

# Magis

*Formation for Mission*

*Stewardship*

*Simplicity*

*Sharing*

*Service*

Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community  
June 2020 Issue

## **COVID-19 and depression**

Always remember that life is  
a marathon, not a sprint

## **Here I am Lord**

When a door is shut,  
the Spirit will open  
its windows

## **Let hope in**

During these times,  
where can we find hope?

## **While on COVID Lockdown**

Life must be lived as it unfolds daily

## **Living and loving in a masked world**

We thrive and find grace  
in the struggle





# About the Cover



We are more than a hundred days now under lockdown. And in these days, we rummaged through our brains, thinking of ways to preoccupy ourselves. But even in the silent solace of our homes, we can't shut out the noise that we "see" in the news. Across our privilege, we think of our fellow Filipinos struggling to make ends meet. While the roads and establishments are no longer deserted, the economy is in decline, Covid-19 cases are on a colossal rise, the government is several steps behind... how are we supposed to move forward, to remain assured that there will be a tomorrow?

Aside from supporting and donating to the various initiatives for our less fortunate brothers and sisters and speaking up for them, God tells us to take this opportunity to replenish our bond with Him. In context, the illustrated cover is a modern, timely retake on Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, where He agonizingly uttered: "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." What we all want will come someday. We don't know when it will happen. But between now and that day, let's cling onto each other even if we are physically apart. Nothing is impossible, and this suffering will not last forever.

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*Magis*

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## Calendar of Activities: July - August 2020

July	August
<b>5</b> Community Celebration	<b>2</b> Community Celebration
<b>11</b> Prayer Workshop	
<b>24-26</b> Spritual Deepening Retreat	<b>August to September</b> 2nd Interface Prayer Meetings

# Here I Am, Lord



**I, the Lord of sea and sky,**

I have heard my people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin  
My hand will save.

I who made the stars of night,  
I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear my light to them?  
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord,  
Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard You calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord,  
If You lead me,  
I will hold Your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of wind and flame,  
I will tend the poor and lame,  
I will set a feast for them,,  
My hand will save.  
Finest bread I will provide,  
'Til their hearts be satisfied,  
I will give my life to them,  
Whom shall I send?

*by John Michael Talbot*

Magis Deo first heard this song 35 years ago, when Magis Deo was not yet Magis Deo, only a hunger in the heart of God. It was 1985; all was dark and uncertain; the economy at a standstill: children were dying of hunger all over the country. Fr. Ruben Tanseco designed a series of retreats, the MEW, the SDR and the CPPJ. For many of the men and women who attended those retreats, it was God's personal call to love one

another, in thought, word and deed. In the same way God loves us.

Events quickly moved, a Snap Election, the infamous cheating at the polls, then at the close of February 1986, the 4-day bloodless revolution that left our people standing victorious on EDSA in a stunningly spectacular miracle. We had been brought out of Egypt, the land of milk and honey was ours as promised; a gift to nurture and care for. We were now responsible for all the children, and though we did not express it in exactly this way, underlying was the truism that it takes a whole village to raise a child. And so community was born.

Today, we face a crisis of devastating magnitude triggered by a contagious disease that is no respecter of persons, place or privilege. At the interface among Sirach, Song of Ruth, and John BCGGs, I brought with me a mix of feelings, but the dominant one was sadness – that all the gains achieved over the last thirty-five years had gone down the drain, and if I was feeling the crunch, how much more my kababayan, whose family was one day away from hunger?

Listening to my group, I was gratified to hear how similar our feelings and experiences were. As we named losses and gains, we began to realize that these are the ways God is trying to bless us, and thus we moved from fear and anxiety to acceptance, gratitude and a strong desire to go where our hearts and the Spirit were leading us.

Two clear directions rose from the sharings – through community and for the greater need of the poor. Though I can only speak with certainty from the evidence of our interface, I would not be surprised that once Praxis Ministry has collated all the facilitators' reports, our responses to the needs of the times will crystalize into concrete programs and along similar lines.

Outreach in the time of Covid will be very different from the time when we all took a chartered bus to help a community like Anduyan devastated by an earthquake get back on its feet, or assist typhoon ravaged Tacloban or war-torn Marawi. We are constrained by social distancing and the world-wide financial depression, but prayer and mobile phones are immune from Covid and GCQ. We can bring the graces of our family ministry through the ether and from our individual homes. We will be able to feed God's lambs and sheep. For time and time again, it has been proven that when a door is shut, the Spirit will open windows.

We are here, Lord. You have led us, and we hold Your people in our hearts.

# Community Activities during Quarantine

Ted & Susan Concepcion, Chaircouple/Archangel Gabriel BCGG

**T**he month of May is usually a festive month for Filipinos, it being the season for harvest, town fiestas and **Santacruzans**. With a pandemic in our midst, our Spiritual Director spear-headed the call "Transitions: Living the Easter Grace in a New and Abnormal World." As can be read in the slide below, Magis Deo sustains efforts to provide community activities and opens its spirit-filled virtual media formats to reach out to members and the Catholic communities worldwide, strengthening and making more resilient family bonds. These have also made us closer to God, and cling to our Mother Mary more often.

**MAGIS DEO COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES**

Transitions:  
Living the Easter Grace  
in a New and  
Abnormal World

Magis Deo Community  
First Post-Covid ECG Community Celebration  
2 May 2020 (Online)  
Fr. James Wenceslao U. Gascon, SJ - Spiritual  
Director

May 3 - ComCel  
teaching & mass  
presider w/ Fr. James

May 9 - **MAGIS DEO  
FACEBOOK DOMAIN  
OPENED** to ALL  
Registered Members,  
ME Classes, Family,  
Inactive Members

May 15 - **Magis 2020  
Leadership Team viber  
group formed by Praxis  
Min. & CSMin.**

Almost all BCGGs  
able to hold virtual  
mtgs via Zoom &  
other platforms  
Via  
Zoom for  
Training

**RECENT EVENTS - MAY 2020**

**MAGIS DEO COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES**

May 21 - Message of Fr. James  
'A letter in response to  
a query about  
Replayed Online Masses'

May 23 - 1<sup>st</sup> Mtg for  
All BCGG Shepherds  
via Zoom c/o PM

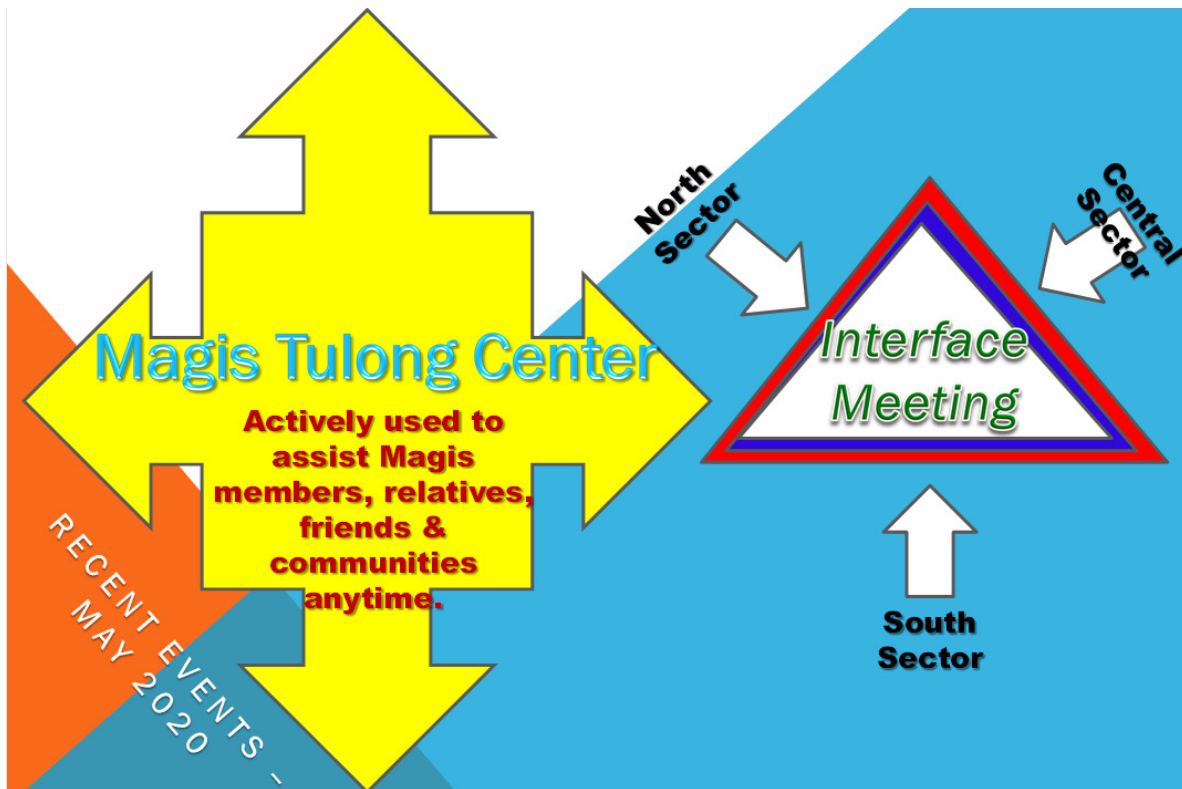
May 26 - Magis Youth  
Prayer Mtg  
With Fr. James  
via Zoom



### Community Activities during Quarantine

The Magis Tulong Center became an avenue and help center in a number of ways to reach out and reach in to one another.

The Interface Program activated by our Praxis Ministry to reach out and say "Hello, how are you?" and "How can we help you?"



We move further ahead, continuing to search, source, strengthen our programs and align them with God's will and plan for us.

### NEXT STEPS: JUNE – OCTOBER 2020

#### ➤ PCouncil not only as overseers but to help out also as co-shepherds to the Ministries

- to help MINISTRIES activate / explore / create new or enhanced Ministry programs in line with Magis Deo Mission considering evolving global and national and local landscapes.



## Online ComCeleb

Leo Soliman, Corinthians BCGG



**S**o now we're all here, stuck in an unimaginable situation forced by Covid-19. All our plans, travels, games, parties, visits, even simple gatherings, had to be canceled. Heck, you can't even visit the sick. Worse, you can't even pay your last respects for the departed.

No one foresaw this. Never thought we'd be in this mess. But not even Covid-19 can take away our animus, our spirit, our spunk for faith, hope, life, and peace.

And so, on May 3, 2020, the first ever online community celebration was organized and aired through Zoom and FB live. Fr James' talk on Transition from ECQ to GCQ – living the Easter grace in a new and abnormal world – came at a time when many are begging for answers. He said our transition is a crossing using the cross of Christ.

The emphasis is on Easter as the greatest feast in the Church. The reason we need 40 days to prepare for Easter and another 50 days from Easter Sunday to celebrate the victory of Jesus over death. Here we renew our vows, our faith.

Easter gifts us with the graces of life, faith, hope and peace. How we live these graces in a quarantine environment is the challenge we all face. We are expected to respond the way St. Ignatius would.

Ah, yes, the Ignatian Way. Sharing life, believing without seeing, anchoring our hope in the Father, and resting in the peace of Christ. Our answer to facing the uncertainties of post-Covid times.

But how do we keep our sanity in a world fast getting insane? How do we keep our wits and not go nuts?

Fr. James continued his talk during the second online ComCeleb last June 7, 2020 with a lecture on mental health, keeping a healthy body, mind, heart, and spirit.

General wellness in its entirety (psychological, emotional,

and social well-being).

We may not be mentally ill but we may be mentally unhealthy. We must be good in handling stress, making sound choices, and relating with others. Mental health leads to a good relationship with God. Biological factors, family history, and life experiences affect our mood, behavior, and thinking. We must be on guard to keep our mental state healthy.

So how do we get to be mentally unhealthy? When we wrongly respond to reality, when our defense mechanism fails, when repression, denials, ignoring details that are harmful to us set in. Worse, we may turn to unhealthy coping processes: alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling, abuse of people, etc.

We can manage our stress through USR:

- Understanding - of oneself, of the problem, of the content.
- Skills - lessons from experience, chilling, silence, meditation, prayer, listening to God, asking for help.
- Resilience - toughness, grit, facing the stress head on.

We should take care of ourselves by eating, drinking and sleeping properly. Exercise, take breaks, conversing, being patient, learning to listen, pacing our life, staying normal. Count our blessings. Focus on what we can do, not on what we can't.

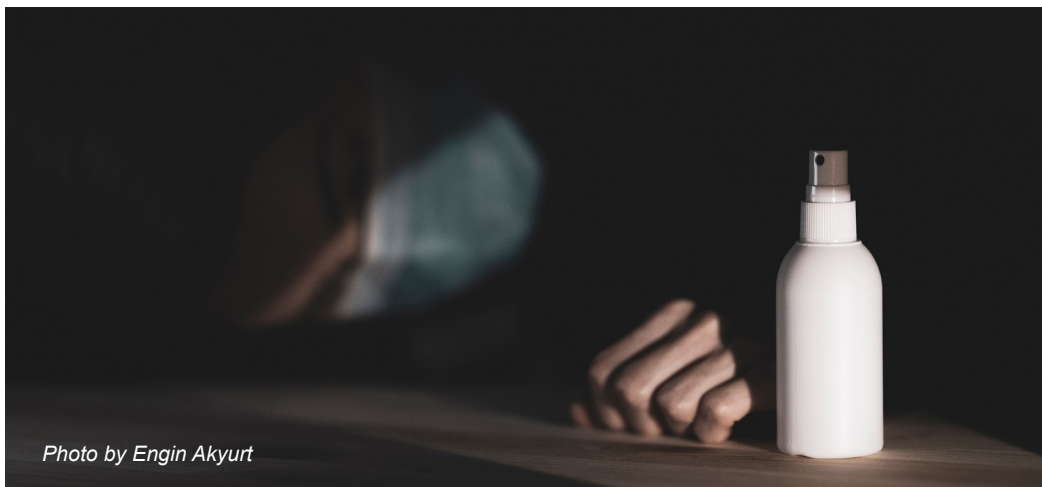
We need to adapt and adjust to an abnormal situation. This may take time but remember, life is a marathon, not a sprint.

As we look forward to the next online ComCeleb on July 3, the community thanks the Community Services Ministry headed by Leony and Mia Parada for leading this initiative. Likewise, to all the participants in the last 2 ComCelebs: Aldeguer family, Espiritu family, Gagatiga family, Claro Santos, Ethel Araullo, and Ojay and Yang Reantaso of Samaritans BCGG – the overall director of the event.

Kudos to Fr. James for constantly guiding and inspiring the community with his teachings and reflections!

# Covid-19 and Depression: A Spiritual Challenge to Mental Fitness

Fr. James Wenceslao U. Gascon, S.J., STL, DMin  
Catholic Safeguarding Institute (CSI)  
Ateneo de Manila University



*Photo by Engin Akyurt*

**W**hen we hear the term ‘mental health,’ most of us immediately associate it with ‘mental illness.’

Although these two terms are not completely unrelated since a healthy mental state includes the absence of illness, however, mental health is beyond illness. It includes our emotional, psychological, social, and even spiritual wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel, and act. A healthy mental state also helps us determine how we handle stress, relate with others, and make choices. In other words, it is our overall wellbeing and disposition, which is very crucial at every stage of our life, from childhood through adolescence through adulthood. Thus, it is a challenge and a responsibility to keep ourselves mentally fit.

The present pandemic is one major situation that negatively affects our overall wellbeing. The Covid-19 virus not only affects our physical health but also undermines our psychological fitness. Our mobility is limited, our space constricted. We are directed to stay at home and quarantine ourselves, warned that any violations will merit sanctions or even legal or criminal penalties. While a vaccine or treatment has not yet been developed, we are completely vulnerable and helpless. We hear and read of hundreds getting infected each day, and many fall ill or die. At present, more than a thousand have died, and many of them are health workers. Thus, we are often caught up in fear of being infected. Some of us get paranoid and anxious, worried not only because of our own personal wellbeing but also of those we love and the community we belong. This is further aggravated when our loved ones live far from us or are in

foreign countries where situations may be worse. Our overseas workers (OFW) are prone to get infected. Worst of all, some of us have lost friends and relatives to the virus. Because of these, we find ourselves developing negative reactions. We become hopeless, helpless and joyless — emotions that disturb our sleep and sense of equilibrium. We are caught in a situation of great loss. Thus, it is not uncommon that depression or suicidal ideation creeps in and our world is turned upside down. If we do not confront such condition, it spins us into unbalance and eventually more serious mental health conditions. But how do we handle and cope with situations such as the pandemic in order to remain mentally fit? How do we face the challenges that depression brings so that we may live a more fulfilling and peaceful lifestyle?

I think the first step to take is to know what depression is. Contrary to what many people think, depression has a vital function in our lives. It warns us that something is not good; our life is sliding to an unwanted territory, a condition that makes us unsatisfied. In a sense, our psyche raises some red flags: something is not working, do not go there because it is unfamiliar, change is needed, slow down, take a rest, take care of yourself. As one of our psychiatrists used to remind us, depression is akin to fever which tells us that there is an infection in our body. We treat the infection and not just take away the fever if we want to totally get well. Otherwise, the fever may be off and on until the real cause is treated. Thus, depression is actually an ally, a friend. It is our psyche’s warning signal in order to protect us.



If you or someone is suffering from one or some of symptoms of depression such as fatigue or lack of energy, feeling of guilt or worthlessness, cannot concentrate or indecisive, excessive or lack of sleep, not finding pleasure or interest in one's daily activities, restlessness, significant weight loss or gain, and recurrent thoughts of suicide or death; it is always good to consult with a professional. At this time of pandemic, many doctors are accessible online or through teleconsult. It is always helpful to seek one who is competent to help.

As a helper, I always distinguish the kind of depression one experiences. The first is what we call clinical depression. Consulting a psychiatrist can give a proper evaluation and treatment of this type of depression. In my experience, Filipinos are reluctant to consult a psychiatrist. There is a sense of stigma seeing one. However, in recent years, because of the educational campaign and the mental health bill, many have taken the path of professional consult realizing that mental health is important. I do not want to dwell on clinical depression in this article since it is a bit complex and is beyond my area of competence. So, I focus on the second one I call "situational or contextual depression." The depression here is often due to a situation or a cause, a concrete example is the current pandemic. So, if we get depressed at this time, one of the initial interventions is to face the situation. Going back to the analogy I gave above, the pandemic is the infection, our depression is the fever. So what must we do? How do we respond?



*Photo by Yuris Alhumaydy*

First, we must always remember that the pandemic is an abnormal situation, and that our reactions, although negative and uncomfortable, are natural and valid. Our negative feelings and emotions are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. It is not us who is "abnormal." The situation is. And because of the anomalous and strange context we find ourselves in, negative emotions are triggered in us. Our moods are altered. With experiences of losses (income, jobs, loved ones, to name a few), we are prone to despair and low spirits. Nevertheless, it is important to begin by normalizing our negative emotions. It is not our person who is negative. Remember that God has created us in His image, and He found His creation very good (Genesis 1, 31). We are good; it is our situation that is bad!

Thus, we must take care of ourselves. We must not wait for others to take care of us. How do we do this? Begin by eating balanced and nutritious foods. We must avoid alcohol or excessive intake of stimulants, like coffee or soft drinks that alter our moods. Sleep properly and sufficiently. According to scientific research, we need at least seven hours of sleep for our brains to rest sufficiently. Regular exercise and some other bodily activities are necessary to maintain our vigor. Science has discovered that endorphins produced in our brain perk up our happy mood and disposition. We must also develop routines. We do not allow ourselves to just be sucked into the grind of day without direction and goal. After setting a regular routine, it is good to include breaks and time outs. Moreover, we must balance our solitary activities with communal involvements. We have to phase our lives. Do not overdo things, work according to your capacity. Walk one step at a time. Like the clock that ticks one tick at a time, chop big things into smaller portions. If we do all things at the same time, we get overwhelmed and end up eating more than we can chew. We must remember that life is a marathon, not a sprint.



*Photo by Stanislaw Gregordy*

Second, if the symptoms we experience get prolonged, most professionals agree to a two-week time frame, it is always recommended that we consult a professional. For example, it is perfectly fine to be sad. However, if this sadness has been there for more than two weeks, it is time to seek help. And we must follow what the doctor instructs us to do. If medication is prescribed, it is for our good. It is always helpful to discuss our concerns with the doctor, to ask questions that bother us, especially in relation to the treatment. Some patients prescribed with medications can be impatient though. It is not uncommon that they complain about the absence of relief even after a few days of taking the pills. However, I always explain that unlike other bodily medications, psychotropic medications take time to have full effects. For example, anti-depressants can take about three weeks to three or four months before optimal effects are experienced. This is the reason why the doctor usually begins with smaller doses and increases it through time until the full effect is achieved. Also, when we already feel better and well, we must not abruptly stop medication without a doctor's advice. Doctors usually instruct you how to wean from medication when you no longer need them. Otherwise, a hasty decision to stop can lead to relapses and other unwanted side effects.

When helping others, maybe our friends and relatives, it is always good to begin by encouraging them to see a doctor especially if symptoms have been there for some time. Listening to their concerns and normalizing them helps a lot. But it is always helpful to do something about the depression as it is an unnecessary suffering which often sabotages our good efforts. Communicating with them more often, especially just by plain listening and mirroring (the skill of showing to the person we talk to that we understood what he or she is saying), can lead to a better grasp of the situations or contexts that cause the distress. Helping them articulate their feelings and behavioral patterns, highlighting the “cause and effect,” is a good tool for accompaniment. For example, I used to help a client figure out why every time he meets with his father, he feels depressed. Allowing him to articulate his anger which he could not express to his father directly, and which he has kept for a while, has helped him ease the sadness.

It must be emphasized though that when the thought of self-hurt or suicide is present, we need to take concrete steps. Risk assessment (the probability of it being carried through) is the first step and if the risk is high the person might have to be put on 24-hour monitoring. It is essential to always take suicide seriously; it must never be ignored or set aside. Again, a consult with the doctor is crucial. Despite finding ourselves in instances of depression symptoms, we may still help others by going to a psychiatrist and being a good and compliant patient.

Finally, our spiritual life is a great resource for support. We are encouraged to nurture a spiritual life grounded on solid praying. What do I mean by this? Remember that praying may involve asking something from God (intercessory prayer). However, grounding ourselves in a spirituality of the ordinary life is what I mean by solid praying. This is praying where we speak less and listen more to God who speaks to us. After all, every prayer is a revelation. We know more about God and we understand more our self. We become more and more human when we are in God’s grace.

And perhaps, this is the reason why as Christians, we always need to find good things even in the most miserable situations like this pandemic. Because God is present as Grace, laboring, working, creating, and saving; and we take part in creation which we enhance by our listening prayer. Questions like: where is God in my depression? What is God telling me about my depression? What are God’s graces that come with this pandemic? Which of my choices during this quarantine lead to deeper faith and authentic spirituality? These are some questions that invite us to listen to God and ourselves. Because the pandemic is a crisis, it is a challenging situation that is at the same time an opportunity to grow, to love and ultimately to hope in a God who is always present in all things. With spiritual maturity, we can face the challenge of keeping ourselves mentally fit.



# Living and Loving in a Masked World

Zarah C. Gagatiga, Emmanuel BCGG

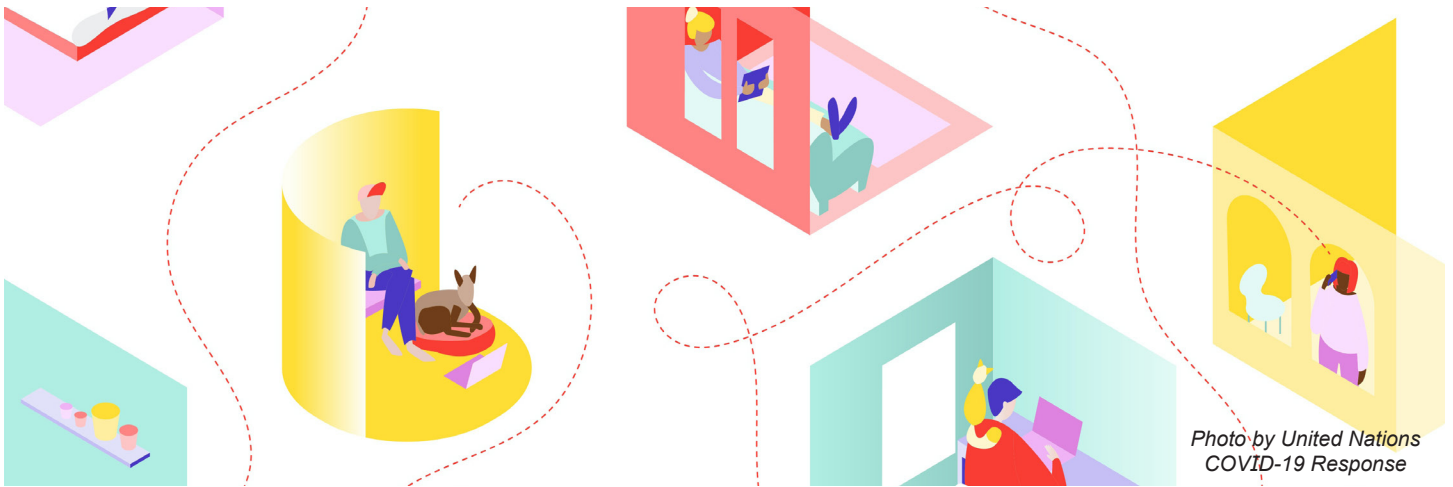


Photo by United Nations COVID-19 Response

**A**nd so I am back after a long hiatus from writing and contributing to the Magis Deo Newsletter. 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.

Suddenly, distance and physical space took on a whole new meaning. Facts and information need to be verified and validated by critically examining the source and the intent of its authors before sharing them with the public. Divisions among people and culture have all been magnified and gaps appear to grow wider as science and technology push for cures and solutions to this virus as well as the illnesses that malign society today. To hear news from the Inter Agency Task Force every day does not help alleviate anxieties and fears in a time of uncertainty and unprecedented change. School campuses remain closed but there is a need to continue learning most especially at home and from home. We all find ourselves in this predicament. But, strive we must to survive. And it is in the struggle where we thrive and find grace.

Take for example the basic health protocol of frequent hand washing, observance of social distancing, and wearing a face mask when going out. It all sounds simple to do but these health practices require generosity and kindness from each of us. It is about personal care, interior freedom and the challenge to continuously "be." This is the call of the time and the teaching of Ignatius no less.

Of the three health guidelines, it is the wearing of masks that fascinates me to no end. Wearing a surgical mask, we

protect ourselves from the coronavirus and those we get in contact with. Wearing a mask pre-Covid-19, however, had a different meaning. In the Marriage Encounter experience, wearing a mask is an act that prevents us from being authentic and real, but now it is considered an act of love. What remains constant is God's call to continue building a relationship with Him, with or without a mask. Because our ways of loving differ from one another, the response to the call of nurturing this relationship varies too.

In my quest to find a quiet and sacred space to be with God, I discovered Fall in Love, a poem by Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ.

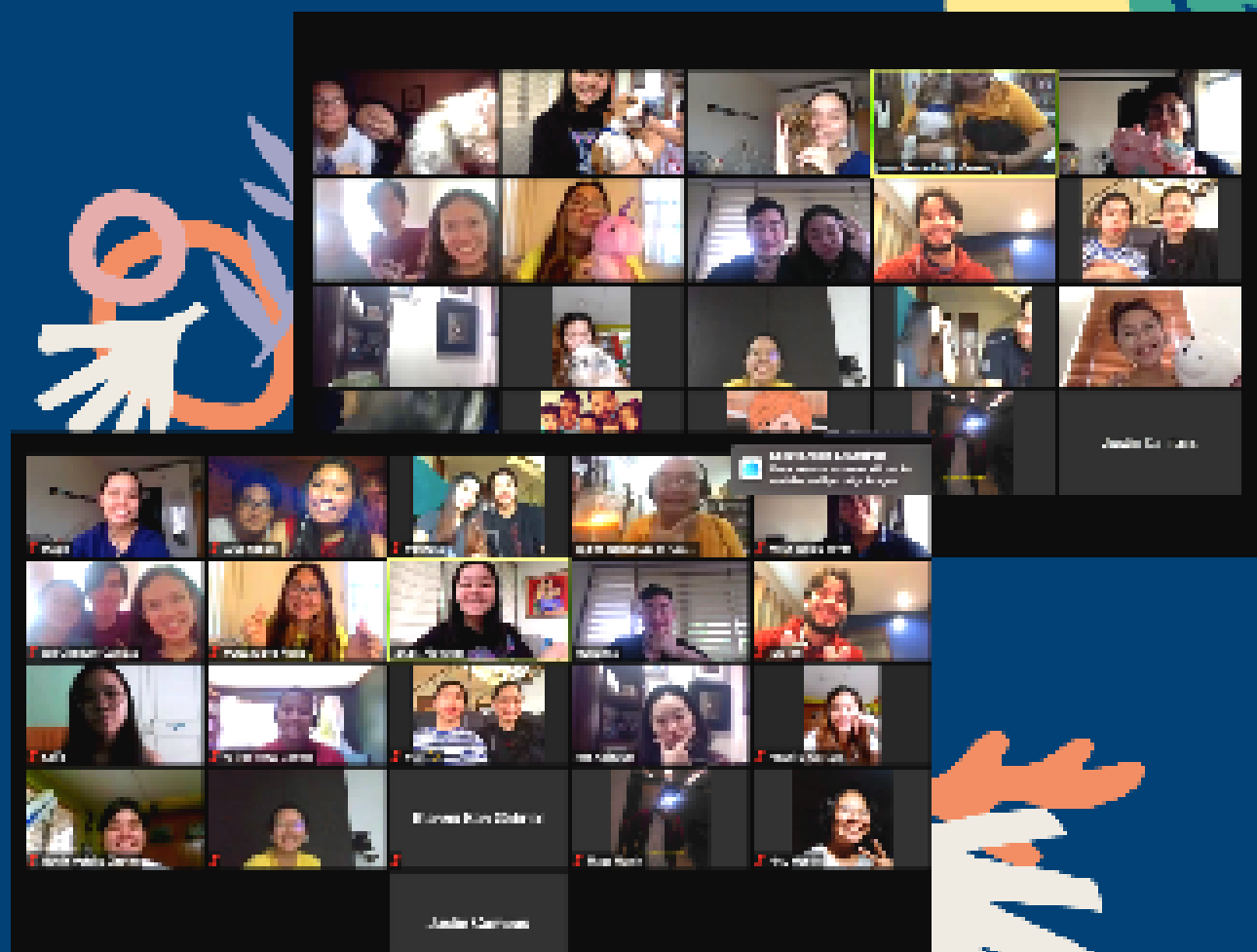
Nothing is more practical than finding God, than  
Falling in love  
In a quite absolute, final way.  
What are you in love with,  
What seizes your imagination, will  
Affect everything.  
It will decide  
What will get you out of bed in the morning,  
What you do with your evenings,  
How you spend your weekends,  
What you read, whom you know,  
What breaks your heart,  
What amazes you with joy and gratitude.  
Fall in love, stay in love  
And it will decide everything.

This poem helps me work through the Examen as I reflect on my desires and the grace asked and received especially in this time of pandemic.

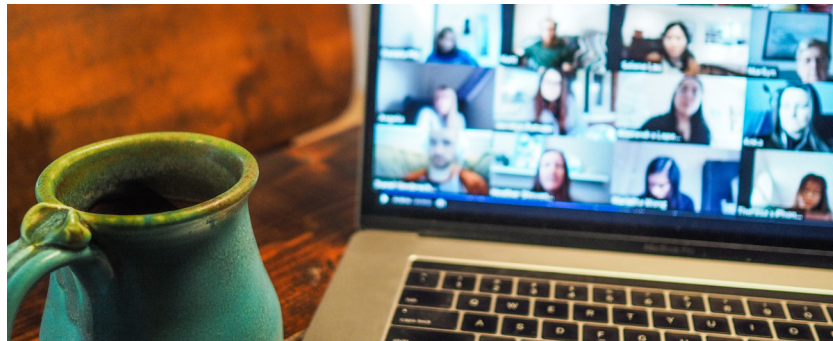


# 26 May 2020 Magis Youth Online Prayer Meeting

**Thank you to those who joined the  
1st Magis Youth Online Prayer Meeting!**



# Magis Youth Reflection on Prayer Meeting via Zoom



**T**he Magis Youth had the opportunity to have Prayer Meetings with Father James via Zoom. 26 youth members participated in both meetings held on May 26 and June 11.

## Gita Manuel

The prayer meetings facilitated by Magis Deo helped me look continuously at the brighter side of the picture without invalidating the fact that the darker side still exists. It comforts me very much because I remember I am not alone. It is not only my fellow youth who listen and understand; it is also, most importantly, God.

## Jeri Cambas

The Magis Youth Prayer Meetings were nice opportunities that made me realize a lot of things, especially considering the situation we are all in right now because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It made me feel relieved that we Magis Youth are healthy and safe in these times, and it made me realize again how blessed and lucky we are to be safe in our homes with our families, with food to eat and internet to enjoy, which not everyone has right now. It also strikes me how we all shared the same sentiments about those directly affected by the virus and the recent issues affecting the Filipino people. It reminded me that there are many other people who have bigger problems than we do; I was grateful for the opportunity to pray for them with Fr. James and my fellow youth. Having these prayer meetings have allowed me to center myself and my faith, even for just a few hours, when mostly, the past weeks left me feeling restless. Moreover, these prayer meetings made me feel more hopeful for what is to come. After all, God is always walking with us to and from different places and struggles. All that's left is for us to find Him in all things.

## Veronica Ricohermoso

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused us to stay in our homes for our safety; thus, we are not allowed to gather for bonding, leisure and even for church. Thankfully, we have

advanced technology that allows us to communicate even when we are apart. We are still able to hear the word of God through our Zoom prayer meetings.

I am grateful for those who organize our meetings because together with the Magis Youth, we can reflect, and we are reminded of what God is telling us during these trying times. I am also glad that our meetings help us open up about what we experience and feel in this situation.

## Mitos delos Reyes

It was another nice time to share with each other our feelings and how we approach this pandemic. It gives a feeling of togetherness as we find out that we are not going through this problem alone, and a feeling of hope since it showed that Jesus is with us even in these trying times.

## Janais Aldeguer

The Magis Youth Prayer meetings were a great way for us to communicate, relate, and empathize with one another in our vastly different situations during quarantine. Although we all have quite different lives, I leave the meeting feeling I have people with me who also experience similar problems and revelations. It makes me miss the monthly physical meetings we have. But to look at the lockdown more lightly, I'm grateful that it has given people more time and opportunity to share (when it may be a bit harder to share in person). Lastly, it would be incomplete if we do not mention Father James' bubblyness that really brought the youth members out of their shell.

## Fiona Mella

It's a new experience for me to attend a prayer meeting on Zoom, but it's also a very memorable one. Both meetings have given me the chance to rethink my decisions and choices during this pandemic. It has also given me a way to be more open with God and reach out to Him more. Living in a different country hasn't been easy, but seeing my friends really made me happy. I'm grateful to have been a part of these meetings and I hope that we have more in the future.

# Thoughts and Experiences While on ECQ



## Jericho Aguirre

### 1. How was your experience of the ECQ and Covid-19? What are your feelings and their impact on you?

Because of the ECQ and Covid-19, it doesn't feel like it's summer even when it already is. I can't go out when I want to or see my friends. It feels like this pandemic will go on forever. What if they don't find a vaccine? I'm a bit scared, but I have faith that it will end someday.

### 2. What was negative about this experience? How did it impact on yourself and your family?

I miss my friends. It makes me sad that I can't see them.

### 3. What was positive about this experience? How did it impact on yourself and your family?

Because of this experience, I have more time to rest. If ECQ didn't happen, I have to train for football twice a day (but not every day). Because of this experience my faith also grew stronger, as we prayed the rosary and celebrated mass every day. It gives me hope.

### 4. Facing the new world, and starting over again, what new skills, values, attitudes, insights and experiences do you have now that can equip you as you journey with the challenges of the new world?

Teamwork. We can get through this pandemic together as one team, as one family. I will do what I can to help my family.

### 5. What kind of help or support do you need from your family?

I want my family to be more understanding and patient with me.

## Therese Aguirre

Is it possible to be realistic and hopeful at the same time? How?

Hopeful. My batch is graduating this school year. This means that it was our last sports fest, our last school fair, our last Chinese New Year Celebration... our last year in high school. Days passed and we became closer to the end. I made sure to make the most out of every moment.

Realistic. January 12, 2020 Taal erupted. Its eruption took away two weeks of my last high school year. Along with that, it robbed us of almost all our lasts. It was our recollection, graduation ball and graduation that were left. There was nothing my batch could do about it. We could only accept what had already happened and move on. It was okay because we focused on what we had left anyway.

Hopeful. March 9, 2020 was the start of my batch's three-day retreat in Quezon City. The first of our remaining lasts... Covid-19 started becoming a serious threat in the Philippines. By that time, there were 6 people positive with Covid-19 in the Philippines – one of them the first Filipino who was positive due to local transmission. Our parents were already worried about letting us go to the retreat. Despite that, the school pushed through with their plan. I was excited. I hoped for our retreat to push through.

Realistic. March 10, 2020. The number of Covid-19 cases rose, and there was now a total of 33 people positive in the Philippines. It was announced that the last day of our retreat will no longer push through. They had to change the planned activities and jump straight to the deep and essential ones. It wasn't safe anymore. We had to go home.

March 13, the last day of school, cancelled. Graduation practice, cancelled. Graduation ball, also cancelled. Graduation was moved to May 9, but was eventually cancelled as well.

Malas, I thought. I felt unlucky. My emotions took over me. I was upset. Frustrated. Angry. Sad. Overwhelmed. Questions always appeared in my head, especially now that I have more time to try to answer them. "Why? Why did it have to happen to my batch? Why do things like these have to happen in the first place? Why did they have to take away all our 'lasts'? I worked so hard my entire high school life, and I won't even get to end it properly." I was hurt. I saw it coming... the cancellation of everything we had left as a batch, but I still got really hurt. Instead of crying with them, hugging them, saying goodbye to them, I'm stuck at home. All I can do is message or call. I can't even do that properly because of our slow internet. Besides all that, I'm scared.

*Continued to page 14*



# Finding the Positive

Timmi Aguirre, Magis Youth

**I remember before the ECQ, I was supposed to have my last day of school.**

Before my alarm started to ring, my mom went in the room and told us not to get up anymore because classes were suspended due to Covid-19. The first ever self-quarantine was announced March 15, 2020, a Sunday. I was so furious because the next day was supposedly my Prom. I was one of the organizers in charge of the program along with other classmates. Of course, the school had to cancel all events. We all felt so furious and devastated, especially me because I had a gown made. It was also summer! A time to be with family and not worry about school.

Finding the positive in this experience, I would say more rest and being more creative in every way possible. Every day I write down the things I do in a journal. So far all I've done during the quarantine is cooking, cleaning, exercising, and arts

and crafts. Another positive hobby is watching K-drama with my mom, sister and our two helpers. It's one of the things we look forward to every day. After we finish one show, we scout for a new one and this keeps us up all night. As a family, we started going to mass every day at 9 am to pray and ask God to stop this Covid-19 era. This helps me stay calm and not worry because I know that God won't put us in a situation we can't handle. During this time, I also spend a lot of time with my dog, but it also affects me negatively because my family tells me to avoid him because I might start getting asthma.

I honestly can't wait to leave the house and go shopping, eat out, and visit my grandparents again. I'm an outdoor person so this quarantine is particularly challenging for me. I know this time is not the best, but I don't think it's the worst either. All I can do is wait a little bit longer and cherish this time I have at home.

## *Thoughts and Experience While on ECQ, continued from page 13*

"When will this end? What if one of us gets the virus? Mom has to go to the grocery once a week. What if she gets the virus and brings it home? Will my dad still earn when companies are starting to let go of workers? Will mom still earn? Will everything be okay someday? When it's all over, can I still do my normal activities? Will the new normal last forever?" Even as I stay at home, I feel so tired, nervous, stressed and burned out.

Hopeful. With all these emotions bothering me, I need my family to be just a bit more understanding if there are times I want to stay alone, times I want to just lay in bed, times when I just want to call and message my friends, and watch shows or videos to make me happy. There are times I might seem too negative or too down, but I want them to understand that just because I am upset doesn't mean I'm not trying to be positive. Just because I am upset, it doesn't mean I am not grateful for what I have right now. I need them to be patient with me; I need emotional support from my family. Actions as simple as hugging me, pag-aakbay, patting my head or my shoulder, kissing me in the cheek, are enough to comfort me. It's those actions that make me feel they are really present for me.

One thing my family already does to make me feel they are truly present is doing a few things in my daily routine together. Every day we make sure we attend mass and pray the rosary as a family. I have become more grateful despite the virus. The virus made me realize and see better all the blessings I have been taking for granted like both my parents being able to earn, being able to eat three times a day and eat snacks too, having internet and a TV to keep me entertained sometimes, and more. Another thing my family does together is watching K-dramas.

Seeing how happy they are while they watch makes me forget about the pandemic even just for a moment. Spending a lot more time with my family is definitely something positive about my experience of the virus. Although "nowhere is safe" because of the virus (not even the surfaces in the house), I feel safe at home with my family.

Another positive experience is being able to rest – without worrying about deadlines and assessments, and being able to rest from the busy world, the busy schedules. I love resting, and I finally have a lot of time to do that. Unfortunately, it now feels a bit too much.

Realistic. After almost two months, I have learned to accept what the corona virus has brought upon my batch, my family and everyone else around the world. I have no choice anyway but to accept.

Hopeful. Listing down what I am grateful for every day has become a habit of mine already, and the pandemic allowed me to see many more things I should be thankful for. This habit I have can help me face the challenges of the new world. My faith in God can also give me hope despite the changes we may face in the future with the "new normal."

To be honest, although I have learned to accept our situation now, I still can't seem to accept it as my "new normal." I don't know if this is wrong. I don't know if it's just me being hopeful, but not realistic. I'm not sure if I'm hoping for something that might never come. Which again brings me back to my first question...

Is it possible to be realistic and hopeful at the same time? How?

# Let hope in

Timmi Aguirre, Magis Youth



**H**ope. I hear this word so often, especially during this time. It is what we need after all. People say, “We need to look for hope in difficult times.” I did not get to graduate like all the other students of Batch 2020. We didn’t have an official ceremony to properly culminate our high school journey. It seemed like we were forced to get ready for a new chapter without even ending the last one. This was one of many things I lost during the pandemic. I admit that everything I lost in the pandemic is nothing compared to what or whom others have lost, but what I lost was a big deal to me.

I decided to keep it all to myself as much as I can. Fr. James Gascon mentioned in his talk that denial is one of the primary defenses of people – an automatic response to reality. Denial was exactly my first way of coping with the situation. I knew how dangerous the virus was, but I thought it will all end soon. I thought that even if it was a scary virus, people will get well and a cure will be found, and it will just be like the flu. But I was wrong, and things were getting worse. Cases of Covid-19 in the Philippines started rising quickly. I lost hope thinking “hope isn’t making me realistic. It was making me sadder.”

Like many, I kept losing hope, and I stayed hopeless for quite a long time. I was overwhelmed by all the emotions I was feeling. I felt stuck – unable to do anything, unable to move on and move forward. People tried comforting me, telling me I

should just be more grateful for what I have. They started doing the “at least” game... saying “At least this. At least that.”

I found myself more stuck, still overwhelmed by all my emotions – a few more emotions added. Besides all the fear, grief, hopelessness, and anxiety, I now felt guilty too because the “at least” game made me think I was an ungrateful person. It made me feel weak, because some are going through worse but they stay strong, while I am doing fine yet I felt hopeless and sad. I felt I was so “OA” about the situation. I thought to myself that for a short period of time, I changed but in a negative way. I was embarrassed to tell anyone about it – about the emotions I felt.

I started repressing my feelings. It was another primary defense of people according to Fr. James. I told myself I shouldn’t be sad. I should be happy. I need to be grateful.... I was lying to myself about how I felt, and it only made me feel worse.

A few days before my supposed graduation date, my grandparents asked me to write a reflection paper. And for the first time, I poured out all the emotions I couldn’t tell people, and all the thoughts I was afraid to share. I was honest with myself about how I felt, and honest with others too. I felt better, like a heavy weight in my chest was removed, but I didn’t really regain any hope.

The day of my graduation was coming, but we couldn't have a proper ceremony. Instead, a few people in my class decided to plan a batch "graduation" Zoom. I was asked to give a speech because they knew I couldn't say no if they asked. But deep inside I didn't want the responsibility of giving a meaningful, positive message when I felt so lost and hopeless. With my state, I found it so hard to write. I had to reflect for days to think of something nice to say.

I missed my batch. We should've practiced for our graduation. We should've had our graduation. We should've had more time to spend with each other. I should have been able to celebrate with them. And then I realized... I focused so much on what should have or could have, instead of what we did have together – all the time we did spend with each other, all the celebrations we did have before the pandemic, and many more. Suddenly I was able to say all these positive and nice things in my speech. I felt hopeful and happy again.

How did I become positive again? (1) I finally accepted the emotions I was feeling. I accepted that my feelings are valid and normal. I deeply appreciated when Fr. James said that our way of coping is normal. It is the situation we are in that is abnormal, and my way of responding to it is how many people have responded as well. (2) I didn't look for blessings I have that others don't because I am more privileged as I was told. I just opened my eyes wide enough to see the blessings I have, still have, and gained during this time.

People seem to think being positive is being happy always. Being resilient is always being tough. I learned and I was reminded by Fr. James' talk that that isn't the case. I'm just

human. Being positive and hopeful could be me accepting that I am sad but also believing that things will get better. Being resilient could be me going through so much struggle and stress but being able to recover despite all the obstacles.

People say, "You may find hope in difficult times." I don't think they're right. Hope, to me, isn't something you look for. It's not a "feeling of expectation or a desire for a particular thing to happen." I think hope is innate. It's just naturally present, but when things don't go our way, pride creates a wall trying to defend ourselves from getting hurt. And when we're too hurt or lost or confused, the wall grows tall enough and strong enough to completely block out hope.

Going back to my experience, I felt bad about the quarantine because it took away my graduation. All I wanted was to properly end my academic year like all other past seniors, but I didn't get to. I was really hurt so I seemed to have created a wall blocking hope from entering my heart. By doing that, I felt like I blocked myself from feeling pain. But after reflecting and realizing that there are so much more than graduation like my experiences with my friends, the celebrations that we did have together and the times I did spend with them, I just appreciated what I gained instead of moping about what we couldn't have. I got rid of the obstacle that prevented me from hoping to cope well with quarantine. I got rid of the walls I created as a defense to protect my heart from hurt. And I let hope in once again.

Hope is always there beside you, with you and in you. Sometimes your heart is just too hurt, scared, angry, or sad to let it in again. Stop looking for hope. Let it in.



*Photo by Kristijan Arsov*



## Working with Holiness

Lilian Collado, Song of Ruth BCGG



Photo by Grant Whitty

**I**n the younger adult years of my life when I was most productive, I was focused on nothing else but to be financially successful in my career in order to contribute to a better and comfortable life for the family that my husband and I were creating. But in the inner recesses of my heart, there was (and still is) a great desire to be holy, not in the eyes of men but only in the eyes of God. Thus, to satisfy that inner need, I did some charitable works... which were rare because of my busyness to work for financial gain.

There was so much work to be done then... finished my residency training, prepared for the specialty board exams, built my own clinic, and developed connections with people who could help me build my career. On top of these, there were important relationships I must build with some unsympathetic, domineering, and arrogant Senior Consultants, as well as with my own fault-finding, condescending patients and their relatives. In my mind then, what was important was to earn as much as I could and simply ignore the upsetting words and actions of the offending people around me... just live and work each day to survive. And as everyone would say — “*talagang ganyan ang buhay.*” And I accepted that part of my life as it was... stressful and unfulfilling.

More than a year after I started my solo practice, I began thinking how I could find more time to do something charitable to satisfy my desire to be “holy.” But thinking further, I realized that my two desires cannot be separate from the other. I cannot work as a physician and later, look for available time to do charitable work! Both desires must come to reality at the same time!

Praying for this to happen, I was able to see that I did not need to find time to do charitable work separate from my line of work. My work itself would be my path to holiness.

I began to change my attitude in my work as a physician. With effort and slowly, I taught myself to slow down and be lighthearted; and recognize the good that resulted from my work that benefitted the patient more than me. I strove to see the goodness in every arrogant man I met which was only obscured by his overbearing trait. And with the condescending patients and their relatives, I made every effort to befriend them, spending extra time outside my duty hours to converse with them, instead of ignoring them.

As years passed, my patience increased a thousand-fold; my tolerance and my friendliness improved. I became a good-seeker and a good-finder as well. My sensitivity, understanding and caring for the needs of patients and other people around me grew continuously, all because I made use of my work to lead me to the path of righteousness, guiding me to the holiness I seek.

I believe that whatever work anyone does, be it as simple as cooking and serving a meal or as grand as building a palace, that work will lead one to holiness if he undertakes his work doing what is right, good and just; doing it for the good of others more than for his own good; and doing it mindfully, willingly, wholeheartedly, and joyfully. Not only will the work be outwardly effective and successful; it will be inwardly fulfilling and satisfying.

# Debriefing Exercise for Families

Virna Aguirre, daughter of Ed & Tatic Castillo, Cana BCGG



## **H**ow was your experience of the ECQ and Covid-19? What are your feelings and impact on you?

In the beginning of ECQ and Covid-19, we read a lot of news articles from different sources and watched videos to learn more about this virus, how to prevent our getting it, and how to protect ourselves from the virus. Up to now, there is still fear that when we go out, we may easily get it or become a carrier without knowing it. Because of this, every time we do errands like going to the grocery, we follow all measures that may prevent our getting the virus. There is also a feeling of sadness and restlessness about not being able to help because of many limitations brought about by ECQ.

## **What was negative about this experience? How did it impact on yourself and your family?**

There are uncertainties/worries, which bring stress to the members of the household:

1. Health: What if I get sick? Where can I go? When will this pandemic end? When will the vaccine be available?
2. Work: What are the possibilities of losing my work? What if this happens? What are the changes that may happen in my work?
3. Finances: Will I have enough to provide for our daily needs, education?
4. Education of the kids: Can the kids manage a full school year of online learning? How will this affect the kids knowing that they cannot be with their friends?

## **What was positive about this experience? How did it impact on yourself and your family?**

There is more family time. There are things we could do now with the children compared to the “normal” schedule that we had. Our family joins online daily masses, and we find strength knowing that God is with us and will protect us. We get to join the kids in some activities they are interested in like playing soccer, watching K-drama, dancing, and more.

## **Facing the new world and starting over again, what new skills, values, attitudes, insights and experiences do you have now that can equip you as you journey with the challenges of the new world?**

Facing the new normal, patience, openness, and positivity would be necessary.

As a parent-teacher, I think my training on mental health and mindfulness will help as I check on the kids and have meaningful conversations with them, and making sure everyone's concern is addressed and processed.

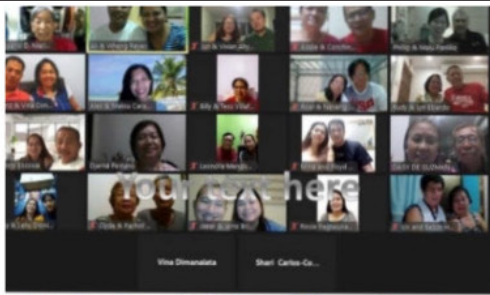
The WFH set-up is also a challenge since I see the home as a place to rest and enjoy time with family. Now, home is also my workplace. Time management would be helpful.

## **What kind of help or support do you need from your family?**

I would probably need a lot of understanding and patience for now since I just started WFH, and preparing for online distance learning is giving me so much stress.

Note: Randy and I answered the questions together except the last 2.

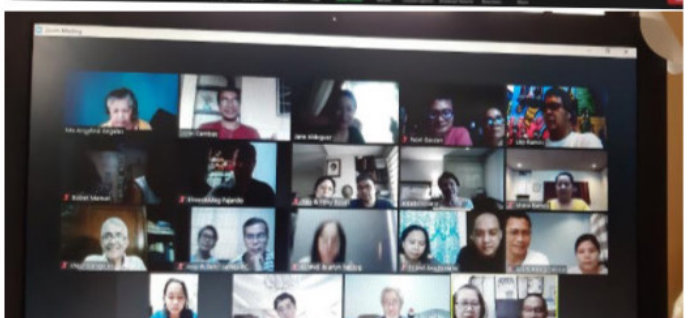
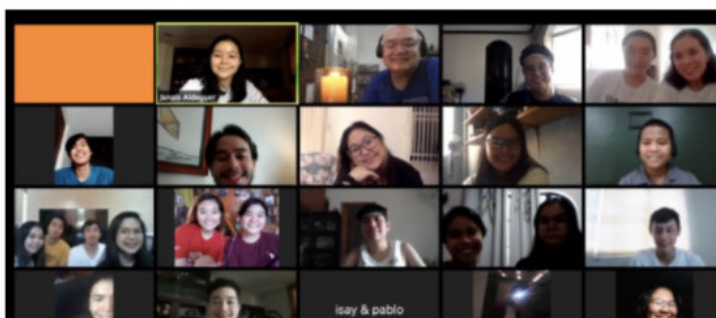
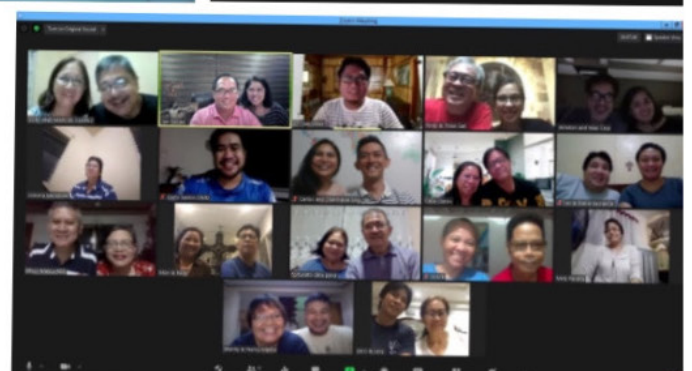




**Interface (Francis/St. Peter & Mustard Seed)**  
June 12 2020



**Samaritans, Magnificat  
& Genesis**





# Our Praxis in the New Normal

Levy & Roxanne Espiritu, Transfiguration BCGG

**T**he Covid crisis not only disrupted our lives; it has practically overhauled everything about our lives. We were forced to restrict our movements outside of our homes, review our priorities, and realize what are truly essential for us.

For most of us, we rediscovered two important aspects in our life: God and Family.

We have realized the value of time, health and relationships.

We became more aware and more grateful for the everyday blessings, no matter how grand or insignificant.

We suddenly find ourselves with a lot of time to spare and to manage.

One of the things that we are grateful for is the gift of community – our Magis Deo Community.

As head of the Praxis Ministry, we realized the importance of revitalizing the faith sharing activity in the BCGG despite the challenges of doing it virtually. In the initial weeks of the lockdown, we ran a survey among the BCGGs and were delighted to find out that majority of the BCGGs managed to conduct their meetings virtually mostly via Zoom. This shows the fervor that continues to ignite every Magis member, and the desire to stay connected in this community that helps enrich our spirituality in every way.

The developing practice among the BCGGs, allowed us to take advantage of this new norm and meet with the BCGG Shepherds to provide familiarization and orientation in conducting BCGG meetings via Zoom.

For most of the BCGGs' experience, the virtual way of meeting opened doors to opportunities like finding time to meet regularly and reconnecting with other members who, in the pre-Covid times, became inactive or were inconsistent with

their attendance due to time, distance, and other logistical limitations.

Headed by our Pastoral Chair Couple and combining the efforts of the Community Services Ministry and the Formation Ministry, we at the Praxis Ministry pursued the plan for the inter-sectoral BCGG Interface to further promote the community spirit and to continue to fortify the effectiveness of the BCGGs as focal points in the growth of its members.

As Praxis means "a discerned practice," we revisited the Group Praxis Program and re-assessed the structure on how best to implement the program amidst the new normal. The Group Praxis Program aims to help BCGG members live out gospel values in their daily lives and we continue to utilize the Sacred Space series in helping us increase the awareness of God's active presence in our lives as well as centering the community more clearly on God.

Meanwhile, Interfaces among BCGGs across the sectors will continue and, thanks to Covid, we will now be able to virtually conduct this regularly, at least bi-monthly. This activity will enable our members to experience the Magis fellowship and get acquainted with other members in the community thereby strengthening spiritual bonds and finding source of inspiration and courage from one another.

While using the virtual format for BCGG meetings continues to be a drawback for some of us, we are confident that our innermost desire to find support to nurture our Ignatian spirituality and reconnect with our companions in faith will far outweigh the technical challenges.

Confronting the new norm, we continue with our mission *to help build God's Kingdom here on earth in response to His unconditional love and His call and invitation in the Ignatian spirit of magis (more) as a community, as individuals, as couples, and as families.*

# While on Covid Lockdown

Leslie Gatchalian, Psalm 98 BCGG

**I got a calendar alert reminding me of my flight to Europe for my daughter's masteral graduation, an event we have planned for almost a year.** I took a screenshot of the reminder and sent it to her.

Such were constant happenings during the Covid lockdown. From mid-March when the lockdown was first implemented, to the present, I've had a multitude of phone alerts for several scheduled but now canceled activities. Many of these I had forgotten, having accepted the consequences of community quarantine due to Covid.

A long-planned reunion with batchmates, a vacation, conferences and other eagerly awaited events... gone with the wind. These were replaced by a dizzying bombardment of Viber messages, Zoom meetings, Google Meets, emailed protocols, warnings, instructions, and other virtual meets that are a challenge to immediately learn and include in your suddenly cloistered life. After getting the hang of it, your brain ceases to accept more, and you just want to get out and breathe fresh air. But even that became almost impossible with the barrier of a mask between your face and the breeze.

What a life! And soon, just the thought of another webinar in the middle of the night sends jitters down your spine. Losing track of time and being at home daily has given me a jetlagged traveler's feeling. It came to a point when I wanted to just drop everything and indulge in what is helpful and relevant during this pandemic. This was a frantic move to capture what was deemed lost or could be gone.

To top it all, Covid hit home – colleagues, family and close friends have lost their lives. The devastation does not spare anybody and has hit hard those who battle it. Doctors are made and doctors die, and only a number will experience a pandemic like this. We were never truly ready nor trained for something of this magnitude. Pandemics of this extent were fictional at most.

At the pandemic's onset, even doctors were asked to stop their clinics. Unimaginable! There is no emergency during a pandemic, and, to help others, one must be protected first.

Life transitioned into a covid-centric abrupt halt of everything one was doing. In the hospital, an atmosphere short

of panic and paranoia pervaded the halls when colleagues were tagged PUI's and PUM's even before the lockdown. Shockingly it became a time when youthfulness was an added necessity. A little more than half of practitioners belong to the YOLDs or young old age group, and these seniors can only help from a distance, away from the hospital setting. Thus, a good number have contemplated retirement, a thought never entertained before. As they say, doctors don't retire, their practice retires them. This became more of a reality than ever. Suddenly, everybody is mandated to stay safe and stay put, senior doctors and even young doctors with special situations included!

In college, I was dictated to take up medicine instead of fine arts because my father deemed it to be a stable job and a service that is always needed. But this pandemic has taught me what is real and true! It is only God who dictates everything.

Getting tired of all the anxieties and fear of this unknown pandemic, one clings to the sole animator of the whole universe. Immersing myself in God's mercy and protection and believing that He is in control, I prayed that He will make this pandemic come to pass, just as abruptly as it came and stopped us all in the middle of what we were doing.

The Covid pandemic was like a taste of death coming like a thief in the night. Soldiers fell, and those still standing were very aware that they too could fall anytime.

Looking at my calendar again, I felt there was so much wasted time, so many unaccomplished things, and so many more undone. All the could've's and must've's looked back at me. It is so surreal! I pinched myself and the pain was real. I am still alive and surely should be living. Reality struck me -- to survive, one must let life flow in. If I allow the devastation to suck the life out of me, I truly will be dead even if I still breathe.

I researched on how to avoid cabin fever and kept myself busy the best way I could. Strictly following a daily routine of prayer, exercise, hobbies, housework, paperwork, entertainment and social media, and quieting down helped for a while. But then I would slowly lose track of meaning again.



Going through Palm Sunday and spending the entire Lenten and Easter season in GCQ allowed me to discover things about me. God was good in allowing me to discover something in me that will lift me up. With nothing leafy to wave on Palm Sunday, I took to my unused colored pencils and sketched palm leaves to be blessed. This started unraveling my long-buried interest in color sketching and watercolor painting; and I unexpectedly found enormous endorphin release from these activities. God allowed me to find what He has placed in me. I found myself unabashedly sharing what pleasantly surprised me. I was happy, that was all there was to it, and I wanted to share the happiness I felt.

Retiring, if ever, might not be that boring after all. I might be wearing a watercolor scent though, but ain't that living wonderfully in colors?!?

This unique and unknown Covid road has opened my eyes that there is someone in control. Life must be lived as it unfolds daily. Only God knows what's in store for us. This is something I don't want to think about anymore. It is not for me to worry about. Today is today and tomorrow... only God knows. I savor and am thankful for what He generously gives every day in this borrowed life. Tomorrow should be a day spent with another set of graces and blessings from Him, and not a day wasted at looking back and thinking about the could've's and must've's. God owns time and He loves us.



## Trinity

Chacho Angeles, Thessalonians BCGG

Favored by the ancients, the triangle, an oft-used Symbol of the Trinity, is a basic depiction of the Power and fullness of space, of presence and being, Of unity and oneness, in love, of self out-pouring and Self-giving. As I meditate on this mystery, and John's Gospel passages, the lines of the triangle blur. The Historical is Jesus, incarnated God. The Christ, is Immortal, has been from the beginning of time, Eternal. The Spirit is the breath of life, the Word That creates all things, from nothing to something.

Without the lines, the triangle is lost, and all that is Left is space and time, encompassing all things, is Of all time, immanent, and yet is above, not quite, Transcendent of time and space. And flowing in and Outwards of this oneness is love, outpouring to all of Creation, to space, to plants and animals and to man.

But why man? The incarnation, special commands, Teachings, instructions, example of a self-giving love. The nature of the beast is to prowl and growl Stalk, devour a prey to feed a hunger, to fight off Others to keep a territory, to maintain a harem, to Protect its young. The strongest and biggest, the Fastest and most weaponized survive and rule. But man is ambivalent, stuck in the evolutionary Cracks, neither beast nor angel, neither matter nor Spirit, broken, ever changing into he knows what. A child nonetheless, a special and relational one. He can soar to the heavens in dance and song. And He can love, as the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit.

## My Heart

Loving Jesus,  
Help me look inside my heart.  
If it is closed, pry it open.  
If it is in the dark, enlighten it,  
If it is hard, soften it,  
If it is cold, warm it up,  
If it is anxious, assure it,  
If it is afraid, make it fearless,  
If it is clueless, make it mindful,  
If it is directionless, give it purpose,  
If it is vengeful, make it merciful,  
If it is hateful, teach it to love, and  
Transform it into a compassionate and  
Loving heart like Your most sacred heart.  
Amen.

## Oneness

Lord Jesus,  
Being one with You is a vision, a goal and a means,  
For this world-bound, troubled and wounded heart,  
Unknowning and ignorant, self-centered and proud,  
Surviving, yet capable of soaring to the heavens;  
The one-ness of the wind, the rain and ice, the waves,  
That of the darkness of night and the brightness of day,  
The sun, the moon and stars, and all the celestial bodies,  
Of the mountains, trees, rivers, plains, rocks and sand;  
The one-ness of the shepherd, sheepfold and the sheep,  
That of the husband and wife, the parent and the children,  
The boss and the worker, the teacher and the student,  
The doctor and the patient, the leader and the follower;  
The one-ness of joy and sadness, well-being and pain,  
That of peace and turmoil, contentment and want,  
Disappointment and fulfillment, failure and success,  
Of togetherness and separation, of love and hatred;  
The one-ness of the mind and heart, body and spirit,  
The demons and the angels, hell, purgatory and heaven,  
That of the creator and creation, of evil and good,  
That of sin and grace, and of death and life.

Loving and good shepherd Jesus,  
Show me how to partake of this meal You prepared  
For me and for the rest of my brothers and sisters, that  
I may be flesh of Your flesh and blood of Your blood.  
You are my good shepherd, show me the way with  
All the decisions I make daily, minor or significant,  
That these may be according to Your will.  
You are the light that illuminates the way that  
I should tread, Your way. You are the bread that  
Gives my body and spirit sustenance and strength  
That I may live as You taught. I am Your servant and  
Messenger, send me out as You will, that I may  
Serve my brothers and sisters and give glory to You.

Abide in me and make Your home in me my God  
That I may have the peace and joy You promised.  
Let Your spirit blow through the trees and the plants  
In the yard, through the windows like a soothing  
Breeze to cool my troubled, anxious and aching heart;  
Let Your spirit guide me through the maze that is  
Life. Let Your spirit invigorate my tired body, soul,  
And guide me in the fulfillment of your mission;  
Let me pass through this life loving as You love me,  
Living as You lived, dying as You died, and finally  
Returning to that heavenly home where I may dwell  
With You, My God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

# Covid-19 Pandemic: Assistance to Olandes Suyuan

Philip & Malu Panlilio, Mustard Seed BCGG

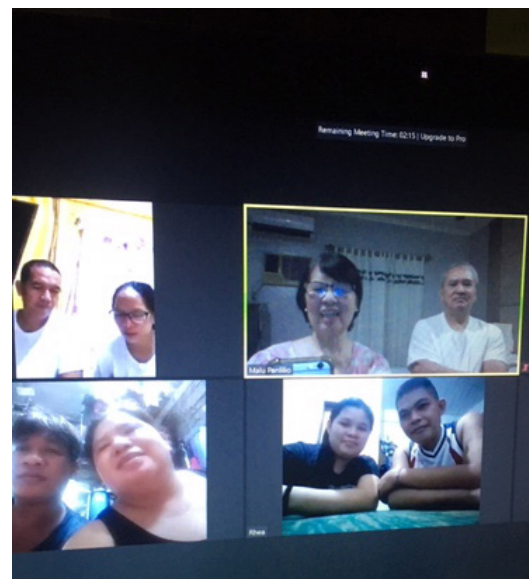
**M**ustard Seed BCGG reached out to 63 families from Olandes Suyuan who lost income for their daily sustenance due to Covid-19.

Most of Olandes Suyuan members are daily wage earners in messenger services and factories, as well as lavanderas, stay-out maids, street sweepers, pedicab and 'Angkas' drivers.

A total of 15 kilos of rice and 1 whole chicken per family were given to 63 families last 18 April 2020 and 5 May 2020. Because of social distancing, arrangements were made through a store in Olandes for the purchase and distribution of the goods, with Olandes Suyuan members having a claim stub per family.

Pastoral care continued through texting of prayer reflection points. A bigger problem is the conduct of the regular prayer meetings. Despite constraints in the cost of having data plans for those who have mobile phones, three (out of six) household groups conducted prayer meetings on 30 May, 13 June, 16 June and 27 June using Zoom and Messenger. Though limited in participants, the online prayer meeting represents a good beginning in keeping the faith in this difficult and abnormal time. Gratitude to God for the gift of family and good health (no Covid-19 cases among Olandes Suyuan members), and the grace of time for prayer, especially family rosaries, was the prevailing sentiment despite the income losses suffered.

Salamat sa Diyos!





## Magis Graduates of Batch 2020



**Jaime Alfredo Vinluan**  
BS Physical Therapy  
University of Santo Tomas



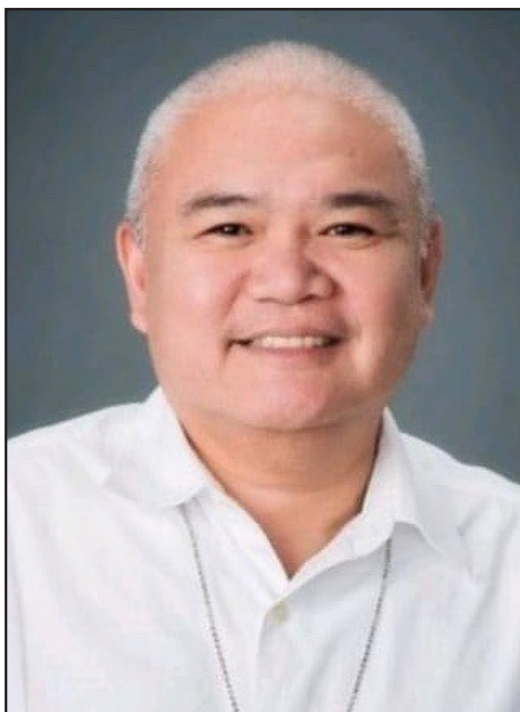
**Brix Pol Remulta Sangalang, M.D.**  
Doctor of Medicine  
De La Salle Medical and  
Health Sciences Institute



**Juan Angelo Vinluan**  
BS Communication Technology  
Management  
Ateneo de Manila University



**Michelle Anne Yared Naldo**  
AB Communications, Minor in French  
Ateneo de Manila University



**Fr. James Wenceslao U. Gascon, S.J.,**  
S.T.L. (Summa cum Laude)  
Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.)  
Ateneo de Manila University



**Charlene Anne S. Ng Sy**  
AB Communication Arts  
University of Sto. Tomas



**Manuel Alexi Yared Naldo**  
Senior High School  
St Paul College of Makati



**Isabella Maria "Cham Cham" V. Chamorro**  
BS Interior Design  
University of Sto. Tomas



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## Magis Graduates of Batch 2020



**Christian Ivan Castro**  
Senior High School  
Our Lady Of Fatima University



**Callia Marie Hans Gacias**  
Senior High School  
PAREF Woodrose School



**Patricia V. Leccio**  
Senior Highschool  
Pasig Catholic College



**Jemimah Mikhaella Gildo**  
BS Business Administration  
Major in Export Management  
De La Salle-College of St. Benilde



**Denise Leianne Marie Atienza Parada**  
BS Accountancy (2nd degree)  
University of New South Wales, Australia



**Jad Derrik Obordo de Leon**  
BS Information Technology  
University of Sto. Tomas



**Noelle Aeshia B. Gascon**  
Junior High School  
Immaculate Conception School



**Zoe Therese Gagatiga**  
Senior High School  
The Beacon Academy Laguna



**Raymond Andrew Tan Dimayuga**  
BS Mechanical Engineering  
De La Salle University Manila