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Formation for Mission



Magis

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MAGIS DEO PLANNING WORKSHOP 2009

Reflection, Prayer and Collaboration in Mission



Mr. Vicente T. Lazatin, Director of Transparency and Accountability Network, Bantay Lansangan, and Coalition Against Corruption.

On January 17, the Pastoral Council and Ministry Heads gathered in reflection and prayer to look back at 2008 and pray what God desired of the Magis Deo Community in 2009.

Our Spiritual Director's Challenge

The gathering started with our community Spiritual Director, Fr. Ruben M. Tanseco, S.J. exhorting the community to be more involved in a more organized way in non-partisan political action and advocacy through networking with various existing groups involved in the work against graft and corruption. He shared his long-standing dream of families living according to the spirit expressed by the late John Paul II in his encyclical, *Familiaris Consortio*, "...families should grow in awareness of being 'protagonists' of what is known as 'family politics' and assume responsibility for transforming society; otherwise families will be the first victims of the evils that they have done no more than note with indifference." Fr. Tanseco then asked Mr. Vincent T. Lazatin, his nephew, Executive Director, Transparency and Accountability Network, Executive Director, Bantay Lansangan and Director of the newly formed Coalition Against Corruption to speak about these organizations

that he heads. After his brief, informative and well-received presentation, Mr. Lazatin extended his invitation for those interested to become members of these organizations.

Reflecting on 2008

Then the work of the planning workshop began, facilitated by Bro. Karel San Juan, S.J., Executive Director of Emmaus Center who is doing his theology studies in the Loyola School of Theology. Bro. Karel introduced the approach for the day and invited all to have and maintain a discerning mind, heart and spirit, to stay "contemplative to allow ourselves to listen to the Lord's prompts." We were, true to our Ignatian spirituality, to take a discernment approach to our decision making.

We started by reflecting on 2008 to recognize and be grateful for all that God had done in and through the community. Each ministry in turn presented a review of the ministry's past year using a framework of consolations, desolations and challenges, invitations and possibilities. Indeed, 2008, in spite of some problems and difficulties, was a grace-filled year. God was actively at work in our community and in the lives of the members – singles, couples and families of our community and those that we serve.

Bro. Karel summarized the sharing into a framework based on the three main thrusts of the recently concluded 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus which elected a new Superior General, Fr. Adolfo Nicolas, S.J. and determined the thrusts of the Society of Jesus. The framework's three factors are: **Frontier – Mission, Friendship –**

Nurturing Community and Fire – Passion or Identity. The summary was enriched by additional "nuances" that we needed to take into consideration also

Praying Our Desires for the Future

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not



Tony del Rosario, Philip Panlilio, Ted & Susan Concepcion, Mimi Santos, Ike Lllamas [rear] Monchito Mossesgeld, Josie Llamas.

for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord ..." (Jeremiah, 29:11-14)

After lunch, using this passage of scripture from the prophet Jeremiah, Brother Karel offered two prayer points: First, God desires nothing else but our good and that he has promised his abiding presence, friendship and accompaniment. We were to pray for God's great desires and plans for our Magis Deo and its mission. Second, God expects us to come with him with our own desires and invites us to approach him with confidence, courage, strength and fervor. Did we know what desires to present before God? Do we have the necessary fervor to present them to Him?

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January Community Celebration and Commissioning of Council, Shepherds, Ministry and Committee Heads



2009 Council: Regie & Daisy de Guzman, Rey Mella, Malu Panlilio (Vice-Chair), Aida & Tony del Rosario



Anchit & Sally Chua Chiacco (South Sector Head) , Bambi Narciso (Central Sector Head), Ike & Josie Llamas (ME Ministry), Joey & Portia Eustaquio (ME Classes Committee), Louren & Rufo Dacanay (Newsletter Publications)



2009 Council: Tina & Monchito Mossesgeld (Chaircouple), Eli & Edith Prieto, Maricel & Joey Suarez



Ronnie Ambe(Alternate,Community Services Ministry), Alice & Mon Go (North Sector Head), Ted & Susan Concepcion (Shepherds & Sharers Formation Ministry), Jojo Aldeguer (Alternate,Shepherds & Sharers Formation Ministry;Recruitment Committee),Eve & Gene Bañez (Finance,Audit)



Lito Quimel (Outreach Ministry), Marcia Balderas, (Liturgy), Suni Rodriguez (Individual Formation Committee), Evelyn & Miles San Pedro (Community Services Ministry)

January birthday and Anniversary Celebrants



from page 1...*Planning workshop*

Using these two points as springboards, we individually, for 20 minutes, prayed our desires for our future. Then gathering in small groups of 5 to 6 members, we shared the fruit of our prayers. The small groups presented their sharing in plenary which Bro. Karel summarized into three main areas.

Thrusts for 2009

The thrusts identified for 2009 are the following:

1. **Focus and deepen our programs and activities.** We will prioritize and simplify our activities, focusing on the most essential and what has the most impact on others, in line with our mission and vision and our resource capacities as a community. We will focus more on how our programs will have greater and deeper impact rather than just having more number of programs. We desire that our programs and activities deepen

our spirituality and build a stronger sense of community. We, as a community, will be involved on a sustained basis in addressing national issues through membership in existing groups and coalitions involved in these.

2. **Intensify the “fire” and commitment of our membership.** We will deepen in our Ignatian spirituality because the “fire” and commitment are its fruits. We will help members to recognize more deeply God’s love in their lives and identify how they will respond through service in the community. We will strengthen, encourage and reinforce our sense of the community’s vision and mission and its praxis in couple, family and community life. We will strengthen our shepherds in their critical role in intensifying this “fire” and commitment, and share the stories of our exemplary shepherds.

3. **Systematize our ways of proceeding**

towards deeper “friendship” and community. We will strengthen our members’ sense of belonging to and participation in the community. We will systematize and document, identifying and using best practices, community processes related to membership. We will identify, on a longer term basis, how we operate and work together as a community.

Afterword: Collaboration in Mission

Each of our six ministries, namely, Marriage Encounter, Shepherds and Sharers Formation, Membership Formation, Praxis, Outreach, and Community Services, will turn these thrusts into realities through their plans for 2009. But these ministries need the support of the entire community for plans to be realized.

We invite all the members to participate and contribute in implementing
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Sunday Homily

January 11, 2009

Ruben M. Tanseco, S. J.

SINLESS-SINFUL JESUS?

How come Jesus submitted Himself to John's baptism of repentance? Was Jesus a sinner who needed conversion? John himself insisted that he simply baptized with water, whereas the sinless, divine Jesus would baptize with no less than the Holy Spirit! "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." (From today's Gospel reading, Mk. 1: 7-11). In other words, John simply initiated the process of conversion, so that those he had baptized could then turn to Jesus for their lifelong discipleship and journey with God toward eternal bliss.

What, then, is the meaning of Jesus being baptized by John? My faith tells me that the divine Jesus came to be One-with-us, from birth until death, so that in turn, we can be one-with-Him. This means a lifelong journey of unconditional love and an ongoing conversion to be sinless like Him. He showed us the way to be fully-human, because to be fully-human is to be divine. To love and be loved unconditionally is to be fully-human, and thus be like Him, be like God. And He showed us that this was indeed doable, by the way He lived and loved. Jesus, the Professional Lover.

How exactly did Jesus live and love? The most historical, inspiring, and challenging biography of Jesus I know of are the two books of Fr. Albert Nolan, O.P., namely: *Jesus Before Christianity* and *Jesus Today*. The first book focuses on the man Jesus "before he became enshrined in doctrine, dogma, and ritual, a man deeply involved with the real problems of his time? which are the real problems of our time as well." The second book captures the spirituality of Jesus, which is radical freedom, not of the ego, but radical freedom from the ego.

In the person of Jesus, as Nolan points out, love and justice were the two sides of the same coin. Unconditional love cannot but involve a deep passion for justice, especially toward the poor, the oppressed,

the downtrodden. At the heart of it all is compassion. Jesus was first and foremost? the Compassionate One. He healed the sick. He fed the hungry. He consoled the suffering. Not only that. He forgave sinners, once there was a sign of repentance on their part. He taught in parables, which He incarnated in His own life. In other words, He walked His talk. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 29-37). The Parable of the Prodigal Son? or should we say the Parable of the Forgiving Father (Lk. 15: 11-32), and many others. Indeed, Jesus was the Forgiving One beyond compare.

But there must be true repentance. Otherwise, as Jesus Himself said: "But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish... (Lk. 13: 3,5). This is not because Jesus is a punitive God, but because of man's choice to be unloving, uncompassionate, and unjust. The lack or absence of repentance.

In this context, many of our people have been baptized with water, but resist or even refuse to be baptized by the Holy Spirit? because this will mean a 180-degree turn-around in their life and lifestyle. Thus, we are Christian in name as a Filipino nation, but many of our so-called baptized Christians are, in reality, anti-Christ. Widespread corruption in governance and business; nationwide moral injustices against the poor; ever-increasing sexual immoralities, and what-have-you.

But we must never lose hope, lest we become spiritually paralyzed. With total faith in God, accompanied by our dedicated human efforts and actions, He will intervene? in His own way and time? as He did at EDSA I and again at EDSA II. We have an increasing number of NGOs, coalitions of organizations, and programs that are actively advocating love and justice among our people and our leaders.

Just to single out one of them: The Bantay Lansangan (Road Watch). This is a "partnership among government, private, and civil society stakeholders in the national road sector for the delivery of quality road



Ruben M. Tanseco, S. J.

services that are responsive to users' needs, through the efficient and transparent use of public resources." Bantay Lansangan "seeks to increase transparency and access to information on the one hand, as well as monitor the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) performance in delivering national road services." As a result of their efforts, they'll expect to reduce transaction costs for road construction and maintenance, improve the response time for maintenance, increase road user satisfaction, and improve the public perception of the DPWH. The World Bank is ready to loan the Philippine government no less than \$232 million dollars, but with the proper safeguards.

With Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN) as coordinator, the members of Bantay Lansangan include:

- Road Users, like the Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines, and others.
- Governance Advocates, like the Ateneo School of Government, and others.
- Road Service Providers, like the Philippine Contractors Association, and others.
- Managers, namely, the DPWH.
- Regulators and Enforcers, namely, the Land Transportation Office.
- Government Partners, namely, the Office of the Ombudsman; and the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission.
- Development Partners, namely, the World Bank, and possibly others.
- Media, namely, the Catholic Media Network.

EDITORIAL

By Tony Narciso

Say YES to Magis, YES to God!

Every year, the Pastoral Council and ministry thrusts are set, and plans to implement are prepared.

There were 2 points that caught my attention:

1. Active membership in Magis has declined vs. last year.
2. In the summation, Bro. Karel San Juan, S.J. brought out that "God desires nothing else but our good. A future of goodness, fortune, reconciliation, healing, restoration, homecoming, community and peace."

Wow, what a wonderful and loving God. I reflected on this for some time and really felt how true this is in my life especially in the community that God has given me, Magis Deo.

Really we have a loving God who says "Yes" to all our requests. Some right away, some a bit delayed, but always in His time. Paul (II Cor 1: 18-

20) says that in God, the answer is always "Yes".

The challenge now is to reflect on the first point and see the connection with the second point. Have we said "Yes" to God, through the community that He has given us?

It's another year and it serves as a gentle reminder to us all. Let's go through the following questions and reflect if we have said "Yes" to them:

1. Do I have a regular prayer time?
2. Do I journalize?
3. Do I attend the BCGG/ME reunion meetings?
4. Do I attend the monthly community celebration?
5. Do I participate in any of the Magis mission areas, Pateros, Payatas, GK Aya Village?
6. Am I involved in the parish?
7. Do I recruit for the quarterly ME Weekend?



Bambi & Tony Narciso

8. Do I reach out to a friend, former BCGG/ME classmates to re-join the community?
9. Do I recharge my relationship with the Lord through the annual Ignatian retreat?
10. Do I pray for my BCGG/ME class, sector and community?
11. Do I contribute to community activities through membership dues and love offerings?
12. Have I loved much?

The goal is to say "Yes" to all the above questions.

Have a new year filled with God's love, God's YES and our YES!

A Father's Prayer

Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak,

and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid.

One who will be proud and unbending in defeat,

and humble and gentle in victory.

Build me a son whose wishes will not take the place of deeds;

a son who will know that knowing himself is the foundation stone of knowledge;

a son who will know You and follow You!

Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort,

but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenges.

Here let him learn to stand up in the storm;

here let him learn compassion for those who fail.

Build me a son whose heart will be clear, whose goals will be high;

a son who will master himself before he seeks to master others;
 one who will learn to laugh yet never forget how to weep;
 one who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past.
 And after all these things are his, add, I pray, enough of a sense of humor,
 so that he may be serious, yet never take himself too seriously.
 Give him humility, so that he may always remember
 the simplicity of true greatness,
 the open mind of true wisdom,
 the meekness of true strength.
 Then I, his father, will dare to whisper, "I have not lived in vain."



COUNCIL CORNER

By Eli and Edith Prieto, Council Members/MEM

Our Relationship with God, Country, Magis Deo Community

John F. Kennedy once said, “Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.” We can also apply this in our relationship with God, with Magis Deo, with our BCGG, with our family, with our spouse, and even with ourselves. However, it is hardest when we apply it to ourselves... i.e., “Ask not what my ego can do for me. Ask what I can do with my ego.”

As kids, we are taught and driven to excel by our teachers and by our parents. At an early age, we already nurture the ego to be better than everybody else and to idolize others who are much better than us. When we start working, our ego would tell us to act and market ourselves in such a way that we would be chosen, over our co-workers, for promotion and advancement. When we plan to start our own family, our ego would tell us to choose a lifetime partner who would be acceptable to our family and friends. When we have children of our own, we nurture the egos of our children the same way as our egos were formed.

Alexander L. Lacson has written a pocketbook entitled “12 Little Things

Every Filipino Can Do To Help Our Country.” These are: (1) Follow traffic rules; (2) Ask for official receipts; (3) Buy Filipino; (4) Speak positively about our country; (5) Respect our uniformed servicemen/servicewomen; (6) Do not litter; (7) Support your church; (8) During elections do your solemn duty; (9) Pay your employees well; (10) Pay your taxes; (11) Adopt a scholar or a poor child; (12) Be a good parent. Before we shout to high heavens the corruption besetting our country, perhaps we can start by asking ourselves if we have adopted and practiced faithfully just one of the “12 Little Things...” outlined by Alex Lacson. When we do not follow traffic rules, we practice corruption. When we do not ask for official receipts when we buy or pay for anything, we practice corruption. And so on and so forth.

In Magis Deo, one great teaching that our spiritual director Fr. Ruben constantly teaches us (from the time we participated in our own marriage encounter weekend up to where we are now in our community) is personal transformation. All other teachings in our Magis Deo



Edith & Eli Prieto

Community emanate from this – personal transformation. We are asked to transform ourselves from an egotistical individual to a selfless creation of God. This is our struggle. This is our journey. We see this struggle in how we relate to our members within our BCGG. We experience this struggle in our sector, in our ministries, in our pastoral council and in our community as a whole. We are egotistical individuals struggling in our journey to become selfless creations of God.

We have learned in Magis Deo that we all can become servant leaders – leaders who serve and not seeking to be served; leaders who recognize rather than seek recognition for themselves; leaders who listen intently to the needs of others rather than dictate what they think others need; leaders who continue to serve even when no one else would want to join them in rendering service. This is how Jesus of Nazareth has shown us how to lead. Even His apostles left Him in times of crisis. As Christians and members of a spiritual organization called Magis Deo Community, He is our inspiration; He is our model.

Therefore, our relationship with God, our country and our Magis Deo Community is greatly influenced by how we are to ourselves. Am I an egotist or am I selfless? ONLY GOD KNOWS. WE CAN ONLY CONTINUE TO BE FAITHFUL IN THE STRUGGLE IN OUR JOURNEY TO BECOME SELFLESS CREATIONS OF GOD.



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Spirituality and the Second Half of Life

by *Father Ronald Rolheiser, OMI*

When Nikos Kazantsakis was a young man he interviewed an old monk on Mount Athos. At one stage he asked him: "Do you still struggle with the devil?" "No," the man replied, "I used to, but I've grown old and tired and the devil has grown old and tired with me. Now I leave him alone and he leaves me alone!" "So your life is easy then," Kazantsakis asked, "no more struggles?" "Ah, no," replied the monk, "it's worse. Now I struggle with God!"

Someone once quipped that we spend the first half of our lives struggling with the devil (and the sixth commandment) and the second half of our lives struggling with God (and the fifth commandment). While that captures something, it's too simple, unless we define "the devil" more widely to mean our struggles with the untamed energies of youth - eros, restlessness, sexuality, the ache for intimacy, the push for achievement, the search for a moral cause, the hunger for roots, and the longing for a companionship and a place that feel like home.

It's not easy, especially when we're young, to make peace with the fires inside us. We need to establish our own identity and find, for ourselves, intimacy, meaning, self-worth, quiet from restlessness, and a place that feels like home. We can spend fifty years, after we've first left home, finding our way back there again.

But the good news is that, generally, we do get there. In mid-life, perhaps only in late mid-life, we achieve something the mystics call "Proficiency", a state wherein we have achieved an essential maturity - basic peace, a sexuality integrated enough to let us sleep at night and keep commitments during the day, a sense of self-worth, and an essential unselfishness. We've found our way home. And there, as once before the onset of puberty, we're relatively

comfortable again, content enough to recognize that our youthful journeyings, while exciting, were also full of restlessness. We'd like to be young again, but we don't want all that disquiet a second time. Like Kazantsakis' old monk, we've grown tired of wrestling with the devil and he with us. We now leave each other alone.

So where do we go from there, from home? T.S. Eliot once said, "Home is where we start from." That's true again in mid-life.

The second-half of life, just like the first, demands a journey. While the first-half of life, as we saw, is very much consumed with the search for identity, meaning, self-worth, intimacy, rootedness, and making peace with our sexuality, the second-half has another purpose, as expressed in the famous epigram of Job: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I go back."

Where do we go from home? To an eternal home with God. But, to do that, we have first to shed many of the things that we legitimately acquired and attached ourselves to during the first-half of life. The spiritual task of the second-half of life, so different from the first, is to let go, to move to the nakedness that Job describes.

What does that entail? From what do we need to detach ourselves?

First, and most importantly, from our wounds and anger. The foremost spiritual task of the second half of life is to forgive - others, ourselves, life, God. We all arrive at mid-life wounded and not having had exactly the life of which we dreamed. There's a disappointment and anger inside every one of us and unless we find it in ourselves to forgive, we will die bitter, unready for the heavenly banquet.

Second, we need to detach ourselves from the need to possess, to achieve, and to be the center of



Father Ronald Rolheiser, OMI

attention. The task of the second-half of life is to become the quiet, blessing grandparent who no longer needs to be the center of attention but is happy simply watching the young grow and enjoy themselves.

Third, we need to learn how to say good-bye to the earth and our loved ones so that, just as in the strength of our youth we once gave our lives for those we love, we can now give our deaths to them too, as a final gift.

Fourth, we need to let go of sophistication so as to become simple "holy old fools" whose only message is that God loves us.

Finally, we need, more and more, to immerse ourselves in the language of silence, the language of heaven. Meister Eckhard once said: "Nothing so much resembles God as silence." The task of mid-life is to begin to understand that and enter into that language.

And it's a painful process. Purgatory is not some exotic, Catholic doctrine that believes that there is some place in the next life outside of heaven and hell. It's a central piece within any mature spirituality which, like Job, tells us that God's eternal embrace can only become fully ecstatic once we've learned to let go.

Article from: **Engaging Aging**
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Secrets of Servant Leadership

By John C. Maxwell

AFTER Princess Diana was killed in a tragic car accident, 2-½ billion people tuned in to watch her televised funeral. Not only Great Britain, but the entire world, mourned her death. What accounted for the public's emotional attachment to Princess Di?

Certainly, royalty and beauty attributed to Princess Diana's popularity, but something else connected her to the hearts of people across the globe.

Looks and lineage may have landed her on magazine covers, but Princess Di had an endearing quality that gave her even greater appeal. *Princess Diana was beloved because she was a servant leader.*

For centuries, royal families epitomized self-serving leadership. Comfortably removed from the day-to-day troubles of those in their kingdom, they enjoyed opulent wealth and absolute power. Princess Diana broke the stereotype.

She leveraged her popularity to lend support for AIDS research, to care for those with leprosy, and to ban land mines. In fact, the force of Diana's compassion was so influential that Time

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these plans so that our community, Magis Deo, may continue to fulfill our community mission and vision and work with our Lord in this world.

The Jesuit Charles Jackson describes Ignatian spirituality as an *active attentiveness to God joined with a prompt responsiveness to God*, who is ever active in our lives. God loves us so he always calls us to growth. He calls us very often out of our comfort zones. As the community moves forward in 2009, let each of us be open to whatever his Spirit may be calling us and, trusting God, in courage, and generosity and love, respond to his Spirit.

-By Monchito Mossesgeld, Council Chair for 2009

Magazine named her one of the 100 Most Important People of the 20th Century.

Practices that help leaders serve others

In their valuable book, "The Secret," Ken Blanchard and Mark Miller shed light on the practices that enable leaders, like Princess Diana, to serve others.

In this edition of *A Leader's Way*, I'd like to pass on their ideas to you.

1. See the future.

Leaders have a compelling vision for the future stirring inside of them. The vision makes plain a leader's identity, direction and pattern of behavior.

To affect the future, a leader spreads values throughout an organization. These values are core beliefs that become the cornerstones of organizational culture. A wise leader publishes the values so that they can be repeated, recognized and rewarded.

A leader cannot delegate the responsibility to see the future. They may share the responsibility, but ultimately, it's the leader's job to make time today to ensure the direction of tomorrow.

2. Engage and develop others.

To create the future a leader envisions, he or she must have the right people, in the right roles, fully engaged to their work. Everything that you will accomplish as a leader ultimately hinges on the people you have around you.

As the Law of the Inner Circle says, "A leader's potential is determined by those closest to him or her."

Sadly, many people's talents languish on the job because they are disengaged. Likely, the greatest waste in business is human potential. Leaders pull out the potential inside of their people by inspiring and motivating. They are quick to offer opportunities for growth, be mentors, or equip their employees with resources.

3. Reinvent continuously.

Great leaders reinvent continuously on a personal level. They are always interested in ways to enhance their own knowledge and skills. The very best leaders are learners. They realize that if they stop learning, they will stop leading. A leader sets the tone of the organization. If they cease growing personally, then the majority of those they lead will become stagnant as well.

Reinvention is critical to survival. The solutions to problems of the past are inadequate to address the demands of today. Leaders must have fresh, innovative thinking and new ideas to respond to the challenges the organization faces.

4. Value results and relationships.

When it comes to results and relationships, the best leaders take a both/and approach. A focus solely on results demoralizes the team, while an overemphasis on relationships undercuts the bottom line due to conflict avoidance and an absence of accountability.

The greatest leaders make friends and profits.

Leaders earn relational capital, and put it to work to gain results. As the Law of Connection states, "leaders touch a heart before they ask for a hand."

5. Embody values.

All genuine leadership is built on trust. Leaders build trust when they establish, articulate, model and enforce values. In short, they walk the talk.

If I say customers are important, my actions had better support that statement. If I choose to live as if customers are not important, people will have reason to question my trustworthiness.

And in the final analysis, if I am deemed untrustworthy by my people, I will not be trusted or followed as a leader.

(Article taken from the internet, 08 July 2007 Inquirer.)

Faith and Feng Shui: Reconciling Luck and God's Presence in My Life

By Kimi Abapo, Magis Youth, Jeremiah BCGG

I'm not really superstitious and I generally don't adhere to Feng Shui, but the happenings in my life seemed so coincidental that I couldn't place it on anything else.

I was supposed to go to Israel on yet another buying trip for the brand that I handle at work. My boss and I even had a minor miscommunication because I wasn't able to inform her of the trip immediately. We were all so busy with the holiday rush (the busiest time of the year for us in the retail industry), that I neglected to make the necessary arrangements prior to the trip. It was also as if my subconscious was telling me not to go. The trip was scheduled January 4 - 8. But just a few days before we were to leave, the Gaza air strike began. Of course, for our safety, my boss and I canceled the trip. But we still had to do the buying no matter what, so the Israeli company came up with the plan to send us to their China office in Shanghai instead. Luck or what-have-you, I was glad for it.

We were to go to Shanghai January 19 - 22. I was pressed for time to finish all the documents needed for the trip, aside from my usual merchandising functions. Then the big bosses dumped us with the news that we were to present our annual business reviews for each brand the Friday before I was to leave for Shanghai. I was extremely busy trying to finish all my work, even staying in the office 'til midnight and Saturdays. It felt like I was never going to get things done. By some stroke of luck once again, the business review presentations got postponed. This meant I had time to focus on the buying documents for the trip. I was able to finish them on Saturday, just enough time before our trip. This was the only time I could finally relax.

We left for Shanghai on the 19th; it was an easy flight - just three and a half hours. And then we learned that the office is also in the hotel we were staying at. Such a blessing because we didn't have to travel far to get to work, we could wake up late (savor the time spent on the luxurious hotel), eat buffet breakfast, and head to the office without stress. We could even stay late at the office without worrying about getting back to our hotel. Indeed, it was the most relaxed buying trip we've ever had so far. Because of this, we were able to finish most of our work on the night before we were to fly back home. I only needed to input some stuff in the morning but my boss was kind enough to allow me to go to Shanghai city for the few hours before our flight. I didn't want to leave Shanghai *without seeing Shanghai* so I took the offer. The day before was chilly and the weather bleak, but that day - that day was great. It was as if the heavens opened up to show Shanghai City to me.

It was not only the heavens that cleared

the way for me that day. I thought I would have to take a taxi to the city, but the company driver was available, so I needn't worry about transportation. He even served as my tour guide, although he spoke no English at all. The quick tour was awesome! We went to Yuyuan to visit the temple and buy some Chinese souvenirs and *pasalubongs*, then we stopped over the Pearl Tower for some picture-taking. The driver also took me through the scenic route going back to the hotel, and passed by the tallest skyscrapers, the Century Park, and others. The greatest thing about being in Shanghai was that they were celebrating the Chinese New Year. And here comes the superstitious part... this year is the Year of the Ox, and I was born on the year of the ox, which makes this year, my year! Luck or what-have-you, I was totally psyched! I had my picture taken with the humongous yellow ox decoration that spouted smoke at Yuyuan temple, prayed for luck this year and bought some Chinese "anting-anting" to carry home with me. Needless to say, it was the best 3-hour rush trip I ever had!

Back in Manila, the Chinese New Year is also being anticipated. My friends and I met up at Eastwood City and came across a fortune telling event. Just to ride with the Chinese theme in my life for the moment, I went ahead and had my fortune read by a *manghuhula*. Coincidentally, the *manghuhula* I got was Chinese (most were Filipino.) I was basically concerned with one thing in my life at the moment (okay, it's my love life), so I went straight ahead and fired my questions about it. The *manghuhula* was not the dubious mystic type, she was actually very realistic. She told me she saw in my cards that my family life was swell and that I am a spiritually-oriented person. It was surprising that that came out in my cards. I told her it was probably because of the influence of my parents. And she told me that was good and that I should continue it. She was saying that man's luck is only 33% of your fortune; it is God's blessing. The rest is something you have to work hard for. So if you are close to God, then you're almost halfway there. Not a bad idea for something that is stereotyped as paganistic as fortune telling. She went on to tell me about my good fortune in career life and other things. I was eager for her to get to the love life part and well, she did not disappoint. She told me good things will happen in that arena of my life this year. I believe it just because I want to. It is not because I consider fortune telling or feng shui as real, but more of psychologically, it affirms my goal of improving my life this year.

For me, everything that has happened so



The author at the Pearl Tower in Shanghai, China

far in my life; how, amazingly, things are falling into place, even if I have to go through rough times and very testing waters, I still pull through, is like good fortune in itself. The postponed trip to Israel that earned me a black mark with my boss was overcome by the very relaxed and successful Shanghai trip. The general timing of world events that affect events in my life seems so surreal and yet they were real for me. How could I have figured that the bombings in Gaza were directly related to me and my job? How coincidental that I go to China during the celebration of the year that my feng shui sign is the luckiest? Okay, these may all sound like some big mumbo-jumbo that I've just created for myself to believe in, but I'd like to think it's just God's way of telling me that I'm on the right path. I feel like He's always here with me, guiding me all throughout my life. He protects me and sends me signs so I know how to proceed. These things I have regaled, man-made creations and built-up superstitions, are actually instruments that God has used to send me His personal messages. It is up to me to interpret and use them not in fanatical ways or to veer me away from my Christian faith, but for them to actually enrich my life. I remember in class our teacher said that it was easier before for God to communicate with His people - during the time of the Old Testament, He would communicate through a burning bush or a cloud or light; during the New Testament, He sent Jesus. But now the time of the Father and the Son has passed, it is the time of the Holy Spirit to communicate with us. How direct can He get? I admit I sometimes fail to talk to God regularly, so He probably has to find ways to remind me that He is there. And I do take notice. I do realize it. I experience His presence in my life, His hand in all the things that are happening to me. So rationally thinking about it, things like feng shui and luck and coincidences are not actually against religious beliefs. I think they merely serve as man's ways of phrasing the messages he gets into something he can understand more tangibly or even, taking it as far as, making the messages more fun to hear.

Shepherds Appreciation Dinner

By Monchito Mossesgeld, Council Chair

[Last Saturday some 56 members of Magis Deo came together at the home of Tony and Aida del Rosario in Alabang. They had kindly offered it as the venue for Magis Deo's Shepherds Appreciation Dinner. It was a cool and breezy evening as the honorees arrived from as far as Antipolo, Carmona and Quezon City. It was a grand time to catch up with one another over the food, drinks and warm fellowship organized by Philip and Malou Panlilio, Maricel Suarez, and Suni Rodriguez. The following WELCOME REMARKS of Council Chair Monchito Mossesgeld delivered after dinner capture the spirit of the evening. – by Tony del Rosario]

This gathering has been a long time coming. Matagal na dapat tayo nagtipon tulad sa gabing ito. We have regular shepherds meetings but these are largely business in nature. We have not come together as far I recall to remember, say



Joy Uy-Tioco and Suni Rodriguez- tied for best make up.

thank you and celebrate. Well, tonight we have come, hopefully not too late, to do just that—remember, say thank you and celebrate. Tonight is for and about you. You are tonight's honorees.

Tonight we remember your dedicated service to the community. Some of you are relatively new shepherds but for many, it has been many years, even decades of service. You, to use an Ignatian perspective, have been at

work with the Lord in his vineyard all these years. Tonight we remember your care, compassion and love that have helped our members grow.

And remembering your service, we in the community say to you, **“thank you very much.”** Thank you for being the frontliners of community leadership. Without you, the Magis Deo community will not prosper. You, whether young or



Our gracious hosts, Tony & Aida del Rosario

old, are the *foundations of our community*, without whom it will not be able to live out its mission and vision. Thank you for being a couple for others. We also express our thanks to God. The words to the Philippians of St. Paul, whose year we celebrated last year, express our gratitude very well. “I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in my every prayer for all you because of your partnership for the gospel...”

Finally, we celebrate in remembrance and in gratitude. Perhaps our community does not celebrate enough for all the graces that we have received.



Eli Prieto and Bambi Narciso settle who will do the dishes the pinoy way - Jack en Poy!



Too...



...many...



...to name!

Tonight we do—and all of you are certainly among the *biggest graces* that this community has received. When we in the

Continued on page 10...

Feelings ... Judgments ... Realizations

By Louren Dacanay, Mustard Seed BCGG

Rufo and I attended the Christian Parenting for Peace and Justice seminar last January 24 and 25... and I felt...

Embarrassed ... that we were late. From past interactions with Fr. Tanseco, I know that he is very punctual. I was afraid he would get mad at us and that would really be embarrassing. But it was okay. He simply called us to sit at the front row, his way of letting us know that he noticed us and our lateness. I was to learn later that this strategy is called "Confrontation with Caring."

Regret ... that our children were not able to join us. The session was enjoyable, challenging, informative, an eye-opener, and, most of all, inspiring. Nina (27) and Jay (24) would have benefited from the seminar as young adults, and specially as future parents.

Challenged ... to learn more about the three S's (Stewardship,

Simplicity and Sharing) and how we could live our lives based on them. When we were bringing up our children, we really lived in a culture of materialism, competition, positive expectance, and lived for ourselves. Goals were for the growth and betterment of the family. I did not see beyond the immediate family. And I thought I was already living God's plan for me – I was a good mother, a good wife and a good boss. Now I realize that the responsibilities go beyond these.

Blessed ... the Asian crisis forced me to simplify my life. Forced into a life of simplicity, I began to realize how blessed I was and started sharing beyond my family. The CPPJ



The CPPJ seminar participants from Magis Deo with Fr. Ruben - Louren & Rufo Dacanay, Fely Redual.

weekend made me realize that even more is expected of me.

Overwhelmed but hopeful ... as I listened to the sharers who are spending their lives in service to the country. I feel so humbled that I have not done more. As one of the participants shared, our individual efforts may be just drops in a big bucket, but if more people contribute, we can fill the bucket and truly make a difference.

Cont. from page 9...**Appreciation dinner**

community see you and your generosity of heart, we know that what our Ignatian spirituality teaches us is true—God is constantly at work in each of us, teaching, shaping and molding us. Tonight, we celebrate God's love and goodness shown in and through you.

Before I end, I would like to thank all those who organized this celebration—Malu and Philip Panlilio and those who helped them,

and our hosts, Tony and Aida del Rosario. You are among the most dedicated shepherds of this community and are great examples to all of us. May there be more of you and all our community shepherds whom we honor tonight.

Let me end with a prayer for all of you, our shepherds, present here tonight and those who have been unable to join us. It is from the same epistle to the Philippians. "And this is my prayer, that your love may

overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to discern what is best, so that in the day of Christ, you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God."

Amen.

Who is Jesus Christ to me?

By Lala Lopez, former KKK BCGG member

I heard about God's message in my early years of college life when I joined a prayer group – "I'll bring you to a peaceful place... it is beautiful." Then on, I started to see God through signs, symbols, people and events in my life.

I have pictured God in the image of Jesus of the Sacred Heart. I longed more to see and feel God as my devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus grew deeper. Once I prayed: "Lord, how I wish you're here with me physically where I can see you, feel you and love you."

I never knew that one day it would be an answered prayer; God named Him Emmanuel, God is with us. Jesus was God's gift to us on Christmas day, where He became man to live with us. And for me, it was on Christmas day, when I met Jesus in the person of Mannix. Was it a coincidence to have his name Manuel? I don't think so. Jesus became real to me as I journey with him. Little by little I began to know Him more, and we became the best of friends. I laughed with him, celebrated with him, cried with him, everything that good friends were meant to be. We communicated a lot. Our conversations became my prayers. Then I realized that the closer you know Jesus, the closer you feel His cross. Being married for almost 16 years is a tough call. Building a family is another hurdle. It's not easy to be a career woman with 3 growing children (*we're now blessed with 4*) and with a husband keeping up in the pinnacle of his career. I have to juggle my time between my work and my

family, only to find out that I was spending more time with my job than with my family. I complained to Him a lot until one time while I was praying in the Blessed Sacrament, He told me to leave everything and follow Him. I decided to leave a highly influential job. Alas, I'll be a full time mom and wife... which I had never been. And my cross became heavier.

Jesus taught me the Lord's Prayer, God's will be done. Give us this day our daily bread.....save us in times of trial and deliver us from evil. It's difficult to be a mother, more so to be a wife. I experienced my own brokenness. But Jesus allowed me to understand the true meaning of brokenness. The breaking of the bread in the Eucharist became more meaningful to me. It is about forgetting yourself, learning to forgive, and committing yourself to what you have promised God; the real essence of forgiveness, accepting the totality of the person given to you, even his and your own imperfections. Nobody's perfect, nothing is perfect. Why? Because God will never be able to work in us, mold us, if we are already perfect. As I dwell in my brokenness, little by little God's love is being unfolded. I grew in faith, in obedience to follow His will, wherever He leads me, even in coming to New Zealand. As I went through my desert life here, the uncertainties of where this life would lead me to, being humbled while finding my own niche in this new place, I persevere in walking with Jesus. Amidst all the hardships and fears, all the unanswered questions,

being skeptical, feeling being abandoned, Jesus remained with God as He surrendered Himself, "Into your hands, I commend my spirit." I learned to let go and let God. Indeed, God remains true to His promise, Jesus' resurrection brings new hope and new life. In my own personal life, as I continue my journey with Jesus, God becomes closer and real. He continued to keep His covenant, "I will never forsake you."

Yes, finally, on a very special day, a very memorable day, God revealed His great love for me, Mannix and our family. Once more, on this very special day, God kept His promise of love; He will be with us always in this new life in New Zealand as we live here permanently. Yes, my dear friends, He granted us our permanent residency on Valentine's Day.

He has told me before, "I'll bring you to a peaceful place, it is beautiful." Thanks for the new hope, thanks for the new life. Praise God and Jesus, now and forever. AMEN.

Editor's Note: Mannix and Lala Lopez were members of KKK BCGG until they migrated to New Zealand early last year.

"When Mannix was invited to talk about Jesus Christ as part of Christian Life Program for Couples for Christ here, I was asked to share my own personal experiences. I was so inspired hence would like to share this. I want you to share this with the Magis Deo community. This is doing MORE FOR GOD!" – Lala Lopez)

YOUTH CORNER

Study ties bedroom TV to unhealthy habits in teens

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Teenagers with a bedroom television tend to have poorer diet and exercise habits and lower grades in school than those without one, U.S. researchers said on Monday.

While many studies have examined TV viewing habits of young people, researchers at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health said little had been known about the consequences in particular for older adolescents of having a bedroom TV.

They questioned 781 adolescents, ages 15 to 18, in the Minneapolis area in 2003 and 2004. Of them, 62 percent reported having a television in their bedroom.

Not surprisingly, those with a bedroom TV were more apt to watch it a lot, clocking four to five more hours in front of a television per week, the researchers said. Twice as many of the teens with a bedroom TV were classified as heavy TV watchers — at least five hours a day — compared to those without one.

Girls with a bedroom television reported getting less vigorous exercise — 1.8 hours per week compared to 2.5 hours

for girls without a TV. They also ate fewer vegetables, drank more sweetened beverages and ate meals with their family less often, the researchers said.

Boys with a bedroom TV reported having a lower grade point average than boys without one, as well as eating less fruit and having fewer family meals, the researchers said.

“It really clearly points out that there’s some merit to not allowing your child to have a TV in the bedroom,” said Daheia Barr-Anderson, one of the researchers.

“When you upgrade your TV in the living room and you have this smaller TV that’s out of date but still usable, parents should really resist putting it in one of your children’s bedrooms — and resist the pressure from the child to have a TV in their bedroom,” she said in a telephone interview.

SURPRISE ON OBESITY

The American Academy of Pediatrics urges parents to remove TV sets from children’s bedrooms, the researchers noted. The findings were published in the academy’s journal *Pediatrics*.

Boys were more likely to have a television in their bedroom than girls — 68 percent versus 58 percent.

Teens from the highest income families were far less likely than those from all other income levels to have a bedroom TV, the survey found.

Among black teens, 82 percent reported having a bedroom TV, compared to 66 percent of Hispanics, 60 percent of whites and 39 percent of Asian Americans.

The researchers tracked body mass index — a measure based on height and weight — and found that having a bedroom TV had no influence on whether teens were obese.

Barr-Anderson said that finding was a surprise, considering that previous studies looking at younger children — one on elementary school kids and one on low-income preschoolers — found that having a bedroom TV was an even stronger predictor of obesity than the time spent watching TV.

Both boys and girls with a bedroom TV reported spending less time reading and doing homework, although the researchers said the differences were not statistically significant.

(By Will Dunham, Editing by Maggie Fox and Eric Beech – internet article, 07 April 2008)



SCENES AND SIGNS OF FAITH

By Clyde Abapo, Jeremiah BCGG

Light of God

About the end of October, I read about the Nobel Prize winners in Chemistry for the year 2008. There were three of them. One was a Japanese who discovered the luminescence of the cells - DNA of earthworms and jellyfish. The other two were awarded for their research in the application of these fragments of light in other living organisms, to better understand their characteristics and behavior. Just as these microscopic creatures are endowed with the luminescence of light, we too are given light signals as a means of communication. Most of the time we cannot see the signals, but a combination of past and recent events will bear out His presence, love and care for us. Take for instance the following incidents.

Last November 6, I had a delivery schedule in Cavite. Normally I use the van for bigger cargo space and fuel economy, being diesel-fed. For unknown reasons, I decided to take the old Toyota car. Delivery went fast and okay. Early the following day, I used

the van to pick up the purchases in Las Piñas. On my way back, the van developed engine trouble that made me stall right in front of an auto repair shop. After inspection, the mechanic told me that the breakdown was a major one, and that repair work would take two days. As I sat down and made a recollection of the days past, it dawned on me that God must have done His part in preventing unnecessary expenses and saved me so much inconvenience.

Praising God (Psalms 150)

As I went through last Wednesday's reading, I got reminded that my prayer of thanksgiving is not enough. There should be some kind of activity that is pleasing to God. I feel that it is characteristic of the Father to be praised and glorified - an acknowledgement of His greatness and goodness, as well as putting Him above everything else. There is no more sincere act of praise than the antics of the child that bring great joy to the father. I think each one of us has his own way of offering gratitude to God.

When I was a kid of seven years, I asked my mother why people were dancing and shouting "Pit Señor" during the celebration of the Sto. Niño de Cebu. "Ang Sto. Niño mao ang batang Hesukristo nga gusto ug malipayon kaayo nga makakita ug hudyaka. Sa ingon nga paagi, kita nga mga anak sa Ginoo makapasidungog Kaniya. Nga Siya lang ang makagagahum," my mother replied. ("Sto. Niño is the Child Jesus who likes to watch and enjoy this kind of merrymaking. In this way, as children of God, we are able to praise Him. He is the Almighty.") This is one occasion where the church and local government are one in praising God. There are groups that highlight their prayer activity with praises to God. The charismatic movement is one of them. There is no doubt that Gawad Kalinga, whose mission to give dignity to the poor, brings much glorification to God. Big or small, we can do acts of praises to God. My way is to share an experience with Him through this column.

Love. Love. Love.

By Zarah Gagatiga, Mt. Olivet BCGG

It's February so let's talk about love.

I don't know about you, but for me, love is not easy to define. Perhaps it's not meant to be. It's just there. Like what Hugh Grant narrated at the start of the movie, *Love Actually*, *love is simply all around*. And so it goes that when we realize its presence in our lives, we are moved to do greater things beyond our known capacity.

In our all too human eyes, the ordinary becomes extraordinary. A painful experience transforms into something beautiful. The old is seen as fresh and new, even ageless. With love, time and space do not matter at all. In love, we're diminished but we surface more enriched and fulfilled. When we love

we become fearless. We endure. We persevere. We change. We grow. Ah, a miracle indeed!

But, thinking about it, to love and to be loved is a gift. It is God's gift to you; to me; and to all of creation. In this month of hearts, it would be good to think about God's love and our response to His loving ways. I'm positive that you would remember the many times in your life when God made manifest His eternal love for you, your family, friends and the community at large. If you could count with your fingers the miracles and blessings that God has given you out of love, yours and His, then you have reason to be grateful. If you could count with your

fingers, toes and more, then it's a grace revealed.

To provoke you further in thought of God's love and His presence, here's another idea. While God reveals and reveals Himself to us in times of joy and consolation, He is likewise most present in our moments of deep sorrow and desolation.

2008 had been a tumultuous year for me. God, however, made sure that I recognize His face and eternal love. I found Him in some unlikely places and in the simple yet familiar routines of family and married life. Best of all, I rediscovered his great love for me in the scriptures.

Mark 2:13-17 resonates so strongly.

It's February so let's think of God and His magnanimous love for it is, actually, all around.

SPIRITUAL TIDBITS AND HUMOR

By: Rey Mella, Cana BCGG

Love is a Many-Splendored Thing

February is love month. I loved to write love letters when I was younger. But, talking or writing about love is something more difficult for me to do. While many people, especially artists, write beautiful literature like poems on love, compose songs on love, I lack the creativity and the depth to write about it. Love is something that has so many dimensions.

I do know how to love and how to express it. I kiss my kids practically every day, when I come home, when they arrive, before I leave for the office or before they leave the house. I hug them at every opportunity. I give them material things when there's an occasion. I talk to them. I inspire them. I guide them. I am silent when I need to, still to demonstrate my respect and love for them. I play and horseplay with them. I joke and laugh with them. I scold them when needed, as a sign of my love. I displease them when I don't allow them to do things and activities which I thought are not safe, or wholesome or productive, again, to tell them implicitly how much I care for them.

Out of love, we have family activities which the kids do not necessarily want to do. Kids hate waking up early, but some Sundays, we get up early, drive to the memorial park, walk for an hour and later enjoy a picnic breakfast on the grass. They love sitting in front of the computer or watch TV or play with the Playstation. They hate long drives. But, recently, we went to Ilocos and drove for hours, stopped at old churches in Paoay, Sta. Maria, Bantay and Vigan, at the Malacanang in the North, the Marcos Museum in Batac, at the lighthouse in Burgos, the windmill farm in Banguid, the view in Pagudpud, a resort in Curimao. We took a lot of pictures. I thought the kids had fun anyway. I love my family and I want us to have great memories.

Intel manufactures microprocessors and memories for personal computers and laptops, mobile phones, toys, PDA's and other electronic equipment and gadgets. At one time in my life in Intel, we had T-shirts made for employees which said, "Memories

are made at Intel..." How true. I had great training, travel and built my career there, made many friends. I met my "ex-girlfriend" there who later became my wife. It must have been part of God's plan for me to find my true love there.

Last week, I brought my team to a teambuilding and planning session in Sonya's Garden in Tagaytay. The session was pretty light with relationship-building and simply being together as the underlying objectives. The restaurant fed us with some great organic natural food – salad from the Garden and pasta with organically prepared sauce, juice and Taragon tea. Half the team must have complained silently about the food but were just smiling as we broke bread together. I offered no apologies for the food as I want them all to be healthy and to see their great grandchildren. I love my team.

We were asked to manage the Praxis Ministry this year. The praxis ministry is something we have not much knowledge and no experience whatsoever, moreso to be its overseer as new council members. The council leadership however, decided that it would be great if we accepted it anyway. With a lot of hesitation, we did. We are lucky to have the presence and support of all the Sector Heads: Anchit-Sally Chua Chiaco of South Sector, Tony-Bambi Narciso of Central Sector and finally Mon-Alice Go have generously accepted our invitation to head the North Sector. We love the community and show it in our acceptance of any assignment thrown our way.

We can do no great things; only small things with great love. – Mother Teresa

My dad did not become wealthy in his lifetime and did not leave us with any inheritance or some real estate. But, a few months back, I found something in my own bedroom that my dad left behind. It has always been there since we came home from Canada in 2003 after attending their golden wedding anniversary. It's their giveaway gift from that beautiful event, 6 months before he died. It's a replica of a house –



Mella family in front of the Church of St. Augustine also known as Paoay Church, Dec. 30, 2008, family road trip to Ilocos

with a quote from the bible handwritten on it. It's from Hebrews 24 – "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." If anything, my dad was a great role model for love and service to the Lord. He did not just go to church, he also served at the printing press of the archdiocese which was the only job he did and knew, printing the weekly (or was it monthly) newsletter, Veritas, of the Catholic Church in Jaro, Iloilo. He also sent two of my brothers to the seminary with the fervent hope they would become priests. While they never did, I look up to these two brothers for their spirituality and examples. My father loved his children.

As they say, there are no shortcuts to real success in life, or, perhaps, there are no shortcuts to anything that is good. It takes time to build relationships. Natural health is a long process and a lifetime investment in doing the right thing. Great food, not instant noodles and fast food, are great because it takes time to prepare and to cook. I would also add, from my personal experience, there's also no shortcut to spirituality. I say, God loves us so much; He wants us to truly experience His love before we eventually become real Christians and His committed followers.

"God speaks to those who take time to listen and He listens to those who take time to pray."

Muldoon lived alone in the Irish countryside with only a pet dog for company. One day, the dog died, and Muldoon went to the parish priest and asked, "Father, me dog is dead. Could ya' be sayin' a mass for the poor creature?" Father Patrick replied, "I'm afraid not; we can't have services for an animal in the church. But there are some Baptists down the lane, and there's no tellin' what they believe. Maybe they'll do something for the creature."

Muldoon said, "I'll go right away, Father. Do ya' think \$5,000 is enough to donate to them for the service?" Father Patrick exclaimed, "Sweet Mary, Mother of Jesus! Why didn't ya tell me the dog was Catholic?"

FOUR STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN HELPING THE POOR: 2nd Stage

By Fr. Albert Nolan, OP

A Christian's spiritual development is tied to serving the poor. In this spiritual development one goes through stages in much the same way as one goes through stages in other aspects of living - for example, praying or loving. I have identified four stages, each characterized not only by a heightened spiritual awareness but also by a more effective way of actually serving the poor.

The first stage of our commitment to the poor is characterized by compassion. (For details on the First Stage see the June 2008 Magis issue.)

The second stage begins with the gradual discovery **that poverty is a structural problem.** Poverty in the world today is not simply misfortune, bad luck, inevitable, due to laziness or ignorance or a lack of development. Poverty today is the direct result of the political and economic policies of governments, parties, and big business. In other words, **the poverty we have today is not accidental. It has been created;** it has been, one almost wants to say, manufactured, by particular policies and systems. This means **that poverty is a political problem,** a matter of injustice and oppression.

We have seen that the discovery of the depth and breadth of poverty in the world leads to feelings of compassion. So now the discovery that his poverty is being imposed upon people by unjust structures and policies leads to feelings of indignation and anger. We find ourselves getting angry with the rich, with politicians and with governments. We accuse and blame them for their callousness and inhuman policies.

But our Christian upbringing makes us feel somewhat uncomfortable with anger. We feel a little guilty when we get angry with someone. Is it not sinful to be angry? Should we not be more loving toward the rich? Should we not be forgiving the politicians their sins - seventy times seven times? For those of us who want to continue to follow Christ, our anger and indignation can lead us to a deep spiritual crisis.

The way forward and beyond this crisis is bound up with the discovery of the spiritual importance of God's anger. We all know that there is a great deal about God's anger in the Bible, and not only in the Old Testament. We

tend to find this aspect of the Bible rather embarrassing and by no means helpful to our spiritual lives. But maybe it is just here that we have something to learn.

There are two kinds of anger and indignation. One is an expression of hatred and selfishness. The other is an expression of love and compassion. God's anger, indeed his wrath, is an expression of his love for the poor and for the rich, for the oppressed and for the oppressor. How can that be?

All of us have experienced this kind of anger. When my heart goes out in compassion toward those who suffer, I cannot help feeling angry with those who make them suffer. The deeper my compassion for the poor, the stronger my anger for the rich. The two emotions go together as two sides of the same coin. In fact, I cannot experience the one without the other once I know that the rich exploit the poor. And if I have no feelings of anger, or only very little, then my compassion is simply not serious. My anger is an indication of the seriousness of this concern for the poor. Unless I can experience something of God's wrath toward oppressors my love and service of the poor will not grow and develop.

And yet God's anger does not mean that he has no love for the rich as persons. We know from experience that we can get angry with the people we love. In fact our anger can be an expression of the seriousness of our love for them. A mother who discovers her child playing with matches and about to burn down the house must get angry with the child. Not because she hates the child but precisely because she loves the child so much. Her anger is an expression of the seriousness of what the child has done and her concern for the child.

Traditionally, we distinguish between love of the sinner and hatred of the sin. This is a notoriously difficult thing to do, but, the more we understand that the problem is unjust structures rather than individuals who can be held personally responsible for poverty, the easier it is to forgive the individual and hate the system. Individuals are only marginally guilty because they are only vaguely aware, if at all, of what they are doing - like the child playing with matches.

We are all more or less pawns or victims of an unjust system. In South Africa, for

example, it is extremely important to recognize that the wickedness of what is happening cannot be blamed upon individuals like P.W. Botha. If he were to be converted, the system and therefore the suffering would continue. If we get angry with P.W. Botha it is because of the system he represents rather than because we are able to judge just how guilty he himself might be.

As we grow to share more of God's anger, we find our anger directed more at the unjust systems than at persons, even if this is sometimes expressed as anger toward those who represent and perpetuate these systems.

That does not mean that our anger becomes weaker. Our compassion can only develop and mature as we learn to take suffering and oppression seriously enough to get really angry about it.

During this second stage, while we are grappling with the structure and systems that create poverty and while we are learning to share God's anger about them; our actions will be somewhat different from the actions we engaged in during the first stage. We will want to change the system. We will want to engage in certain activities that are calculated to bring about social and political change. Relief work deals with symptoms rather than causes. Relief work is like curative medicine as opposed to preventive medicine. What is the point of trying to relieve suffering while the structures that perpetuate the suffering are left untouched?

Preventive action is political action. And so we find ourselves participating in social actions, supporting campaigns against governments and generally getting involved in politics. This has its own tensions and constraints. But how else can one serve the poor? Relief work is necessary, but what about preventive work?

For the complete article on the First Stage, see page 15 of the June 2008 Magis Newsletter. Third and fourth stages to be continued... Reprinted with permission of Praying P.O. Box 419335, Kansas City, MO 64141

**MAGIS DEO COMMUNITY CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES
FOR THE MONTHS OF FEBRUARY – APRIL 2009**

February			
03	Sector & Ministry Heads Meeting-1	Magis Deo Office	Magis Deo 426-7191
06	Community Celebration	San Carlos Lay Formation Center (MPH)	M.E.M/ Agnus Dei & CIA/Wisdom
CENTRAL SECTOR			
11	Council Meeting	Magis Deo Office	Magis Deo 426-7191
13-15	ME-2 – P3,000/couple	St. Scholastica's, Tagaytay	MEFP 426-4206
13-15	MEW (ME Class 96) – P3,000/couple (Fr. Allan Abuan)	La Verna, Tagaytay	Ike/Josie Llamas 821-0639
21	Life in the Spirit Seminar (LSS)	God's Love Catholic Prayer Community New Manila	Clyde/Patchot Abapo 838-8553/0922-8098768
March			
03	<i>Shepherds & Ministry Heads Meeting 1</i>	<i>Sanctuario de San Antonio Parish Office</i>	<i>Magis Deo 426-7191</i>
06 or 07	Community Celebration	San Carlos Lay Formation Center (MPH)	NORTH SECTOR 11
	Council Meeting	Magis Deo Office	Magis Deo 426-7191
13-15	AIR (Annual Ignatian Retreat)	Sacred Heart Novitiate	Joy Uy-Tioco 0917-8166745
14-15	Shepherding Seminar-1 (Free)	CEFAM	MEFP 426-4206
28-29	Shepherding Seminar-2 (Free)	CEFAM	MEFP 426-4206
31	Sector & Ministry Heads Meeting-2	Magis Deo Office	Magis Deo 426-7191
April			
03 or 04	Community Celebration	San Carlos Lay Formation Center	(MPH) CENTRAL SECTOR
08	Council Meeting	Magis Deo Office	Magis Deo 426-7191
09	Lenten Recollection	FP Theater, Camp Aguinaldo	MEFP 426-4206

**BIRTHDAY CELEBRANTS FOR
THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2009**

1	Tony Arevalo	Beatitudes
	Helen Chua	Sirach
2	Royce Remorca	ME Class 89
	Puring Santos	ME Class 89
3	Sheila Tumaliwan	Mustard Seed
	Jhune Talla	ME Class 86
4	Anna Pili	Emmanuel
	AbeAwit	ME Class 89
	Anne Hanapin	ME Class 92
6	Tony Tuviera	CIA/Wisdom
8	Aileen Melaya	ME Class 91
9	Ferdie Joson	Sirach
11	Edison Guzman	Beatitudes
	Gary Canoso	Magnificat
	Pearly Braga	ME Class 91
13	Norma Cordero	Philippians
	Cathy Rafael	Agnus Dei
	Annie Baldo	Emmanuel
15	Melit Faderguya	ME Class 92
16	Danny Mendoza	ME Class 87
17	Mike Magpayo	Sirach
18	Domeng Gagatiga	Mount Olivet
	Jo Bello	ME Class 92
20	Bing Arkoncel	Isaiah 66
25	Vicky Mendoza	ME Class 87
27	Glo Alli	Kapatiran Kay
		Kristo
	Atoy Apo	ME Class 87
28	Jun Ahjong	ME Class 83

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES
FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2009**

7	Bing & Tes Dela Paz	ME Class 91
8	Benz & Vina Dimanalata	Genesis
10	Danny & Charito Dimayuga	Sirach
	Frank & Fe+ Reyes	Philippians
	Ben & Linda Gareza	ME Class 84
14	Leony & Mia Parada	Psalms 46-Samaritans
	Jun & Vivian Ahjong	ME Class 83
	Percy & Chit Garcia	Mount Olivet
15	Ciso & Laura Cayabyab	Philippians
16	Dindo & Aileen Melaya	ME Class 91
21	Bong & Bing Arkoncel	Isaiah 66
	William & Olive Ng	ME Class 86
23	Leo & Grace Moselina	Mustard Seed
25	Egay+ & Djarn Pestaño	Sirach
27	Tony & Mads Tuviera	CIA/Wisdom

BCGG Interface Feb-Apr 2009

NORTH

Sector Head: Mon and Alice Go
Agnus Dei — Mustard Seed
Archangel Gabriel — Isaiah 66
Beatitudes — Magnificat

CENTRAL

Sector Head: Tony and Bambi Narciso
CIA/Wisdom — Sirach

Corinthians — Psalm 46/
Samaritans

Micah 6:8 — Thessalonians

SOUTH

Sector Head: Anchit and Sally Chua
Chiacio

KKK — Emmanuel

John — Genesis/House of David

Philippians — Mount Olivet

Cana — Jeremiah