
- Abby & Lilit Tumbocon: John
- Ging & Raffy de Guzman: John
- Chinkee & JC San Juan: Song of Ruth
- Alex Reyes: Prodigal 102
- Cathy & Mark Maulit: Prodigal 102

In line with the goals of Magis Deo for 2017 which are: strengthening the coupleness of members through mutual empathy, re-igniting members' prayer life, and reviving community involvement and reaching out to others, the Youth Ministry has planned the following activities to support these goals:

1. Magis Deo Youth Summer Camp: This was held at Paradise Adventure Camp in San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan last May 20 - 21, 2017. There were a total of 19 participants who were supervised by 11 auxies. Everyone was at the venue around 9am and the activities began by 10am. The daytime activities were composed of ziplining, rappelling, wall climbing and various team building activities geared towards developing camaraderie, teamwork and reviving community involvement. The activities were facilitated by Kuya Mel (from Paradise Adventure Camp).

As evening came, the activities shifted from physical to sensitivity training. The kids walked outside blindfolded while holding on to their team/groupmates. The activities heightened their sense of hearing, taste and touch. The parent auxies became involved as well. They took part in the story-telling by performing the roles of Earth, Wind, Water and Fire. They told the kids that people are not taking care of them and that they need the kids' help in preserving Mother Nature.

The finale was a "ball of fire fell from the sky" and lit up our bonfire, igniting the spirit of the kids to care for Mother Earth.

2. M.Y. Kaibigan Retreat Part 2: In 2016, the Youth Ministry, in cooperation with Life's Directions, sponsored a retreat for kids aged 13 to 21 years old. It was held at the Betania Retreat House in N. Domingo St., Quezon City. It was con-

ducted by Fr. Ted Gonzales. The retreat was very successful as it really touched the hearts of the participants. This year, we are planning to have one again. The tentative period for this activity is September or October 2017.

3. Creation of a Facebook page: There is already a Magis Deo Youth Facebook page. The purpose of this page is to disseminate information about upcoming youth ministry activities and to post quotations and stories to inspire the members (kids/youth).

4. Youth Outreach Program: In our efforts to attain our goal of reaching out to others, the Youth Ministry is planning on conducting an outreach program, in cooperation with the Outreach Ministry. The tentative period for this is December 2017.

5. Monthly Youth Talks: The ministry plans to invite speakers to talk to the members (kids/youth) about relevant topics which affect them. These talks will be scheduled during the Community Celebrations.

The Youth Ministry is very grateful for the support of the parents of the participants for allowing their kids to participate in the Summer Youth Camp last May 20 - 21. We look forward to your continuing support in all our other activities.

More for God!

Our all-loving God relates to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is how much He cares for us. He is our constant companion in all our human needs, unless we turn our backs on Him and become self-centered rather than God-centered.

God decided to be one among us, so that He can be our role-model in what it means to be a loving human person, and at the same time He is God the Son. Jesus Christ. And the cross is the supreme act of His love. But it does not end there. Death-Resurrection-Ascension-Holy Spirit. Jesus went through all this as His gift of love for us all. All means all of mankind. All of creation.

The spiritual author Wm. Maestri describes God-the-Son as all-loving, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-merciful, all-forgiving, all-provident. His heart reached out to the poor and hungry, the sick, the handicapped. He healed all kinds of diseases; He multiplied loaves of bread and fishes to feed thousands. He knew the past, the present, and the future. He was so forgiving that even as He was crucified on the cross, His heart spoke and He said: "Father, forgive them..."

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus clarifies that the works of God-the-Son are the works that you and I are asked to do. "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father. And whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it." (Jn.14:12-14). These words of Jesus are very humbling indeed, and most assuring of His love for each one of us.

In this regard, the message of Pope Francis to all of us is most meaningful. Allow me to quote it here: "Jesus lived the daily reality of the most ordinary people: he was moved as he faced the crowd that seemed like a flock without a shepherd; he wept before the sorrow that Martha and Mary felt at the death of their brother, Lazarus; he called a publican to be his disciple; he also suffered betrayal by a



Father-Son-Holy Spirit

14 May 2017 / Ruben M. Tanseco, SJ

of our countrymen will respond to Christ's call and conversion to His discipleship.

We have many NGO's and parish organizations that are actively involved in the ministry that we are talking about. But the word I want to emphasize is MAGIS, the MORE. This would include individuals, couples, and families who are not members of such organizations. More of our fellow-Filipinos can do more as a loving response to God's call.

"On the night before he died, Jesus asks his disciples to take up 'the work that I do': The work of humble servanthood that places the hurts and pains of others before our own, the work of charity that does not measure the cost, the work of love that transcends limits and conditions. The simplest work of compassion and charity, done in God's spirit of love is to do the very work of Christ; the most hidden and unseen acts of kindness will be exalted as great in the kingdom of his Father." (*Connections*, May 2017, p.2).

Here was a family who were scheduled to leave for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land within two weeks. The couple has two children, a twenty-year-old son and an eighteen-year-old daughter. Just a week before the trip, the son made a painful confession to his parents that he had debts from different sources that amounted to twenty million pesos. This was due to his involvement with drugs for the past year or so, and now, he was involved in a rehabilitation program, and he was under the spiritual direction from a priest in their parish. The son's conversion has been so sincere and deep, and so the parents gave him their compassion, love, and forgiveness. His sister was likewise very supportive of his spiritual awakening. The family went through a process of discernment under the guidance of their parish priest. They decided to cancel their trip to the Holy Land, since they needed the money to pay the debts, and the next few months were really an experience of mourning and bereavement. But they became even closer to one another as a family. And their relationship with God and love for Him became much stronger than before. Amen.

How Beautiful the Feet!

Sally Chua Chiaco, John BCGG



During Jesus' time, to wash the feet of another was considered so lowly and humiliating that it was commonly the work of non-Jewish servants or slaves. Disciples performed personal acts of service for their rabbis but did not wash their feet.

Washing the feet of another is not a Filipino tradition. I recall having done it maybe twice in 66 years when Anchit was immobilized due to serious foot or leg injuries. It was a call to duty, but also an expression of love. When we love someone, we are willing to serve unselfishly and do things for the other which we would not normally do.

John BCGG had their annual washing of the feet on the fourth week of Lent. We were grateful for the chance to wash our spouse's feet, or another John companion's feet, even if just on this occasion. How beautiful the feet of someone we love... the feet that bring him or her around the home to serve the family, the feet that transport him to his place of work or business to support the family, the feet that bring the family to church to worship the Lord, the feet that enable us to act, to visit our elder relatives and the sick, to reach out to our poorer brothers and sisters. Oh, we need our hearts to serve, but so too our hands and feet.

Washing the feet of our spouse or friend, and having our feet washed allowed us to experience giving and receiving love in humility and gentle service. The image of Christ washing our feet in the place of our husbands or wives came almost naturally. For many of us, the question that challenged our hearts was, would we be willing to wash the feet of someone not our spouse or friend, an ordinary man or woman whom we hardly know or do not like?

Peace and Joy Serving At

Randy Rivera, Song of Ruth BCGG

Three years ago Tito Eli and Tita Edith Prieto invited Cecil and me to be a couple sharer at a Suyuan in Posadas Village. But in my mind I thought... *I will not be a Suyuan facilitator... a big NO.* But a tragedy in our couple life opened a door for us into this ministry.

God touched our hearts to serve Him through Magis Deo and the Suyuan. My wife shared what happened in our crumbled relationship, and how God helped us rebuild this shattered relationship through Magis Deo and our Song of Ruth BCGG. God gave us the strength, humility and wisdom to be Suyuan facilitators; to be able to share, understand and be understood through the hearts of the Suyuan couple participants, and touch their lives.

Since then we have served as couple sharer/facilitators in many Suyuans. And as my wife now says, "Hangga't kaya pa natin magserve kay Lord, go tayo." And, "Mahirap magsalita sa harapan ninyo kung hindi ko na-experience or haramdaman ang mga pangyayaring ito." Kaya nga siguro pinaramdam sa amin ni Lord ito kasi my gusto Siyang ipagawa sa aming mag-asawa. Serving in Magis Deo, serving at Suyuans, is our calling... God's calling.

06 May 2017 Community Celebration



Broken But Friends of Christ

Kickoff Session for the “Amigos del Señor” Formation Series

Marlyn Angeles, Thessalonians BCGG

“Broken Companions of Christ” – that about sums up who and where I am in my spirituality today. The kickoff session of the Shepherds’ Formation Series aptly called “Amigos del Señor” held on Saturday morning, April 29, started with this theme.

Father Bob Buenconsejo, SJ facilitated the discussion and brought home the point that as we are called to be Companions of Christ, we journey into being Companions in the Lord.

And so, Fr. Bob starts: “We are all sinners, broken, wounded, narcissistic and even dysfunctional. Despite all these, the Lord desires us to join Him in the enterprise of working in the Kingdom.”

What a comforting thought. If He accepts my wounded self, and appreciates who I am, who am I not to do likewise? This can be frightening.

“God desires us to be the best version of who we are,” he continued. Hmmm. Not the best version of who I think I am, or who others think I am. I held that thought as it evoked peace and calm within.

As Companions, we must be willing to be taught and to accept a posture of a disciple. We must ask for the grace to hear His call to engage in a great enterprise larger than ourselves. Today, this means engaging under the standard of the Cross, in the crucial struggle of our time, the struggle for faith and that struggle for justice which it holds (GC 32, Decree 2, Nos. 1-2).

This requires a posture of humility and openness, more importantly, of COURAGE. The standard of the Cross often intimidates me and stops me in my tracks. This evokes more sufferings (which I do not like and naturally try to avoid), more struggles (which can be tiring now that I feel my energy diminishing), and more work (sigh). At my age, a senior and semi-retiree, I get that sinking feeling more will be asked.

I looked around. Among the 54

participants, I saw Tita Marcia, Tita Josie, Tina Mossesgeld, and many more seniors that morning. They are still around, still giving it their all, still smiling and happy in the thought of serving the Lord. Okay then, there must be something here.

Fr. Bob continued covering what being a companion of the Lord entails.

#1. BELONG TO GOD. *“Do what you will; only belong to Me.” Our identity is in the Lord, and not in the projects we undertake. Be lost in the heart of God.*

Have I really allowed myself to be lost in the Heart of God? To feel His love and identify with that Love rather than with the outputs of my work as a Shepherd? Like any corporate animal, I get triggered with goals. Because active membership in the community is not growing, the goal then is to recruit more. Because attendance in the ComCel is plateauing, the goal is to increase attendance, particularly by our BCGG members. We have to do something, to contribute to the growth of the community. We have to reach those numbers. Last year, it was one RAP for every member. Today what? I easily can get lost in the quantifiable targets.

My spiritual director once cautioned me to “Stop treating your spiritual journey as a project that you have to finish within set standards. It is not a project to manage.”

#2. THE WORK OF THE LORD GIVES IMPORTANCE TO WHAT I AM DOING.

I am not just the bricklayer working for someone else. I share in the vision that the Lord has ignited in me. This gives me a sense of expansion looking at a much larger horizon than myself. In the words of Simon Sinek, this is my WHY, and that surely fired me up. I am building a Cathedral.

#3. CALL TO GIVE MY HEART TO SOMEONE LARGER. *That Someone WHO asks more (magis) of who I am, not*

just my work. We commit ourselves to a heart larger than our hearts.

“Magis.” That word again. It sounded like the Lord is asking much from me, like squeezing me dry. My enough is never enough. (I’m getting tired.) Then Fr. Bob continued: *“This is not about work efficiency but more about love’s outpouring... More of an affective ‘more,’ seeking to do more loving and to commit more to Jesus.”*

Now, that made me think. Magis is not about doing more because I am asked to do more. It is about loving more because that is the only thing my Lord asks of me. The rest will follow.

If there was anything that was a clear takeaway that morning, this was it. I have been going about this rather myopically then. I have been focusing on the task rather than on the nurturing of the Love I receive and that which I wish to give back to the Lord and share with others.

It is no wonder I get irritated and frustrated when members don’t participate in the community celebration. I could perhaps focus on how I grow in Love with God and share that Love with others, with or without ComCel. It is not about me and my outputs. But rather it is about my love for GOD.

“My work is not the entire work of the Lord. It is not the job that defines us as servants in Christ’s mission. There is a larger enterprise that embraces, unites, defines and calls us.”

It is not the task itself, but its very essence, which is bringing the souls closer to Christ. I took note. This task is not mine alone. My role could simply entail being present in BCGG meetings, loving the members, inviting them to avail of the various opportunities by which we could grow in our own spirituality. Or it could mean talking about a forthcoming ME Weekend with a friend and allowing that conversation to touch them.

Continued on page 11

When Christ Lit the Charcoal Fire After Easter

Phillip & Malu Panlilio, Mustard Seed BCGG



The thirst for formation in Magis Deo was evident last April 29 during the launch of the Amigos del Señor (Friends of Christ) formation series. Fifty-four old, new, and potential Magis shepherds gathered at the Magis Deo office and took to heart the inputs and sharings of Fr. Bob Buenconsejo, SJ. Fr. Bob hit the point of how we are before Christ in our everyday community life, broken people but still friends of Christ. Each one was able to resonate with what was said and felt confident that despite our brokenness, we can still participate in the work of the Lord and still be generous in making ourselves available in serving the Lord.

To us, we remember the Gospel scene where Peter

Broken But Friends of Christ

Continued from page 10

While this conversation may not have triggered their decision to join or not to join the weekend, it may have planted the idea. Another friend or event may have been the reason they joined the weekend. The planted seed has fulfilled its purpose. And that is enough. Mission accomplished.

#4. A COMPANION OF JESUS IS A CONTAINER OF SUFFERING. *This is not to ask for new sufferings, but to accept diminishments, loneliness and misunderstandings, exhausting work with greater determination to serve with gladness. To be weak enough and to hold that suffering. To still be me because God is holding me.*

By this time, I began to see suffering in a different light. Because I have grown in Love with Christ, I can now accept what is out there even if it hurts. I can contain all

and the disciples caught so many fish, after several efforts of no-catch, with the help of the Lord. Then Peter and the disciples found the Lord cooking fish for them to share in fellowship. The Lord invited them to partake of the meal. It was as if Christ lit the charcoal fire in the hearts of Magis shepherds on April 29, rekindled their passion, expressed their desire for more, and looked forward to the next formation session. Thanks be to God!

Note: Amigos del Señor means friends/companions of Christ. Señor is an important word to St. Ignatius of Loyola as it was his term of endearment to Jesus. At his last dying moment, all he lovingly uttered was “Señor.”

Growing in maturity then meant detachment from our sources of security, readiness to forgive, courage to take risks, fidelity to God, patience, readiness to listen to the word amidst diversity, and the ability to remain alone before God who speaks or remains silent.

The work in the vineyard is challenging. We are human. We deal with people who are equally broken as we are. Sufferings, hurts, loneliness are inevitable as with any human interaction. Is it possible to continue to work in the vineyard and follow Christ? Yes it is. Not by my act of will to do so; but because I love God and I live IN Christ’s love. The Love is the spark that will keep me going. I now realize it is not about the numbers nor about the work’s results. It is about nurturing and growing the Love I receive. It is about how I give this love to others as I live IN Christ.

A Song for My Olpren

(You've Got a Friend, by Carole King)

As I am working after dinner on the computer last night, without prompting and with no apparent reason, this song just popped into my consciousness. This sort of thing happens to me often these days. You've got a friend, Olpren, the first person that entered my mind in relation to this song! I must be going crazy to be thinking of you. Well, not really. I do mean that I thought of you first, and then our other friends, members of my family who are experiencing one form of hardship or another. The last time we talked, you told me that the week that passed was a bit heavy for you. And that you can hardly work. Or something like that. My heart goes out to you and your wife, Olpren. I know that you are in a really bad place that is full of "downs", with very few "ups."

Ang pangako sa asawa napapako,
Minsan. Sa kaibigan walang pangako,
Ngunit ang pagsasamahan nagtagtagal
Maski na hindi nag-uusap palagi.
Maganda!

I think that there is something in our friendship that now makes me view friendship a little differently. There is something more important than us in our friendship. We and several of our other friends see each other often in prayer meetings. Our prayers and the relationship with God that we nurture in these get-togethers, give a different color to our friendship. Through these get-togethers, we journey through life together, and under the aegis of our faith. More than friends, we belong to a community of pilgrims and travelers.

Ang bantayog ay mataas, naka sentro,
Ang ibang bahagi ay nakaturo dito.
Pinag-isang tayo ng masmatayog pa sa atin
At ang puso nati'y nagkaisa sa pag-ibig
Ni Hesus.

I and Marlyn too need friends sometimes, but most especially at this time. Our desolation is most likely lighter than the trials you now endure, but things tend to get blown out of proportion. A serious problem festers because there is nothing that we can do about it. And still new ones come up. Some are manageable, but some drag on and on, and sap our energy and equanimity. Like a telenovela where there is a new crisis every episode, my wife and I had a long running drama that exploded with a new crisis on Easter Monday. Someone whom I consulted commented: "Patay!" It was so ironic coming as it did on the day after Easter, the commemoration of the Resurrection of

Jesus, where life conquers death, light conquers darkness, and love conquers hatred. There must be something here that I should ponder upon. But I guess these disconcerting developments always happen in life, whatever the time of the year – whether it is Christmas, Valentine's Day or Easter. We can't do anything about it. They just inevitably happen.

Paglipas ng taglamig, tag-init.
Paglipas ng tag-tuyo, tag-ulan.
Pag natapos ang araw, gabi.
Pagkasilang, buhay, at kinalaunan
Kamatayan!

Part of this journey is our desire to be with our God daily, through prayers and through a deepening of our understanding of the teachings of Jesus. For example, the gospel today speaks of a 3-step spiritual process for the two disciples traveling to Emmaus. But with a few delightful twists. Two disciples leave Jerusalem in grief, feeling hopeless – the first step. On the way, they meet Jesus who explains the Word and the disciples' hearts were set on fire, but they did not recognize Him – the 2nd step. And He is revealed to them on the 3rd step, when He took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them. The Eucharist! They invited Jesus into their home because it was getting late, but Jesus took over and He played host! My spiritual growth is very much like the experience of Jesus by these disciples. I lose Jesus because of my troubles, disappointments and pains. But I continue with my faith and sooner or later, I feel Him again, now with more understanding and inspiration, hosting a banquet in my heart. This travelling to Emmaus reminds me of the pilgrimage that is my life, which will ultimately end in that final home with my God.

Ang kalapati maski saan naroroon,
Malapit man o malayo sa kanyang
Pinanggalingan, pag pinakawalan
Ay uuwi't uuwi din sa kanyang tunay
Na Bahay!

I was also reminded of the gospel yesterday that speaks of the grief and dismay of Mary Magdalene, the former sinner or demon-possessed, when she did not find the body of Jesus in the tomb. And when she sees Jesus, because of her grief, she did not recognize Him but thought He was the gardener. When Jesus says her name, like a bolt of inspiration, she recognizes Him. There is a certain elegance and grace to this spiritual process, like a 3-step dance. (But don't take my word for it, I am no dancer.) I too wish to hear Him say my name, often. This would remind me that through my grief, my troubles, and even through my brokenness, I can get to hear His voice, by asking for this grace through prayer.

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A Year After my Stroke of Luck

Zarah Gagatiga, Mt Olivet BCGG

When I was a school librarian in Xavier School, a classroom teacher became one of my assistants. She came from a long leave of absence after a minor stroke that rendered her insecure and fearful. While she tried her best to work alongside the healthier staff of the library, her moods and temperament swung from left to right. She couldn't keep up with the demands and energy of the preschool community hence the work assigned to her were few and light. Hoping this would give her the time and the pace to recuperate, gather her strength and go back to full time teaching the next school year, she wallowed in self pity. It affected her work and productivity. She became a burden to many on the days she was down.

It was not easy for all of us, most especially for me as I was the librarian-in-charge of that library located in the early childhood education unit of the school. One day she told me of her desire to go back to classroom teaching because she felt utterly useless in the library. She believed she was meant to teach. Her health had stabilized somewhat, according to her doctor. To

A Song for My Olpren

Continued from page 12

Parang ipo-ipo dala ang aking puso
Paakyat sa kalangitan, at kapagdaka'y
Bababsak din sa lupa, upang muling
Bumangon din!

This 3-step dance mirrors a lot of things in my life and in my faith: my birth, my living and my death; my learning, my forgetting, and my returning; my pains, my joys, my accepting. The Word (scriptures), my Heart (my whole being) and His Grace. The Incarnation, Passion-Death and the Resurrection. Love! The Father, Son and Holy Spirit. My God and my friend! These give me hope because I am constantly reminded that He is always there for me, loving me, ever ready to be a friend to me despite my numerous faults and pains, if I just let Him.

go back in the classroom would renew her self-confidence and vigor.

Who was I to prevent her? The next school year she was moved back to the Grade School Department, to the relief of the staff and the teachers who endured without her for one academic year.

I remember her now because today is the first year anniversary of my Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA). How easy it had been for me to dispense faith and belief to someone who survived a stroke. Indeed, putting one's self in the shoes of another is very different from experiencing a life changing event. The emotional and psychological recovery takes time. I remember her now with the realization of how fragile our bodies are; more so our feelings and state of mind.

Now I know how it is to be insecure and afraid. To lie in bed, begging for sleep to come, but worry hovers and keeps me awake for hours; to cling and to seek friends who would patiently listen to my complaints. The irrepressible Zarah Gagatiga is no more but a vulnerable woman afraid to die at any moment. There are days when, after a productive day at work, fear

These realizations make me see my life and my faith, not only as made up of the basic 3 steps, but in its wholeness, as a beautiful, grace-filled and elegant dance.

And you are a partner in this dance, Olpren.

"If the sky above you grows dark and full of clouds,
And that old north wind begins to blow,
Keep your head together and call my name out loud,
Soon you'll hear me knocking at your door."

would gnaw at my insides and leave me exhausted until one of my kids or my husband assures and pacifies me. Telling me and reminding me of my worth. That I am loved. That I am not alone. I doubted myself a lot since the stroke. My prayer to God had been a litany of endurance and survival. Nahihiya na nga na ako sa Diyos because there are instances when I become blind to the graces, the mercy and the blessings that came my way since the TIA.

Yet, God's love is stronger than my fears. Walang hanggan ang kanyang pasensya. Walang katapusang kanyang pagmamahal.

Everyday, He continues to give me the grace to see the kindness in people and to bask in the glory and the goodness of His creation.

Despite myself, I pray for humility and a forgiving heart.

I wish I had been kinder to that former colleague of mine. No one knows if I will see her again. But, I resolve to live life one day at a time; to be simply grateful for every breath and for every waking moment; to be kind and to do good for as long as I live.

Dear Dad

Piolo Adrian L. Tumaneng, Magis Youth

The 15 years, 5 months, 19 days, 18 hours and 20 minutes you spent in your life being my father are the moments that are unforgettable and will forever be treasured in my heart.

I miss you dad and as each day passes, I miss you even more. I miss seeing you every day after a tiring day in school, and you asking me how my day was. I miss how we would eat together at the dinner table every night even though it was just the two of us because mom and the kuyas have work. I miss you just being there for me and your advice on my academics and life in general.

Up to this day I still can't believe you've gone away; you've gone to a better place. But I guess it's all in God's timing. As you always say, "If it's meant to be then it will be meant to be. It's Destiny." It may have been your destiny but how I wish you stayed in this world a little longer.

My father was, and will always be, in every way, an inspiration to me. Though he may have left us physically, he imparted me with wisdom that forever I will keep. I may have never thought of it this way before, but I thank him now for being not only the father figure that he is, but the Father figure that is Christ, to me and to our family. And today I wish he could have been here to listen to this.

Thank you dad for being a hard worker to be able to provide for your family. My dad always wanted the best for me. He was the one who gave me my daily allowance for school. He even went out of his way to check the school canteen prices to make sure he was providing me with enough allowance. He made sure that there was always food on the table to prevent us from starving. Just like Christ as He fed 5,000 people with only 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish.

I remember a time when I was kid, playing with a badminton racket, hitting the door with it, and not noticing that I had damaged the door. My dad got mad at me for that. I realized that he wasn't mad at me personally but at what I did. He was



temporarily mad but then he let it go and forgave me and forgot about it. Thank you dad for your unconditional love for us; just like Christ who, despite the countless sins we humans commit, still loves us no matter what.

Thank you for being a teacher to me. You taught me that I should make the most of what I have and to always be thankful for the countless blessings God has given me. As I recall, my dad became a part time professor in San Sebastian and San Beda College Alabang. He had a passion for teaching as his mom, my grandmother, was a teacher as well. I always saw Christ in him. Just as Jesus told parables with a great lesson in them.

My dad never failed to supply guidance. He was the role model that I not only looked up to, but wanted to become. Not only did he push my brothers and me to pursue the highest of dreams; he also enlightened many people to push themselves everyday and to acknowledge the talents that God blessed them with. I will always remember my

dad as an athlete. The guy who played basketball and many different sports till he pushed himself to play in the Palarong Pambansa. He not only pushed himself in sports, but also in academics. He knew that since he could do it, we could do it too. So he helped me. He guided me and he left a legacy with me. Thank you dad for being a role model to us and for your guidance.

Most especially, thank you for being my dad. You raised us like you needed to, and set the foundation for what I and my brothers are to become. Christ acts a father for He possesses all the qualities of a great father: loving, hard working, a provider, a teacher, and a great role model.

From your dearest son,
Pioy

Labor of Love

Levenspeil R. Sangalang, Magis Youth

One of the few memories that I remember as a child - isn't it odd that we forget most of our childhood, and could only count a few - was that for every children's party we were invited to, there will always be an instance where the birthday kid gets gushed about. Passed on and carried from tito to tita.

Eventually, the kid was on your arms. I stare at this scene, my eyebrows curl and come together, and my fists clench. Stomping on each step, I go in your direction and place my minuscule hands on your arms - slightly tugging, begging for you to pass him back to his mother. You laugh at me, and return him as you finally carry me. The feeling of rising up and meeting your face was a victory, as if I earned the Champion title.

And I clinged on until the moon shone over us.

"Ma, ang kati ng likod ko. Pakamot," I say as I roll over on our shared bed - with Papa and Kuya beside us, a sleepover of four - facing the wall. It was amazing, how your sharp nails, rising and falling on my back's surface, kept me calm and relieved. You were like a violinist, having a run-through of her written symphony. And for each night, these were the lullabies where I slowly, and all at once, ended my days.

The sun was on its nth lap, and I got bigger and bigger. I was the Alice who, after consuming a magical cake, couldn't fit inside a house anymore.

As I stood on, growing inch by inch, I learn day by day how to be thankful, and slowly realizing that you were an exemplar of Christ..boasting of genuine altruism.

Thank you for being an inspiration. You're one of the most influential people that I know, alongside Dad. Thank you for molding me intricately, a model tailor-fit after you. Thank you for showing me how big this world is, how to find solace in little moments, and to indulge in the in-betweens.



Thank you for being strong. From the very genesis of your birth, to excelling in the jobs that you've taken, up to taking care of all of us: your three stubborn children, your own family, and dad, the list goes on. Thank you for being independent, as I take notes from it.

Thank you for commanding me to get that No. 1 Mongol pencil, and grade school pad paper. Thank you for singing the bear song ("Small circle, small circle, big circle..."). There wouldn't be illustrations of you in picture frames. I listened, and you listen too, constantly.

Thank you for staying still. You're still that beautiful girl with the long hair, that a great man fell, and always will fall, in love with. You're still that sister and daughter who knows her place and responsibilities. You're still that amazing woman that no man can ever win their superiority over.

You're still that selfless person...and you win at life. You're still my mom. And without you I literally wouldn't be here. My siblings included.

We wouldn't have touched the floor barefoot. We wouldn't have ran our finger through your silky hair. We wouldn't have felt the warmth of your embrace. We wouldn't have felt your love radiating on us. We wouldn't have experienced life.

We wouldn't have loved you.

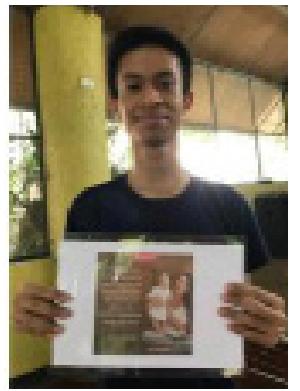
And that would be such a missed opportunity, because you deserve to be loved...so, so much. Your love is transcendent. And so are you, no matter how tough waters can be sometimes, you and dad keep our ship afloat through patience, and guidance; as we sail on to the different winds and directions that life will take us.

You stay still. You stay strong.

Here's to 'stills', and I know that you will stay being you. I love you. We all love you.

From the mama's boy,
Leven

Magis Youth Camp reflections



"One thing I learned in this unforgettable camp is that teamwork, determination, and bravery are the keys to overcoming challenges ahead of us. It's teamwork because we cannot achieve our goals alone."

We need support from friends and families to bring us to our achievements. It's determination because it drives us to be better than we were before.

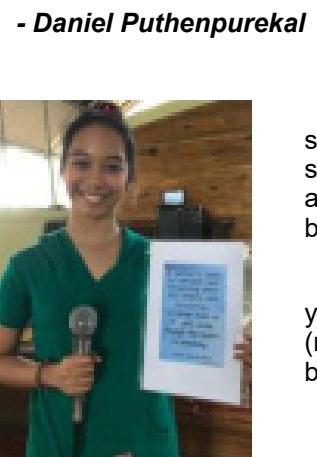
And it is bravery because when we face our fears with the presence of the Lord, we can conquer our fears. Overall the camp made me happier, braver, and a better person."

- **Daniel Puthenpurekal**

"Bravery, trust and friendship were the most important things I learned during the summer camp. Though the camp was 2 days only, I have a lot of memories to treasure.

I would like to thank my new friends and all the parents who gave their time and effort to take good care of us.

God bless us all and I hope to see you again. Proud to be a member of Magis Youth!"



"The youth camp had a big impact on me and I learned a lot of things and discovered so much from it. It's not just about teamwork but also working on your own capabilities and strengths. Each obstacle is very challenging and tests each one how to cooperate, to listen and to follow. As one of the oldest members in the camp, it was nice to see everyone do their best. It was a challenge to guide my campmates and lead them throughout.

I used to be one of the youngest campers before, but now I'm the one leading the younger ones. Having teamwork and being able to lead my campmates is a way to socialize (make friends), to bring out the best of everyone, and to prepare for any obstacles that may be in store for us."

- **Angie Bumanglag**



I See Christ in You

Denise Parada, Magis Youth

The number one lesson I have learned from believing and having faith in the Lord is that He never leaves my side. The Lord may be disappointed with some of my decisions but He is always there to guide me back to the right path as long as I have faith in Him. He would always test my faith so I learned to lean on Him and not be discouraged when things seem unclear. James 1:12 says, "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."

Recently I decided to learn to drive with the utmost distress since I am already 23 years old and my parents still drive me to places I need to go to. The most recent time I saw Christ in my dad was when I forced him to let me drive the van so I could hone my poor driving skills. Everyone needs someone by their side. That is why I was so grateful my dad was beside me while I battled Manila traffic.

He guided me since I was not familiar with the paths and lanes, where to turn, and when to stop or go. It is like how God guides us towards the right destination in our lives. I remember the first time I drove along Quezon Avenue last week. I was on the second to the leftmost lane and everyone on my right was cutting in front of me to make a turn. It was stressful for a first timer like me and I was not sure if I was doing the right thing but dad was there to help me and comfort me in the most patient way he could. When you trust God and you know that He will not let you get hurt, the fear goes away. When I trusted my dad, I felt at peace.

When we were still toddlers, my brother and I would run around and play and Dad would be there to look after us. We were very "makulit" as he would always tell us but I am sure it was fun for him too. His unconditional love for us would always shine through especially during our teenage years. We were not the most obedient kids in the planet and it really tested my dad's patience and trust in us but he never left us. When my siblings and I would go out with friends for



an event, my dad can't sleep until we get home. As young adults, we sometimes feel he is too protective or he does not trust us enough, but I should be thankful. Not all kids are blessed with a caring and selfless dad like mine. It's been said, "The most important thing a father can do for his children, is to love their mother"

I don't think we need to get into much detail with this because everyone in this community has been a witness. The way he loves my mother taught the three of us a lot of important things. From Ate Miny and I, Thank you for showing us exactly the kind of man who we deserve to marry. From Milo, you taught him how to treat a woman, which is with love and care. I can see God in my dad because of his unconditional love and care for us.

I think a lot of people, me included, took God's love for granted

some point in their lives. We may have questioned His plans, stopped praying for a while, or maybe lost faith in Him. I was angry with God when my father got sick in June 2012. I love my mom and dad equally but I can say that I am a daddy's girl. I was so afraid I would lose my dad. I questioned God why He allowed this to happen to the man I love, but then I realized that the enemy brings uncertainty and fear, and God is the only one with all the answers.

I thank God every day that I have a father like Leonardo Angeles. I may not be the perfect daughter but I am glad I have my own version of a perfect dad. I have been experiencing a lot of changes in my life right now and my dad has been there to support me. I see him

working hard every day with my mom to give us a comfortable life and I will forever be grateful. I remember resenting my dad for being too protective when it comes to boys but I understand now that it was for my own good. "Wala daw kasing babagay para sa anak niya. Humanap daw kami ni Ate Miny ng katulad niya." Unsurprisingly, I agree with him. Sometimes I say to myself, I want to die first before my father. It is a ridiculous thought, I know, but I cannot imagine life without my dad. He taught me almost everything.

Up to this day, even when I was in Australia, I still call him to ask what to do with this or that. Life would certainly be less of everything without him... less happy, less exciting, and less corny...

I refuse to have that kind of world. My family is blessed to have you, Da. Thank you for the Godly example that you are!

Again, thank you for never leaving me alone, for teaching me how to not be afraid, and for loving me. I love you, Da! You are the greatest dad in the world, really. I hope you enjoy this Father's Day because you deserve it! Happy Father's Day, Da! Advance Happy Birthday as well!

Your loving makulit daughter,

Leia

Have faith, God always responds

Rey Mella, Cana BCGG

grew up in an atmosphere where children were not allowed to ask questions nor challenge anything.

Talking back to the elders was a big no-no. Short of being militaristic and simply obeying first before one complains, we were supposed to be quiet and be obedient and compliant.

As an adult, when I stopped asking questions, I stopped being more creative. When I slowed down in asking questions, I slowed my learning process.

In the workplace, we want our people to be inquisitive, to ask questions, to challenge things. We want them to ask the why's of things in order for continuous improvement and excellence to happen. Being shy, timid and quiet were not looked at as positive attributes of an engineer. In order to become better, we advocate a questioning mind. We train people to speak up and to speak their minds without fear of any repercussions.

For those with faith, no explanation is necessary. For those without, no explanation is possible.

—Thomas Aquinas

A few years back, my boss recommended a book "Change Your Questions, Change Your Life," by Marilee G. Adams. I bought the book, read it, prepared PowerPoint slides and then trained my managers on the concepts of the book. The book simply teaches question thinking and to be a learner instead of being a judge.

If questions are asked from a viewpoint of open-mindedness, of trying to learn, "the resulting answers are optimistic, hopeful and full of possibilities for the future." The opposite is judging questions which lead to blaming and unproductive results.

During the 9-day advent novena masses, which over the last 8 years I have perfected, the readings on the angel speaking to Zechariah and to Mary always strike me. It amazes me that God responded differently to the questions of Zechariah and Mary when the angels appeared to them on two separate occasions.

When the angel spoke to Zechariah and told him about his prayers having

been heard by God and that his wife, Elizabeth, would bear a child in her old age, Zechariah responded with a question: "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." God's response: Zechariah became mute. He was able to speak only when he wrote on a tablet the name "John" after John the Baptist was born.

But when Mary asked when the angel appeared: "How will this be since I am a virgin?" — God responded differently. Nothing happened to Mary.

I asked myself, what exactly was the difference between Zechariah's question and Mary's question? Without knowing the tonality of their voices and their attitudes when they asked the questions, I can only read between the lines and interpret their words.

Initially, I thought both questions were seeking clarification and trying to understand.

On second thought, perhaps Mary's question was more for her to try to understand while that of Zechariah's was tainted with doubt, which is why the angel wasn't so happy and penalized him.

Reflecting on these gospel readings, I need to be careful when I pray, say something, or ask God some questions. He might misinterpret me. I might be muted.

"Who among us has not experienced insecurity, loss and even doubts on their journey of faith?... We've all experienced this, me too."

—Pope Francis

In spite of a several years of thinking about, preparing for my retirement and deciding on what to eventually do outside of the corporate rat race, I really did not have a real plan. Until I applied my learning from the book Change Your Questions, Change Your Life. I turned to asking the right questions to lead me to the ultimate direction post-retirement:

- What am I so passionate about?
- What do I enjoy most doing?
- What are my top skills and competencies?
- What are my values?
- Where would I get the most value



for my time?

- Given my desire to own my time and be able to consistently do what I love doing (daily exercise, and not have to be "compelled" to do what I hate doing (waking up so early), what do I really want to productively do?

- Outside of a leadership role and given my experience and skills, where can I make the most difference in people's lives?

The answers to the above questions led me to my new profession as a financial advisor and my other goal of becoming a motivational speaker.

My passion to influence and inspire people and my advocacy in increasing people's financial literacy has now become my mission. I speak to individuals, groups and companies about the basics of personal finance. I feel I am fully responsible to not let others make the same financial mistakes I did in my life. This is my legacy – that of making this world way much better than when I entered it.

No doubt God responded to my prayers and guided me in responding to my own questions.

"Faith isn't believing without proof – it's trusting without reservation."

—William Sloane Coffin

There is this joke in Cebuano about Peter trying to also walk on water towards Jesus who was walking on water.

Peter fell and would have drowned had Jesus not put his hand out for Peter to grab and hold. Jesus scolded Peter for doubting. But, the joke is that Jesus yelled at Peter, "Did you not see the rocks? You should have stepped on them!"

Asking Questions

A father and son went fishing one day. While they were out on the water, the boy suddenly became curious about things in general and started asking all sorts of questions.

He asked his father, "Why does the boat float?"

Continued on page 19

Up & Down But Not Over and Out

Nancy Palmaro, Psalm 98 BCGG

On June 2 Kit and I mark our wedding anniversary. On this day, 40 years ago, we recited our vows before God and man. I only have vague memories of what transpired, I can only remember repeating what my priest-cousin, Fr. Lito Mangulabnan, SJ, was saying, and going through the motions like a robot. He kept telling me to smile maybe because I looked dazed.

Our union has been blessed with 4 plus 1 children and 3 grandchildren.

The years have not been easy. Like any relationship, we had our ups and downs, spats, tampuhan. The first two years we stayed with Kit's family. During our quarrels, I would pack my bag and go home to my folks, only to come back when he fetched me the following day. But this all stopped when we moved into our own home, kasi baka di na ako sunduin. And I thought, bakit ako aalis sa bahay ko?

Have faith, God always responds *Continued from page 18*

The father replied, "Don't rightly know son." A little later, the boy looked at his father and asked, "How do fish breathe underwater?" Once again the father replied, "Don't rightly know son." A little later the boy asked his father, "Why is the sky blue?" Again, the father replied. "Don't rightly know son." Finally, the boy asked his father, "Dad, do you mind my asking you all of these questions? The father replied, "Of course not. If you don't ask questions, you never learn nothin'." — www.funny.com

Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. — Mark 11:23



I recently asked a married couple who have three kids, none of whom are yet teens, "Who are the most important people in your family?" Like all good moms and dads of this brave new millennium, they answered, "Our kids!"

"Why?" I then asked. "What is it about your kids that gives them that status?" And like all good moms and dads of this brave new millennium, they couldn't answer the question other than to fumble with appeals to emotion.

So, I answered the question for them: "There is no reasonable thing that gives your children that status."

I went on to point out that many if not most of the problems they're having with their kids — typical stuff, these days —

Your kids should not be the most important

By John Rosemond, Sunday 01 January 2017

are the result of treating their children as if they, their marriage, and their family exist because of the kids when it is, in fact, the other way around. Their kids exist because of them and their marriage and thrive because they have created a stable family.

Furthermore, without them, their kids wouldn't eat well, have the nice clothing they wear, live in the nice home in which they live, enjoy the great vacations they enjoy, and so on. Instead of lives that are relatively carefree (despite the drama to the contrary that they occasionally manufacture), their children would be living lives full of worry and want.

This issue is really the heart of the matter. People my age know it's the heart of the matter because when we were kids it was clear to us that our parents were

the most important people in our families. And that, right there, is why we respected our parents and that, right there, is why we looked up to adults in general. Yes, Virginia, once upon a time in the United States of America, children were second-class citizens, to their advantage.

It was also clear to us — I speak, of course, in general terms, albeit accurate — that our parents' marriages were more important to them than their relationships with us. Therefore, we did not sleep in their beds or interrupt their conversations. The family meal, at home, was regarded as more important than after-school activities. Mom and Dad talked more — a lot more — with one another than they talked with you. For lack of pedestals, we emancipated earlier and much more successfully than have children since.

Continued on page 23

Sally Chua Chiaco, John BCGG

All mothers will say that their child is precious to them. To me, my second daughter, Carline, is extra precious. She is the child we might never have had. She came 15 years after her older sister, after two consecutive miscarriages in years 12 and 13, and a full bed rest that started out as 3 months, then became 5, 7, finally 9 months to increase my chances of having a child. At that time (this was in 1990), there was no cable TV, no DVDs or internet movies, no Facebook, Messenger, or Viber, no iPad to play games on. I only had Time and Newsweek magazines and books to read. But I don't remember complaining about being bored. I had a purpose, which was to bring a fetus to full term and have a second child, my last. I was almost 41 when Carline became Carline.

As parents, our goal has been to give our children ROOTS and WINGS. Ugat at pakpak. Roots to give them nutrients for their minds and souls, and values they can cling to when the storms of life threaten to uproot them. Roots to keep them safe and strong. And wings so they can fly... so we can set them free to find their place in the world, to dream and achieve their dreams, to seek their own destiny, to be the best they can be as a gift to God.

As a mother, I follow a few basic rules to give our children ROOTS and WINGS. These are personal rules. As the saying goes, "different folks, different strokes." Remember, I am now 66; I belong to another generation.

1. Values are first learned at home.

Respect for authority, discipline, honesty, hard work, love of God. I am a strict mom, taking after my father who was head of the Marines and a Navy officer. I strive to teach by example, but I have to admit I often nag, and if that doesn't work, I threaten. But I am consistent as I am steadfast with values I hold dear.

2. The priorities of the school must be consistent with values at home.

We chose to send Carline to an all-girls Catholic school. Medyo conservative, sabi ng iba baka mag-madre siya. But okay lang, when it comes to values, we are a conservative family. We wanted a school where moral formation is first priority. We wanted her to learn her catechism, stories from the Bible, the commandments, the sacraments. We wanted her to learn the virtues of going to confession regularly, hearing Mass every Sunday and receiving Communion often. We wanted her to learn to love God and to choose right.

3. Tough love

I am a believer in free will. I always remind Carline that whatever she decides to do, dapat kaya niyang panagutan. I cannot be with her all the time. Whatever she decides, in small or big things, she's got to own her choice because she will have to live with the consequences.

Growing up, Carline told people that "with my Papa, everything is possible. With my Mama, nothing is possible." That's not exactly true. I say yes after an interrogation on what, why, where, how, with whom, how much. But I am never afraid to disappoint her with a "no" if I have to. Sometimes, I just want her to learn to wait.

I am the accountant in the family. Anchit makes fun of me because I keep my checkbook balanced to the last centavo. Growing up, Carline always had money for what she needed and a bit more. As a student, she lived on a weekly or monthly allowance which we jointly calculated at the beginning of a semester. Dapat, marunong siyang mag-budget. Pag inubos niya kaagad, sorry. When she went abroad without us, say, for a college exchange program, or when she studied in Sydney, she had to account for the money we gave her. I even gave her Excel worksheets to do her expenses. She hated it but obeyed anyway. Controlling the money leash is not an issue of trust. It is my way of knowing her activities, keeping her focused on her priorities, and keeping her safe from doing the wrong things. It is a great way to teach financial responsibility.

4. I am a tough cookie (just on the outside. In the inside, I am a marshmallow.)

It breaks my heart to see Carline fall or fail. It is not entirely true that she has to live with the consequences of her choices by herself. I struggle with them too. I think I get more stressed than she does.

Many things are hard for me as a mother. Like letting Carline go and fly. I only have two daughters, kinuha pa yung isa. My instinct always tells me to keep her close to keep her safe. Huwag pabayaang mag-isa... sumakay ng public transport... tumira sa condo habang nag-aaral. But I also know in my heart that I cannot always be with her nor do I have the energy to do what she has to do or wants to do. We have our own lives to live, our own dreams. I cannot clip her wings.

So we set her free slowly, carefully, making sure that roots are there to keep her safe and strong.

At 11, Carline went to a children's international summer camp in Sweden for 5 weeks. I worried about the company,

the place, even the laundry. She survived beautifully.

In college, she stayed in a condo near her school, learned to ride the tricycle to and from school, to ride the MRT. During the rainy season, lumusong siya sa baha, lumipad kasama ng payong, nasiraan ng sandalyas. Naawa ako. But I let it be. It's all part of the experience.

After college, Carline chose to work with a multinational beverage company. She worked very long hours and had to drive to and from work. Once, Anchit and I picked her up at midnight just so she would come home. Sobrang naawa na naman ako but I let it be. After all, it was her choice. And I understood fully, ganun did naman ako when I was working.

In 2015, Carline decided to take her Master's in Sydney. It was an intensive full-time program which she would complete in one year instead of the usual two years. She worked on this like a project, completing all preparatory and academic requirements, choosing her living quarters, moving around by public transport. She also did odd jobs for some extra money, reconnected with old friends, climbed mountains, explored black holes, swam with sharks. She was lonely and cried a lot. She fell in love with Australia and wanted to stay, but it didn't work out. The pressure she put on herself resulted in near-pneumonia, chronic vertigo, and insomnia. But she refused to let us go over to help. Thank God for Viber! Awang-awang-awa ako. I would ask myself, "Is this worth a Master's degree, or a dream to come true?" Diyan ako natuto mag-novena. She is finally back home with her Master's degree, and a dream which she now has to reinvent, no more vertigo and insomnia. Carline is herself a tough cookie.

5. Faith and prayer

I cannot imagine surviving motherhood without a spiritual life. And for this, I owe a debt of gratitude to my parents, my school, and to Magis Deo.

I have survived two incidents of breast cancer and the loss of a daughter. I have bargained with the Lord for a few more years, fought with Him, questioned His will, but I could never turn my back on Him.

When we lost our daughter in 2006, I was on the brink of depression, but I fought it to keep our family and home whole and wholesome. It took me several retreats, including three Retreats in Daily Life over seven years to reconcile with God. Okay na kami ngayon.

taste or texture, perhaps those are the decisions I deeply admire most.

I do not have that kind of control and discipline with food, and I can only hope for half the amount of discipline that you constantly exhibit.

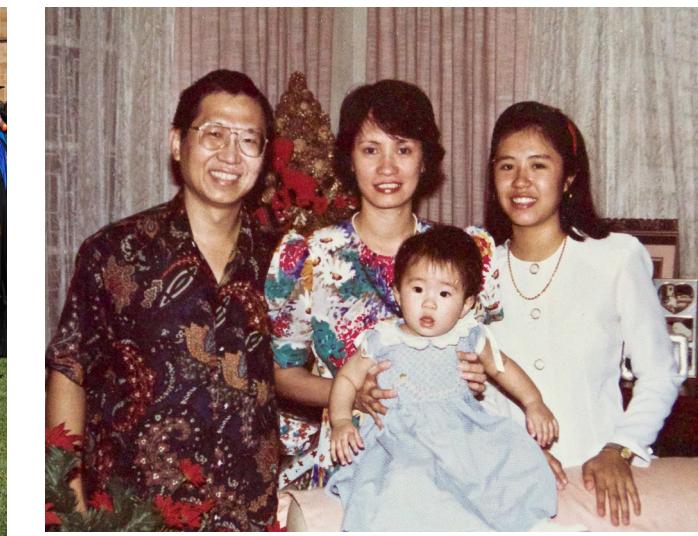
Also, I very much admire your attitude towards hardship, most especially toward your cancer. Your survival is not only a tale of physical triumph but also a battle won over depression, helplessness, and lack of faith. I still cannot understand how you were able to make a decision to just rise about it all – you are such an incredible person and I deeply admire you for that.

When I look back at my version of motherhood for the past 41 years, I realize that it is more about my children than it is about me. It is more about what they feel they've become than it is about what I've done. I'd like to share one of Carline's cards which she wrote in February 2011 when she was 20. Carline likes to write cards.

Dearest Mama,

I just saw this card and absolutely had to get it for you. Its message is just so humorous yet accurate at the same time – and it honors you in such a simple yet meaningful way. I know we don't talk about it much but I really do admire you for the woman that you were and are – the woman I know you will always be. Though I am driven insane by your decisions to eat the healthiest foods on the planet regardless of their

I wanted to write you this card to let you know that are an important person in my life. You make a difference in my life. Also, I'd like to thank you. You've helped me so many times in so many ways, even if I constantly let you down. You may be a tough mom, but I am truly grateful that you are such because I am content with the person that I have grown to be. Thank you for letting me just be me. You're constantly surprising me with how much freedom you give me, and how "cool" you are with my friends, Gabe, his family, my church activities, and my life in general.



I hope you know that even if sometimes I let you down, or don't fulfill your expectations, I still have your best interests in my heart. I'm just at that stage in my life where I'm trying to discover myself, pursue my passions, and go on as many adventures before my 'youth' runs out. Just know that I am always here for you. I love you so much. Cai

(Note: The card reads: You were a survivor before they made TV shows about it.... So you're impressive and a trendsetter.)

Facebook June 19, 2016

Despite everything that's happened to you and our family, having given you every reason to be angry with life and turn away from God, you chose instead to love despite the pain, to hope amidst the darkness, to walk in faith even without understanding. More than your steadfast faith or resilient spirit, your example has always taught me that life is about the choices that we make – learning to say "no" to people or things that are bad for us, "yes" to opportunities that will help us grow, and most importantly, having the courage to make the hard decisions. Thank you for giving me strength, for being my strength, and for showing me to make the most out of my life through the choices that I make. I love you more than life itself, my beautiful Mothergoose. Happy birthday.

Wisdom borrowed from St. Joseph

By Tom McGrath / www.americamagazine.org - June 05, 2013

St. Joseph seems to have been a man of few words but plenty of action. The brief stories that mention him in the Gospels leave us with a vivid impression of a strong, supportive man who revealed his feelings and beliefs more in what he did than what he said. Over the years, I have come to appreciate this humble carpenter who always seems to stand a short distance from center stage. As a foster father he fostered many great traits in his son, Jesus. Through my prayer and reflection I have witnessed four wisdom principles in St. Joseph, the patron saint of fathers, workers and of the universal church.

Every difficult family situation is best met with compassion. "Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly" (Mt 1:19).

The story of Mary's unexpected and highly unusual pregnancy is so well known that it is hard to appreciate how scandalous this news would have been to Joseph. Few would have blamed him if he had "exposed her to shame." But the penalty for proven adultery at that time was stoning, and Joseph chose to exercise compassion. He planned to divorce her quietly, rather than "hold her in her sin." The grace to choose compassion opened up room for God to work in this situation and that made all the difference, not just for Mary, but for all of us.

In my own life as a dad, I recall times when I've acted from righteousness and times when I've acted from compassion. Compassion always trumps righteousness because compassion flows from human connection rather than separateness. Compassion demands that I see the one in front of me—my wife, a daughter, a co-worker, even myself—as a person and not an object deserving of an object lesson. Thank you, St. Joseph, for your example of compassion.

Expect God to speak to you. And be willing to listen. "Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her'" (Mt 1:20).

My family's religious experiences surely pale in comparison to what happened for Jesus, Mary and Joseph, but a few moments are memorable.

Joseph must have been used to listening for the voice of God in his life. Other men would have slept through such a dream or chalked it up to bad falafel. But Joseph listened, and then he acted decisively on what he heard, taking Mary into his home and later, at the urging of another dream, pulling up stakes and moving his young family far from Herod's reach. I am always inspired by these examples of Joseph's attentiveness and readiness to take action.

There were a few times while raising our daughters when my wife and I found ourselves bewildered as to what our next best step for them might be. And these words came to us one day—almost as if in a dream: "Love them through it." We have recalled these words countless times regarding not only our daughters, but also with other family members and friends—and with each other as well. Thank you, St. Joseph, for inspiring me to listen for and act upon messages from God.

Practice your religion; it will help you discover who you are and why you are here. "According to the law of Moses they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord" (1:22), and "Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover" (2:41).

Joseph is a great example of how practicing one's religion can be life-giving and crucial to discovering one's truest identity and purpose. When Mary and Joseph presented the child Jesus in the temple, they encountered Simeon and Anna, two holy people who spoke of Jesus' great role in human history and predicted how all of their lives would be extraordinary.

Later in Luke's Gospel, when Jesus was "lost" in the temple, the family witnessed a deepening of Jesus' understanding of his identity and his destiny. By observing the practices of his Jewish faith, Joseph experienced God doing what God always does: inviting us to open our hearts, realize who we belong to and discover our purpose in the world.

My family's religious experiences surely pale in comparison to what happened for Jesus, Mary and Joseph, but a few moments are memorable.

During a parish renewal my wife and I signed on for six weeks of small-group faith sharing—which continued on for almost 10 years. Two of those faith sharing gatherings stand out especially. When our older daughter was preparing for first reconciliation and first Eucharist, the group invited her to join us as each person shared generously and passionately what the sacraments of reconciliation and Eucharist meant to them. They repeated this precious gift when our younger daughter prepared for her first Eucharist. Thank you, St. Joseph, for opening my heart to the value of religious practice.

We are all here to do some work. "I must be in my Father's house" (Mt 2:49).

This statement of Jesus in the Temple is often translated, "I must be about my Father's work." I'm sure St. Joseph understood Jesus' sense of urgency. When I meditate on Joseph, I think of a life spent building things, solving problems and restoring broken items to usefulness. St. Joseph is known as the patron saint of workers, so it is not surprising to me that his son's teachings were full of references to work: "A sower went out to sow"; "A man built a tower"; "A woman came to draw water from a well."

Parenting children is work. Often it is hard work—physically, emotionally and spiritually. How consoling it is as a parent to have the tools of the carpenter at my disposal—compassion, attunement to God's word, life-bringing religious practices and an awareness that God too is at work in the world and at work in me. And, as my wife and I have discovered, the parenting continues even when the children are raised and out of the house. Thank you, St. Joseph, for inspiring me to embrace the work of being a father, whether near or far.

*Tom McGrath is vice president of new product development at Loyola Press, author of *Raising Faith-Filled Kids* and editor of *Seasons*, a faith resource for parents of children in middle school, both from Loyola Press.*

Did God Create SuperMoms?

Rhea Gaddi, Prodigal 102 BCGG

My mother had already passed away when I became a mother. So I was not able to ask her about breastfeeding, alcamporado, diapers, booster shots and all other things that first-time mothers ask their own mothers. Thank goodness for my mother-in-law, sisters-in-law, my mother-friends and the internet where I got all the help and tips (at times too many tips!) on how to take care of my newborn. My father somehow filled in for my mom and gave me advice not just on motherhood, but on parenthood. My son is 10 years old now and one of the things that I realized is that even if I don't have my own mother now, it's the memory of her being a wonderful mother to me and my brothers, that guided me on how to become a good mother. I learned from my mother the value of love for family and relatives, hard work, integrity, compassion, devotion to the Blessed Mother Mary, and unwavering faith in God. All these she showed consistently and lovingly to all her children. These are the very values that my brothers and I grew up with, until we became parents ourselves.

My mother was a full-time mother who chose to take care of all of us 6 children. After college, my mother often advised me to pursue my dreams about career, marry a good man and raise a family, and to always pray for God's guidance. And so I did—I pursued a fulfilling career, married a caring and responsible husband, and now we are raising our son Enzo. While I was able to pursue all of these, the struggle to balance family, personal time and career slowly took place.

In my late 30's, I became overweight, lethargic and my idea of exercise was shopping the whole day inside the mall. I found it difficult to do my work, run the house, go out with my husband and run after my toddler son. So I decided to start to eat healthier and exercise—which eventually led me to running which I have fallen in love with since. Running was my personal time and I made sure it was part of my daily life. Even when I'm on a business trip, you'd see a pair of running shoes instead of high heels in my suitcase. So getting back physically in shape allowed me to do more—work more, travel more and attend more of my son's football tournaments.

There was a period in my work where I travelled frequently and relied on Skype, Viber and Facetime to connect with my husband and son. During one of my travels, my sister-in-law stayed with my son and shared with me a conversation

my son had with another kid at the village playground:

Boy: What does your dad do?

Enzo: He's a doctor.

Boy: What does your mom do?

Enzo: She's on-line.

While the conversation seemed funny at first, I realized how much time I have spent away from my family—and how much I have missed them. And that incident made me question my work over and over again—why am I doing this again?

Because the demands of my work have increased over the years, I did come to a point when I had to reflect on the choices I have made and my priorities. As much as I have kept telling my team in the office that my weekends are sacred and exclusive for family time, I sometimes find myself struggling not to feel guilty when I'm cheering my lungs out at my son's football tournament instead of finishing a project proposal that was due yesterday. When I was training for my first 42 km marathon, there were times I'd stop running and asked myself: Shouldn't I be helping my son with his homework instead of being at ULTRA at 6 pm to train? I have read stories of Supermoms who are able to balance family, personal time and career. I have actually met some of these working mothers and none have really ever considered themselves to be Super because their situation is not always easy and they do not always have superpowers to make their situation less difficult. But what is inspiring about these working mothers is that they are happy and grateful for their perfectly imperfect lives. Perhaps the feeling of gratitude somehow provides that sense of balance many working mothers hope for.

But how do you reach and experience a feeling of gratitude when one feels like it's a never-ending battle of decisions and choices, of making time for everything and everyone?

During one of my silent retreats, I reflected on the choices I have made in my life and asked myself: "Where did I see or experience God in all the choices I made?" Becoming a mother was not actually a choice I made but it was a blessing and opportunity given to me by God. However, becoming a good mother or wanting to become a SuperMom will always be a choice for me to make. I realize these are very hard decisions, and there is no easy or right answer. But I also realize, when I prayed hard over

these decisions and choices, I find myself asking the very same question "Where do I see or experience God in all of these?" After much reflection and prayer, making a decision or choice becomes less difficult. I also realized that whatever decision my prayer has led me to, I need to be 100% "in that moment" and celebrate God's presence.

So whenever I run out now to the field and cheer for my son while he plays football, I experience God's gift of family and life—that is me being 100% in that moment, and that is my moment with God. When I stay late in the evening for a conference call helping a client, I experience God's presence as I help others with their problems. This year I celebrate my 14th anniversary at work and it has been a place where I find God over and over again—whenever my staff call me "Mother" and seek my help or just need somebody to talk to. Now, whenever I run long distance or uphill, I experience God's love as I marvel at the beauty of nature or express gratitude for a healthy life. Running has been my personal moment with God.

So, did God create SuperMoms? I think God did not create SuperMoms who can be everything to everyone, everytime. But I have seen that God created moms who can be super in loving and caring for others, who bring others closer to Him and create super moments where one can experience God's amazing love and grace.

So while I know there will always be challenges that I will face as a mother, I know that whenever I pray and talk to God, it helps me to discern His direction for me. And I know sometimes, His direction may not lead me to wear a red cape. ☺

Your kids... *Continued from page 19*

The most important person in an army is the general. The most important person in a corporation is the CEO. The most important person in a classroom is the teacher.

The most important thing about children is the need to prepare them properly for responsible citizenship. The primary objective should not be raising a straight-A student who excels at three sports, earns a spot on the Olympic swim team, goes to an A-list university and becomes a prominent brain surgeon. The primary objective is to raise a child such that community and culture are strengthened.

"Our child is the most important person in our family" is the first step toward raising a child who feels entitled.

You don't want that. Unbeknownst to your child, he doesn't need that. And neither does America.

Central Sector Fellowship Night

Leo Soliman, BCGG Corinthians



As the saying goes, "A good gimmick deserves another round." The Central Sector get together last year was so enjoyable we had to come up with a repeat. And so, last April 21, 2017, the DATUM Corporate Office again played host to a paaarrty! More than 30 warm bodies wined and dined with the delicious food of our suki caterer Queensland. Ms Lally de Guzman and her blind but talented son jammed the keyboard with music that had the crowd sing along to their 60s and 70s repertoire.

The favorite parlor game "Guess the Singer and the Song" had all the 7 BCGGs participating with the tandem of new kid on the block Ricky Sun and the chair couple half Cesar Pareja slugging it out with Corinthians' Carlos and Ruby Pizarro in the finals. But sorry guys, the Pizarros were just too much.

Chacho Angeles and Ramie Santos proved to be a revelation, huh? These two can carry a tune. Seriously.

Undeniably, all had a grand time again. Can't wait for next year's get-together. Thanks to the Espiritus for providing the venue (for the nth time), to the Sangalangs for organizing and donating the prizes, and to Corinthians, Easter, Psalmarians, Transfiguration, Thessalonians, Sirach BCGGs and our bunso Matthew BCGG for the great night spent together.

June Birthday Celebrants

1	Delsa Sangalang	Psalmarians
	JonJon Cruz	ME Class 124
2	Marlyn Angeles	Thessalonians
2	Nessa Santos	Prodigal 102
3	Chito Babaran	Magnificat
3	Cora Buenaventura	Sirach
4	Cora De Guzman	Agnus Dei
6	Jhun Coronel	Magnificat
6	Ana Pestano	ME Class 118
9	Petrik Punzalan	Easter
10	Mimi Parayno	Psalm 98
	Marnee Antonio	ME Class 124
12	Lille Collado	Song of Ruth
13	Dino De Veyra	ME Class 121
13	Manette Yap	Corinthians
14	Paul Puthenpurekal	Easter
15	Boy De Leon	James, Brother of John
15	Jenny Palencia	Tala
16	Ramie Santos	Psalmarians
	Dong Galang	ME Class 123
18	Boy Lubguban	Exodus
19	Jang Estrada	Emmanuel
20	Sally Chua Chiaco	John
22	Elyn Aracid	Easter
23	Charley Ng Sy	Agnus Dei
	Pen Batoctoy	ME Class 124
23	Jon Sta. Maria	Transfiguration
25	Malou Tabuzo	Song of Ruth
27	Jojo Gaddi	Prodigal 102
29	Leony Parada	Psalmarians
30	Joey Suarez	Tala
	Anang Tabuldan	ME Class 12431

June Wedding Anniversaries

1	Domeng & Zarah Gagatiga	Emmanuel
2	Kit & Nancy Palmario	Psalm 98
4	Bobbit+ & Precy Cruz	Thessalonians
7	Ali & Wheng Reyes	Francis
8	Rodel & Eden Acosta	Song of Ruth
12	Anchit & Sally Chua Chiaco	John
12	Ike+ & Josie Llamas	Genesis of David
12	Cesar & Dels Sangalang	Psalmarians
	Roel & Celia Claros	ME Class 124
13	Lito & Jet Quimel	Exodus
14	Mon & Ting Yupangco	Transfiguration
	Jay & Maye Atencio	ME Class 124
17	Ted & Susan Concepcion	Archangel Gabriel
17	Ronnie & Malou Tabuzo	Song of Ruth
18	TJ & Ana Pestano	ME Class 118
20	Boy & Jovy De Leon	James, Brother of John
21	Clyde & Pachot Abapo	Francis
24	Jhunn & Ellen Coronel	Magnificat
25	Jun+ & Cora Ona	Archangel Gabriel
	Ricky & Claire Dela Cruz	ME Class 123
26	Eugene & Ethel Araullo	Transfiguration
26	Menandro+ & Fely Redual	Francis
27	Tony & Aida Del Rosario	James, Brother of John
28	Ariel & Maan Masungsong	Francis
	Hector & Faith Villegas	ME Class 123
30	Elmer & Meg Fajardo	James, Brother of John