

Magis

Formation for Mission

Stewardship
Simplicity
Sharing
Service

Official Publication of the
Magis Deo Community
March 2023 Issue

We are Loved Because We Love

Only when we love God can we discern that, indeed, He knows our needs and wants.

Couple Power: The Benefits of Couples Volunteering Together

Tips for Couples Volunteering Together

"Mahal ang Magmahal" – The Cost of Being in Love

There is indeed no love greater when a spouse is willing to lay down his life for the sake of his wife.

Reaching Out – A Consciousness

We need to be aware, to recognize, and to celebrate how we reach out to others, even in the smallest possible way.

Our Version of Life Sentence in Bilibid

Rebuilding Lives.
Rekindling Hope.
Restoring Dignity

ABOUT THE COVER



The feeling of mutual care and concern among two or more groups of people is described as love. A certain amount of love and care is essential for every living being. I also believe that love is omnipresent; it is everywhere in some form or another. A soul without love is like a pitcher without water — useful to none. Love is the essence of life and the most important feeling around which it revolves.

God loves us unconditionally. He loves us in our best and worst times. This urges to share this unconditional trait that we have been shown. It is a trait that is essentially built into our psyche, as we've experienced this love with our first breath.

As we approach Holy Week, let this be a time for us to discern and reflect. Let this be a chance for us to open

our hearts to those we hold dear, despite the current hardships and obstacles we face, individually or as a community. Like Jesus who was challenged during His passion, death, and resurrection, we too are challenged to love even those who've hurt us. As children of God, let Lent be a call for forgiveness and acceptance of the imperfections brought by sin and temptation. Always remember: love is a challenge, but also a decision. Love, because we are loved.

Opening our arms means also opening our hearts. Graphic designer Joaquin Aldeguer portrays a vibrant and simple artwork of Jesus with open arms, representing His acceptance and invitation to love one another, just as He loves us.

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Magis

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WE ARE LOVED BECAUSE WE LOVE

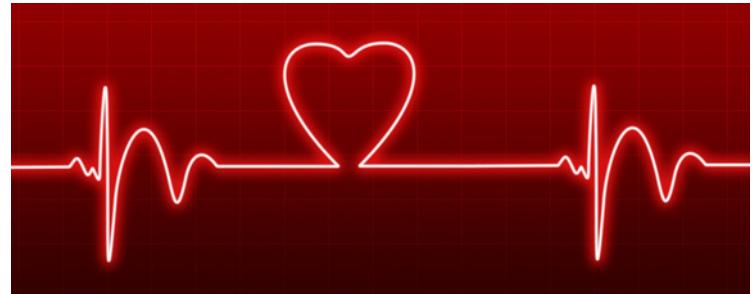
In our faith, we believe God created us in His own image and loves us unconditionally. Nothing can separate us from His love. Agape. Out of God's overflowing love, we exist. St. Ignatius describes God as one "who loves without limit." He loves us 24/7. Makulit ang Diyos in loving us. We cannot run away from God's love. We will always be drawn to Him. We cannot do otherwise but love God in return. We know this. We understand this. But why can't we love most of the time? Why do we even choose whom to love, when to love, how to love? Worse, we hurt even those we profess to love. Where do we fail? "You cannot receive what you don't give. Overflow determines inflow... Unless you allow it to flow out, you won't even know that you have it" (Eckhart Tolle).

God has filled us with His love to the brim. As finite beings, we have to share God's gift of love to keep on receiving more. We do this by following God's commands: Love God... and Love Your Neighbor. If we don't give, we don't grow in love. Like the Dead Sea, we stagnate. Like stagnant water, we stale. In loving, we make the love in ourselves fresh and vibrant. The reward in following God's commandments to love: Because we love, **we are loved too.**

In the prayer of petition, why appeal to God when He already knows our needs and wants long before we were even conceived? In an Ignatian retreat, we were told that the prayer of petition is not to "kalampag" God to remind Him of our needs. Rather, it is to bring to mind that everything is provided for by God. That is why we ask God to give us just about anything and everything. On the other hand, our prayer of petition reminds us that we are totally dependent on God. We need to love God. We need to profess to God our whole being



in love. Only then will we receive the grace to see the vastness and richness of His gifts. Only when we love God can we discern that, indeed, He knows our needs and wants.



When we gave Suyuan seminars, we always asked the couple-participants, "Sino dito ang hindi nag-aaway?" To those who would raise their hands, we would quip, "Abnormal." We would explain that despite becoming one in marriage, husband and wife remain unique to each other as God created us. As the late Fr. Ruben would teach, married couples should never lose their God-given uniqueness and sweep under the rug their individuality. Looking back at our own couple disagreements, these would always start on the insistence that one's uniqueness be the dominant influencer in how we lived our married life. Selfish? Yes. Loving? No.

After my wife passed away, I would contemplate on our love. I missed how much she loved me. I longed for her love. When I missed her, I would always yearn for moments na sana I could have loved her "more." I never had the guts to ask her why she continued to love me very much. I wish I had. Now I can only pray that somehow I have shown her a love worth her loving me back that much.

As a widower, a priest told me my journey to God with my wife here on earth is over. She has gone ahead to be with God. He added that I have to continue my earthly journey to God without her. Friends arranged dates and meet-ups. Fr. James indicated a "second hallelujah." But my son advised, "kung hindi mo mahal Dad, huwag na." To love and be loved (Frank Sinatra).

As we wake up each morning, may our love flow in our activities for the day. Then, in the evening, when we go back to sleep, we can smile with the thought that "**we are loved because we love.**"

REACHING OUT – A CONSCIOUSNESS

Winston & Mae Cruz, Chaircouple / Matthew BCGG

We need to be aware, to recognize, and to celebrate how we reach out to others, even in the smallest possible way.



When Mae and I filed our candidacy for the Pastoral Council elections two years ago, it was something we sought to do after reflecting on what to do to give back, and to find purpose as a couple. After getting onboard and being voted chaircouple for 2023, we were struck by humility and the impending responsibility. The big mission for us was to come up with our thrust for this year... not an easy task.

Reflecting on our journey in the Magis Deo community, we noted that among our most fulfilling experiences was helping couples in the Marriage Boosters and Marriage Encounter Weekend. In many cases, these notable experiences were shared with friends in the ME Ministry and our Matthew BCGG. The joy of being able to help, inspire, or provide hope to someone strikes deep into the heart and soul. Sharing these moments – with your spouse, ministry, BCGG, community – enhances and elevates the experience and drives you to do more. It is a wonderful feeling, and you feel the Spirit is with you.

Thus, we decided to push the theme of helping others, of serving others, of reaching out. It is not a new thrust, but we also know it takes effort and will. It can take people out of their comfort zone. Some may have different reasons for being in a community; some may find different sources of fulfillment, all of which are valid, correct, and commendable. Upon further reflection, the most important element is experiencing the act of serving and sharing. This can happen at varying levels for people – as a spouse, as part of a BCGG, a community, in a family. This is where we saw that there are so many opportunities within the community to serve and reach out: offer your expertise or knowledge to a community member in need, contribute merienda to a community event, mentor a younger couple, or share a cup of coffee and words of wisdom with elders. We are, after all, a community. This is what community spirit is all about! And the hope is that these experiences strike our hearts and urge us to do more. And if the spirit touches you to follow that path, that you will be inspired and have the will to do more.

Recently I discussed the operations of Magis Deo with Ricky Sun, Shepherd of Matthew BCGG. Since we were exploring how to run the back office professionally, we endeavored to put the thrust of Magis Deo in a similar professional context.

Ricky posed the questions: What is your goal for outreach for the year? What is the number? What is the success barometer in terms of how many are helped? These made me pause for a moment... a long pause. I do not know if the Spirit visited us in that conversation, but I immediately remembered Fr. James' words during our December 2022 planning session at the Espiritus' residence. Fr. James shared that what we are setting out to do is to bring about a consciousness – a conversion of consciousness. We need to be aware, to recognize, and to celebrate how we reach out to others, even in the smallest possible way. We should look at opportunities to move beyond spiritual growth, to reaching out. I responded to Ricky: There is no number. There is no target number of families helped, no number of mouths fed, no number of indigents visited and clothed. If we simply bring this consciousness to people and open their minds and hearts to sharing and helping others, then we have achieved our goal. The Holy Spirit will take over from there. And our hope is that it strikes your heart and soul deeply, and inspire you to do more.

ME CLASS I35

Benz & Vina Dimanalata, Francis BCGG



The journey to a lifetime begins with one weekend

Maraming salamat po at nakahanap kami ng community na ganito. God's plan is always perfect than our plans.

I honestly like all aspects of the weekend program. The atmosphere is prayerful, the community is warm and welcoming, and the sessions (talks and testimonials) are practical (concrete and significant to the context of the couple) and inspiring. Thank you very much for the great ministry you are doing for couples.

Please continue your mission of spreading the love of God among couples and individuals with your very examples or doings. Please pray that I will be able to convince my siblings (with their husbands) to attend ME Weekend organized by Magis Deo. God bless!

Hi po, mag-i-inquire po. We're one of the participants last night (Feb 2 Marriage Boosters) and interested to be a member of Magis Deo, also want to join the M.E. Weekend on March 10-12. HM po yun mam?



Rev. Fr. Allan Abuan, Spiritual Director

Presenting Couples: Edwin & Jes Gumila; Jojo & Jane Aldeguer

M.E. Class 135 Graduates: 14 couples, 8 Religious, and 8 individuals from CeFam



MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER MINISTRY

The Auxies *Serving with gladness*



M.E. Music Ministry masters, Claro Santos and Ethel Araullo, rendered beautiful music throughout the retreat.



MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER MINISTRY

Spiritual Director, Rev. Fr. Allan Abuan,
who recently celebrated his 25th Sacerdotal Anniversary



Ang Buhay Ng Kristiano



Ay Masayang Tunay



MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER MINISTRY

The Magis Choir serenaded the participants during the Harana, and sang at the Sunday Mass.



Auxiliary Class 133 Shepherd Winston & Mae Cruz (Matthew BCGG) with Incoming Class 135 Shepherd Boy & Yoling Sevilla (John BCGG)



M.E. Class 135 with their Shepherd Boy & Yoling Sevilla of John BCGG



PRAXIS VIRTUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Jane Aldeguer, Praxis Ministry / Chronicles BCGG

What a wonderful way to start our year with the Virtual General Assembly of our BCGG Heads and their Alternates last January 29, 2023.

We had 89 attendees with all BCGGs represented, along with our Council members and Ministry Heads.

We started off with an ice breaker, sharing our thoughts on "How do we wish to be remembered as a couple in Magis Deo?" We were treated with heartwarming, funny, and surprising responses.

Winston & Mae Cruz, 2023 Chaircouple, welcomed everyone and shared Magis Deo's thrusts for the year.

The 2022 FORMICOM results were discussed, providing a segue to FORMICOM 2023, with the objectives of supporting the thrusts for 2023 and invigorating the FORMICOM.

The roles of the shepherds and members were reviewed, and the attendance log sheets and prayer meeting guides revisited.

The Praxis Ministry presented the interface groupings, the BCGG ComCel mass reader assignments, and the ME Shepherding schedules of the BCGGs.

Praxis also took the opportunity to provide a convenient way of submitting monthly attendance reports and reiterated its assistance to the BCGGs in accomplishing them.

Praxis looks forward to making the rounds, visiting the BCGGs, and joining the sectoral gatherings.

We hope to have a great bond this year as we continue to Reach-In, Reach-Out, and be Enriched!



form*i*com
FORMING IGNATIAN COMMUNITY

#BCGGGoals

f ormation	1 formation program / activity per member
O utreach	1 outreach per BCGG
R ecruit	3 Marriage Booster / MEW recruits per BCGG
m eeting	2 Prayer meetings per member per month
i nterface	2 interface per member
com cel	6 Comcel per member

PRAXIS MINISTRY



Praxis Ministry

Praxis Head: Jojo & Jane Aldeguer

Council Overseer: Levy & Roxanne Espiritu

Sector Heads:

North: JC & Chinkee San Juan

Central: Jun & Cecile Gacias

South: Elmer & Meg Fajardo

BCGG Shepherds

1. John & Glo Boren; Gene & Eve Bañez for **Agnus Dei**

Alternate: Fred & Cora de Guzman

2. Ted & Susan Concepcion for **Archangel Gabriel**

3. Ney & Pinky Rosas; Bobet & Gina Manuel for **Chronicles**

4. Boy & Kit dela Peña for **Exodus**
Alternate: Atoy & Malou Apo

BCGG Shepherds

5. Jhun & Ellen Coronel for **Magnificat**
Alternate: Mon & Glo Umali

6. Leony & Mia Parada for **Mustard Seed**
Alternate: Joe & Myr Serranilla

7. Cesar & Marivic Pareja; Nadeia Sarte for **Prodigal 102**

8. Levy & Delia Domingo for **Song of Ruth**
Alternate: Rodel & Eden Acosta

9. Jun & Vivian Ahyong for **St. Peter**
Alternate: Roel & Neneng Claros

10. Leo & Marilyn Soliman for **Corinthians**
Alternate: Apin & Chie Llamas

11. Rico & Terry Lim for **Easter**
Alternate: Edwin & Jes Gumila

PRAXIS MINISTRY



BCGG Shepherds

12. Ricky & Trixie Sun for **Matthew**
Alternate: Ian & Elaine Serranilla

13. Lito & Anne Naldo for **Samaritans**
Alternate: Dorge & Maricar Tariman

14. Benjie & Fely Santiago for **Sirach**
Alternate: Ferdie Joson

15. Dodo & Jon Sta. Maria for
Transfiguration
Alternate: Eugene & Ethel Araullo

16. Miles & Evelyn San Pedro for **Cana**
Alternate: Jennifer Chia

17. Jojo & Mina de Castro for **Emmanuel**
Alternate: Ed & Sol Macalalad

18. Benz & Vina Dimanalata for **Francis**
Alternate: Ali & Wheng Reyes

19. Joey & Portia Eustaquio for **Genesis**
Alternate: Josie Llamas

20. Lito Gonzales for **James, Brother of John**
Alternate: Tony & Aida del Rosario

21. Noel & Gigi Resurrecion for **John**
Alternate: Mark & Karen Madrid

22. Mon & Alice Go for **Psalm 98**
Alternate: Ferdie Cruz

23. Joey & Maricel Suarez for **Tala**
Alternate: Bogz & Grace Catangay

COUPLE POWER: THE BENEFITS OF COUPLES VOLUNTEERING TOGETHER

Rhea Rosas Gaddi, Community Services Ministry Overseer / Prodigal 102 BCGG



Communication is key when volunteering together. Make sure you communicate your needs and expectations clearly to each other and be open to feedback and suggestions.



reach into ourselves to discover their unique God-given talents, use these talents to reach out to others: our fellow Magis Deo members, their families, and poor communities in need of help. When we serve others, we consequently enrich the lives of those we have helped.

At the January Community Celebration our Spiritual Director, Fr. James U. Gascon, SJ, described this year's thrust as the community's shared compass that guides us in living out our mission of Simplicity, Stewardship, Service, and Sharing. When couples volunteer together they live out the community's shared purpose, and experience together a sense of fulfillment that brings them closer to each other. Volunteering provides purpose and fulfillment for couples looking for a way to give back to their community.

Volunteering is a great way to make a positive impact on the world, and what better way to do so than with your spouse by your side? Volunteering as a couple not only benefits the community, it also has a positive impact on your relationship. Here are several reasons couples should consider volunteering together.

Shared Experiences

By volunteering together, couples share new experiences and create lasting memories. Whether it's sharing personal stories in a Marriage Booster, serving snacks during a Community Celebration, making nametags for participants of a Suyuan, or even collecting Love Offering during a mass, volunteering creates a sense of teamwork and bonding that strengthens a marriage.

A Common Goal

Working together towards a common goal can be extremely rewarding. The Magis Deo Community's 2023 Thrust highlights the themes of Reach In, Reach Out and Enrich, encouraging members to

Learn New Skills, Learn from Each Other

Volunteering is a wonderful way to learn new skills or apply skills one already has in a new environment. Working alongside one's spouse provides a safe and supportive environment to learn and grow together.



COMMUNITY SERVICES MINISTRY



Strengthen Communication

Volunteering improves communication between couples. Working together towards a common goal helps couples learn to communicate more effectively and provides an opportunity to practice active listening and problem-solving skills.

Make a Difference Together

Finally, volunteering together allows couples to make a positive impact on the lives they touch and the world around them. Whether it is making time to listen to the concerns of other couples, sharing one's professional expertise, or finding ways to set up a hybrid or virtual prayer meeting to include all BCGG members, volunteering is a powerful way to make a difference and leave a lasting impact.

Volunteering as a couple is a rewarding and meaningful experience. From strengthening couple relationships to making a difference in the lives of others, there are many benefits to volunteering as a team.

Volunteering as a couple builds a stronger and more connected community. By working with other volunteers and ministries, you can create a sense of unity and collaboration that has a ripple effect throughout the community. You may also discover new resources and opportunities you never knew existed, allowing you to build new relationships and connections.

So why not sign up now with one of our ministries and Reach Out to others inside and outside the Magis Deo Community?

Tips for Couples Volunteering Together

Now that you know the benefits of volunteering together as a couple, here are some tips to help you make the most of your experience:

Discover your talents and strengths as individuals and as a couple.

What are your interests, skills, and unique talents that you can share with others? Your current work, hobbies or training can be a good way to assess what skills and talents you may want to share with the community or to serve others. If you enjoy managing events or projects, volunteering to help during the monthly Community Celebrations might interest you. If you have experience in counseling or guiding others during retreats, then our Formation Ministry can use your help.

Choose a Ministry, project or tasks you are interested in or care about

To make the most of your volunteer experience, choose the volunteer work where you can share your talents, skills, and professional experience. You can also choose the areas you both care about or are interested to learn. This will help you stay motivated and engaged throughout your time volunteering together.



COMMUNITY SERVICES MINISTRY

Set realistic expectations.

Before you start volunteering, it is important to set realistic expectations. Make sure you have a clear idea of what the work entails, how much time it will take, and what you need to bring. The Praxis Ministry came up with a list of "Chewable Tasks" – simple tasks members can do during the different activities and projects of the various ministries. Examples of these tasks are: buying flowers for the mass during community celebrations, helping set up the Zoom meeting for an online recollection, creating the Excel file for the BCGG attendance log sheet. In Magis Deo, every form of volunteer work matters.

Communicate effectively.

Communication is key when volunteering together. Make sure you communicate your needs and expectations clearly to each other and be open to feedback and suggestions.

Be flexible.

Volunteering can be unpredictable, so it is important to be flexible and adaptable. Be willing to take on new tasks and roles and be prepared to adjust your plans as needed.



Celebrate your successes.

Finally, take the time to celebrate your successes together. Whether it is completing a project or making a difference in someone's life, acknowledging your accomplishments strengthens your bond and motivates you to continue volunteering.

By following these tips, you can make the most of your volunteer experience and strengthen your relationship at the same time. Sign up now with one of our ministries and Reach Out.

You never know what kind of impact you could make together.



YOUTH MINISTRY

On April 2, Sunday, during our face to face community celebration, the Magis Deo Youth Ministries are inviting the kids 13 years old and below to a Lenten Reflection on Sacrifices with Tito Dong and Tita Gin Galang at Auditorium 3 of the Lay Force San Carlos Seminary from 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM.

Simultaneously, the teens, 13 to 19 years old, will have their Journaling activity entitled "Gathering Gifts Graces through Journaling" with Tita Zarah at Auditorium 1.

Lastly, the Young Single Adults, 20 years old and above, are welcome to join the Magis Deo couples in A Lenten Recollection with Fr. Xavier Olin, S.J. at the Lay Force Chapel.

See you all!



Formation Ministry together with Community Service Ministry & Youth Ministry Invites everyone to **A Lenten Recollection**



Fr. Xavier "Xave" Olin, SJ

**"Embracing Grace-filled Growth:
Praying Our Lent"**

Eucharistic Celebration
will follow
Sponsored by Easter BCGG



MAGIS DEO YOUTH MINISTRY

is inviting Magis Deo kids aged 13 and below to join ...



LENT REFLECTION ON SACRIFICES

With Tito Dong and Tita Gin
magis deo community
celebration kids event



REMEMBERING LENT REFLECT & SING

Date: April 2, 2023 (Sunday)
Auditorium 3,
9-10:30AM



Magis Deo Youth Ministry
Gathering Gifts and Graces
Through Journaling

Join us for a morning of journal writing
guided by the framework of the Examen.

Who: Magis Teens (13 - 19 years old)

When: Sunday, 9:00 - 10:30 AM on April 2, 2023

Where: Lay Force, San Carlos Seminary,
Guadalupe, Makati City

What to bring: notebook; pens, pencils, crayons,
paints, pastels, stickers and scrapbook kit if you
have

Facilitator: Tita Zarah Gagatiga, BCGG
Emmanuel

Walk-in participants are welcome!



OUR VERSION OF LIFE SENTENCE IN BILIBID

Mennen & Elyn Aracid, Outreach Ministry Overseer / Easter BCGG

The prison ministry is not something new to us. We have been "serving our sentence" through the Philippine Jesuit Prison Service (PJPS) as formation volunteers to the children of inmates or persons deprived of liberty (PDLs). Elyn joined in 2003 and Mennen in 2005. In prison terms, that would have been a life sentence already! We could have been eligible for parole for good behavior and given a reduced sentence. But we opted to stay.



Rebuilding Lives. Rekindling Hope. Restoring Dignity

This tagline of PJPS resonates with us. The past 20 years we spent with the PDLs and their families proved that restorative justice works. We saw how lives have been transformed, especially for the children of PDLs who are victims of the circumstances themselves. Without parents who could give proper guidance and support, these children could easily make bad decisions and wrong choices in life and could become liabilities in society in the future.

This is one of the compelling reasons why we became active in the prison service. Formation volunteers meet the children or their parents once a month for a 2 to 3-hour session. It is not that much, but the sense of community, and the values and spirituality that are introduced to them are enough to help them get through difficult times.

Magis Deo. More For God

The Magis Deo community was formed as a response to a mission to do more for God. Our call is "to help build the kingdom of God here on earth through a life of stewardship, simplicity, sharing, and service to others."

According to our founder, Fr. Ruben M. Tanseco, SJ, one of the most important vocations is the forging of true companionship: between husband and wife, parent and child, and of course, God and man. This

was what was lost in the families of PDLs, and which we, as part of the Magis Deo family, would like to share.

Faith Sharing with our Incarcerated Brethren

Sally and Anchit Chua Chiaco of John BCGG have been organizing Lenten and Advent Recollections in Bilibid since 2012. The PDLs and benefactors look forward to these recollections every year. However, the covid pandemic prevented us from visiting and doing recollections the past 3 years.

This year we are fortunate to be allowed to continue.

On March 25, 2023, 38 Magis Deo members experienced being a companion to 300 PDLs at the Medium Security Compound of the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa. Some, like us, are already familiar with the prisons, while others are first timers.

The following BCGGs heeded the call to be companions to the last, the least, and the lost.

- Archangel Gabriel
- Easter
- Francis
- James
- John
- Matthew
- Mustard Seed
- Samaritans
- Sirach
- St. Peter
- Transfiguration

OUTREACH MINISTRY

Initiation

We arrived at 8:00 am for the orientation by PJPS staff. Our IDs and vaccine cards were collected for ease of entry. Our gate passes were already processed the week before.

We moved to the Medium Security Compound which is a 5-minute drive from the PJPS office. Everything went smoothly from the security check to registration and stamping. The PSG or the Pastoral Security Group (PDLs who are parish workers) made sure we feel secure and comfortable while inside the compound.

Mass and Recollection

Fr. Firmo Bargayo, SJ, PJPS Executive Director, led the community mass. His message around the word "tanda" (tanda... tanda-an... pagka-tanda...pagka-tanda-an) was a good introduction to the recollection that followed.

Yoling Sevilla of John BCGG facilitated the recollection. She effectively led the discussion about the parallels of Prison Life with the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

The PDLs shared these reflection points with their Magis Deo facilitators:

- How did you take God and your parents for granted?
- How did you find your way back?
- How are you now?
- How has your point of view changed all this time?



The PDLs were so eager to share that the one hour allocated for the small group and plenary sharing didn't seem enough.

Highlights of the sharing:

1. Most of the PDLs in our group did not heed the advice of their parents. Most of them disobeyed their parents, and later regretted that their parents were right.
2. The wrong company. Most of the stories we heard involved being in the company of friends who had vices and were bad examples.
3. They took their freedom for granted. This 'downtime' was a good preparation for them to develop their relationship with God, study and earn qualifications, and mend their ways.
4. Prison life is not easy. It is bad enough that most of their friends and loved ones abandon them because they are in prison. But they are also thankful that they are alive. They surmise they would also have been dead by now if they continued to live their lives prior to incarceration.
5. Hope and freedom are powerful things to look forward to. They may not be visited by family or friends, but they value the ear of strangers who took time to listen to their stories. Despair gets set aside.

Fellowship

Aside from the snacks, the PDLs were served lunch by the Magis members. To show their appreciation, the juveniles or the CICL (Children in Conflict with the Law) and the College Guild entertained us with dance numbers. That was something that we always look forward to in our visits.

Igniting the Magis

This year's thrust of Magis Deo to have a spiritually strong and vibrant apostolic community in service of others came alive through the outreach activity to the PDLs. It was indeed an enriching and transformative experience both for the PDLs and the 38 Magis volunteers. We are sure everyone left Bilibid a different person.

Our life sentence continues...

OUTREACH MINISTRY



TENDING THE SHEEP SERIES WITH FR. JAMES U. GASCON, SJ FOUNDATIONS OF HOLINESS (MORALS FOR EVERYDAY CHRISTIANS)

Reported by Chacho Angeles, Matthew BCGG

This year's Tending the Sheep Series will focus on the moral teachings of the Church. The Series started on 25 March 2023 covering the foundations of moral theology. 85 members from 21 BCGGs attended, with 1 ME Class member and 6 guests.

For this formation session, Fr. James discusses the principles and foundations of Christian morality and how to live a moral life. He first gives a definition or clarification of some terms and concepts. Morality is defining what is right and wrong, good and evil, and choosing what is good or right, and avoiding what is evil or wrong. Vocation is the experience of being called, and responding to this call. Our foundational principle therefore is that each one of us is called to a unique vocation of creaturehood in God, experiencing the call to do good and avoid evil. This is a process of becoming fully human that leads to genuine happiness. Therefore, to live a moral life is a call from God, a vocation.

The question therefore that Christians may ask at this point is: How does one know what is good or evil? Other corollary questions are: What is 'happiness'? What actions will, after a decision-making process, lead me to meaning? If the goal of vocation is the fullness of life characterized by happiness (contentment, peace), how do we get there? Are there any principles or guidelines by which we will be able to arrive at what is good?

There are different approaches to discerning what is good and evil. These are: the Ethics of Duty or Obligation (which is rule-centered), the Ethics of Consequence or Utility (which is outcome-oriented), 'Old Style' Catholic Moral Theology (which is concerned with what is sinful and what is not based on divine and Church rules) and Aristotle's Virtue Ethics (which is person-based).

Aristotle's Virtue Ethics is a system of moral thinking that doesn't focus on rules (Ethics of Obligation)



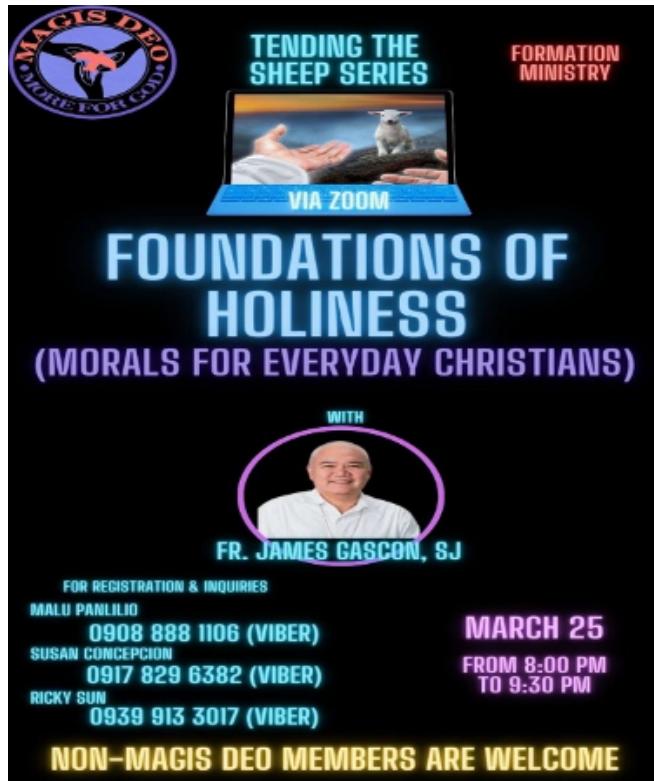
or on the outcomes (Ethics of Consequence). Instead, this ethical system focuses on the person. A good person does right actions, and doing right actions habitually makes a person good. Virtues are character traits that a good person has, and leads to good behavior. And virtues are the midpoint between excess and extreme deficiency. Aristotle calls this "mean" Mesotes, or the middle ground.

For Catholics, according to James Keenan, Virtue Ethics asks us first to consider who we are (or who we are becoming), who we ought to become (or who we are called to become), and how we can get there. These considerations will direct the study of morality. Keenan points to the Catholic virtues of justice, prudence, temperance, fortitude.

When rules conflict, or when outcomes are unweighable, turning to the person might be the best compromise, and this points to what action leads one to become. One important reality that Virtue Ethics considers is the reality that "goods" often are not in the same level of goodness, often conflicts, and are sometimes incompatible and discordant. And as Catholics, it is relevant to ask: What does Catholicism call us to become? Can there be morality without religion? What does a Catholic moral life look like?



FORMATION MINISTRY



**MAGIS DEO
MORE FOR GOD**

TENDING THE SHEEP SERIES

FORMATION MINISTRY

FOUNDATIONS OF HOLINESS
(MORALS FOR EVERYDAY CHRISTIANS)

WITH


FR. JAMES GASCON, SJ

FOR REGISTRATION & INQUIRIES

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0908 888 1106 (VIBER)

SUSAN CONCEPCION
0917 829 6382 (VIBER)

RICKY SUN
0939 913 3017 (VIBER)

MARCH 25
**FROM 8:00 PM
TO 9:30 PM**

NON-MAGIS DEO MEMBERS ARE WELCOME

Morality is lived by a moral agent, and this is man, a human, who is relational, embodied, historical, equal but unique, with freedom, has conceptual knowledge (the brain), evaluative knowledge (the heart) and a conscience. Those actions which are deliberately and consciously performed by humans through their intellect and will, are known as 'Human Actions'. In contrast to this, 'Acts of Humans' which are instinctive in nature, are proper to a human person but are not within the human capacity to choose, such as breathing, sickness like mental illness, etc. Only human acts can be evaluated as good or bad, as right or wrong. Furthermore, to assess moral acts, we look at object, intention, and circumstances. A morally right (good) act fulfills the total person adequately, and virtues aid us in pursuing the good.

Furthermore, we believe that we are created in the image and likeness of God who loves us unconditionally, and our response to this love is to do good moral acts. As Catholics, we do this in imitation of Christ. This is our response to the universal call to holiness. This is our vocation.

For Catholics, there are several sources of guidance in living a moral life. The first is the use of the Scriptures as guide to a moral life. The bible is often read in a prescriptive manner. It tells us what to do and what not to do. However, if we treat the bible as

illuminative rather than merely prescriptive, another dimension of the text opens – the bible begins to engage our moral vision. When we read the bible stories as an invitation to engage and participate in the discernment presented by the text, reading it as stories and following characters, events, and meaning, then the dimension of God emerges. Scriptures do not tell us just what to do in simple black and white terms. Rather, scriptures challenge us to shape our moral vision accordingly. Scripture texts must be interpreted in their larger context, and having a guiding principle and a point of reference will help. Four critical approaches developed in using Scriptures as a source of moral guidance, and these are the exegetical, hermeneutical, the methodological and the theological.

In using Scriptures as a source of moral guidance, we must be aware of some tensions that can be observed. These are Revelation versus Reason, Materialism versus Life in the Spirit, Universalism versus Group Identity, Grace versus Law, Love versus Force, Status versus Equality. The presence of these tensions in the scripture shows the incompleteness and mistake of taking only parts of the scripture that lean to one side of the tension. One also needs to consider and take into account the other parts that tend toward the opposite pole of the tension.

A second source of guidance for Catholics to live a moral life are the teachings of the Church. Church teachings provide precepts and patterns for behaving by presenting stable points of reference and direction for moral living. One such set of teachings are Catholic Social Teachings/Thought, which is the collection of documents (mostly papal encyclicals and bishops' conferences manifestos) that speak about justice and the common good in various political and socio-economic issues. Also relevant to this is the concept of hierarchy of authority and hierarchy of truths. This teaching authority is called the Magisterium of the Catholic Church and is vested in the Pope and the bishops. It is infallible when the teaching is solemnly declared *ex cathedra* on doctrines concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Catholic church, by the Pope, ecumenical council, by the Pope and bishops. Because these teachings are divinely inspired, we Catholics should give our full assent of faith. If not declared infallible, we give our Religious Assent or Submission.

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Over the centuries, there has been recorded resistance to some of these teachings, even at the highest bodies. However, a prudent approach is needed with regards to these magisterial teachings. What is important is that these Church teachings are shared, disseminated and discussed in the external forum, and individual Catholics consider these in the formation of conscience, in the internal forum.

Natural law also is also a source of guidance for morality. Natural law is a philosophical theory that states that humans have certain rights, moral values, and responsibilities which are inherent in human nature. Natural laws are universal concepts and are not based on any culture or customs. This refers to laws of morality ascertainable through human reason. In philosophy, the natural order and reason are the moral sources from which natural law seeks to derive its authority.

With man as a moral agent, human experience can also be a source of moral guidance. It is the human person who will ultimately decide to act in one way or another. Human identity, fundamental stance, experience, and the interplay of experience, are also involved in questions of morality. Experience is always diverse and changing, and are situated in a dynamic social context that necessitates a need for a community reflection of certain moral norms, such as the development in the Church's stand on the death penalty.

How do we evaluate a moral act? The morality of human acts depends on the OBJECT chosen, the END in view or the INTENTION, and the CIRCUMSTANCES of the action. The object, end, and circumstances make up the "sources" or

constitutive elements of the morality of human acts. However, there are some caveats that our Catholic faith imposes on this evaluation. An evil action cannot be justified by reference to a good intention, or the end does not justify the means (CCC1759). A morally good act requires the goodness of the object, of its end, and of its circumstances, taken together (CCC1760). And there are concrete acts that are always wrong to choose because they are intrinsically evil, or their choice entails disorder of the will (i.e., moral evil). One may not do evil so that good may result from it.

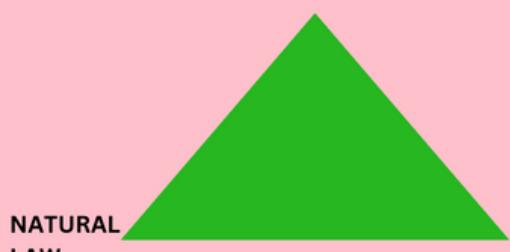
The OBJECT establishes the "species" of the act, or what kind of action it is. To determine the object of the act, three elements must be considered: physical act, immediate intention, and defining circumstances. The END or INTENTION refers to the larger purpose for which the action is done. This is another level of intention, different from the immediate intention which is part of the object. The END of the agent is the final goal toward which the action is directed. It could also be known as long-term goal or motivation. The qualifying CIRCUMSTANCES of the action are the external factors that vary the degree of rightness or wrongness of the moral act. They are different from circumstances that define the object of the act. But always remember that the object of the act may be neutral, objectively right or wrong, but the final moral evaluation of the concrete action will require consideration of the end of the agent and the qualifying circumstances.

To further delineate what is intrinsically evil, as affirmed by Pope John Paul II in *Veritatis Splendor* (1993), there are acts which the Church's moral tradition terms as "intrinsically evil" (*intrinsece malum*), which are *always* and *per se*, on account of their very object, and quite apart from the ulterior intentions of the one acting and the circumstances, are evil in themselves. These are acts: that are hostile to life itself (such as any kind of homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, and voluntary suicide); that violate the integrity of the human person (such as mutilation, physical and mental torture, and attempts to coerce the spirit); that are offensive to human dignity (such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution and trafficking of women and children, degrading

The Sources of Moral Guidance:

HUMAN EXPERIENCE

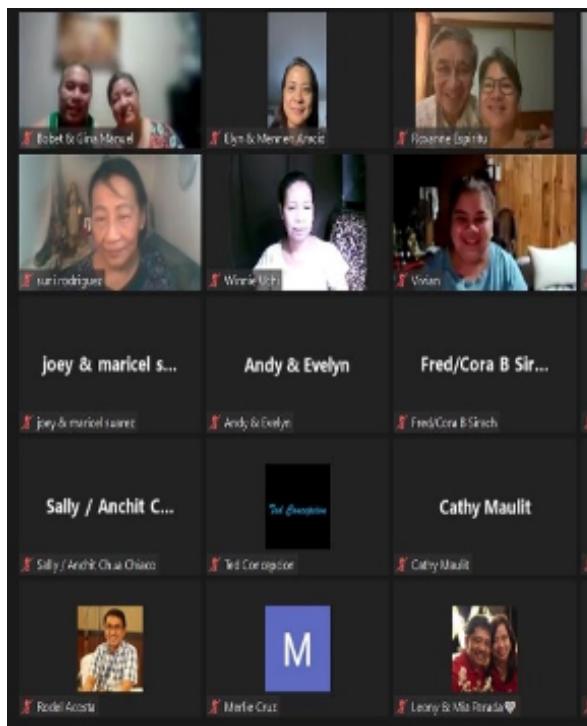
SCRIPTURES



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working conditions which treat workers as mere instruments for profit and not as free and responsible persons). These acts should never be directly intended as the Church considers them seriously disordered and harmful. Although the gravity of the act and the subjective culpability of the agent may be diminished by circumstance and intention, the overall act remains wrong. These are acts that strike at the core of being human and cannot seem to admit any justification today.

Moral discernment is always difficult to do because it should look at the whole, at the social context as the basis of communal moral discernment. It should look at the situation and the context of the moral agent, with focus on the person. We should be able to listen to the person, be positive in our outlook, respect conscience, ours as well as others, be attentive to distinctions, be responsible with Church teaching, share doubts, and, most of all, pray.



GOLF FOR A CAUSE

Leo Soliman, Corinthians BCGG

It has been a while since we held a golf tournament, the last of which generated the most funds for our community's activities. To my knowledge, funds raised from the last tournament topped those from previous tourneys combined.

To maintain and sustain our projects and programs, it is again time to hold a golf tournament. Lilit & Abby Tumbocon immediately answered the call to handle the reins for this endeavor. They formed an elite troop for the golf committee: Ting Yupangco to organize and manage the tournament proper; Edwin Gumila for sponsorships and solicitations; Jun & Vivian Ahyong for Finance; Cesar & Delsa Sangalang to recruit players/golfers; and yours truly as rah-rah boy.

After a series of meetings and deliberations, the undertaking was born: The Magis Deo Community 35th Anniversary Golf Tournament will be held on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at the South Course of the Canlubang Golf and Country Club.

This event promises to be fun and fulfilling for all. Magis golfers, bring your family, friends, and colleagues to play. All members, please help in the sponsorships and solicitations for the benefit of Magis Deo's programs and projects, especially our outreach projects.

With the tournament's noble purpose, the support of the community, and prayers for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the committee is optimistic of the event's success.

We've gone a long way since Claro Santos initiated a golf fellowship which has morphed into periodic successful fund raisers for the community. Truly, God works in mysterious ways.



Canlubang Golf and Country Club (South Course)

April 26, 2023 (Wednesday)

Registration: 6:00AM

Shotgun Tee-off 8:00AM

Format: Molave Points System

Tournament Fee: Php 4,500.00

(inclusive of green fee, cart-sharing, giveaway, lunch & raffle)

Proceeds will go to the Magis Deo Community outreach programs.

Sponsorship Packages:

- Package A: PRESENTER: Php 100,000.00
- Package B: GOLD SPONSOR Php 50,000.00
- Package C: SILVER SPONSOR Php 25,000.00
- Package D: BRONZE SPONSOR Php 10,000.00
- Package E: DONOR Php 5,000.00
- Package F: PRODUCT SPONSOR



SIMPLE LOVE

Chacho Angeles, Matthew BCGG

Father,

How I wish I were a child again.
With no cares, no worries, no work
No responsibilities, no ambitions.
My apo just wants to eat, go out, play
With the kids, or on her own with
Her toys, dinosaurs, and puzzles.

She calls out to me to show a
Discovery, or to ask for help,
Accompany her outside the house,
Or to just sit beside her while
Watching dinosaurs on my laptop.
She loves to sleep beside me curled up
In the crook of my arm, snuggling.

And she can cry! When she is hungry,
Does not get what she wants, when
She gets hurt, or when she feels bad,
But sometimes for no apparent reason.
And she throws a tantrum, to get
What she wants, or get back control?

She has, I saw, very simple needs,
Around which her world revolves.
And among them is a desire to be
Loved, to cuddle, to be cared for,
To be with her when she hurts, and
When she is happy. She trusts
The love of her parents and older
People around for all her needs.
Her feelings are so transparent that
I know when I do right by her.

How I wish I could be like her,
No ambitions, no deceit, no trickery,
No duplicity, no pride. I pray that I
Learn to trust You unconditionally;
I pray for simple joys, simple hurts;
For Your companionship and care.
I pray for a simple love to rule my life;
For You love us, Your children,
Far more than any mother can.



Jesus,

My life is so short, like a breeze that passes,
And I am sometimes at a loss on how
It could have meaning and be fulfilling.
And yet I manage to stray from a path
That You have laid down for me.
I am nothing without my God, and
I am nothing without my fellow men.
Yet I get attached to worldly things,
And pay attention only to what I want.

I pray that my desires and my worldly self,
Be totally given to you, dedicated to living the
Example of Your life; mirroring that heart,
Compassionate and ever loving, wishing only the
Well-being of Your flock, You and I, the
Beloved of the Father, with the Holy Spirit.

Amen.



Father, why do I always run in the shadows,
When Your love shines brighter than the sun?
Why do I often forget You, feel Your absence,
When Your Word is ever present, and Your
Love is shown in all Your wondrous creation
And a lot of people show this love to others.
Is it my lack of faith, my skinny love for You?
Or do I give inordinate importance to my fears,
Worldly attachments and my daily concerns?

Father, I pray for Your grace, that my heart
Be like the heart of Your son, the seat of
His divinity, our bridge to an ever lasting
Union with You. From His heart compassion
Springs forth, dispelling the darkness of doubt.
Let the spark of love jump out from my heart,
That I may embrace Your son's teachings, so that I
That I may believe and love as He does.



Lord Jesus, shower on me Your grace.
Let my faith grow from a tiny seed
To a great tree, with fragrant flowers
Whose nectar feeds bees and butterflies,
That produces sweet and nourishing
Fruit and food for animals and humans,
Leaves that cure the body and the spirit.

Shelter this tree, strong but with a fragile
Heart, from strong winds and rain,
Bowed but unbroken.

Nourish it with your Word that magnifies
Your presence in this self-absorbed world,
That it may grow strong and mirror Your
Compassionate heart, and overcome my
In-born selfishness, my doubts and fears,
Caused by the apathy of others and
Your seeming absence from this life.

Come and dispel the darkness and disbelief
And cure me, make me healthy, in body and
Spirit, because I believe.



REFLECTIONS

GOD'S LOVE

Gian Manuel, Magis Youth

I first knew you when I was a child
When I was small they told me stories about You.
In school I learned about how much You cared for me.
Every single day I feel Your presence in my life
But bad habits, temptations and sins try to pull us apart.
I'm sorry if sometimes I go astray
Forgetting You when I'm busy with other things.
Like all other relationships, ours has its share of ups and downs
But I think whatever happens, I will always end up back in Your arms.
For each time I turn my back on You
You never fail to forgive me and love me even more
Your love has taught me to care for fellowmen as well
To always be kind and treat all with respect.
It seems easy but it can be a struggle for me
Because I can be weak in the face of trials and difficulties
But no matter how hard I fall, Your love lifts me up without fail
Thank you God for Your unconditional love.



LEARNING HOW TO LOVE BY BEING LOVED

Angeline Concepcion, Magis Youth

They say when it comes to love, you become wiser as you age. I did not understand this until I reached my 20's. When I was younger, I believed I knew everything I needed to know because I watched so many movies, and I have seen how the people around me act and behave with their loved ones. But when I experienced my first heartbreak, I realized that what I knew about love was just the surface. I remember thinking, "Why should I continue to be kind if this is what I get in return?" or, "Why should I keep giving my all if I do not get what I give?" But then I think about my first introduction to love: my family.



I think back to when my brothers would do their best to give me the best gifts even when I could not give them anything in return except a card or a silly little drawing. I try to remember when my mom would go to all my trainings and competitions and cheer me on even when I didn't get a podium finish. I try to think about when my dad would do small things like inviting me to the mall to run errands with him or watch a movie with him, and all I had to give in return was my time and presence.

Now that I am approaching my mid-20's, I am more open to learning and understanding love. I continue to live life with love and continue to offer that love to my friends in the form of gift-giving, words of affirmation, or just my time and my presence. I remember how my family shows me love and this reminds me how I should go about my day to day. I am reminded that I must be kind and always give my all even when I do not get the same effort in return. Love has affected my life in such a beautiful way because I realize I am loved unconditionally by my family, by my friends, and by God. So, in return, I love unconditionally as well.



WHEEL OF LIFE

Delsa Sangalang, Samaritans BCGG

I found God through another shopper yesterday. We have ongoing improvement works in our Flair Towers condo unit in Mandaluyong to augment its rental, either through long term lease or Airbnb. I was alone driving the Everest SUV yesterday to buy some items from a surplus shop in Muntinlupa na ilalaman namin sa condo unit. After paying, I backed up to facilitate loading the items when some passers-by and the security guard pointed out that the right rear wheel was flat. Sobrang flat nga at sayad na ang gulong. First time kong ma-flat tire! One of the salesmen suggested that I leave the items I bought, go to a vulcanizing shop and just get back after. Sabi naman nung isa, masisira ang mags dahil dalawang kilometro pa ang nearest vulcanizing shop, na hahanapin ko pa. Sabi naman nung isa may air pump daw sila kaso sira. In other words, walang nag-offer na tulungan akong tanggalin yung flat tire at palitan ng spare tire. Di ako marunong magpalit; pati nga yung tools at spare tire ay di ko alam kung saan nakalagay at hanapin (which is something I should really learn).

Then another shopper on a motorcycle came and volunteered to help. He took out a small item that looked like a power bank, tinanong ako kung ano dapat ang air pressure sa gulong, then proceeded to attach the thing to the flat tire. Its digital screen registered 7 psi which is consistent sa itsura ng gulong. First time kong makakita ng ganun. Nagtanong ako sa mga nakapaligid kung ano yun. Sabi niya it's an electric air compressor or inflator na portable at rechargeable. Sa laki ng gulong ng Everest at sa liit nung dalang equipment ni Kuya, parang ayaw kong maniwala na kayang pabalikin ang gulong sa normal na 30 psi tire pressure. Pero syempre di ako pwedeng maging choosy dahil hulog ng langit si Kuya. God must have sent him my way to help me, kasama yung pregnant wife niya na hinintay matapos lahat bago sila kumain sa carinderia. Nagkagulo dun sa parking ng surplus shop: pinicturan at vinideo yung maliit na inflator ni Kuya habang nai-inflate ang gulong. After 15 minutes, back to its usual self na ang gulong ko. I thanked them all at saka ko pa lang tinawagan si Cesar habang palabas ng highway. Sa excitement ko sa nangyari, nakalimutan kong tawagan si Cesar. May nadaanan akong vulcanizing shop kaso nasa gilid ng highway at may 10-wheeler truck na nakaharang sa harap kaya di ako maka-pwesto. Ang naging concern ko ay makatawid sa SLEX nang hindi



hindi babalik sa pagka-flat ang gulong. But yes, God is good. Nung dumaan ako sa Petron sa SLEX, okay pa ang gulong hanggang nakarating ako sa isang tire shop sa Sta. Rosa. The vulcanizing shop confirmed na may butas nga ang gulong.

From that simple event, I guess God was trying to show and remind me several points:

1. Una, I should learn where to find the tools and spare tire, and how to change tires, Di pwedeng sakay lang ng sakay. Just like in life, I should always be prepared. Anything can happen. My comfort zone will not always be comfortable.
2. Pangalawa, kahit na maliit na bagay kagaya nung cute na inflator, pwedeng makaambag pa rin ng malaki. Kaya dapat wag kong maliitin ang maliliit na bagay. I should not be quick to jump to conclusions or give judgement. On the other hand, I should be open to just believe, to always keep on believing.
3. Pangatlo, it was unlike me to call Cesar only after everything was okay. Perhaps I wanted to solve things on my own first, or I was distracted by the people around me, or I got overwhelmed with excitement. And looking back, I tend to forget to call on God when I have problems. Pinipilit kong kayanin muna bago ako humihingi ng tulong sa Kanya. Other times, I tend to forget Him when I'm happy and in high spirits. In good or bad times, I should never forget to call and acknowledge God's presence in my life.
4. Last, I guess God is trying to show me na kung yun ngang maliliit na bagay kagaya ng flat tire, may pinapadala siyang mga sugo out of the blue para tumulong, yun pa kayang malalaking trials sa buhay? Maraming magme-meron, minsan meron ding haharang, at maraming distractions, but I should keep on going and should not doubt Him. I should always trust God in all things, big and small, and re-learn every single day to lift everything up to Him.



I CHOSE THE LATTER

Leo Soliman, Corinthians BCGG

This April my ME Class 36 marks our 28th year with the Magis Deo Community. How time flies. From 12 or 15 couples (sorry, my memory fails me) sitting at Betania Retreat House, listening to Fr. Barquez and couple sharers, we're now down to 2 1/2 couples, one being a widow.

Our class, 90% of whom are within the same age range, had a lively and prayerful social life. After a few weekly meetings, we were an instant barkada. Activities weren't confined to churches and prayer rooms. We often went out socializing, taking advantage of our remaining youth. All looked forward to what, where, and when our next "lakad" would be. Our class bonded, that's for sure.

As time passed, 5 deaths came earlier than expected. Others relocated. Others lost steam. Then, only 5 members remained.

Haaay. Those were the days. Our children grew up with each other and became close friends. But as fallouts happened, so did their togetherness. It was convenient then to have a graceful exit from the community. In my case, I'm sure no one would have noticed my absence if I had left too. But God had other plans.

Marilyn and I were assigned to ME Ministry as couple sharers, which had us sharing our life experiences ME Weekend after ME Weekend. And in a number of times, we shared outside the Magis Deo Community. I took it all as God's will.

During these times of serving God, my personal problems went from bad to worse, to the point that I questioned God's intentions. I started doubting His presence. How could He allow me to fall into this pit? However and whatever I did to recover, I only sank deeper and deeper. Worse, I dragged my family and loved ones down to my abyss.

I've been carrying this elephant on my back for as long as I can remember. It's a miracle I'm still standing. Yes, the elephant is still there; but now they're a herd. Each waking morning I ask myself, "Am I really still alive?", thinking that dying in my sleep would be the best escape from my problems.

But I like to believe that God hasn't abandoned me. Nor will He ever. For whatever He deprived me of, He blessed my children abundantly. It is for them that I kept going. It is for them that I stay strong. It is for them that I kept my faith. It is for them that I continue to praise and thank God. Looking at them fortifies my faith in God's goodness.

Back then I knew I was left with two options: Whine and sulk, or rise and move forward. I chose the latter.



ROOM IN HEAVEN

Lito Naldo, Samaritans BCGG

"Service to others is your rent... for your room in heaven."

– Muhammad Ali



Coming from a devout Muslim, it seems that the belief in heaven as a gift from God is universal. In John 14:2 of our Bible, Jesus told His disciples, "In my Father's house there are rooms for you..." But because Jesus told this to His disciples, I therefore have to be a disciple of Jesus to get a "room in heaven."

So, how do I become a disciple of Jesus?

In Matthew 19:21, Jesus told the young man, "... go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven. Then come, follow me."

What is God telling someone like me who has a relatively comfortable life, who also has many possessions?

In prayer, this is what I heard from God... "LOVE me and your neighbor, NOT your possessions! Only if you do this can you follow me and be called my disciple!"

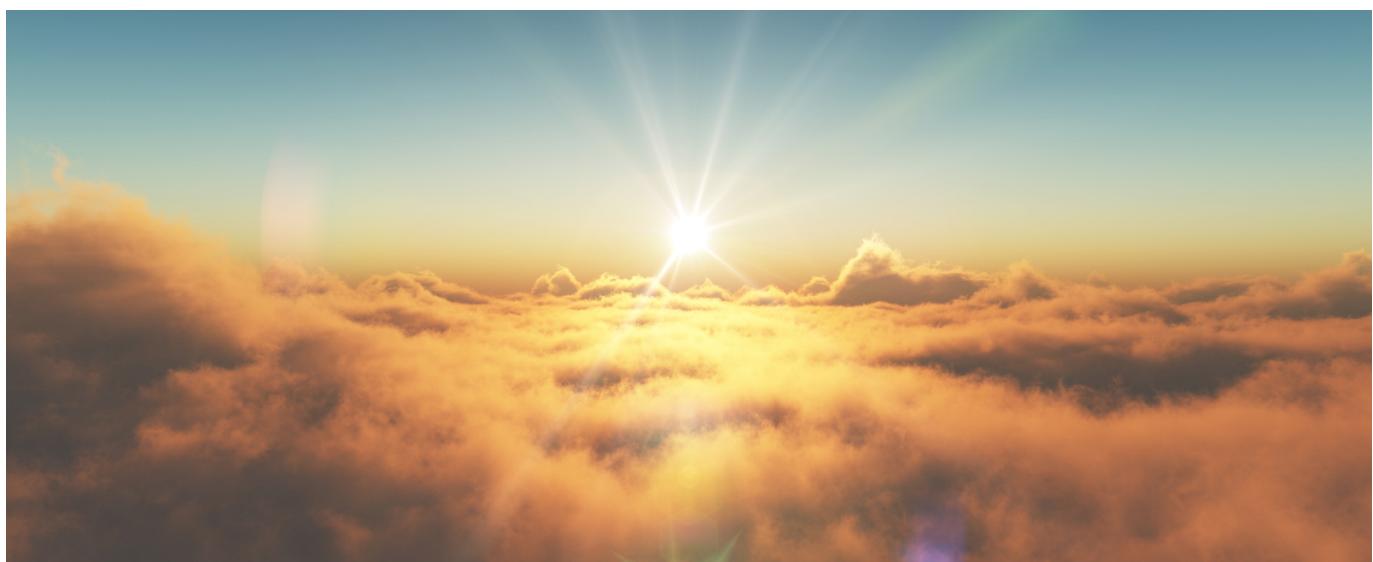
What possession do I "love" the most, and what do I find most difficult to give to God and my neighbor? Digging deep into my heart I realize that it is TIME.

Especially now that I am back teaching face-to-face classes at the university, my daily schedule is always full. I use up most of my time holding classes, studying teaching materials, and preparing PowerPoint presentations for my lectures. If I find some free time in the day, I usually spend it catching up with the news, or reading and answering emails. I value my time, I don't want to "waste" time, I have very little time left to give to others.

But how about time for my wife Anne and our children? I also have to give time to our BCGG meetings every Tuesday, time to write my prayer reflections, and of course, time to pray. So many need my time... to whom and what am I willing to give my time?

Tweaking the words of Muhammad Ali, I say, "Giving my time to others gives me time... to stay at a room in heaven."

So, my reply to God is: Thank you Lord for the time you have given me on this earth... may this short time I have be spent doing Your will and loving others. Amen.



"MAHAL ANG MAGMAHAL" - THE COST OF BEING IN LOVE

Josephus B. Jimenez. Cana BCGG

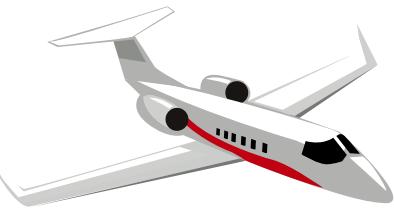
In today's too secularized and overly materialistic world, love has become a big business. It is a common thought nowadays that one cannot express love without a huge budget. Today's world has transformed the gentle feeling of love into a big commercial enterprise. Today's secular world pressures lovers to spend a lot, from the simplest bunch of roses and box of chocolates, to expensive dining with

luxurious wine, champagne, and caviar, complete with candlelight and romantic music from an orchestra in a six-star hotel, or at an exclusive resort in Balesin, El Nido, or Amanpulo.

Every Valentine's Day, birthday, wedding anniversary, and what not, businesses gear up for brisk earnings. These include flower shops, chocolate stores and wine cellars, fine dining restaurants, romantic concerts, and of course, hotels and motels. Malls use Valentine's Day to mount high profile marketing and sales campaigns. Online distribution platforms make a killing with unusually high volumes of sales and orders. Even small shops for ordinary folks are happy when people spend more on gifts, food, wine, chocolates, flowers, and greeting cards. Businessmen love Valentine's as they value the Christmas season, for these are the times human emotions translate into revenues and profits. Gift items of perfumes, wardrobes, shoes, bags, and jewelry bring billions of revenue in one day alone. Hotels and motels are fully booked.

The most expensive Valentine's gifts are diamonds, gold, pearls, cars, condos, and world tours given by taipans, moguls, magnates, tycoons, politicians, gambling lords, and drug lords to their wives, lovers, or both. One of the most expensive gifts given in the name of love is the Taj Mahal costing US\$827 million, built by Emperor Shah Jahan for his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Anil Ambani of the Ambani business empire in India gifted his wife Tina a yacht worth US\$84 million. Mukesh Ambani gave his wife Nita a jet plane worth US\$60 million. Indian actor Shah Rukh Khan gifted Arjun Rampal, Rajnikanth, and Anubhav Sinha with the latest BMW 7 model each. Love indeed is becoming very expensive.





Tom Cruise gave Katie Holmes a US\$20 million Gulfstream jet plane. Roman Abramovich, a Russian businessman, politician, and owner of the Chelsea Football Club, gifted his beloved Dasha Zhukova a *Femme de Venise* sculpture, a much coveted masterpiece by Alberto Giacometti. This is in addition to numerous art work estimated at US\$120 million. Elizabeth Taylor's famous 68-carat diamond worth US\$7 million in 1969 is just one of the expensive gifts from her then husband Richard Burton. Legendary boxer Mike Tyson gave a 24-carat golden bathtub worth US\$2 million. I don't know what Manny Pacquiao gives Jinkee on Valentine's Day, or what Boy Abunda gives Bong Quintana, or what Vice Ganda gives Zion in the name of love. But these gifts must cost millions.

Beyonce gifted her lover Jay-Z with a US\$2 million Bugatti sports car. And Beyonce's luxury bags worth about half a million dollars were gifts from Jay-Z. Kim Kardashian received not one or two but five Mercedes Maybachs from Kanye West. Love has become unaffordable for the hoi polloi. Oprah Winfrey gave a US\$705,000 ten-day luxury cruise to an unnamed person. Mariah Carrey received a Rolls Royce Phantom worth US\$400,000 from Nick Cannon. Sienna Miller's diamond and sapphire ring worth a quarter of a million was given by lover Jude Law. Jennifer Aniston's bicycle worth US\$15,000 was a gift from co-star Courteney Cox. Indian Business tycoon Raj Kundra gave his beloved Shilpa Shetty the entire 19th floor of the world famous Burj Khalifa. How much it is worth is a guarded secret.



I am not a rich man. For the last 45 years, I have given my wife Emma six dozen roses every Valentine's Day and when we were in Amsterdam, seven dozen red tulips. I have a candle-lit dinner with her and a night of concert music in Broadway or in the West End. We did a romantic cruise along the Rhine River from Amsterdam to Austria. I have also given the love of my life five fine children, five grandchildren and a number of foreign trips to America, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa.

We went to the Holy Land, renewed our marriage vows at Cana, and traveled to Rome and the Vatican twice. We went on a religious tour to Fatima in Lourdes, then Paris; and in Italy we visited Assisi and Pietrelcina, St. Padre Pio's birthplace. I could not afford carats, cars, condos, and cash. Nonetheless, I have given her my whole life and my faithfulness and pure love. That is all that I can afford.



Fr Ruben Tanseco's words of wisdom ring true until now: *Love is not a feeling but a decision. To me, the decision is final, unappealable, executory, and immutable*



There is indeed no love greater when a spouse is willing to lay down his life for the sake of his wife. Marriage is not all a bed of roses, but Fr Ruben Tanseco's words of wisdom ring true until now: Love is not a feeling but a decision. To me, the decision is final, unappealable, executory, and immutable. And marriage is not till debt do us part, but until death, period. I am prepared to die for my wife and for my family. That is the cost of being in love. Mahal and Magmahal.

LOVE IS HEALTH

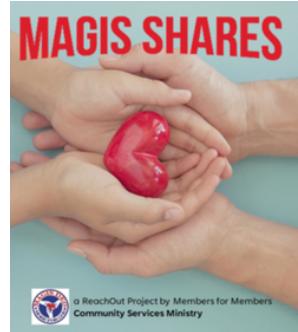
Jojo Gaddi, Prodigal 102 BCGG

We have been taught to "love others" or "be kind to others." Well and good. Not to sound selfish, but I think it is essential that we love ourselves also. In fact, learning to love ourselves, to take care of ourselves, gives us the ability to love others better. One of the ways we can love ourselves, take care of ourselves, is by exercising regularly. Exercise benefits us in many ways:

- It improves our well-being
- It relaxes us
- It makes us happy
- It strengthens our bodies, enabling us to combat different illnesses
- It improves our heart and lung health
- It increases bone density and bone mass
- It strengthens our muscles, ligaments, and tendons
- It improves our balance and coordination
- It builds confidence and self-esteem
- It helps prevent injuries



There are different forms of exercise. The two general forms are aerobic and anaerobic exercises. Aerobic exercise focuses on improving cardiovascular and pulmonary capacity, while anaerobic exercise focuses on developing strength and explosiveness. We must strive to do both so we can experience the full benefits of exercising. Examples of aerobic exercise are walking, jogging, and steady pace running and swimming. Examples of anaerobic exercise are sprinting, high intensity interval training (HIIT), and resistance training (using weights, resistance bands or body weight).



The simplest exercise one can do, and which is proven to be very beneficial, is walking. Walking can be both aerobic (casual walking) and anaerobic (brisk walking). The more steps we take, the better for our overall health and well-being (strive for at least 10,000 steps a day). Walking can be done anywhere (best outdoors) and does not require expensive equipment. Walking can be done any time, as well. It is good to walk after a meal.

Exercise benefits both young and old. The following are recommended exercises/activities for young ones, including children:

- Walking; running/jogging; swimming; playing outdoors
- Participating in sports
- HIIT
- Resistance training: weights/weight-lifting, resistance bands, calisthenics (pull-ups, push-ups, etc.)
- The following are recommended for the young once:
- Walking; running; if still tolerable: swimming
- Resistance training: weights/weight-lifting, resistance bands, calisthenics (pull-ups, push-ups, etc.)

Exercising regularly improves our health and helps us reap its other benefits. Maintaining our health can help us live longer, thus enabling us to love more. So remember: just keep moving!

5 Reasons WALKING is the King of Fat Loss (Changed My Life)
<https://www.magisdeo.org/mdnl/frw.mp4>

STUDY: Walking 10,000 Steps Daily for Fat Loss, Depression
<https://www.magisdeo.org/mdnl/wtsd.mp4>