

Magis

Formation for Mission



Stewardship
Simplicity
Sharing
Service

Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community
October 2017 Issue

Grace

Ever wonder what
it truly means?

Heroic leadership

Is it a task, or an ongoing
process?

Anxiety & peace

Why we should take
it seriously

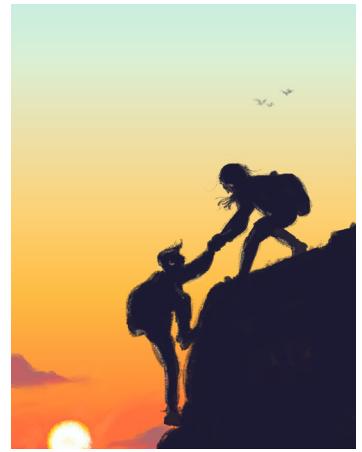
Katotohanan

Why truth will always be
important to us

On God's Magic

God gives us something
that transcends magic

About the Cover



In this month's issue, respective writers contribute their insights on what it truly means to become a leader. They shed light on the fact that there is a built-in leader in each one of us; you just have to have the initiative and realization to do so. It may be a challenge, but leading your own life keeps things moving.

Because of these, illustrator Levenspeil R. Sangalang of Magis Youth, enlivened his vision of heroic leadership through an adventurous and grand color scheme. The illustration features a lady pulling up a lad on the top of a cliff rock in the heat of day. Leadership isn't just about gender.

Furthermore, he wants to symbolize the rocky mountain as life and its obstacles. In the background, we see faintly three birds; to show that even in animals, they have their own mission to adapt and survive. In harmony, we all keep the wheel of life moving.

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Table of Contents

COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

Grace: God Dwelling In Each One of Us
by Malou Panlilio, Mustard Seed BCGG &
Marlyn Angeles, Thessalonians BCGG

4

PROSE AND POETRY

A Letter to My Daughter by Chacho
Angeles, Thesallonians BCGG

17

EDITORIAL

Heroic Leadership: A Challenge to the
Magis Deo Community

7

COUNCIL CORNER

Disturb Me, Lord... by Lito
Gonzales, James, Brother of John
BCGG

8

ANXIETY & PEACE

Anxiety & Peace by Ruben M.
Tanseco, SJ

10

REFLECTIONS

Katotohanan: Why Truth Will Always Be
Important to Us by Father James U. Gason,
SJ

My Mountain by Leo Soliman, Corinthians
BCGG

11

PILGRIM PIT STOP

When Parents Grow Up With Their
Children by Zarah Gagatiga, Emmanuel
BCGG

13

HEROIC LEADERSHIP

Finding My 'Magis' in Magis Deo by
Susan Concepcion, Archangel Gabriel BCGG

14

We Are All Leaders by
Susan Concepcion, Archangel Gabriel BCGG

SPIRITUAL TIDBITS & HUMOR

On God's Magic by Rey Mella, Cana BCGG

18

MUSICAL NOTES

On Learning to Live Alone by Nitz Eslava,
Psalmaritans BCGG, Magis Choir

20

MAGIS YOUTH

Feels Trip by Levenspeil Sangalang,
Magis Youth

23

SUYUAN

20th Suyuan sa Olandes by Philip &
Malu Panlilio, Mustard Seed BCGG

24

Calendar of Activities: October - December 2017

October

14 Community Celebration and Elec-
tion of Pastoral Council Members
27 Magis Golf Tournament

November

18 Advent Recollection
24-26 ME Weekend

December

3 Family Day

Grace:

God Dwelling in Each One of Us

*Malu Panlilio, Mustard Seed
BCGG and Marlyn Angeles,
Thessalonians BCGG*

Have you ever wondered what “grace” means? We encounter the word “grace” every day when we pray and in doing the Examen – we usually beg for God’s grace as we start our prayer. But what does “grace” really mean?

Last 2 September 2017, Fr. Arnel Aquino, SJ, professor at the Loyola School of Theology at the Ateneo de Manila explained what grace is. Many were amazed but challenged.

When one talks of grace in colloquial language, one gets a glimpse of what this means to different people. Oftentimes we hear funny anecdotes on what grace is through the following examples:

a. Biyaya as in “Halina at kumain na. Huwag nating pahintayin ang biyaya ng Diyo.” In this statement, grace appears to be something that waits. Is this not insulting to God?

b. Grace under the right conditions is downloaded and it is used up. Can grace be refilled and reloaded?

c. Grace of forgiveness given by the priest in confession: Is grace received only after absolution or after one has done the penance?

d. Sometimes people ask for special blessings from the priest or even the Pope. Is the grace given during mass too general that one has to ask for special blessing and grace from the priest, or, in another scenario, is the grace or blessing given by the Pope more potent than that given by Fr. Arnel, an ordinary priest?

e. Sometimes we hear people refer to grace attributed to material things that could bring luck or shield against bad things: e.g., “nang pumasok ang grasya.” Is grace some power or force that will prevent accidents or bring in wealth or money?

f. Does grace subsist in material things? Is the grace from the river Jordan different from the grace from the water of Lourdes? Some prefer the grace from the river Jordan since this is related directly to the source of grace, i.e., Jesus.

Grace is perceived as blessings and something we need to work on in order to receive it. Grace also refers to certain qualities we find in spite of odds or challenges we face like: peace and contentment in spite of confusion and chaos, in spite of dire poverty (“salamat sa Diyo at nakaraos din”). It can also refer to courage when telling the truth in spite of the consequences because we want to be free. Patience, endurance, and hope despite terminal illness.

Peace, contentment, patience, hope – these cannot be objectified but are there.

The original term for grace is **CHARIS** – inner light which comes from another source; something that shines like a jewel wherein light is merely reflected coming from a different source. It could also refer to a person who has inner light that shines (charismatic) like Cardinal Tagle where the inner light draws others to him. Mary as full of grace must have been a very charismatic lady, with much deeper and inner light. Being charismatic is not something that we turn on and off.

In the Old Testament, grace is called **HANAN** which means overall goodness of God. Hanan is Hebrew and it somehow means bending down to listen to someone asking for something. Fr. Arnel talked of a priest in the USA who was so much taller than him. And whenever they meet along the corridor and he calls him “father,” the priest bends on one knee so he is at eye level with Fr. Arnel, and is able to see him. This is a very good visual image of God’s grace. Grace is like God bending on one knee to see you, eye to eye, so He can see Himself in your eyes. God became man: He was bending to us, violating His own rules to accommodate us.

Another term for grace is **HESED**: Yahweh’s being gracious; kind, compassionate love of God. Your Hesed, Lord, is my life. In our covenant relationship with God, there is the powerful party and the weaker party. However, even if we violate God, Yahweh continues to shower His goodness upon us. God violates His own rules to accommodate us, as exemplified in the washing of the disciples’ feet. He remains faithful to us amidst our own unfaithfulness to Him.

In the New Testament: Paul, after his Theophany, felt saved from the law to save for Christ. CHARIS, most of all, is a person not a law. Being a Pharisee himself, Paul was like others who were concerned with law. When he encountered Christ, he realized that it is Christ that made him righteous. Some priests are so focused on the rule rather than on the human person. The core of righteousness for Paul is the person of Christ, the focus on the human person.



Photo by Cardens Design

Jesus Christ is CHARIS incarnate who valued people more than protocol. Sabbath was made for people and not the other way around. Have you ever put the law in favor of a person? Christ used His body to draw near to others, to draw near to those excluded by the law. CHARIS incarnate broke the law of God, becoming man to accommodate man. He broke the theological protocol and called God his Father “Abba.” Yahweh – a name that could not even be spoken. The concept then was one should earn God’s grace.

We pray not to earn God’s grace but to develop our relationship with God. Grace is “free” forever. Grace from the sacrament of confession should free us. God is incredibly merciful. To save us, God is to free us from something. God’s grace is working when a person forgives because God has forgiven the person. We underestimate our power to forgive, which is a sign that there is an absolute power within us. To be able to forgive from the heart is not possible on our own. We are able to do this because God is within us.

Do you believe God is merciful but just or unjust? For others, God is first merciful then just later. GRACE is both mercy and justice. God’s justice is HIS mercy. He makes everyone right through

His mercy.

MERCY is CHARIS incarnate. Grace is within us. Grace incarnate within us. Grace is Christ incarnate dwelling within us.

CHARIS is in-dwelling in you. The spirit gives us the power, to love. CHARIS incarnate within is the foremost and crucial definition of Grace. It is Christ dwelling within us. For Karl Rahner, this means “Within us-transcendent,” Within us-Absolute.”

CHARIS dwells in spirit. When Paul was persecuting others, God asked him “Why are you persecuting me?” Jesus identified with the persecuted, not outside of His followers. Jesus is with His followers. God is in them.

Thus, with the expanding knowledge about the world, it is God within the human brain that can think and expand His understanding of the world. It is only humans that can ask and search for meaning and answers. The mystery suddenly becomes something we understand and we keep on seeking to understand more.

Grace in Sacraments: God is always first in the “act of gracing.” Sacraments

affirm and concretize, ritualize and celebrate the grace that is already there, and these are there to change a person’s life. Our part is simply to cooperate with God.

Grace cannot be transferred from one person to another. There is no need to transfer grace. Grace is dwelling in us because God is in us. Sin is when we choose not to affirm God’s presence in us.

When we pray for a person, it is a remembrance of God’s presence in that person. We ask God for what we need and this should eventually evolve into surrender – Your Will be done. Praying for the dead is “communion with the saints.”

The end of prayer is surrender, freedom. Our prayer of thanksgiving tells us we are totally dependent on God, remembering that the person is in the presence of God. For St. Ignatius, it is important we know what we desire.

Suffering is not caused by God, but caused by our sins and sins of others.

Grace’s deeper meaning then is its in-dwelling in us. There is no need to earn it. Just like God’s love, it is unmerited.

Heroic Leadership: A Challenge to the Magis Deo Community

When St. Ignatius of Loyola founded the Society of Jesus together with his ten companions, they developed a leadership style that formed their members into leaders as well.

That was more than 470 years ago. Today the Society of Jesus is the largest religious order in the world with 21,000 members. The Jesuits, as they are called, are actively present in Africa, Australia, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America. Their influence in society is legendary, and many times controversial. And they continue to be a force for change. Here is a sample of their achievements as described by Chris Lowney, the author of the much acclaimed book, *Heroic Leadership*:

“Over the years they have served European monarchs, China’s Ming emperor, the Japanese Shogun and the Mughal emperor in India, unmatched by that of any other commercial, religious or government entity. Jesuit explorers were among the first Europeans to cross the Himalayas and enter Tibet, to paddle to the headwaters of the Blue Nile and to chart the Upper Mississippi River.

“In Europe, Jesuits built the world’s largest higher education network, starting more than thirty colleges within a decade. By the late eighteenth century, 700 secondary schools and colleges sprawled five continents educating nearly 20% of all Europeans pursuing a classical higher education. Jesuit astronomers and mathematicians were among the leading scholars in Rome, China, France, Asia and Africa.”

- (*Heroic Leadership – A Summary*)

What kind of a leader were Ignatius and his ten companions and all the other Jesuits that came after them? Being supposedly formed in Ignatian Spirituality, what can we as Magis Deo members and as a community learn from them?

Chris Lowney, a former Jesuit scholastic who became an investment banker at JP Morgan & Co. was struck by the stark contrast between the Jesuits' leadership model and the prevailing practices in the corporate world. He found four main differences:

1. We are all leaders and we are leading all the time, well or poorly. This is in contrast to the top-down leadership in the corporate world. The Jesuits believe that each one of us have untapped leadership potential and not just the top 1% or 10% in the organization.

“Everyone has influence, good or bad, large or small, all the time. A leader seizes all the available opportunities to influence and make an impact. Circumstances will present a few people with world-changing, defining-moment opportunities, but most will enjoy no such big time opportunities in their lifetimes.

Leadership should not be defined by the scale of the opportunity but by the quality of the response.” (*Heroic Leadership – A Summary*)

If we are to adopt this concept in Magis Deo, then all of us can see ourselves as having leadership potential. Every one of us can make an impact in our community no matter how small. Being a Pastoral Council member, or a shepherd or being present in community activities, or doing what we can to fill a community need, all make an impact on other members and the community as

a whole. But whether the opportunity to influence or make an impact is big or small does not matter. What matters is how we respond to the opportunity.

Applying this concept to the community as a whole, how do we respond to opportunities to influence or make an impact in Philippine society today? Are we even aware of these opportunities?

2. Leadership is about who I am as much as what I do. “A leader’s greatest power is his personal vision, communicated by the example of his daily life. Vision is intensely personal and is the hard-won product of self-reflection: What do I care about? What do I want? How do I fit into the world?”

Do we take the time to reflect on what is our personal vision? Is our personal vision in sync with what Magis Deo cares about and how it sees its place in Philippine society? In the first place, do we as a community know what is important to us at this point and what is our place in Philippine society?

3. Leadership is a way of living. It is not something that you put on or off, but rather flows from what you value and want to achieve. Knowing what is important to you and what your priorities are will ground you in a new or changing environment.

Again, this requires self-reflection on a regular basis so we can know ourselves better. The Examen is undoubtedly the most effective tool to help us become more self-aware.

Is reflectiveness promoted or even encouraged in Magis Deo not only individually but as a community? There was a time when reflectiveness was very evident in the community. BCGG members reflected on their growth in the BCGG. Those who sponsored Suyuan reflected on the impact of this outreach activity on their faith life. There was also an annual reflection of the leaders to discern where God is leading the Community to serve. However, this seems to be missing now in the life of the Community.

4. The task of becoming a leader is a work in progress. We never stop learning and maturing. “The external environment evolves and personal circumstances change, as do personal priorities. Some personal strengths erode, even as opportunities arise to develop others. All these changes demand consistent balanced growth and evolution

as a leader. The strong leader relishes the opportunity to continue learning about self and the world and looks forward to new discoveries and interests.”

How do we feel about our formation program? Do we take the opportunity to learn more about ourselves? Our relationship with God? About what's going on in the country? Do we as a community value learning about our spirituality, community life, the world?

Do we want to grow into this kind of leadership and practice it – both individually and as a community? If we do, we can take to heart the guiding principles of Ignatius's kind of leadership which Chris Lowney has distilled into four. They are:

a) Self-awareness – understanding your strengths, weaknesses, values and worldview.

b) Ingenuity – confidently innovating and adapting to embrace a changing world.

c) Love – engaging others with a positive, loving attitude.

d) Heroism – energizing themselves and others through heroic ambitions.

As members of Magis Deo, we are all called to be leaders. We are called to respond to opportunities to influence for the good or make an impact, whether big or small, in or outside Magis Deo.

Perhaps if Magis Deo can adapt and make these guiding principles a way of life in the community, then maybe we can really be what God meant us to be – More for God!

Tina, Cesar, Rufo, Ted, Malu:

This is a very good editorial, especially the aspect about leadership on all levels, and I suggested this topic because of the retreat/seminar “Heroic Leadership” scheduled the last weekend of this month.

But there is a subtle area that if understood simplistically, can cause serious misunderstanding of what Ignatian or heroic leadership is. It is this – that Christ is the model for authentic leadership, and if we are called and accept his model of leadership, as we profess to do in Magis Deo, we will know, accept and experience what he experienced; that the Passion inexorably precedes and makes possible the resurrection. You can't have one without the other.

Tina, you know I have always been wary of success in the eyes of the world.

Let us be careful of leaving the impression that success as we normally know it, is identical to success in following the standard of Christ. That was the mistake we made as a community when formation requirements were removed to qualify election to positions of leadership. This is the area I believe we need to re-educate ourselves and our community in – when we pray the Examen, seeing all the times God has loved us during that day, can we respond by asking for the grace to love as Christ, God, did?

Chris Lowney, being an ex-Jesuit, understands this, but I feel his book *Heroic Leadership*, written for a corporate audience, does not highlight this aspect enough for all audiences though it is implicit in the book.

That being said, I feel this editorial is accurate and true, but I would feel happier if we could follow up with the mystery of “failure” in the eyes

of the world as an opportunity for transformation, a call and challenge for leadership as Jesus practiced it. I always like to think of the third commandment of love – Jesus telling his disciples at the last supper “Love one another as I have loved you.” Scarey, but it is Ignatian, authentic heroic leadership.

One possible fruit is that this awareness may encourage and re-kindle the desire to keep on, in the face of failure, rejection of our efforts, the seeming smallness of the harvest.

Joy

Disturb Me, Lord...

Lito Gonzales, James, Brother of John BCGG

The mission and vision of our community are encapsulated in our commitment to a life of stewardship, simplicity, sharing and service. A life formed the Ignatian spirituality way.

At our recent 25th anniversary celebration, we used the following to emphasize what we are trying to achieve: **To KNOW, To LOVE and To SERVE GOD.**

We are organized along those lines. The formation programs, BCGG meetings, community celebrations and other activities, help us to look into the mystery of GOD, i.e., to know GOD better. Yes, ultimately GOD is a mystery. As one author said, "If the human mind could fully explain GOD, then GOD would cease to exist. Still, all of us are expected to attend all these activities and try our best to know GOD. Just for info, St. Thomas Aquinas said that GOD has given us two books of revelation: one is Nature, the other is Scripture.

Reflection Question: How well have we used these books to know GOD?

We are called to transform the ideas and knowledge we gained into our personal values, into the way we live our lives. Authentic love of GOD is through a life marked by His Word and within it. Hearing the Word is not enough, we must put it into action. We must put into practice what we hear and live what we learn.

Two of our community's well-known outreach projects are the Marriage Encounter Weekend (MEW) and the

Suyuan. Needless to say, these two need the community's whole-hearted support. The MEW, particularly in recruiting participants, and the Suyuan for new presenting couples. So much to do, so many hearts to touch, but the laborers are few. We need more Randys and Cecils in our Suyuans.

I feel very blessed to belong to James, Brother of John BCGG. We have been to Suyuan sessions from Pasay to Tagaytay to Batangas, and lately to Lucena. Let us listen to what they have to say with respect to "OUTREACH."

- Outreach is an open-hearted giving and sharing – going beyond the normal.

- Outreach is giving voluntary acts of various services to a community that needs these services but does not have easy access to such services. It involves reaching out and communicating with a person or group of people, usually to help them or spread the planned services offered to the community.

- Outreach is reaching out to the less fortunate with mercy and compassion.

- Outreach is reaching out without expecting anything in return.

- Outreach is extending our time/treasure/talent to a community in need. It means we are going beyond what is expected of us.

- Outreach is reaching out others who needed the most... giving our self and resources whole-heartedly without expecting anything in return.

- Outreach is to give, extend services and help to those who are in need.

- Outreach is an opportunity to give back to our neighbors the blessings that God has generously given to us. It is a loving act of helping others in a practical manner by sharing our resources, skills and time. It is a deed to make them feel that God is present and that He is watching them through us.

I feel very blessed to belong to James, Brother of John BCGG. We have been to Suyuan sessions from Pasay to Tagaytay to Batangas, and lately to Lucena. Let us listen to what they have to say with respect to "OUTREACH."

Reflection Question: How about you? We want to hear from you.

To the community: Reach out to two couples of your BCGG who are seriously considering being presenting couples of Suyuan.

At this point, allow me to refer you to an article published in our Nov-Dec 2016 Magis Newsletter, entitled "Lamentations."

Let us accept the truth that our community needs help. Our response should be one of unified LOVE. The reality is, we have to work doubly hard to pass on what we have learned, work for the continuity of our ideals, and ensure empowerment of our younger members using, as bases, truth and love.

Let us work harder to strengthen the sacrament of family, ours and that of others.

Amen.

02 September 2017 Community Celebration



Anxiety & peace

08 October 2017 / Ruben M. Tanseco, SJ

Anxiety is a common response to human situations and problems that we encounter.

It can either be light and short, or it can be heavy and long. In today's second reading, we read from the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians: "The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (4:6-7). God the Son lived among us and showed us the way. He met all kinds of problems and persecutions, but there was continuing peace in his inner life. How did he succeed in doing this? Precisely by prayerful and loving attachment to God the Father. Thus, if we learn and continue to love and serve Christ in the way that He loved and served us, we will live in profound peace, whatever human pains and problems we encounter. There will be times when God will answer our prayers according to what we ask for. There will be times when He will not. One way or the other, we will experience inner peace if we are spiritually and emotionally attached to Him as our Creator and God. The awareness of God's continuing love for us will move us to love Him in return, whatever happens to our daily lives as human beings.

Here are two male patients, both confined in the same hospital, each one in a private room, next to each other. Both were suffering from the same disease. Both were suffering, not only from the pain, but also from deep anxiety. One was not only anxious but was becoming angry at God that his prayers, according to him, were being ignored by God. At one point, his anxiety pushed him to speak in a loud and angry tone that was heard outside the room. "Diyos ko, ano ba? Ano ba ang nagawa kong masama na pinarusahan mo ako ng ganito? Akala ko ba ay mahal mo ako? Ngayon alam ko na, na hindi mo ako mahal!" In the other room, the other male patient was totally quiet. His eyes were closed, and in his heart he felt God's presence as he surrendered himself to Him. His anxiety disappeared,



and he prayed quietly in this manner: "Panginoon, pagalingin mo po ako, at kung ito ang iyong kalooban, iaalay ko po na mahalin pa kayo ng mas malalim, at gayon din ang aking pamilya, at ang sambayanan. Amen." This prayer gave him much peace, and the anxiety left him. Now, which type of discipleship do you belong to? What a stupid question to ask! The answer is clear, and this discipleship is being offered to all of us by the one and only loving God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And the opportunity to live out this discipleship is offered and open to all of us, especially to those whom God has gifted with much time, talents, and treasures. More and more disciples under this category are very much needed today in our country.

This brings us to the last part of today's liturgical focus: Extreme Poverty Day. Side by side with the socio-economic progress of the rich and middle-class Filipinos are the many more who are extremely poor, and whose lives are suffering greatly. We are still very far from being a truly Christian country, as far as a more equitable distribution of God's resources is concerned. A national spiritual conversion is needed, no less. We are not the real owners of our time, talents, and treasures. Not even our own lives. We are simply the stewards of God, who owns and creates all of creation. Thus, we are called to be disciples of Christ, not only of His words and teachings, but precisely His lifestyle of stewardship, simplicity, and sharing. May we all be His faithful and loving disciples for the rest of our lives. Amen.

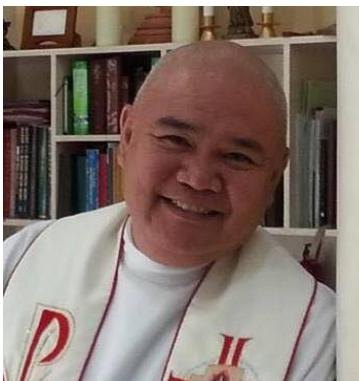
than done! Here was a wealthy businessman who had bank accounts both here and abroad. The father of one of his employees suddenly died. The body had to be brought home to the province, and he ended up with a lot of debts. His employer gave him P2,000 as his contribution to all his expenses. A week later, the employer and his family joined an expensive pilgrimage to the Holy Land! God Almighty, what do you say to that? In the name of religion at that!

Our beloved Pope Francis expresses this tragic situation in the following words: "The unjust distribution of goods persists, creating a situation of social sin that cries out to heaven and limits the possibilities of a fuller life for so many of our brothers." (From 10 Things Pope Francis Wants You To Know.) One of the first things he did after becoming Pope was not to live in the Papal Palace. He also took the name of St. Francis of Assisi, who was known for his lifestyle of poverty, and whose main apostolic ministry was reaching out to the poor. This is what Pope Francis is making an effort to follow.

Let me end with another family who also runs a profitable business. They live in a simple house, with a simple lifestyle. They are active members of two organizations that run programs for the poor. Quite a big part of their income goes to these two institutions, and they are actively involved in running them. They are able to reach out to more and more poor families. In time, they felt God's presence not only in their own lives but in the poor families they were helping. Their extended family no less.

Let us all be inspired by Jesus Himself, who shared all that He was, his time, and His talents with one and all, especially the poor. His lifestyle as LOVER was one of stewardship, simplicity, and sharing. May we all be His faithful and loving disciples for the rest of our lives. Amen.

REFLECTIONS



Katotohanan: Why Truth Will Always Be Important for Us

Fr. James U. Gascon, SJ

Foremost, truth is central to Christian values. God is truth. God upheld the truth by explicitly instructing his people "not to bear false witness against one's neighbor (Exodus 20:16)." He strictly prohibited fabrication, generating something that is not true. Moreover, untruth robs the victim the cloak of truth, making lying closely allied with stealing. I remember my mother reminding us: "Ang sinungaling ay kapatid ng magnanakaw." She further warned us that first we lie about small things, then later we deceive about bigger matters. And before we know it, we are already coveting others' things. Jesus in fact insists that lying defiles the heart (Mt 15, 16-20). When a liar gets so used to lying, he fails to distinguish the truth from falsehood. It contaminates one's soul and spirit. In Psychology, we call this the "pathological liar." Because of one's perpetual lying, his heart is defiled and lying becomes his habit. The person becomes a lie.

Furthermore, untruth is never acceptable to a community of faith. Why? Lies are always offensive to communities because they betray trust. Trust is the foundation of any communion without which an authentic community cannot exist. The Tagalog word for truth articulates the role of truth in a community. The word for truth is katotohanan. This Tagalog word is a conflation of several words: katoto, totoo and tahanan. Katoto means companion; totoo is truth; and tahanan is home, a place where one feels comfortable and serene. In between companionship and serenity offered by a home is a product of trust that is anchored in truth. True companions need to live together in truth, finding home in each other's company.

Thus it makes me wonder. In the midst of all these fake news, untruth and lying, what is our reaction and response? Are we even dented by this sad reality in our midst? As practitioners of Ignatian spirit living in communities of faith, what kind response are we called to do? But before we can answer all these questions, we need to affirm that truth is personally important, and it always will be valuable. Otherwise, we will just remain in our apathetic slumber.

My Mountain

Leo Soliman, Corinthians BCGG



Photo by publicdomainpictures

On numerous occasions, Jesus was mentioned to be hieing off to the mountains to preach or to pray by Himself. There must be something mystical in the heights that attracts not only our Lord but also a lot of souls searching for answers not found in boardrooms. Perhaps the peace and tranquility the mountains offer, and their cool, clean, refreshing air that envelops one's entirety, are too conducive to ignore.

Baguio has been the all-time favorite while Sagada is way over the top. The Tagaytay highlands before the 90's have been the top choice for spiritual retreats until commercialism took over. Our M.E. Class 36 (summer of '95) at Betania Retreat House opened my eyes to the awareness on relationships. Our Spiritual Deepening Retreat (SDR) at Canossa opened my heart to God's unending love.

God has a peculiar way of showing His love, though. My next 22 years

at Magis Deo were nowhere near a rose garden. I was doing fine with my marriage, my family and my business before our M.E. Weekend. But with the succeeding years of blunders after blunders, I found myself falling into a pit way below rock bottom. Funny thing is, I held on to Him tighter and tighter after each and every fall. I surmised that God knew what was about to go down that's why He prepared me spiritually. Fr. Arnel Aquino said that God is not responsible for our debacles. True. But He knew the debacles would happen. That's fate. And I know He will one day soon save me. That's faith.

The clear essence of the mountain I get best whenever I am in solitude. Here I am at my best and at the same time at my worst. I can clearly lay out the plans for my redemption, how to recompense for my losses, how to correct the wrongs done, how to rebuild my empire. But in the same lonesomeness, the disappointments, the frustrations, the mistakes, the ghost of disasters past,

creepingly haunt me. My bothered conscience never fails to depress.

And that's my cue to call on Him. I know my capabilities and I know I can rebound given the right opportunity. I unceasingly pray for His saving grace to bless me once again, to grant me another break, to give me a second chance in life. Knowing He never refuses the prayer of a contrite heart, I await for His most perfect time.

We all have our mountains

We all have our oceans deep

I may have lost all of my gains

But Jesus' love I will forever keep.

When Parents Grow Up With Their Children

Zarah Gagatiga, Emmanuel / Mt Olivet BCGG



When Domeng and I had our Marriage Encounter Weekend in 2006, Nico was 9 years old and Zoe was 5.

In the span of eleven years, Nico and Zoe have grown up being kind, smart and talented young adults. Nico is pursuing an academic career as a Music Pedagogist while Zoe is a Grade 10 student contemplating on taking a college course in Design or Fine Arts. They are our pride and joy. It is my fervent prayer that they find their true passions and when they do, use it to make this world a better place.

While this brief profile of our kids looks good, it is but a small fraction of a bigger picture. One that has the real and unmasked portrait of the struggles they faced in the past and some challenges they still grapple with. I am sure that life will show them many more. When tough times come a-calling, I hope that they take it with a prayer in their hearts that God is always by their side.

Of the many things I learned from being a parent to Nico and Zoe, it is that vulnerability is a grace. When I was a young mother, my motto was, when the going gets tough the tough gets going. Months and years after the Marriage Encounter Weekend and Family Encounter Weekends (we attended as a family candidate in 2007 and as an auxie family in 2009) this changed to when the going gets tough, it is God who gets it going.

I learned to seek help, to ask, even beg for assistance and support from others. First of all, I started being open to Domeng about their needs, my mothering issues and what keeps me awake at night. From my husband, I realized the value of building one's strength of character, my own and my children's too.

I also learned that my children are their own persons. I came to respect their decisions, learning styles, moods and temperament. Listening to them is the most enjoyable. Letting them go is the more difficult thing to do. It is not wise to control or impose on them but when I do, as I am not perfect, I face them with an honest apology. I am forgiven so easily. It is there where love rests.

The apples did not fall far from the tree, of course. So many times I see myself in them and I see Domeng too. Often, I am happy to discover these characteristics manifest in real life applications. Sometimes, not so. Nonetheless, this mirroring only makes parenting more meaningful as I resolve to be a better version of myself for their sake and my own too.

Our children are growing up in this new stage of their lives. They need more space and time to fully appreciate and find wisdom in adulting. I remain their mother, of course, but I too grow with them as a person. How my role has shifted from caretaker, to teacher to counselor and now, mentor and life coach! Indeed, our children are God's gift to us and to the world.

Finding my ‘Magis’ in Magis Deo

Susan Concepcion,
Archangel Gabriel BCGG



Photo by snob.ru

Is Magis Deo still relevant to me? Do I still want to continue serving in this community? These are a couple of the questions that have been disturbing me these past few months. Attending the Heroic Leadership Workshop last September 30 - October 1, 2017 was an enlightening experience in that I was given some insight into the answers I have been searching for.

In the Heroic Leadership framework, we are all leaders with our own spheres of influence. Leadership comes from within. It is about who we are and what we do. It is a way of life. We become heroic leaders when we reach for goals greater than ourselves, when we reach for excellence.

In the words of Chris Lowney, the author of Heroic Leadership, “Heroism begins with each person considering, internalizing and shaping his or her mission. Whether one works within a large organization or alone, no mission is motivating until it is personal. And it is sustainable only when one makes the search for ‘magis’ a reflexive, daily habit. A magis-driven leader... is restlessly inclined to look for something more, something greater... Instead of waiting for golden opportunities, they find gold in the opportunities at hand.”

From the workshop, I learned that the ‘magis’ in my service should come from my passions and deepest desires and it does not look for anything in return. If I feel burned out as a result of my service, then there are impurities in the ‘magis.’

In my personal roles as a wife, a mother, a daughter, a sister, I find I can easily attain ‘magis.’ It is my passion and desire to serve my family without expecting anything in return. In my service to Magis Deo, however, the passion is not there.

Thus, I am easily discouraged because I don’t get responses from people I talk to, text or email. I feel burned out because my service is not personal. I have not aligned my service with my deepest desires. I need to know what is my role and mission in the community and internalize it. I need to discern why God has led me to Magis Deo. Nothing happens by chance and I’m sure there is a reason why I am here. I need to see myself through God’s eyes and be grateful for all the gifts I have received. Only then will I be able to find my gold in the opportunities for service in Magis Deo. Only then will I be able to find my ‘magis’ in Magis Deo.

We Are All Leaders

Susan Concepcion,
Archangel Gabriel BCGG



Photo by mwhglobal

Despite their busy schedules and other priorities, 20 committed souls took time out to attend the Heroic Leadership Workshop held last September 30 -

October 1, 2017 at the Pedro Calungsod Hall, Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo Campus. The workshop was conducted by the Heroic Leadership Philippines team headed by Xavier Alpasa and included Tinnah dela Rosa, Maella Abaya, Beth Dungao and Jeric Lee.

The workshop is based on the book by Chris Lowney, which talks about a formula for molding people for them to lead more meaningful lives. Its foundation is grounded on the following principles:

- We are all leaders.
- We are leading all the time, whether poorly or well.
- Leadership springs from within. It’s about who I am as much as what I do.
- Leadership is not an act. It is my life, a way of living.

- I never complete the task of becoming a leader. It’s an ongoing process.

The workshop expounded on the 4 pillars of Heroic Leadership:

- Self-awareness: Leadership from within
- Love: Leadership that moves
- Heroism: Leadership with purpose
- Ingenuity: Leadership that discerns

Those who attended the workshop went for different reasons. Some were really interested and wanted to learn more about the topic. Some attended to accompany a spouse or to support a friend who invited them. And still others attended because they felt obliged to attend. Despite the reasons for attending and probably a little reluctance on the part of some, everyone willingly participated in all the activities and left the workshop feeling renewed and revitalized, willing to serve God in whatever way He calls them, whether it be in Magis Deo or in their personal lives.

Heroic Leadership Workshop

September 30 - October 1, 2017



Chacho Angeles, Thessalonians BCGG

A Letter to My Daughter

Sweetheart, I remembered you during mass with Mama and Lola Gloria today.

The gospel was about the appearance of Jesus to the apostles after the resurrection. After greeting them "Peace be with you," he told the apostles: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

We are not apostles, nor the clergy, but for Jesus, there appears to be some connection between PEACE and FORGIVENESS. That INGRATE remark in one of your FB posts, I think I know whom you are referring to. Despite everything that happened, Mama and I are at peace. Well, some sort of peace. We decided to forgive, and love that person despite, and inspite of, all the heartaches that goes with this seeming one-way relationship. Maybe there are other things that are weighing down the spirit of that person.

But what is important is that maybe Mama and I can do this because we learned how to pray. The kind of praying that looks forward to developing a relationship with our God. YOU, yes you sweetheart, somehow played a role in this aspect of my life. When you were about six years old, new in St. Scholastica's, you asked your Mama and me why we don't go to mass. Rather than debate with you, we just started going to mass. And this started a long process of 'returning' for us.

Sweetheart, go back to your roots. They are not that bad. Forget about what other people think about you – these are extraneous and immaterial. Jesus actually made it easy for us: Love God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your soul. And love your neighbor as you love yourself. Well, also read Matthew's version of the Beatitudes, Mt. 5, and the parables (my favorite is the Prodigal Son, though I think it should be retitled the Prodigal Father). I love you.

We can never find the words
To describe the greatness of your love.
Our praise will always fall short of
Who You are to us, our life-giver.

Let us always find for You
A space in our hearts and lives.
Let us see the weaknesses and brokenness
In us and around us, and pray to discover in them
Your unconditional acceptance and love for us.
By Your grace engulf us in Your loving arms,
As we embrace others as our beloved.

In our daily lives,
Make our hearts soar to the heavens
With that soulful song that resonates

In our innermost beings;
Make us see and feel this love
That we may through others
Show our love for You;
So imbue us with Your spirit that we may fill

Every minute of our lives
Every person we touch
Every work we do
With Your light and Your love!

On God's Magic

Rey Mella, Cana BCGG

I love magic.

Even as a young boy, I loved watching magic shows and simple magic tricks by my uncles and neighbors. We would watch magic shows in the town plaza during fiestas. Because I was so enamored with magic, as I was growing up, I also learned a few tricks of my own. When I started to travel to the US, long before these were available here in the Philippines, I would buy some packaged magic tricks from stores that specialized in magic toys and gadgets. I would practice and demonstrate these tricks to friends and kids, eventually to my nephews and nieces.

Then, as an adult and as a parent, when invited to children's birthday parties, I would enjoy the magic shows as much as the kids did!

Last month I was invited to a birthday party of a friend's 1-year old son. As my 20-year old daughter and I were sitting, the party emcee started teaching the children some rhymes and children's songs. I then commented to my friend who dropped by our table to chat, that I liked this approach of having a teacher teach and read to children at a birthday party. My friend replied, "Yes, it's a more educational approach," and then he said, "We did away with things like the magic show today."

I was disappointed – I came for the magic show! As soon as my friend left, my daughter was laughing at me. Earlier, we were excitedly talking about the magic show which we thought was about to happen!

Two of my favorite movies are about magic – *Now You See Me* and *The Prestige*. The TV show *Street Magic* by David Blaine never fails to catch my attention. Same with Penn and Teller: *Fool Us*. David Blaine, Harry Houdini and David Copperfield are some of my favorite personalities. Even jokes about magic are part of my repertoire in conversations and drinking parties. I'd say magic is part of me.

"What's your father's occupation?" asked the teacher on the first day of the new academic year.

"He's a magician, Ma'am," said the new boy.

"How interesting. What's his favorite trick?"

"He saws people in half."

"Gosh! Now, next question. Any brothers or sisters?"

"One half-brother and two half-sisters."

– www.Jokes4us.com

"Miracles come in moments. Be ready and willing."

– Wayne Dyer

There is no magic in long term relationships. Nothing is instant and easy. They are built over time, with a lot of time spent and invested.

In marriage, for example, one has

to persevere. I should know. I've been married 32 years and counting.

I have a special relationship with my son. When he was a toddler and as a young boy, I invested in time playing with him on weekends on his PlayStation, playing basketball, helicopters, being present in various outdoor activities. We played chess on various occasions and kept a running score for several years.

Of his 9 years in kinder, prep and elementary grades, we participated in 8 of the 9 annual father-and-son campings. Only a business trip prevented me from perfecting attendance of all the 9 years.

We built that special relationship with time, over time, no magic.

During a recent vacation in Las Vegas, a man went to see a popular magic show.

After one especially amazing feat, a man from the back of the theater yelled, "How'd you do that?"

"I could tell you, sir," the magician answered, "But then I'd have to kill you."

After a short pause, the man yelled back, "Ok, then... just tell my wife!"

– www.Jokes4us.com



In my life, I have come to realize that there is no problem that can magically be solved or resolved. Difficult situations, problems, challenges – be it at work, at home, be it financial, relationships, health – will not, and cannot be fixed by magic. At 60 years old, I would like to consider myself a veteran with so many battles to show. As they say, I have earned my stripes. I have survived so many battles in my life – marital problems, issues with children, health concerns, financial struggles, work-related stresses, and more.

I was recently invited to a forum of graduate school students where I gave a 30-minute talk on dealing with adversity. To an audience of professionals, students and teachers, I provided a 4-point formula on how to manage and deal with various situations called problems and adversities, now positively-termed as challenges. The four points do not include magic.

I put the four things that made me better in dealing with adversity in one slide and spoke about them at length. They are:

- A strong personal belief that things always become better and that there is always a solution.
- The ability to pause, sit down, think and reflect, and ask myself some questions.
- The propensity to always act and move.
- Prayer, being grateful and letting go.

I then summarized it into a simple acronym, when adversity comes – BRAG:

Believe

Reflect

Act

(Let) God

God does figure in problem solving. While He does not do magic, He does give us something much more. Answers. Miracles!

"We do not need magic to transform our world. We carry all of the power we need inside ourselves already."

– J. K. Rowling

"That we must love one God only is a thing so evident that it does not require miracles to prove it."

— Blaise Pascal

On Learning to Live Alone

Nitz Eslava, Psalmaritans BCGG, Magis Choir



It's been more than a year since Rey returned to our creator. I still miss him, especially when I pray and listen to Vespers and Lauds music (Rey's favorites). But I have to face the reality that I now have to do everything myself. It's not easy, in fact it's scary to do ordinary everyday activities alone: doing all the household chores, repairing defective fixtures in the house, watching movies, eating out, going home after choir practice or prayer meetings, and, most especially, going to sleep. It was tough during the first few months but with God's grace and guidance I am now getting used to being alone and doing things alone; and finding it enjoyable and challenging.

I believe that God has been preparing me long before Rey's passing. Rey had been on dialysis for 12 years after his transplanted kidney of 17 years was rejected. Back then my friends would advise me to prepare for the worst, that someday I will have to live alone. They advised me to join some organizations in our community to keep away the boredom of just staying at home, but of course without neglecting my duties of attending to Rey and his medical care.

I followed their advice and joined a women's organization, the CWL, where we have monthly meetings and some liturgical reading. They also have a choir which I also joined. We sing every 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month. I also joined our parish (National Shrine of the Sacred Heart) grand choir and we sing at the Sacred Heart Novena mass on Fridays and during special occasions and feast days. For volunteerism and outreach programs, I joined the YMCA for Seniors program. I also joined their choir and the Anklung

(a bamboo musical instrument) group. When Rey was still around, I could not attend most of my organizations' activities; but now that I have my own time, I attend most of the activities. This is my way of giving back to God for the talent He gave me. At the same time, these activities keep me going, help me live a normal life, and gain more friends.

I also did some renovations in our house to make living alone more enjoyable. I travel to different places with my friends, to make up for the times when I couldn't be with them before (but no regrets because Rey was a very obedient patient.)

Of course I cannot thank enough the Magis Deo Community – you have always been there from the start, praying for and helping us (most especially Rey). I continue to sing with our Magis Deo choir, which I am most proud of. I love how close we have become, we're like brothers and sisters. I love our practice nights, our jokes, and also our seriousness and attentiveness during practice. I most especially enjoy our yearly get together and outings.

I also regularly attend our Psalmaritans BCGG weekly prayer meeting for my spiritual strength and connection with our Lord. I enjoy listening to my brothers' and sisters' sharings even when I am sometimes at a loss on what to share, now that my life is so simple. But I just look at all the blessings and how God has been with me through the day and the inspiration and sharing comes forth and continues.

May God continue to bless and guide us always.

Transformative Reflections

Alice Go, Psalm 98 BCGG

The gospel last August 6 was about the transfiguration which gave me a true perspective in life.

I have had many realizations in life with regards to dealing with the different people around me, my family, my relationship with my husband Mon, friends, and especially with myself. The process of transformation was not that easy. It took a lot of courage to do so. I could say it was very difficult because as human beings we have different personalities, different culture and values.

There are so many factors to consider but because of my faith in God, I was able to adjust and deal with them. Knowing that our God is the God of love, of hope and of strength. God gave me the courage to handle situations lightly. God wants us to live a better, happier, peaceful and wonderful life.

Thank you Lord for all your goodness and the unconditional love that you have given to us.

Advertisement

Golf TOURNAMENT
October 27, 2017

Ayala Greenfield Golf & Leisure Club, Calamba, Laguna

Tournament Fee: P3,500 • Club Member: P2,500

Includes Green Fee, Caddy Fee, Shared Golf Cart & Lunch Buffet

October & November

Birthday Celebrants and Wedding Anniversaries

October Birthday Celebrants

1	Gi Valencia
2	Becky Dizon
2	Lyn Ebardo
3	Rose Marigomen
5	Chinkee San Juan
8	Ferdie Cruz
9	Charito Dimayuga
9	Elmer Fajardo
10	Frank Reyes
12	Apin Llamas
12	Eddie Punongbayan
14	Virgie Abella
16	Eve Bañez
17	Fely Santiago
19	Remy Castro
19	Elaine Serranilla
21	Ariel Fernandez
21	Alice Go
22	Claire Cambas
23	Eloy Del Rosario
25	Karen Madrid
30	Louren Dacanay

October Wedding Anniversaries

8	Ian & Jhune Vinas
10	Albert & Pam Narciso
15	Butch & Joey Vargas
17	Cesar & Marivic Pareja
21	Lito & Marlyn+ Gonzales
22	Joey & Maricel Suarez
28	Dave & Marissa+ Serrano

November Birthday Celebrants

3	Vivian Ahyong
3	Archangel Gabriel
4	Francis
4	St. Peter
5	Song of Ruth
6	Psalm 98
6	Sirach
6	James, Brother of John
10	Psalm 98
11	Corinthians
12	St. Peter
12	Mustard Seed
12	Agnus Dei
16	Sirach
17	Easter
20	Matthew
20	ME Class 104
24	Psalm 98
25	James, Brother of John
26	St. Peter
27	John
27	Song of Ruth
28	Vivian Ahyong
29	Ciel Yap
3	Nancy Palmario
4	Flor Peralta
5	Ting Yupangco
6	Leony Escosia
6	Manny Gatchalian
6	Malu Panlilio
10	Tina Mossesgeld
11	Bing Brillantes
12	Mennen Aracid
12	Boy Dela Pena
12	Celine Magpayo
16	Bambi Narciso
17	Matt Pineda
20	Nikkie Perez
20	Noel Valdes
24	Bogz Catangay
25	Ging De Guzman
26	Belle Tiongson
27	Ray De Guzman
27	Aida Del Rosario
28	Portia Eustaquio
29	Ethel Araullo

November Wedding Anniversaries

6	Danny & Vicky Mendoza
7	Jay-R & Leila Leccio
14	Fred & Cora Buenaventura
19	Roland & Belle Tiongson
20	Chacho & Marlyn Angeles
24	Bogz & Grace Catangay
28	John & Claire Cambas
30	Phil+ Agnes Tumaneng

You stop at one point in your life where you think you deserve a big break.

If there's such a thing called the "calm before the storm", I believe there's also a calm after it. And so, just last month my family and I embarked on our Europe trip: from Paris, to Amsterdam, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Milan, Venice, to Rome, and Barcelona.

All these in just under two weeks. It's crazy, I know, how a family can be so game to fly around these places filled with such iconic and breathtaking wonders.

No, I won't be talking about all the magic; some places actually aren't as glossy and clean as they seem. Sure, you see this tower, and that building, or this fountain in pictures and movies. But you would be surprised that all these beautiful landmarks also have dirt around them. More than that, there are also a lot of people. All these reminded me of my home, our country, and yes I would say I enjoyed the trip (as fleeting as it is) but my heart still ached for home. How odd.

This trip reminded me of how humorous we all are as a family. I could say that this roster is a wacky, and weird group of people, but I'm proud of them, and I will be eternally grateful for them. Put us in a room, or even on different places that we're unfamiliar of, we still manage.

Just like any other trip, some things get bumpy once in a while. Due to unfamiliar streets, unclear maps, we literally got lost at some point in our trip. Nothing calms a raising voice like us. We try our best to not fight with fire. And I saw, during our trip the heroic leadership in all of us. Even in my little sister.

It's really refreshing, that one toddler could lighten up the dark clouds in all four of us. She brought the lightning and the thunder. It reminded me of Jesus' teaching about the importance of being child-like. In Matthew 18: 3-4, he says:

"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

This trip taught me that as we grow older, we must stay grounded in order to get things moving, in order to lead your life in the right direction, and to lead the other people that you love. Once we landed back in our country, I came to a realization: home isn't just a place.



Home could be a person. In my life, home is a woman who spearheads at work in the morning, breaking free of the limits set on femininity, and lullabies a toddler to sleep.

Home is a man who's excellent with his work and his words, and blurts out corny jokes if time permits.

Home is an all-nighter medical student, who has passion for science and math, as much as he does with his shoots and dribbles.

Home is a growing sunflower of a lady who talks and thinks like a grown person.

Home could be your family.

Feels Trip

Levenspeil R. Sangalang, Magis Youth

20th Suyuan sa Olandes

Philip & Malu Panlilio, Mustard Seed BCGG



Welcome and Congratulations to the
Suyuan Class 20!
27 August 2017, Nativity of Our Lady Parish



Noong 27 ng Agosto 2017, ang Mustard Seed BCGG, katulong ang ME Class 123, ay nag-alay ng isang Suyuan sa Olandes, Marikina. Ito ay ika-dalawampung klase ng Suyuan sa Olandes na kataguyog ang mga datihang graduates ng Suyuan.

Ang pitong household prayer groups ng Suyuan ay naka-recruit ng 12 couples para dito. Lahat ng 12 couples ay tatanggap ng sacramento ng kasal sa 2 December 2017.

Katulong ang ME Class 123 sa mga ongoing Suyuan reunions at preparasyon para sa kasalan bayan.

Na-obserbahan namin na parami nang parami ang mga nagsasasama na di kasal. Sa mga unang Suyuan noong 2003-2007, mga 30%-40% lang ang di kasal sa simbahan. Ito ay lumaki sa 50%-70% noong 2010-2012, hanggang maging 100% ngayon. Malaking drawback ito sa pagtaguyod ng matibay na pamilya sa lipunan. Ito ay signal lang na lalo pang palaguin ang pagbibigay ng Suyuan especially sa mga mahihirap nating kababayan.