

Magis

Formation for Mission

**Stewardship
Simplicity
Sharing
Service**

Official Publication of the
Magis Deo Community
June 2023 Issue



The Lord's Bounty Harvest

The Lord manifested His generosity when He unexpectedly sent 23 couples to the Suyuan Class 2023 in Olandes

Olandes Magis Youth Outreach

A morning of values formation session on individual agency and collaboration

"Sleeping with Bread" or WHY do we need the Examen?

For what moment today am I most grateful?
For what moment today am I least grateful?

2023 Fund Raising Golf Tournament

A report on the Golf Tournament for funding of "external outreach" activities

Money Talk: Understanding and Managing Finances as a Couple

Financial Education and Coaching is necessary for couples

God finds us

Rhea Gaddi, Prodigal 102 BCGG



Photo credit: Antoniette Mendoza-Talosig

My boss, Toni, took the photo during our team building last year in Batangas. She was walking on the beach when these pieces caught her eye – a sea glass, a coral, and a pebble. Each is shaped uniquely and beautifully over time; a closer look shows one in the shape of a heart. She shared the photo with our team, and the images inspired me during my meditation that weekend. Inspiration found me; God found me.

The experience reminds me of an article I read years ago about finding God in all things. The theme resonates with the cover photo but perhaps in reverse – it is not only true that we find God even in the ordinary, but God also finds us, especially when we feel lost and cannot find the light or way. God finds us.

We have house chores, office work, and to-do lists that sometimes seem ordinary or mundane. I learned from retreats given by Magis Deo that I could experience these moments as my encounters with God.

Here is the article^[1], and I hope it inspires you to find God or celebrate when He finds you:

God in the ordinary moments

We talk often on this blog about finding God in all things; it's a basic tenet of Ignatian spirituality. Here's a reminder that "in all things" doesn't mean only in all the life-transforming or awe-inspiring things.

God doesn't want us to speak with Him just when we see big, beautiful, and amazing stuff. He wants to hear from us as we stand smack dab in the middle of the everyday ordinary stuff that makes up our day-to-day life. He wants us to realize He's waiting for us in the middle of the regular!

How many people can you pray for when you fold a load of laundry? How many times can you call down God's blessing upon your family as you pack their lunch or prepare dinner?

[Sheri Wohlfert shares this reminder on CatholicMom.com and shows us how finding God in the ordinary is a practical way for parents (and all of us) to meet God in prayer.]

[1] Article source: <https://www.ignationspirituality.com/god-in-the-ordinary-moments/amp/>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	5	COMCEL - June	23
<u><i>"Sleeping with Bread" or WHY do we need the Examen?</i></u>		<u><i>Within Reach: Reflections on Love</i></u>	24
By Tina Mossesgeld, Cana BCGG		By Arlyn Tabilog and Mark Maulit, Youth Ministry	
COUNCIL CORNER		<u><i>The Fathers' Children</i></u>	25
<u><i>FORMICOM</i></u>	7	By Vivian Flores and Nette Wong, Chronicles BCGG	
By Levy & Roxanne Espiritu, Council Overseer for Praxis / Transfiguration BCGG		OUTREACH MINISTRY	
<u><i>"2023 Fund Raising Golf Tournament"</i></u>	8	<u><i>The Lord's Bounty Harvest</i></u>	26
By Golf Tournament Committee & Finance Ministry		By Philip & Malu Panlilio, Mustard Seed BCGG	
REFLECTIONS		<u><i>Suyuan at Merville</i></u>	29
<u><i>The Big "G" in Golf</i></u>	15	FORMATION MINISTRY	
By Cesar Sangalang, Samaritans BCGG		<u><i>A Story Told, a Story Heard, by the Story We are Healed (A Holy Week Triduum Retreat)</i></u>	31
<u><i>Finding God's Presence in our Life (as an individual and as a couple)</i></u>	16	By Philip & Malu Panlilio, Formation Ministry / Mustard Seed BCGG	
By Jun & Vivian Ahjong, Finance Ministry Head / Shepherd, St. Peter BCGG		<u><i>Reflection Sharing</i></u>	33
<u><i>Why I am with the Magis Choir</i></u>	17	By Bib de Guzman, Archangel Gabriel BCGG	
By Flor Pison, John BCGG		<u><i>Reflection Sharing</i></u>	34
PROSE & POETRY	18	By Arlyn Tabilog, James Brother of John BCGG	
<u><i>The Heart</i></u>		YOUTH MINISTRY	
By Chacho Angeles, Matthew BCGG		<u><i>Olandes Magis Youth Ministry</i></u>	35
COMCEL - May	20	By Mark Maulit, Youth Ministry / Prodigal 102 BCGG	
<u><i>Discover the "Reachness" of our Family</i></u>	21	<u><i>Reflections on Youth Outreach</i></u>	36
By Jane Aldeguer, Chronicles BCGG		By Enzo, Magis Youth, son of Jojo & Rhea Gaddi of Prodigal 102 BCGG	
<u><i>Sharing Stories of Joy and Healing</i></u>	22	By Paco, Magis Youth, son of Alex Teehankee of Prodigal 102 BCGG	
By Zarah Gagatiga, Youth Ministry		By Anton, Magis Youth, son of Alex Teehankee of Prodigal 102 BCGG	
		By Selena Cruz, Magis Youth, daughter of Winston & Mae Cruz, Matthew BCGG	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD

God's love language - Presence

By Lito Naldo, Samaritans BCGG

MAGIS AMORI ET LABORI

Finding God's Presence in HR, Lawyering, Teaching, Writing, and Serving OFWs

By Josephus B. Jimenez, Cana BCGG

MAGIS SHARES

Money Talk: Understanding and Managing Finances as a Couple

By Benj & Fely Santiago, Sirach BCGG

REFLECTIONS

Finding God

By Sonny Maroon, Samaritans BCGG

Reflections as Auxiliaries

By Emerson & Weng Reyes,
ME Class 133

39

40

42

44

45

REFLECTIONS

Finding God's Presence in My Life

By Cat Geslani, James, Brother of
John BCGG

Renewal at Cana Embracing my shortcomings and striving to be a better partner, a better husband

By Lito Ramos, CSM Ministry Head,
Chronicles BCGG

The Feast of the Visitation and Renewing Our Marriage Vows in Cana

By Mona Ramos, CSM Ministry Head,
Chronicles BCGG

46

48

49



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“Sleeping with Bread” or WHY do we need the Examen?



<http://www.magisdeo.org/mdnl/latw.mp4>

God reveals GodSelf to us in our human experiences. That is fact and we can say that with conviction because of our own experiences of God. In the ordinary and extraordinary moments of our life, we are aware of his touches, his guiding, moved by his inspirations and joyful in his presence.

God breaks through our consciousness when we least expect it. Stumped by a difficult problem, suddenly a thought that has never occurred to us before will come, paving the way to a solution and we thank the Holy Spirit for that inspiration. Seeing our children and their families together at lunch happily conversing and catching up on the latest, suddenly we are filled with gratitude for how God has always taken care of us, and lovingly continues to do so. Gardening, we are amazed by the beauty and uniqueness of the plants that surround us and our thoughts fly to its Creator. Or on the way to work, thinking about what makes us feel fulfilled, we are moved by the certainty that we are here where God wants us to be.

We can also sense God's presence when we relate with others: caring for a spouse who is suffering from chronic illness; loving a bratty teenager gently, unconditionally; assisting our colleagues in work or ministry; being kind and/or experiencing kindness from total strangers; being involved in making our neighborhood and community better; working for better politics in the country; and even making our voices heard in our church synods.

To quote contemporary spiritual writer Maria Tattu Bowen, "Our relationships with people,

environments, social structures, and culture can reveal God's presence in us in the course of our lives... God imbues the entire world with divine presence, (but) we seem to experience this reality only sporadically."

The world is truly charged with the grandeur of God. These moments can pass us by, we do not notice. But there is always grace: God wishes, desires, to be found.

Ms. Bowen continues: "When we notice that our attention is drawn to God in our experiences, or when we recall them later in prayer, we grow in relationship with ourselves. We also grow in relationship with God by seeing more thoroughly how God invites, inspires and moves us. It follows that continuing to sharpen our awareness of ourselves and helping others to do the same, can lead to ever more conscious experiences of God's presence, inspiring ever more abundant faith."

How then, do we become more aware of our experiences of God? Ms. Bowen says we have to see the world with the eyes of faith, with God in mind. How do we look at the world with the eyes of faith?

We in Magis Deo already have the answer, a tool, a prayer method handed down to us by St. Ignatius of Loyola: the Awareness Examen or the Examen of Consciousness. Our founder and first Spiritual Director, Fr. Ruben Tanseco, SJ, taught us this prayer method at the beginnings of Magis Deo Community. Our present Spiritual Director, Fr. James Gascon, SJ, has affirmed its significance by launching another series of Ignatian prayer workshops soon after his installation.

We have learned that the Examen is a way of seeing where God is in our lives as individuals, as a family, and as a community. The original five steps of the Examen, contained in our weekly prayer guide, are very familiar to us, or at least to those who pray it regularly on their own, and share in their weekly BCGG meetings.

Dennis Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn, and Matthew Linn, SJ, have popularized a contemporary version of the Examen in their book, *Sleeping with Bread*. In the book's Introduction, the Linns tell this story: it illustrates the power of the examen to sense God in sickness and in health, in sorrow and in joy.

During the bombing raids of World War II, thousands of children were orphaned and left to starve. The fortunate ones were rescued and placed in refugee camps where they received food and good care. But many of these children who had lost so much could not sleep at night. They feared waking up to find themselves once again homeless and without food. Nothing seemed to reassure them. Finally, someone hit upon the idea of giving each child a piece of bread to hold at bedtime. Holding their bread, these children could finally sleep in peace. All through the night the bread reminded them, "Today I ate and I will eat again tomorrow."



Being in touch with God's presence in our lives daily through the Examen is like "sleeping with bread". We are assured that today, God is with us, and He will be with us again tomorrow, no matter what.

The Linns simply ask these two questions as a way of doing the Examen:

*For what moment today am I most grateful?
For what moment today am I least grateful?*

There are also other ways of asking the same questions. Here are some of them:

*When did I give and receive the most love today?
When did I give and receive the least love today?*

*When did I feel most alive today?
When did I most feel life draining out of me?*

*What was today's high point?
What was today's low point?*

If we reflect on any of these pairs of questions prayerfully, we can get to know who we truly are, how we are with others, as well as who and how God is to us. We will always see the world with God in mind, we will look at the world with the eyes of faith. We will be sensitive to God's presence not only in hindsight, reflecting on a situation, event, or interaction after it has happened, but we will also be aware of how **God is touching us, right there and then, as it happens!** As Fr. James Martin writes in his book *Learning to Pray*, "Noticing helps you realize that your life is already suffused with the presence of God."

Praying the Examen can give directions to our lives and guide us in the choices that we make, i.e., what option bears more fruit, what is more loving, or what is for the greater good, and confirm the choices we have made. But more than that, "When we do the examen process every day, a pattern emerges that is even deeper than the pattern that leads to a specific decision." (Linns) **These patterns help us sense more clearly God's hope and desires for us; so much so, that even in the busy-ness of ministry, or an outreach activity, the rightness of a moment can ring clear. We know, not with the knowledge arrived at by thinking or reasoning, but with the certainty of an inner, intuitive knowledge – I know, that I am here where God wants me to be, doing what God wants me to do.**

Going back to what Marie Bowen says, "Continuing to hone our awareness of ourselves and helping **others** to do the same, can lead to ever more conscious experiences of God's presence, inspiring ever more abundant faith." This is a clear invitation for us to pray the Examen regularly as individuals, to do the Examen in our families, and to practice this at the community level. Then we can truly say that in *Magis Deo*, we grow in "ever more abundant faith!"

FORMICOM

Levy & Roxanne Espiritu, Council Overseer for Praxis / Transfiguration BCGG

John 15: "I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing."

– This verse reminds us we belong to Christ and our role as Christians is to bear fruits to glorify the Father.

Following Magis Deo's vision to focus the community's spiritual growth on the relationship between husband and wife and among the family members; the deepening of the relationship with God, especially in the context of prayer; and journeying in faith with the larger community beyond the family. Following Ignatian Spirituality, we are in Magis Deo to grow, develop, nourish, and nurture our spirituality as a person, a couple, and a family.

As we celebrate 35 years of Magis, we cannot emphasize enough how Magis Deo has helped us in our faith journey and improved our lives as well as our marital and family relationships.

We continue to give credit to all who dedicate themselves to sustaining the mission and vision of this community and keeping the community spirit alive and flourishing through various ministry programs.

FORMICOM is the acronym that has become synonymous with our engagement and participation with Magis. It stands for **F**ormation, **O**utreach, **R**ecruitment, **M**eeting, **I**nterface, and **COM**munity celebration.

Formicom is not only a BCGG goal but an aspiration of every Magis member, bordering on the lifestyle of stewardship, simplicity, sharing, and service to others.

As active members of Magis Deo, we have a duty to grow and develop our spirituality via the formation programs made available for us such as the Spiritual Deepening Retreat and the Annual Ignatian Retreats.



We consolidate and validate our learnings and faith experiences by breaking bread with the community through our *weekly BCGG meetings, quarterly Group Interfaces, and Monthly Community Celebrations*.

From all these **reaching-in** activities, we express and further enhance our faith experiences by **reaching out** of our community through *Outreach* mission programs and recruiting *couples for the Marriage Encounter Weekends*, as our way of paying forward, sharing our blessings, and spreading God's message of love, mercy, and compassion.

As the late Fr. Ruben Tanseco, SJ, repeatedly reminded us, nourishing and nurturing our spirituality transitions from the head to the heart to the feet. *We are not only called to bear fruits, but to bear MANY fruits*. That is how we can enrich ourselves and bless the lives of people around us. That is what makes us Magis Deo – doing MORE for GOD!

The community thrives on the support and participation of every member. Without these, the community will naturally disintegrate. If we want the community to flourish, we have a sacred duty to do our share and ensure that we carry on the Magis Deo spirit. After all, we have been drawing spiritual strength and quenching our thirst for our inner longing for God through this community.

Magis Deo has been enriching many lives for 35 years and continues to touch more marriages and strengthen family relationships. As social media and digital transformation continue to gain traction in

COUNCIL CORNER

every home, marriages and family relationships are constantly challenged to preserve the moral fiber that holds them together.

A community like Magis Deo provides a respite from the chaos technology brings and a source of inspiration to keep us grounded. With ministry programs contained in FORMICOM, we members can focus on our spiritual growth and development and thus fulfill our Christian duty of building God's kingdom on earth.

It has been done for the last 35 years; we are now tasked to ensure its longevity for another 35 years, and more.

form*i*com

FORMING IGNATIAN COMMUNITY

#BCGGoals

f ormation	1 formation program / activity per member
O utreach	1 outreach per BCGG
r ecruit	4 Marriage Booster recruits per BCGG
m eeting	2 Prayer meetings per member per month
i nterface	2 interface per member
com cel	6 Comcels per member

COUNCIL CORNER

2023 Fund Raising Golf Tournament

Golf Tournament Committee & Finance Ministry

The 2023 Fund Raising Golf Tournament was held on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at the South Course of the Canlubang Golf and Country Club.

Registration started at 6:00 am and the Shotgun Tee-off promptly started the games at 8:00 am.

There were a total of 92 players, 45 of whom were Paying players, 45 were Sponsors' players, and 2 Complimentary players Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Zamora, the CanGolf members who sponsored our tournament that day.



TICKET SALES		92
Paying		45
Regular @ P4500		41
CanGolf members P3000		4
Sponsors		45
Complimentary*		2

*Canlubang members who sponsored our Tournament



COUNCIL CORNER

SPONSORS

Fifty seven (57) Sponsors patronized our golf tournament, as per our projection. The turnout for Presenter, Gold, and Silver sponsors was better than expected, resulting in significantly higher revenues.

Sponsors, Tickets & Mulligan	Qty	UNIT	TOTAL*	NOTES
Presenter	7	100,000	698,000	Less WHT; CWC gave 50k Cash + Chair prize =>> Total 8 Presenters CWC included here for computation of 50k 2 deducted WHT of P500 each 1 sponsor gave 15k Galinco cookies; TropicSports t-shirts
Gold	9	50,000	450,000	
Silver	25	25,000	624,000	
Bronze	10	10,000	105,000	
Donor	3	5,000	20,000	
Product Sponsors	3	--	--	
SPONSORSHIPS	57		1,897,000	

*Some sponsors deducted Withholding Tax

FINANCIALS

Gross income from Sponsors, Ticket Sales, and Mulligan Collections totaled **Php 2,121,000**, 66% over the initial Projection of Php 1,273,000. The positive variance is primarily due to the skew of sponsorships towards the higher-end **Presenters, Gold, and Silver** Sponsors, than the **Bronze and Donor** sponsors.

PROJECTIONS (2/10/2023)				ACTUAL as of 6/17/2023		
Sponsors, Tickets & Mulligan	Qty	Unit Price	Total	Qty	UNIT	TOTAL*
Presenter	1	100,000	100,000	7	100,000	698,000
Gold	5	50,000	250,000	9	50,000	450,000
Silver	15	25,000	375,000	25	25,000	624,000
Bronze	16	10,000	160,000	10	10,000	105,000
Donor	20	5,000	100,000	3	5,000	20,000
Product Sponsors				3	--	--
SPONSORSHIPS	57		985,000	57		1,897,000

The Green Fees, Cart Fees and Food Expenses rose proportionally to the increased number of players. **Total Expenses** reached **Php 523,878**, only 10% over initial projections.

PROJECTIONS (2/10/2023)				ACTUAL as of 6/17/2023		
Sponsors, Tickets & Mulligan	Qty	Unit Price	Total	Qty	UNIT	TOTAL*
SPONSORSHIPS	57		985,000	57		1,897,000
Ticket Sales	60	4,500	270,000	44	4,500	196,500
Mulligan Collections	60	300	18,000	92	300	27,600
GROSS INCOME			1,273,000			2,121,100

GOLF EXPENSES			174,400.00			189,900
FOOD AND DRINKS			78,600			111,060
GIVEAWAYS, PRIZES, RAFFLE			151,500			132,132
OTHER SUPPLIERS & MANAGEMENT FEE			68,500			90,786
TOTAL EXPENSES			473,000			523,878

NET INCOME 800,000

1,597,222

NET PROCEEDS from the Golf Tournament reached **Php 1,597,222**, double the initial projections.

COUNCIL CORNER

USE of FUNDS

The main objective of the Golf Tournament was to raise funds for our "external outreach" activities – mainly the Outreach Ministry, and the Marriage Encounter Ministry, our key Mission.

The proceeds were to be spread over 2 to 3 years, depending on the amount raised, so that big fund raisers need not be held yearly as this causes donor-fatigue. Due to the significant amount raised, the Council has decided to allocate the proceeds over 3 years.

The Pastoral Council is finalizing the Mid-Year Budget and will detail how the allocation for 2023 will be used by Outreach and Marriage Encounter Ministries.

For any clarifications, please reach out to the Finance Ministry Head or the Overseer.

In service to the community,

The 2023 Golf Tournament Committee

Jun & Vivian Ahyong · Edwin Gumila · Leo Soliman · Cesar Sangalang · Ting Yupangco · Lilit & Abby Tumbocon – Committee Head



SPONSORS

PRESENTER

- CWC International Corporation
- Bluerock Pacific Land. - Harry/Helen Chua
- Davies Paints Phils., Inc.
- Citiaire Industrial Services Corp.
- ASDEC Builders Corporation
- DATEM Inc.
- Pacific Paint (Boysen) Philippines Inc.
- LJ Industrial Fabrication, Inc.

GOLD

- Spurway Enterprise
- SMC
- Will Decena & Associates Inc.
- Robros Incorporated
- Air Movement Advance System
- Dee Concrete, Inc.
- SGV Foundation, Inc.
- Anonymous c/o Ahyongs

SILVER

- Tangent Solutions Inc.
- Power Circle International, Inc.
- RCW Construction Deut Corp.
- Great Year Industries Corp. Manila
- Charito Dimayuga
- Soliman Grp of Companies
- Makati Development Corporation
- Chem Water Trading & Services
- Loxon Philippines
- Integrated Contractor & Plumbing Works, Inc.
- Meyuza Enterprises
- JP Marsean Paintmasters, Inc.
- Gran Marameda Sand & Stone Corporation

- Tri-J Water Proofing Corporation
- Rockbuilt Manufacturing Company, Inc.
- Polaris Industrial Sales Corporation
- First Wintaf International, Inc.
- Broadwide Industrial Trading OPC
- FJT Concrete Products & Trading
- BV Rosario Construction Corp.
- SkyDragon Construction Products Inc.
- Javier Project Managers Inc. (JPM)
- Omnico Consortium
- Ultracote Paints & Coatings Corp.
- Jun & Mila Sison
- Sy2

BRONZE

- GMV Materials
- Eyelectric
- Trucklane Moving Services
- K Lebrix Spaces
- Ragojos Heritage Const. Corp.
- Global Link-MP Event
- Gina M. Mijares
- Utracon Phils. Inc.
- Citimex Inc.

DONORS

- Anonymous (R.E.)
- LR. Briones Skin Clinique
- Charley Ng Sy
- Dionisio Sadang
- Galinco
- TropicSports

TOURNAMENT WINNERS

	Category	Player	Points	Remarks
1	Overall Champion	ARIS SALOMON	59	
2	Class A Champion	CARLO CANICOSA	54	
3	Class A 2nd Runner-up	KEN PADUA	50	Won by most no. of birdie (3)
4	Class A 1st Runner-up	ROLLY TOLORES	52	
5	Class B Champion	TONY BUENDIA	35	
6	Class B 1st Runner-up	RICHMOND TAN	34	With 1 birdie
7	Class B 2nd Runner-up	JULIAN COFESOR	34	Won by most no of par (5)
8	Class C Champion	EMILIO ALEJANDRO TUMBOCON	26	
9	Class C 1st Runner-up	REY REGINO	25	With 1 birdie
10	Class C 2nd Runner-up	CESAR SANGALANG	25	
11	Ladies Champion	SOFIA COCHIEN	46	
12	Ladies Runner-up	BERNADETTE ZAMORA	44	
13	Most Accurate Drive at Hole No. 7	ARIS SALOMON	on the line	
14	Longest Putt at Hole No. 10	EDWIN GUMILA	6 yards	
15	Nearest to the Pin at Hole No. 13	RENE DELA CRUZ	1 1/2 yards	
16	Longest Drive at Hole No. 16	CARLO CANICOSA	340 yards	

TOURNAMENT DAY: April 26, 2023



Registration



MD Players & Golf Committee



Leo Soliman



Ting Yupangco



Cesar Sangalang



Levy Espiritu, Lilit and Emil Tumbocon



Opening remarks by Winston & Mae Cruz



Emcees Cesar Sangalang and Ting Yupangco



Tournament Winners



The Big “G” in Golf

Cesar Sangalang, Samaritans BCGG

I started playing golf over 10 years ago, more from necessity than a choice due to the nature of my work in sales and marketing. My first 3 years of playing was a struggle and full of frustrations as I could not see significant improvements in my golfing skills. Moreover, at that time my heart belonged to my first love in sports, basketball.

I began enjoying golf more after getting a hole-in-one in my young career, and started garnering trophies and awards in amateur tournaments. In addition to my excitement in every game, I enjoyed and appreciated the beauty of the golf courses, the great food and fellowship after each game, and the company and network I developed over the years.

Fast forward to today, I realize the deeper and more important purpose why God gave me the opportunity to play this prestigious game of golf. First, golf allowed me to know myself better, to recognize my strengths and weaknesses, and learn to recover and cope with life's struggles and challenges. Second, golf gave me the opportunity to meet more people, make friends, and expand my network which significantly helped my profession. Lastly, this game enabled me to serve the community by organizing tournaments and raising funds to support the various projects and mission of our beloved Magis Deo community.



As I reflect on the recent Magis Deo 35th Anniversary Golf Tournament, the more I realize that the reason for its tremendous success is the big “G” in golf, our **G**od Almighty. Ignatian Spirituality teaches us to find God in all things. And certainly, I found God in the organizing committee which tirelessly and gladly exerted all efforts to reach the target proceeds, while making the tournament filled with fun and happy memories. I found the big G in the sponsors who manifested their generosity despite the financial challenges brought about by the pandemic. I found the big G in the almost 100 players who took a leave from their respective work and personal engagements to join and support the event. I found the big G in the extremely supportive members of our community through their sponsorships, participation, and, most of all, their prayers.

As we look forward to future Magis Deo golf tournaments, I am excited to see more members getting involved in roles they are capable of and are willing to take on, knowing that our big G is always there to guide and help us. And just like in amateur golf tournament where there is mulligan (*a free shot sometimes given a golfer in informal play when the previous shot was poorly played*), you and I are also beneficiaries of God's unlimited mulligans, of millions of second chances to correct our mistakes or to do better. For life is like a game of golf; it will not be complete without the big G in it.

Finding God's Presence in our Life (as an individual and as a couple)

Jun & Vivian Ah Yong, Finance Ministry Head / Shepherd, St. Peter BCGG

Vivian and I have been members of Magis Deo since 2008. As a couple, we have grown spiritually and our marriage has matured and strengthened over the years largely because of the focus on Ignatian spirituality imparted to us by the Magis Deo community, and from the BCGGs we continue to be part of, namely St. Peter and Sirach. We are grateful to Tito Ike and Tita Josie Llamas for not giving up on us when we didn't join a BCGG after our ME Weekend. They were God-sent. We are with Magis Deo because of them.

Filled with intense gratitude and reverence to the Lord for all that we have and where we are today, our journey to serve God is always present and a constant reminder to "pay it forward." God is always part of our daily life; from the moment we wake up to the time we sleep. But sinful and human as we are, not everything is as perfect and smooth as we would want. Many times, we are so engrossed with what we do that we forget that God is ever present. Oftentimes, we are too preoccupied and focused on what we can do from a human perspective, we selfishly forget that God is just a call away. Consciousness of God's presence continues to have a very faith-moving and profound effect in our daily life. God is right, left, front and center; He is an integral part of what we do, through good times and bad. We have learned to check ourselves several times within the day for short prayers and quiet contemplation, which lead us back to the awareness of God's presence, love, and mercy everywhere, every time, and always.

We served as BCGG Head for St. Peter and as Finance Ministry Head, all for the glory of God the Father. We can never outdo God's generosity. The least we can do is help the Magis Deo community through service.

With God's blessings, we have been given the strength and determination to gather our brothers and sisters who joined the ME Weekend but live and



work in Bulacan, to form St. Peter BCGG. We know that many who attended ME Weekends don't end up being part of any BCGG. We didn't want the same to happen to those from Bulacan. We were determined that if it is God's will, He will help us. Today, St. Peter BCGG is as strong and vibrant as ever. We were God's channel to bring the Good News and form a BCGG outside of Metro Manila. God is good. His hand was upon us, guiding us, giving us hope, and never giving up.

As we celebrate the 35th anniversary of Magis Deo this year, one of the major initiatives of the Finance Ministry was the recently concluded golf tournament at Canlubang Golf and Country Club last 27 April 2023. Led by our energetic and passionate Magis Council couple, Lilit & Abby Tumbocon, and with the help of many Magis members especially Ting Yupangco, Edwin Gumila, Leo Soliman, Cesar Sangalang, and Ria and Cora of our Magis Office, we generated much needed funds for our growing outreach activities and projects such as Suyuan and education scholarships. We thank the Lord for His tremendous love and grace by gifting us with this successful endeavor. But our work in the Finance Ministry doesn't end there. As stewards and custodians of the funds of our community, we pray for continuous enlightenment and guidance on the wise and efficient use of these funds. Our Ignatian spiritual perspective will help in getting us "back on track" if we are distracted or side-tracked along the way.

REFLECTIONS

Imperfect as we are, Vivian and I continue to seek God's guidance as we live our earthly life and follow God's teachings. We will always be a "work in progress" because only God is perfect, but we humbly put our faith in His love and mercy in living a life pleasing to Him.

As a reminder of how we want to live our life, we end our sharing with this beautiful prayer of St. Ignatius:

O my God, teach me to be generous
to serve you as you deserve to be served
to give without counting the cost
to fight without fear of being wounded
to work without seeking rest
and to spend myself without expecting any reward
but the knowledge that I am doing your holy will.
Amen.

REFLECTIONS

Why I am with the Magis Choir

Flor Pison, John BCGG

It has been over 40 years since Tony and I attended the ME Weekend in 1982, where my eyes were opened to God's movements in my life and the beautiful gifts God has given us, especially in marriage. We were moved to know Him more and resolved to share our blessings with others. We decided to do this through something close to our hearts – music. We joined a choir and expressed our love for God through our voices.

In the early days of the ME Weekends (the Alpha Omega series given by MEFP) Tony and I joined Rae Bernad, who plays the guitar, and led the singing at masses during ME Weekends, Spiritual Deepening Retreats, and CPPJ Weekends. The Alpha Omega series gave birth to Magis Deo, and the Magis Deo Choir was formed under the leadership of Aida del Rosario and Dada & Donding Labao. Tony and I continued to serve with the growing number of choir members.

If you ask why I continue to be with the choir, my answer is: Singing in the choir especially at mass brings me closer to God; it is a way of bringing my heart and soul together and focus on Him. Tony has always been inspired by this beautiful statement attributed to St. Augustine, "He who sings prays twice." These words kept us in the choir despite feeling our voices are not that good.



I lost Tony to cancer in 2002. Missing my beloved partner, I became an off-and-on member of the choir, then left for a couple of years. In 2021, missing that wonderful feeling of singing for the Lord and despite my aging 80-year-old voice, I believe He nudged me to rejoin the choir.

If you are looking for something that will give you peace of mind, come and join us, sing with us. Let us serve together through our voices. It does not matter if you cannot read music, or think your voice is not good enough. God will give you the talent to make joyful noise for Him!



The Heart

Chacho Angeles, Matthew BCGG

As I was praying one morning, the definition of Fr. Henri Nouwen (a Dutch priest and spirituality writer) of 'heart' came to mind. For him, it is where the soul, mind, spirit, psyche, and emotions converge. It is the seat of kindness, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, overall goodness. And on the reverse, it could be the seat of evil, or the cause of evil like selfishness and greed, fear, anxiety, pride, etc. An MSC priest once talked about the prayer discipline of the Sulpicians – head, heart, hands – read, learn, and listen (head), understand through meditation and contemplation (heart), and do, apply, decide, choose (hands). We integrate everything in our hearts, where our personality is formed, and where the way we live our lives is determined.

Another thing that popped up was Fr. Bulatao's "split-level Christianity," where our faith life has no connection with our mundane life. Although now, I would call it "multi-story Christianity without connecting stairs or elevators," where all our involvements like family life, work, outside organizations, our political work, and even church work, are not characterized by, or are compartmentalized from the beliefs and principles of our faith. We do things outside the church's premises that often contradict or are inconsistent with the principles of our faith. A former president appears that he did not truly understand what he said: I have deep abiding faith, but I have no religion. Thus, the EJK's which are obviously, and mostly, state-sanctioned, his attitude towards women, his propensity to shoot his mouth off, even his attitude towards criticism, really shows that – he has no religion, and he also has no faith.

Forming our heart in the image and likeness of the heart of Jesus, both divine and human, so that our whole person becomes like that of Christ, or at least is becoming like that of Christ, is, I think, the first requirement of living our Christian faith, with the help of God's grace. And this is a process, needing a bit of study, a bit of spiritual direction, and needing lots of choices which we have to make daily because we have to live God's love with every breath we take.



(Well, a lot of study and spiritual direction would be very helpful.) And we need a lot of quiet time with our God. Thus formed, our hearts will become the stairs (or elevators) that will connect the different floors of our lives here on earth and make our lives whole. All the achievements in the various areas of our lives are nothing if we do it for our own personal aggrandizement, and not for serving our neighbors in the spirit of the sacrifice of Jesus in Calvary. The programs we Christians initiate or support, for the good of the people, are nothing, if we just do it for PR purposes, for tax avoidance purposes, even for CSR, that is, if we do not do it as part of our Christian mission.

And this is already evangelization because we are showing people how we live as Jesus taught us. St. Francis said: Speak if you must, referring to spreading the good news. This is probably what we can remember about the saints. We non-scholars, will most likely not remember the words and teachings of saints. But most of us remember their lives, how they lived, what they stood for, the sacrifices they made (some even sacrificing their lives). Over the centuries since the ascension, the Word was spread through the example of the lives of the saints. Phalanx upon phalanx of apostles and disciples carrying out Christ's mission and conquering the heart of the gentile world.

Jesus' heart is God's heart, and should be our heart as well.



Teach me to open my heart more
So that I can see You with clarity.
Teach me silence so I can hear You.
Teach me patience or I will miss
You in my tendency to rush things.
Teach me to feel you in this pain,
For others suffer more than I, as
Your Son suffered and died for me.
Teach me to live, amidst the death
That surrounds me, and my society,
Where victims have become so
Because they have nowhere and
No one to turn to for survival.
Teach me to have confidence in
Your loving care, and to find some
Meaning in my feeble response
To Your embrace...
By Your grace and with Your peace!



Father, we ask You to help us
Peel away all those layers of
Disappointments, pain, abuse,
Accomplishments, and wealth,
Honors and trophies, pride,
Greed, anxiety, and lack of trust,
Accumulated over the years;
Callouses covering my heart.
Make us see You in everyone
And everything, and as your
Children, open in our hearts
A loving and sacred space for
Your joy and Your peace to fill.



Dasal Po namin Ama,
Na mahalín mo kami.
Hiling po namin ang kalayaan
Na makilala ka, at kami'y
Matutong sumunod sa iyo,
At sa iyong mga aral.
Buksan mo ang aming puso
Sa mga biyaya at grasyang
Ibinibigay mo sa amin.
Tulungan mo po kami matanto
Aming mga kasalanan sa iyo,
Sa kapwa at sa sarili. Palambutin
Mo ang aming mga pusong sutil,
Upang mapagsisihan mga salang ito.
Palakasin mo ang aming kalooban
Upang maipagluksa ang naglahong
Buhay paraiso. At gabayan kami
Sa aming taos pusong ninanais:
Walang sawang pagtugon
Sa dalisay mong pagmamahal
Sa amin. Amen.

It's a *May* FAMILY AFFAIR!
DISCOVER THAT WE ARE A... *reach* FAMILY!

Reach IN
To **SEE** WHERE WE ARE, **OUR GIFTS!**

Reach OUT
To **SURRENDER** TO GOD, **HEALING!**

EnRICHed
TRANSFORMED TO **SERVE, Go!**

FR. TED GONZALES SJ
CHAPEL AT LAY FORCE SEMINARY
07 MAY 2023 | 9 AM

Eucharistic celebration will follow.
Young single adults and teens will join the big group.
Kids will have a Mother's Day craft activity.

Sponsoring Ministry
and BCGGs:
**Praxis, Exodus,
Francis**





Discover the “Reachness” of our Family

Jane Aldeguer, Chronicles BCGG

It was indeed a Magis Deo family affair, as kids, teens, and their parents graced the May 2023 community celebration. Fr. Ted Gonzales, SJ, shared the essence of *Reaching In, Reaching Out, Being Enriched* in the context of seeing our gifts, surrendering to God, and being transformed to serve. Fr. Ted’s first invitation to us was reflecting on our encounter of God’s presence through unique or personal blessings, seemingly going back to Galilee (being called to be fishers of men) as part of the foundational experience of grace and charism.

See, Surrender, Serve

- We see by recognizing that there is good news but there is also powerlessness. We have weaknesses. We are every bit human.
- Surrendering of our weaknesses to the higher power, God.
- We are wounded but called to serve, for God said, “I was thirsty you gave me to drink” ... giving drink first within our family, then going out to a greater mission.



What is the status of our family?

What are the current conditions of our family?

What are our aspirations as a family?

How do we adjust/discern the aspirations with the current conditions?

Where do we want to go? Ano ang kailangan nating ayusin?

Yes, it goes back to See, Surrender, and Serve.

See – Reaching in within ourselves and our family’s gifts; We cannot be disciples to other families if we do not start with our family. Our mission starts with our family. We cannot give until we experience it. It needs integrity. We heal the gaps after we recognize our own weaknesses. It starts with communication, without judgement or blaming. This can only happen if we remember that our base is our bond of love. We become defensive without the love.

Surrender – Reaching out to God, healing through Christ. We can only have peace if we have the higher power of God. We can only move because we are healed.

Serve – We are enriched and transformed, we wash each other’s feet, but we are also called to discipleship for others by serving other families.

Truly, we are called to be an Easter Family – a family carrying the Good News and becoming His Witnesses, here and now.

Sharing Stories of Joy and Healing

Zarah Gagatiga, Youth Ministry

Forty Magis Deo kids, teens, and young single adults (YSA) attended the youth activities at the May Community Celebration.

The kids joined the activity "Sharing Stories of Joy and Healing" with Zarah Gagatiga. They had a mini workshop fostering creativity and active listening.

The teens and YSAs joined the Magis couples attending the talk of Fr. Ted Gonzales, SJ, on being a "Reach Family," and the small group sharing that followed.



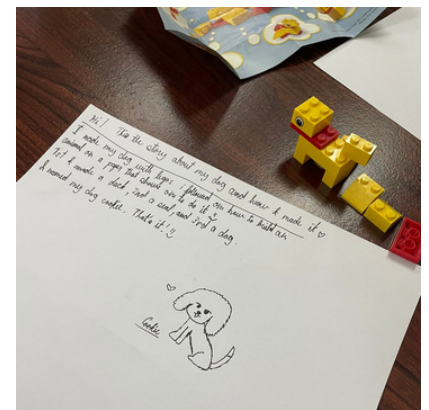
The participants of the Magis Deo Kids Activity this morning had a mini workshop on fostering creativity and active listening. The children built animals from Lego blocks. Most worked individually except Pablo and Ethan who collaborated on making their own.

This free-hand exercise on creative thinking was followed by a short writing activity on the animal they made and/or a description of the process they went through building the Lego blocks.

Pablo and Ethan wrote a poem. Athena wrote a short story. The rest continued building Lego animals.

To cap the session, we had a storytelling of Beybi Bibe, who went looking for companions to sing with, only to be disappointed since there are different personalities and sounds of her animal friends in the farm. It was Nanay Bibe who reminded her to sing confidently in her language and that the home and the family will always hold a place for her.

In response, the children made mini-books and/or letters to and about their mothers and family.





Within Reach: Reflections on Love

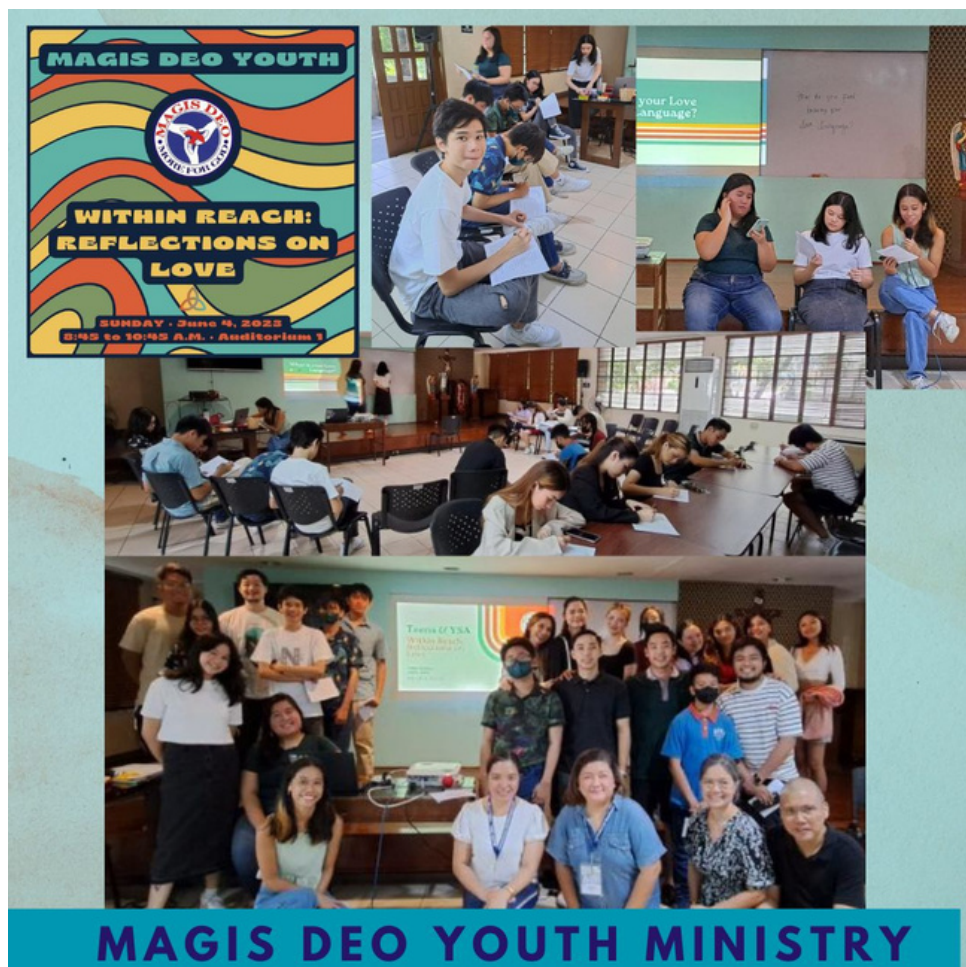
Arlyn Tabilog and Mark Maulit, Youth Ministry

On Trinity Sunday, June 4, 2023, 22 Young Single Adults and teens spent quality time together in a session entitled "Within Reach: Reflections on Love." After a few games where they learned about each other's favorite pastimes and tried guessing titles of movies, they learned about love languages (acts of service, physical touch, words of affirmation, gift giving, and quality time) by identifying them as portrayed in several video clips. Then they discovered their own love languages through a set of 30 questions about the forms of love they are used to perceiving. Lastly, they shared what they learned about receiving and giving love from the activities.

Among the realizations they shared was that often one's love-receiving language is the same as one's love-giving language but sometimes they can be different too. Another realization is that a person's love language may change over time along with life

circumstances. Finally, they realized that the real challenge for each person is two-fold: learning to perceive love in all the different languages people can convey them while learning to convey love in the particular language that the person we want to express it to, can perceive it. That last point is much easier said than done and can entail defying our own nature so that we can become better receivers and givers of love. In Magis Deo and as Catholics, we believe this can only be achieved by the grace of our triune God – the Father (the Lover), the Son (the Beloved), and the Holy Spirit (the Love between the Father and the Son).

Congratulations and thank you to the Magis Deo YSAs (Janais Aldeguer, Gita Manuel, and Ria Maulit) for preparing and facilitating the very engaging session which everyone enjoyed and learned a lot from.



MAGIS DEO YOUTH MINISTRY

The Fathers' Children

Vivian Flores and Nette Wong, Chronicles BCGG

In the old practice of Catholics, kids anticipated Sunday school. This was the time they learned about God and good values. Sunday school further deepened their relationship with God, and activities were suited to their interests and understanding. Through the Youth Ministry, Magis Deo sponsors activities that best interest kids. This June, the theme was Fathers' Day. Tita Nette Wong and Tita Vivian Flores, both from Chronicles BCGG, facilitated the activities.

The kids were taught an action song, Father Abraham. They actively participated in the singing and dancing. They were asked to identify the roles of their fathers in their lives. They described their fathers as supportive, funny, protective, hardworking, smart, loving, and helpful. They felt their dads were the best dads in the world!

To relate their biological fathers with God the Father, they were taught about the biblical fathers and their roles in their children's lives. It was emphasized that fathers can make good decisions and bad decisions, but through constant prayers, they will be guided by the Holy Spirit, so they can lead their families according to God's will.



The kids showed their creativity in making personalized cards for their fathers. They had diverse ways of expressing their love and admiration through illustrations and write-ups. It was evident that they enjoyed the activities through their outputs and active participation.

Tita Nette avers it is always fun to be with kids. She remembered her two grandchildren who used to live with them. She added that despite her busy schedule, this opportunity to teach the kids of Magis Deo was truly meaningful.

To all the fathers – Tatay, Daddy, Papa, Ama, Tatang, Abeoji, Appa – Happy Fathers' Day! You deserve recognition for all the sacrifices, hard work, and love that you give to your families! May God the Father, through the intercession of St. Joseph, the father of Jesus Christ here on earth, continue to bless you and sustain all your needs!



The Lord's Bounty Harvest

Philip & Malu Panlilio, Mustard Seed BCGG

On 23 April 2023, we were surprised by the Lord and what a pleasant surprise it was! The Lord manifested His generosity when He unexpectedly sent 23 couples to the Suyuan Class 2023 in Olandes, Marikina. Earlier that week, we were worried the Suyuan might not push through with only 10 confirmed couples, and from past experience, there are usually "no-shows." Prayers from past Olandes Suyuan graduates and from Mustard Seed Companions strengthened our faith that the Lord will make things possible. And He did! Salamat sa Diyos!



Faithful to their apostolic mission, Randy & Cecil Rivera served as facilitators of the seminar. Four trainees as Suyuan facilitators observed the Suyuan proceedings, namely, Naomi Ramirez, Ani Mata, Rey Aquino, and Sr. Beth Burgo.



Mustard Seed BCGG (Vic & Bebot Hurna, Floyd & Mina Tamera, Regie & Daisy de Guzman, and us), together with Olandes Suyuan graduates, were glad to serve as Suyuan auxiliaries with Outreach Ministry Head Rico & Terry Lim. The Suyuan seminar was blessed with the presence of Fr. Christopher Gonzales, parish priest of the Nativity of Our Lady Parish, who gave an inspirational talk to the Suyuan participants.

To date, three reunions were held as follow-up deepening sessions: 30 April, 14 May, and 21 May 2023. Mustard Seed and Chronicles BCGG jointly helped in the conduct of the reunions, with generous provision of merienda. Chronicles BCGG led two reunion meetings with Ney & Pinky Rosas, Gina Manuel, Jojo & Jane Aldeguer, and Dong & Gin Galang. Regie & Daisy de Guzman of Mustard Seed took care of the second reunion meeting, with Leony & Mia Parada preparing the snacks. The next reunion is on 11 June, which will coincide with the Youth Ministry outreach for the children of Olandes Suyuan. Regular prayer meetings will follow, jointly with preparation for the Kasalan Bayan. Thanks be to God



Olandes Suyuan Class 2023



Suyuan Class 2023 with Facilitator Randy & Cecil Rivera and Mustard Seed BCGG Auxies and Outreach Ministry Head Rico Lim, and Couple Participants



Olandes Suyuan participants in session



Olandes Suyuan Auxies



Mustard Seed Auxies



Kids of Suyuan Participants

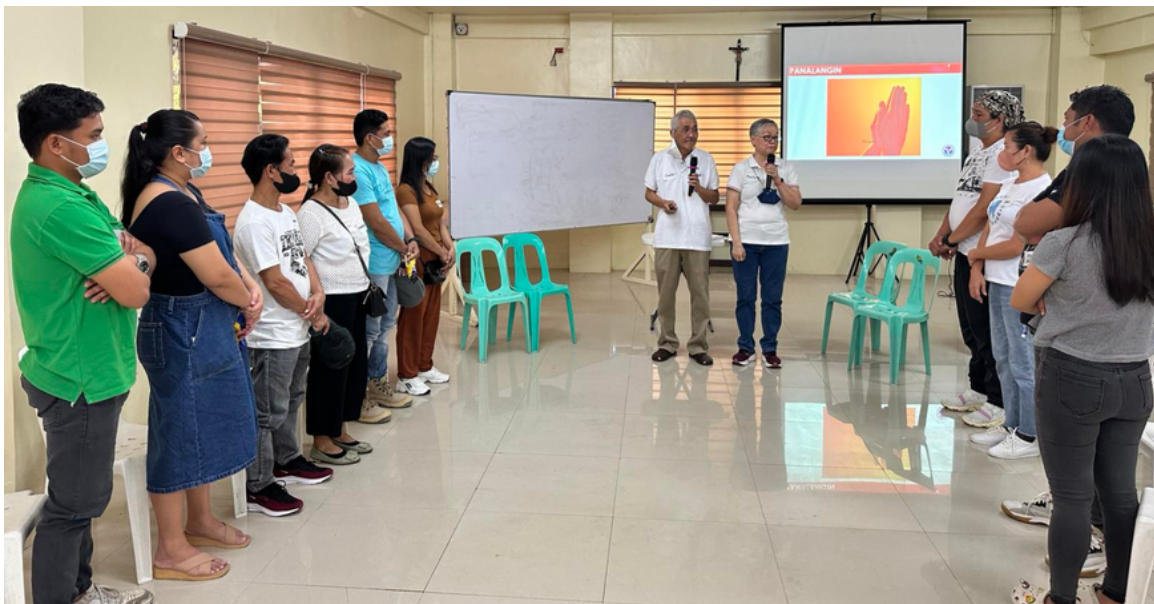


Reunion 1 – led by Ney & Pinky Rosas and Gina Manuel of Chronicles BCGG

Suyuan at Merville

Suyuan in Holy Infant Jesus Parish at Brgy Hall Merville, Paranaque on April 23, 2023.
Blessed with seven couples.





A Story Told, a Story Heard, by the Story We are Healed (A Holy Week Triduum Retreat)

Philip & Malu Panlilio, Formation Ministry / Mustard Seed BCGG

It is the second year that Magis Deo offered the Holy Week Triduum Retreat with Fr. James Gascon, SJ. This year the retreat was opened to 40 non-Magis participants, bringing the total retreatants to 112. All BCGGs from the North (9) and Central (6) were represented in the retreat with 58 retreatants while 5 BCGGs from the South with 14 retreatants were present.

Deepening Experience Through Contemplation. In the domestic monasteries of our homes, Fr. James accompanied the retreatants to pray and reflect on the story of the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, culminating in the resurrection, with relevance on our family spirituality. Contemplation was the suggested form of prayer – recreating the scene in our minds and hearts to help us enter into Jesus. We made every effort to get inside the PASSION, not just staying with external sufferings but entering into the loneliness, the interior pain of rejection and feeling hated, the anguish within to realize that Jesus loves us so much that he willingly suffers everything for our sakes (David Fleming).

Therefore, the triduum was a “deepening” experience, and the liturgies are pregnant with symbols that can help our reflections towards a deeper experience of Christ – in particular, the Human Christ.

We remember the Grace of Third Week of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: I beg for sorrow with Christ in sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and deep grief because of the great affliction Christ endures for me. (Spex 203):

- Prayer of Feeling With is compassion – cum passio, to suffer with as a companion.
- Remember that passion has several meanings:
 - passion as desire – as emotion, as directed toward an object.
 - passion as suffering – passion as suffering
 - passion as love – passionate offering of the self in the beloved.



We prayed on the second point, Grace: To listen to the paschal story using my heart, that I may be healed by the story of Jesus. Teach my heart where and how to seek you (Prayer of St. Anselm of Canterbury).

Holy Thursday: Connection, Care, Conviction to Build Communion. On Holy Thursday, we reflected on the Last Supper. The Last Supper is a gathering, a banquet, a communion for connection, care, conviction. Through the washing of the disciples' feet, Jesus established his connection with the disciples and them to each other. Not only did they have a common experience of being washed; they also partook of the same bread and wine. This is the foundation of the disciples' connectedness with Christ. Because we are connected, we cannot but be mutually responsible. I am my brother's keeper.

What sustains communion is love – to love is to be loved. Care is vulnerability; care is to be affected; care is to see the other's perspective. Understanding is another word for care.

To “conquer with conviction” is to conquer with belief, with determination. Jesus' choice of the passion is with determination; with belief, with determination to conquer one's fear. Conviction is one's capacity to pursue a value despite and no matter what.

It is in this regard that connection, care, and conviction go hand-in-hand to build communion.

Good Friday: Choices, Consequences and Compassion. We entered Good Friday with hearts feeling for Jesus. Good Friday is about choices, consequences, and compassion. Life is all about choices. We make choices and our choices make us. If we want a different result, we need to make different choices.

On Good Friday Jesus chose to love. He chose to obey; He chose to love more. The Good Friday of Jesus highlights the importance of choices in our families. We make choices out of love – again because of our connections. The salvation of our choices is when we are able to let go, let God.

Choices have consequences. The Cross of Jesus is a consequence of His decision to love like the Father... in obedience to the Father. In families, some choices are individual, but consequences are always familial – members of the family are never immune from the consequences of choices because of our connection – our vulnerability to each other.

The story of Good Friday is a story of suffering for and suffering with... of compassion. Compassion is mercy. Jesus chose to suffer for us and with us, willing to bear the consequences of his compassion. Compassion is the energy that sustains the connection of the family. In the family, true compassion is healing; where there is compassion, healing commences.

Holy Saturday: Challenge, Commitment, Companionship. On Holy Saturday we reflected on Jesus descending into hell. "Hell" should not be interpreted here as the place of eternal damnation. Hell in the Old Testament, Sheol in Hebrew, or Hades in Greek, is the "place of the dead." Hell, or the netherworld, was a place for both good and bad. Our faith teaches that after Jesus died, he went to the place of the dead (hell). He went there as an act being one with all, to commune with all. Just like the incarnation, when Jesus became like us in all things but sin, in death he also became like us.

Holy Saturday is a challenge, a commitment, a companionship. The challenge that Easter poses is how to trust even when what is ahead is not

clear. When Jesus died on the cross, he did not know that he was going to be resurrected. But he took the challenge. Families are challenged every day. Contemporary values challenge long-held morals and beliefs of families. Our response is fidelity. Can we remain faithful to what we believe?

Commitment is not only to invest one's self, but also to put one's self at stake until the end. Jesus finished his mission till the end; he did not give up. Our generation has difficulty with commitment. We have been taught that change is good. We always have to reinvent and renovate (the best symbol is technology), always find a new way. What happens to fidelity? To risking ourselves in loving? The institution of marriage, which is the hallmark of commitment, is being devalued. There is no forever, there is no permanent commitment, as popular culture insists.

Companionship is EMPATHY. Empathy is the spirituality of families. We can never be families without empathy. It is the energy that promotes companionship. When Jesus descended to the dead, he declared his companionship with us, in life and in death. He joined them and us.

Empathy grows out of active listening. When we know how to listen, then empathy is developed. When there is empathy, it naturally breeds a response of empathy as well. Then it becomes "mutual empathy." To mutually empathize is to become companions. Our family is our companions in our journey. Our family is our mission. And equally, our family has a mission.

Easter: Celebration and Calling. Easter is the greatest feast in the Church – the foundation of everything we believe in; the ending of a story that will never end; and the triumph of fidelity in God. We shared in small groups our own paschal stories that ended in Easter and the "Cs" in our family life, i.e., connection, care, conviction, choices, consequences, compassion, challenge, commitment, companionship. Christ is risen! We celebrate and take the Easter challenge!



Reflection

Bib de Guzman, Archangel Gabriel BCGG



Dear Lord,

You are the only one who knows everything that goes on in my life. My daily prayers, every thought, every pain, every sacrifice, every sorrow, is just between You and me. It's hard to share everything with others especially the small details, when there's no time or when it's not appropriate. When I'm with other people, we usually talk about the good things first before going to the deeper and stressful events that are happening.

During the Paschal Triduum retreat with Fr. James Gascon, I was glad to have spent some quiet time with You again. I was very moved by the video of Your crucifixion and death. Everybody knows what happened to You, Lord Jesus, but having to watch it again was such a painful experience for me. You died alone, brutally nailed to the cross. As I go through each day, carrying my own cross, I remember how much You suffered on the cross, and all my burdens become lighter and are nothing compared to what You went through for us.



Today, as I celebrate the 40th day after my father's death, many people ask how I seem all right, and that I don't look sad or grieving. Honestly, I am grieving inside but I still try my best to have a cheerful outlook in life. The Paschal Triduum retreat helped me prepare for my father's passing. It gave me comfort knowing he was provided all the medical procedures and treatments, and that my family was slowly being prepared for his death. My father passed away with all of us by his side, and he was comfortable and not in pain. He had a beautiful celebration of life that was well-attended by family and close friends, and a peaceful inurnment.

I thank You, Lord, for the strength You give me because of Your sacrifices on the cross. Thank You for always being by my side, guiding me gently, and letting me see the good side of things. Thank You for the answered prayers and for always letting me know that You have not forsaken me.

Love always,

Bib



Reflection

Arlyn Tabilog, James, Brother of John BCGG



When God calls you to listen to what He is saying, do you hear Him? One of the many blessings I learned during the pandemic was being able to join various online classes, masses, and seminars that eventually led me to attend Fr. James Gascon's Paschal Triduum Retreat. What struck me the most in the talks were the word "Connection" and the question "How to trust even when what is ahead is not clear?"

"Connection" is defined as a deep bond formed between people when they feel seen and valued. God's connection with the twelve disciples was greatly manifested during the washing of the feet. "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." Great love and genuine humility were evident in this gesture. God established a connection with the disciples that reflects their relationship. He taught them how to love and be responsible for each other because they belong to one family. Making a person feel loved and important creates a strong bond even when you are miles apart. Moreover, staying connected in faith builds a deeper relationship with our Creator. As I desire to create a special relationship with my family and with God, it is my task to stay connected and create a safe space by showing unconditional love and staying in faith through prayers. Selflessness is God's message to me. He calls me to serve with all humility my family, others, and my community.



"How to trust even when what is ahead is not clear?" Uncertainty... the disciples didn't know what will unfold in the future. Jesus' dying on the cross and being resurrected was unanticipated. Jesus surrendered and let God's plan be revealed without any doubt because of trust. "In God, whose word I praise – in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" Psalm 56:4.

I ask myself, "Do I fully trust in Him?" I believe my personal relationship with God is still a work in progress. I admit there are still times when I am in doubt, especially when the road gets unexpectedly bumpy. It is difficult to maintain faith during hard times, though at the end of the day, I remain grateful that I am able to get through. When I am in doubt, my only hope is trust. God wants me to depend on Him in the worst and best times, to set aside my anxieties, fear, and doubts. The need to persevere with my prayer life is the key so that when things go wrong, my faith will not be shaken. SELFLESSNESS and CERTAINTY are the lessons I must carry through and should be seen in the way I live my life. I may stumble, fall, and face obstacles along the way, but with God by my side, I know I will be okay.

Olandes Magis Youth Outreach

Mark Maulit, Youth Ministry / Prodigal 102 BCGG

On June 11, 2023, the Magis Deo Youth celebrated the Feast of The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, by offering their in-person presence and accompanying 65 sons and daughters of Suyuan couples (including some Magis Deo scholars) from Olandes, Marikina in a values formation session on individual agency and collaboration.

After an opening prayer by Marianne Bacud, one of the Magis scholars, Malu Panlilio of Mustard Seed BCGG and Magis Chair Winston Cruz gave the welcome and introductory remarks.

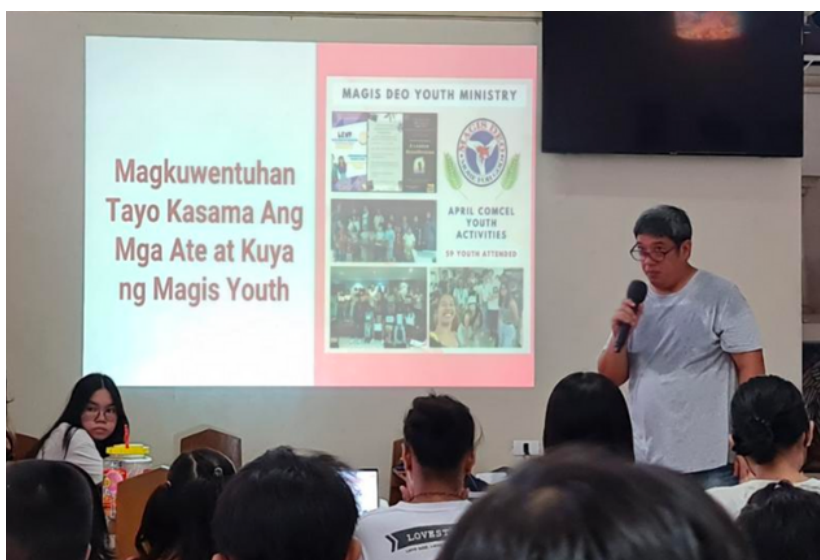
Dong Galang, Kids Committee Head, energetically facilitated the main art and storytelling activities and made it an enjoyable, rainy Sunday morning especially for the Olandes youth.

During the art activity, the participants were given cut-out paper hands and asked to list their favorites on the fingers and palms. Then in smaller groups, they shared what they listed. This was followed by a story written by Zarah Gagatiga entitled "Miyawing Kuting" who was a pretty white cat left alone at home without food and had to learn how to exert effort and accept the support of others to solve her problem. Afterwards, the participants got the chance to win sweet treats by answering questions about the story.



The Magis Deo Young Single Adults and teens, around 11 of them, as well as some Magis scholars, generously assisted the participants in the art activity and the small group sharing, and helped in distributing the materials, prizes, and heavy snacks. About 11 proud Magis parents watched lovingly from behind.

As Malu Panlilio mentioned during her remarks, she appreciated the initiative of the Youth Ministry with this outreach activity and hopes this is just the first of more such activities complementing the Suyuan program of Magis Deo.



Reflections



Enzo, Magis Youth, son of Jojo & Rhea Gaddi of Prodigal 102 BCGG

Q1: What did you enjoy most about the outreach?

A1: What I enjoyed most about the outreach was interacting with kids during the icebreaker activity and helping those who had difficulty writing answers to the given questions. While doing so, I remembered the last time I interacted with kids from small communities, which was during my Tulong Dunong, or TD, class in school. In TD I got the chance to teach English to public school 6th graders. This was a special experience: it showed my ability to teach kids what I learned from school; I taught them using my own words and interpretations. It was a lot of fun talking to the kids about their favorite food, favorite song, and favorite TV show, even if some of them were shy.

Q2: Where did I experience God's presence?

A2: I experienced God's presence when I distributed the packed food and drinks to the kids after the program. Every time I gave a packed lunch, I saw God in each kid that received it and said, "Thank you" or "Salamat po." It makes me happy and giving back to these communities is the best reward at the end of the day.

Q3: What makes "reaching out" to others important to you?

A3: "Reaching out" to others is important because it's one efficient way to say to the small communities; "We're here to help you!" or "You're not alone!". By doing so, you expose yourself to unfamiliar environments. It's also a way to be more "down-to-earth" and be more familiar with kapwang Pilipinos. "Reaching out" to others is something everyone should try; it will surely change their perspective.

Paco, Magis Youth, son of Alex Teehankee of Prodigal 102 BCGG

The activity was fun. It allowed us to talk and make memories with people who are not as fortunate as us. We are also helping them and giving them a little support like God would want us to do. Our activity reminded me that God wants us to love our neighbors and that help never goes unappreciated.



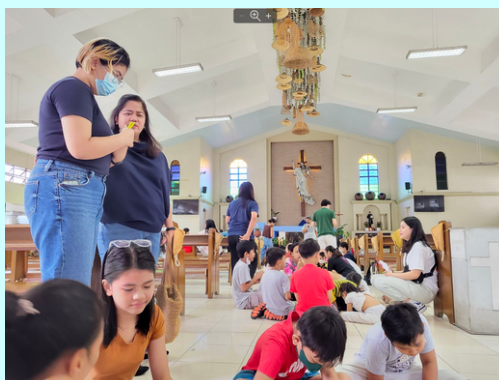
Anton, Magis Youth, son of Alex Teehankee of Prodigal 102 BCGG

Attending this outreach and doing volunteer work made me proud to be called a child of God. Being able to share our time especially with the younger children and teaching them about our Creator gives that good feeling that I am able to do what God has asked me to do. Giving and Sharing are always great emotions. I am thankful that Magis Deo has activities like this.



Selena Cruz, Magis Youth, daughter of Winston & Mae Cruz of Matthew BCGG

Attending this outreach and doing volunteer work made me proud to be called a child of God. Being able to share our time especially with the younger children and teaching them about our Creator gives that good feeling that I am able to do what God has asked me to do. Giving and Sharing are always great emotions. I am thankful that Magis Deo has activities like this.



Olandes Magis Youth Outreach



God's love language - Presence

Lito Naldo, Samaritans BCGG

After listening to Fr. Jet Villarin's homily at the Keep the Faith mass last May 28 celebrating the Feast of the Pentecost, I felt God was speaking to me...

At one of Magis Deo's community celebration years ago, Fr. James Gascon asked us to answer a short questionnaire on the different ways we express our love to others, and how we would want others to show their love to us. At the end of the questionnaire, we found out what our love language was.

Our son Manuel attended the ComCel with us and after completing the questionnaire we showed each other the results. I was surprised to find out that Manuel's and my wife Anne's love language are the same, and that is PRESENCE.

As Fr. Jet explained what the Holy Spirit does to us, I realized that probably, the love language of God is also PRESENCE... after all, His name is EMMANUEL – "God with us!" I suddenly realized the countless times I was alone and afraid (especially during the covid lockdowns), when I got overwhelmed with the troubles and difficulties in my life, and when I lost my way in sin due to pride and arrogance. Then, I heard God telling me, "I was with you in all those times, as I am now."

After hearing mass that Pentecost Sunday, I felt the Holy Spirit was constantly telling me, reminding me, and inspiring me, to be present also to others...



The following day, Anne asked me to accompany her and attend a two-hour face-to-face seminar, to which she was invited. At first I couldn't say yes; not only was I not interested in the topic, but I was also in the midst of checking the final exams of my students. Eventually, after remembering what God reminded me just the day before, I decided to accompany Anne to the seminar. I also remembered that this is how she wants to be loved... she wants my PRESENCE.

I am now conscious about giving my presence to others. When someone talks to me, whether he's a student, a work colleague, a friend, or even my child... I now try my best to drop everything else, remove what is in my mind, and focus on the person in front of me, to be present 100%.

On Tuesday evenings, even when I am tired or have unfinished work, I try my best to attend our BCGG meeting. Furthermore, I try my best to be attentive to the one sharing, especially when most of our meetings are via Zoom. I give not just my time, my ears, but especially my listening heart to whoever is speaking... I try my best to be present 100%.

I thank the Lord again for talking to me, reminding me of His gift of the Holy Spirit, who, through the years, has protected me and my loved ones, who has guided me well in the major decisions I have made in my life, who continues to inspire me to serve not only my family, but also my students and colleagues, and my brothers and sisters in Magis Deo. Without the PRESENCE of the Holy Spirit in my life I would have stayed lost... and I would not have enjoyed everyone who is also present in my life now. Amen.



Finding God's Presence in HR, Lawyering, Teaching, Writing, and Serving OFWs

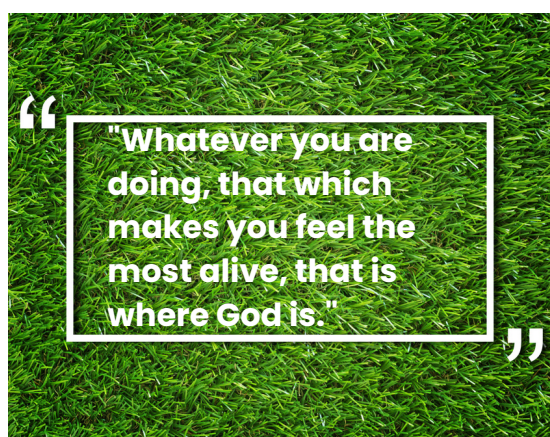
Josephus B. Jimenez. Cana BCGG

Among the many nuggets of wisdom and inspiration from St. Ignatius de Loyola, my wife and I like this most: "Whatever you are doing, that which makes you feel the most alive, that is where God is." St. Ignatius continues: "Teach us to give and not to count the cost" and "It is not hard to obey when we love the One whom we obey."

Our married life has been a life of giving, serving, sacrificing, and obeying, even when these brought tremendous pain, anguish even.



Emma and I wed in 1978 and now have 5 children and 5 grandchildren. We have been members of the Magis Deo Community since 1991, joining as ME Class No. 14. That means 45 years of marriage and 32 years of living the Ignatian way. I have been in HR for 28 years in San Miguel Corporation, Pepsi Cola, and Petron. I served the government as Labor Arbiter, Labor Attaché, and DOLE Undersecretary for 27 years. I have been a lawyer for the poor workers and for the good employers alike for 48 years now, a Law Professor for 46 years in several universities, wrote 48 HR and Labor Law Books for 35 years. For more than 20 years now, I write a daily column in a small Cebu newspaper, The Freeman, under the Philippine Star Group. I speak in seminars here and in ASEAN nations. I travel a lot, spreading the good news of work harmony based on justice and compassion. In everything I do, I find God inspiring me and prodding me to do more to feed His lambs.



In all that I do, my wife reminds me to put God in the center of my career. Thus, I embraced a credo: I work hard, offering the best of my gifts from the Holy Spirit. I put God in the center of my profession and career, and my family as my priority. I believe there is no success in career, business, or profession that can make up for failure in one's family life. Thus, I did not enter politics, where I could have become a governor or congressman. My family vetoed my ambitions; I obeyed. It is not hard to obey if obedience is to the one I love. Then something earth-shaking happened. The late Fr. Ruben Tanseco challenged me: "Instead of criticizing the government, why don't you join the government and serve God's

people in the field you have gifts to serve and to give?" Those words revolutionized my life and changed my priorities. Fr. Ruben was very powerful. God used him to summon me.

The Holy Spirit used Fr. Ruben to transform my comfortable life into one of many sacrifices and pain. I was already Vice President of a global beverage company with 45,000 employees, managing eighteen HR managers and eight lawyers, as I headed HR and Legal functions. I traveled around the world at company expense; I had luxury cars, drivers, security guards, club memberships, and signing privileges. I had all the perks and glory. But

MAGIS AMORI ET LABORI

I left these privileges and comforts and embraced the life of a servant of the working class. With the support of my wife who was at first hesitant to give up so much ease and comfort, I accepted a government post as DOLE Undersecretary with a compensation package exactly one tenth of what I got from the private sector.

Then I asked to be demoted and be deployed as a Labor Attaché, to serve the OFWs who work in dirty, difficult, dangerous, degrading, and deceptive jobs. I did not choose privileged posts like Washington, Geneva, or London. I could have, being an Undersecretary then. But I chose Kuwait, Malaysia, and Taiwan – the most difficult posts – where hundreds of thousands of our domestic helpers work like slaves for 18 hours a day, with many being abused, maltreated, some even raped and murdered. I comforted them in detention centers and hospitals. I took care of the runaways in shelters, and Emma gave them emotional and psychological counseling and therapy. I fought illegal traffickers and greedy recruiters, and filed cases in various foreign courts. I got death threats. But the Lord was with me all the time.

In Kuwait I put up a Weekend Empowerment Center where Filipino community leaders and ordinary OFWs were trained on Financial Literacy and Disaster Preparedness. We conducted sessions on entrepreneurship so they could go back home and be with their families again. We conducted spiritual exercises like prayer meetings, bible sharings. We let other sects like the Iglesia ni Cristo, the Pentecostals, the Born Again to have their own days of spiritual teachings. My wife taught emotional and psychological healing techniques. We had Suyuan and mini-Weekend Encounters for those who had their spouses with them. We worked with the Catholic Church in Kuwait, Taiwan, and Kuala Lumpur, where my wife and I served in Saint John Cathedral every Sunday, as extraordinary minister of the Holy Eucharist.



My wife and I found God in our life as servants of the Filipino domestic servants. My wife got no salary as a volunteer in nursing the broken hearts and souls of the OFWs. In Malaysia I founded a Sunday Academy for OFWs where I taught for free computers and basic nursing; I encouraged professional expats to teach for free 53 other skills every weekend. I taught Basic Laws for Migrants and my wife taught Basic Nursing and Social Graces. We did not have any rest day for three years, but we were happy serving the least of God's lambs. I put up a scholarship program sponsored by a Malaysian Datu who sent 18 Filipina maids to Philippine nursing schools. Today these former maids are nurses working in Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Johore, Malacca, and Singapore.

I did not get any award from the government for all I did. We do not care because we served not for awards but for love. In Taiwan I filed charges against recruiters for excessive fees and succeeded in having hundreds of thousands of Taiwan dollars returned to the OFWs. None of my superiors noticed what I did for the migrant workers. But again, we did not care because recognition was not our motive. I would have been happier if Fr. Ruben could have seen the fruits of what he did to my life and Emma's. And the Lord blessed us immensely with our five children who finished their schooling with academic excellence in Ateneo, UP, La Salle and Assumption. They now on have their own homes and careers. God is so good all the time.

Our sisters in Cana BCGG – Tatic Castillo, Evelyn San Pedro, Maricel Suarez – visited us in Kuala Lumpur; Leony and Mia Parada visited too. They saw our service to the OFWs. We are fulfilled and happy because we have chosen to heed the call of the Lord, conveyed through Fr. Ruben, to feed His lambs and to take care of His sheep. We find God every time we serve, each time we give, and in each of our small sacrifices. We do all these, as we did before, for the greater glory of God. Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam. More For God and More For His People.

May the name of the Lord be praised and glorified because of the little things we have done. We have seen the Lord and He blessed us with the opportunity to serve. At one Community Celebration, I challenged the Magis Deo Community to make OFWs one of our focused communities to serve. Until now, there has been no response. May this write-up be a reminder that outside our comfort zones, labor migration has broken thousands of marriages and shattered more families. May Magis Deo see this as another worthwhile mountain to climb for the greater glory of God.

Money Talk: Understanding and Managing Finances as a Couple

Benj & Fely Santiago, Sirach BCGG

One of the Top 5 Reasons for couples separating is money/finance problems. Conflicts arise because usually, the couple are each raised in a family with dissimilar situations, where finances are handled differently. Hence the need to discuss financial matters.

Couples usually find it difficult to openly discuss and agree on how to handle finances. Who will manage and pay for expenses? Who will manage the income and where will this be placed? Who decides on the budget? Where and when will they buy properties? Do we give support to our aging parents? Do we extend support for the basic needs of our jobless siblings? Do we live with the in-laws?

Adding to these concerns: How do we prepare for children's education, retirement planning, insurance protection, healthcare, and additional cash flow? These important financial issues are usually left out and discussed only when the need/concern is already at hand.



This is why Financial Education and Coaching is necessary for couples. In our experience, Fely's parents and my parents had major differences in the way family finances are managed even though both our mothers are housewives, and both our fathers are in the government service. Fely's father handles the finances and budgeting, while my mother does all the budgeting.



Ano ang mga dapat Pag-usapan

- ☐ Pera ko, Pera mo sino may hawak?
- ☐ Meron bang allowance ang nasa bahay lang?
- ☐ Sino mag-Budget?
- ☐ Kailan tayo bibili ng...Etc.





Fely and I did not talk about the status of our finances until we were already in a deep problem with credit card debts. We thought we knew how to invest correctly only to find out that our strategies were faulty and led us to losses.

We learned our lessons the hard way. We lost millions of pesos due to financial ignorance. We did not have the right financial strategies. We did not have a coach nor proper guidance.

We are blessed to have learned and executed proper financial strategies that helped us become financially free in our retirement years. This is why we are passionate about sharing financial literacy with people, couples, or singles.

If you need guidance you may want to check this out: <https://bit.ly/LinkBioFely>

Lahat ng mga blessings at accomplishments na aming nakamit ay napakalaki, Subalit ang pinaka masaya sa lahat

Baguhin ang buhay ng mga mag-asawa at magkaroon ng kahulugan ang aming buhay.



Debt Destroyers SEVC Benj&Fel

TRM
TRULY RICH MAKERS

Christy and Randy Canete | Nancy and Manny Martin
Malvin and Matin Leano | Malou and Vener Torres

Benj & Fely Santiago are Certified Financial Educators, and the Founders and Head Coaches of Truly Rich Makers

Finding God

Sonny Maroon, Samaritans BCGG

I found God last week while listening to the sound of a running stream.

Long before Holy Week, I told my family I did not have anything planned, not even our usual holiday out-of-town trip. I was not up to traveling with the horde and going to places where crowds congregate. The holy week vibe is ruined for me when many people congest the places where I want to relax. I wanted something simple for the Lenten season, something different.

The family was fine with this. This decision was also made easier since our friends who usually go with us on trips also decided it was better to stay in the city while the crowds trekked to the provinces. We wanted some peace and quiet for a change, no karaoke king and queen every five meters belting out April Boy songs at the top of their lungs. We just planned a quiet get together at a friend's place for barbecue, a dip in the pool, and a movie night on Good Friday.

Meanwhile, our youngest son Kevin was invited by his aunt to a farm in Laguna to spend time with his cousins from Maundy Thursday to Black Saturday. The rest of the family stayed home.

During Holy week I went on afternoon walks around the village with my dog. Our village is sparsely populated, with lots of trees and greenery. The long walks gave me time to still my mind amidst the trees and nature. I would stop by a ridge where a stream flowed below, across a ravine. There I would linger, listening to beautiful songs of a bird (locally known as Maria Capra) while the sound of the running stream gently lulls my mind to daydream.

It was Maundy Thursday. As I lingered, quietly contemplating, a thought came to me. I remembered... 2000 years ago, it was Thursday when Jesus knew it was his last day before being put to a horrific death.

Ako kaya, If I knew it was my last day to live and the next day I will suffer horrible death, ano kaya gagawin ko?



Maybe I'll pull out all the stops and do whatever the hell I want? Carpe Diem/YOLO to the max? Maybe go sky diving and tick off as much as I can on my bucket list? Maybe spend every peso I have on insurance so when I kick the bucket, my wife and kids will be taken care of? Maybe take my family someplace really expensive and nice then spend the day having fun with them?

Then it hit me. On Jesus' last day to live what did he do? He washed feet.

That Thursday after sunset, knowing he was to die the next day, Jesus washed feet. He washed the feet of his disciples while preparing to share the last supper.

Just imagine. He knew very well that the next day He will be tortured and nailed to a cross, condemned to die like a common criminal. Yet he was no criminal. He is the only begotten son of God, he sits at the right hand of the throne, he is the prince of Heaven. He was there when the world was created, yet he humbled himself and chose to wash feet.

He could have ordered the angels to descend on chariots of fire and burn the Sanhedrin and the entire Roman army to the ground and show God's power. Instead, he washed feet before he gave himself up freely to die and purchase our ticket to redemption.

REFLECTIONS

This was how He loved his disciples. He treated them as his brothers. Would you wash your brother's or sister's feet if he or she is able-bodied and not sick? For a regular person, I don't think so. But he washed their feet and counted himself as a brother to them. In the bible he calls his disciples his brothers many times. In the reading today (April 11) Jesus addresses Mary Magdalene: "Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'."

Indeed, God's salvation makes us God's adopted children... brothers and sisters of Jesus. That is how God loves us.

One may ask: "What's the deal with foot washing in the olden times anyway?"

Per Encyclopedia Britannica: "The practice of foot washing was originally an act of hospitality in Palestinian homes, performed for guests (who wore sandals and walked on dusty roads) by a servant or the wife of the host. St. Paul refers to the custom in 1 Timothy 5:10."

So, it was usually slaves or women who washed feet then. Remember when Mary Magdalene washed Jesus' feet with her tears and dried them with her hair at a banquet in the house of Simon?

Yet Jesus, in all his Kingship bowed down and did the same for his disciples. Easily, we can see that Humility is God's favorite virtue, as much as pride is Satan's favorite.



While I stood listening to the running water in the stream, I could imagine the sound of trickling water as Jesus washed feet. On the last day of his life, it was still love that reigned supreme in Jesus' heart. A love that he taught us by example. The King of kings washed the feet of people he loved. He gave us a concrete example that real love means service. Real love requires humility.

Much as I want to follow his footsteps, it is rare for man to be given the blessing of knowing how many days he has left on earth. For most of us, death comes like a thief in the night.

The best I can do is to serve those I love, now while I still can. I can start today. I can start forgetting what I want for myself and instead find ways to give the people I love the happiness they deserve. It is time to forget about me. It is all about the people dear to me.

Last week I found God while listening to a running stream.

May you find Him as well in the most unexpected places. He is there. You just need to stop and listen.

REFLECTIONS

Reflections as Auxiliaries

Emerson & Weng Reyes, ME Class 133

Our ME Class 133 was chosen to serve as auxies at the March 10 to 12, 2023 Marriage Encounter Weekend for ME Class 135. It was a fantastic experience for us as a couple. We rediscovered the essential goal of our union, which in turn reinforced, improved, and enhanced our marriage.

Our enthusiasm was twice as great than when we were simply participants. We were aware the three-day event would need a lot of time and energy, but we were motivated by the opportunity and our role in illuminating, enhancing, and helping each participant couple's marriage.



Our relationship shifted from one of power to one of love at this ME Weekend. We were excited to have this incredible adventure with God as the center of our union. Being auxies was a privilege for us as we made the participants have the same unforgettable experience we had back then.

Finding God's Presence in My Life

Cat Geslani, James, Brother of John BCGG

Just like that, half of the year has passed! How have you been? Do you feel God's presence in your highs and lows?

As for me, my feelings and emotions are like a roller coaster ride. I am just grateful I can feel God's loving presence in every step, may it be on a difficult or an easy path. I am glad that coming into 2023, my anxiety due to the pandemic has abated. I felt relieved and relaxed knowing that Covid cases nationwide are declining. I realized that we have been blessed in so many ways and this abundance must be shared. I am grateful that Tito Lito Gonzales, one of our dear shepherds in James BCGG, has been encouraging us to reach out where we can help. God has been generous in giving us Time, Treasure, and Talents. We have been given so much that it is just natural for us to share blessings with others and make them feel loved too.

The first half of the year has been eventful for me and my family. January and February were festive due to celebrations of birthdays and our wedding anniversary. Being nominated as a representative in our company's Global newsletter last March and



getting a much-prayed-for promotion last April, I am on a high!! These were pleasant gifts, and it feels good to be appreciated and recognized.

Last March 19, our James BCGG family sponsored the literacy program of The Knights of Columbus (KoC). Our members interacted and did our best to be teachers for one day. We prepared some food and played games. We were encouraged and inspired by the work of the KoC. As support we gave their students gifts that they can use in their classes and during their April graduation. The best way to feel God's presence is to be make others feel His presence too. Trust me, it comes back two-fold and more.



REFLECTIONS

At a scheduled health screening last April, an irregular mass was detected on my left breast. I witnessed how my paternal grandmother suffered from breast cancer, so for me this was a red flag. I had many sleepless nights worrying and crying. After discussing with my husband Doc and praying, we decided to act and scheduled an excision biopsy mid-May. On the night before the operation, I had an excruciating and familiar headache, so I had a rapid antigen test. Positive. This was my second time to have Covid, the first was in January 2022. Thankfully, the symptoms were much less. To get my mind off it, I helped our BCGG prepare for our 2nd outreach held in Los Baños last May 28. Even if I was on quarantine, I was happy to know the outreach was a success, with our BCGG providing books and food during the visit to Fr. Cacao.



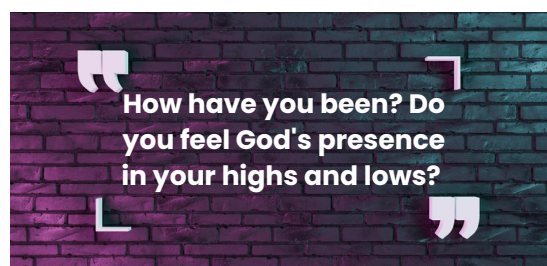
Two weeks after recovering from Covid, I had the breast mass checked again. The excision recommendation remained the same. With a more conditioned mind and spirit, I had my operation last June 2. God gave me a best gift of health – the mass was benign. I am in the process of healing and bravely focusing on recovery. Even if I am deliberately slowing down now, the world moves on. With the help of my loving husband, we are trying to balance activities and minimize disruptions to the normal activities of our children. They have their own activities – piano recitals, plays, moving up, dance

rehearsals, and schoolwork – all demanding our presence, regardless of how I feel. I am sure every parent can relate: we want our children to feel we are strong for them despite our weaknesses. When one is in pain, even a small task can be so taxing. At least for now, that's how I feel.

A few days ago, with doctor's clearance, my hubby took me out on a much needed Couple Date night. I really appreciated all his efforts to take care of me that day! And the date it was a musical play featuring my long-time college crush! 3,000 pogi points goes to my husband. Woohoo. Thank you, my Love.



Moving to the second half of the year, our BCGG will continue focusing on sustained outreach projects that transform lives. Doc and I will definitely participate. We want to give back and share what we can to make a difference in the lives of those we touch.



Renewal at Cana Embracing my shortcomings and striving to be a better partner, a better husband

Lito Ramos, CSM Ministry Head / Chronicles BCGG

Mona and I recently went on a Holy Land pilgrimage with Fr. James Gascon, SJ. Part of our itinerary was the renewal of our marriage vows at Cana, where Jesus performed his first miracle.

My initial thoughts and feelings were that this wasn't anything special, but something we have to do in the pilgrimage. It was like visiting a holy place with no personal meaning or significance. But my thoughts and feelings changed when we arrived in Cana.

When we visited several holy places earlier, I imagined the stories that happened there (i.e., Abu Serga Church where the Holy Family stayed when they escaped from King Herod; Mt. Sinai cave where Moses hid after coming face to face with God and receiving the 10 Commandments; the burning bush in St. Catherine's Monastery; the Jordan River near the place where John the Baptist baptized Jesus, to name a few). Visualizing life in the old days made the bible stories come alive. I imagined traveling back in time and reliving the stories as a witness, a spectator. I found myself immersed in the whole experience and became more excited to see the other holy places in our itinerary.

On the day of our visit to Cana, I read the scripture (John 2:1-11) on Jesus' first miracle where he turned water into wine, and the biblical reflections attributed to this miracle. I hoped this would spice up my imagery of the place and the experience. Arriving at Cana, we had a group picture in front of the Wedding Church (also known as the Franciscan Wedding Church) and toured the place. We then lined up with eight other couples and walked down the aisle for the mass and renewal of vows.

As I listened to the readings during mass, my thoughts drifted to the part when we were to renew our vows. I wondered, how would it be like and what were we going to say? Would I need to prepare a personal vow, or would we read common vows together?

I tried to remember our wedding 16 years ago. What was the atmosphere in the church? Who were at our wedding? What songs were sung? What did Mona and I say to each other?

I realized that my wedding vows were all promises – the promise to be the kind of husband I wanted to be, and the promise of the kind of life we would have together. Sixteen years later, I realized how short I was from those promises. There were a lot of things I thought I knew or learned from books or seminars on married life. I realized there is still much we must go through and learn together, which no book nor seminar could prepare us for.



I wish I had prepared a personalized renewal vow, one based on our experiences together as husband and wife. I wanted it to have all the elements, all the changes — pluses (+), minuses (-), multiplications (x), and divisions (/) — and not something generic. I wanted to make it special. I wanted it to be as realistic as possible. I wanted my vow to matter.

Since this was not possible then, I just prayed silently and said my own “revised” vow, confident that God knows the deepest desires of my heart for our marriage. Hopefully, I can write them all down (although this may become a memoir of sorts) and pronounce these vows to Mona in church at our 20th anniversary.

For now, I am grateful we were able to visit Cana and renew our vows in front of our friends and co-pilgrims. I prayed to Mama Mary to intercede for us and to ask the Lord Jesus Christ to guide us in constantly becoming better versions of ourselves as husband and wife.

The Feast of the Visitation and Renewing Our Marriage Vows in Cana

Mona Ramos, CSM Ministry Head / Chronicles BCGG

It was the Feast of the Visitation of Mama Mary (May 31) when Lito and I renewed our marriage vows in the Church of Cana in Galilee. A few days later, on our wedding anniversary (June 2), we visited the Church of the Visitation in Jerusalem.

Why were we graced by the "presence" of the Visitation of Mary twice, both times on important days of our marriage? What is the message to us? Lito and I discussed these and had some realizations.

The Feast of the Visitation reminded us of the importance of family and community, and sharing our blessings. Renewing our vows was a beautiful way to recommit ourselves and reaffirm our dedication to each other. Both events reminded us of the significance of the presence of Christ in our lives and the importance of commitment to each other, and to others.



Community service has been a part of our lives even before we got married. Our commitment to serve others, as individuals and together, stems from a deeper understanding of God's love, grace, and divine plan for us. Our apostolic work in Magis Deo and in the other communities we serve allows us to share our God-given time, talent, and treasure. By making a personal mission to be a couple for others, we opened our hearts to God's call, which further nourishes our relationship.



In addition, we offered our devotion to the Feast of the Visitation of Mama Mary when she made her presence felt in our marriage. She inspired us to reflect on the virtues in the Magnificat, her proclamation of praise for Jesus. She reminded us of our humble service to God and to others, magnifying the presence of Jesus in our hearts, our lives, and our marriage.

*"Ang puso ko'y nagpupuri, nagpupuri sa Panginoon!
Nagagalak ang aking Espiritu sa 'king tagapagligtas."*

