

Check out Sacred Space in
www.magisdeo.org

Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community
Vol. X • Issue No. 38

Magis

Formation for Mission



March 2009

THE NEW TRIANGLE: COUPLE AND TECHNOLOGY

Fr. James Gascon, S.J. discussed this topic during the community celebration at Lay Force on February 6, 2009. In order to maintain balance in our married life, we naturally create a triangulated relationship. A third party helps distribute and ease the tension present in a relationship. For example, a child who gets sick normally brings his/her quarreling parents together and relieves the tension created between his/her dad and mom. However, there is a new triangle present in our modern day marital life that we are not aware of, or take for granted. Fr. Gascon calls this new triangle *the couple and technology*. In the past two years, Fr. Gascon counseled around thirty couples, twenty-five of whom have this technology triangle directly or indirectly affecting their relationship, hence bringing them to marriage counseling.

Fr. James cited instances encountered in his counseling experiences where technology created problems in the relationships between husbands and wives. Two of these instances are:

1. Internet – A happily married husband has learned how to use the chat room in the internet. When bored, he finds himself in the chat room where he finds a female chat mate. One thing leads to another, and they eventually have an affair.
2. Cell phone – A husband receives texts from friends which are quotations about love. The wife sees these texts and begins to get jealous. They start fighting.

Fr. Gascon further explained that the problem with technology is: it has taken charge of the lives of couples and



Fr. James Gascon, S.J.

families. This is aggravated by the fact that the couples and families concerned do not pause to examine technology's effects on them. They do not talk about the influence and impact of technology in their lives. Technology is supposed to be a tool for couples and families. In

Continued on page 6

Taste and See the Goodness of the Lord An LSS Experience

Last February 21, 2009, the Magis Deo Community had 3 couples from ME Class 92 and 2 singles who attended the Life in the Spirit Seminar conducted by the God Loves Catholic Prayer Community. The attendees were Boyet & Rose Ambata, Ed & Jona delos Santos, Ian & Neth Alon, Joey Lorenzana and Frances Zyra Mella.

Shepherds for the seminar were Joy Uy-Tioco, Rey Mella, Ted & Susan Concepcion, Gene & Eve Bañez, Djarn Pestaño, Ferdie Cruz and Clyde & Pachot Abapo.

It was a one-day seminar entitled "Taste and See the Goodness of the Lord." Topics taken up were : 1) God's Love, 2) Jesus, The Way, the Truth and the Life, 3) Receiving God's Gift/ Baptism in the Holy Spirit, 4) Growing in our relationship with God, and 5) Transformation.

Fr. Domie Guzman, SSP, officiated the mass and commissioning rites.

*By Pachot Abapo
LSS Coordinator, Jeremiah BCGG*



LSS attendees sing and praise the Lord.

Sharings of LSS participants are on page 2.

Suyuan in GK Batangas

By Djarn Pestaño

Ano ang mga natutunan mo sa Suyuan at ano ang naging epekto nito sa inyong mag-asawa?

Bro. Roger/Sis. Endromida Reyes: *“Ang pagpapatawad sa isa’t isa....at doon ko nakita ang pagmamahal ng aking asawa sa aming pamilya....at doon ko din nalaman kung paano ang pagdala ng pamilya.”*

Nilo/Judith Braga: *“Maganda ang aming pagsali sa Suyuan dahil lumawak pa ang aming pag-unawa o pag-intindi sa aming mga ugali. Ang aming karanasan ay pangkaraniwan lang sa mag-asawa. Dahil sa Suyuan lalo kaming naging maunawain sa isa’t isa.”*

Ricky/Michelle Trinidad: *“Maraming pagbabago sa loob ng tatlong linggo na dumaan. Kung sa dati ay ako ang palagi sumusuyo sa mister ko, ngayon siya na ang sumusuyo sa akin. Siya na din ang nangangaral sa aming mga anak. Kaming mag-asawa ay buong pusong nagpapasalamat sa Suyuan lalong-lalo na sa Itaas na nagbigay sa atin ng buhay.*

Edwin/Jocelyn Carandang: *“We have learned how to consult each other properly when we have conflicts. It also helps our relationship grow – a better interaction in our home. Now we are more open to each other and this makes our relationship stronger than before.”*

These are random feedback from the Suyuan participants of Gawad Kalinga

photographers, was with us. Nina Yuson and Harry and Helen Chua,



(GK) Padre Garcia in Batangas, three weeks after their seminar. What more can we say?

Magis Deo... moved to do more for God, Danny and Charito Dimayuga, Sirach BCGG shepherds, members Ronnie and Jean Ambe, Gen. Felix and Rita Brawner, Ferdie Josen, Mike and Celine Magpayo, Djarn Pestaño, and Bong and Emma Punsalan, trooped to Batangas in the early morning of February 1, 2009. Of course the Suyuan wouldn't be complete without Tita Cathy Rafael and Pocholo and Merly Cea. As a bonus Ferdie Cruz, one of our reliable

couldn't make it and were our prayer warriors.

Traveling via the Star Tollway, we prayed the rosary for a safe trip and for the success of the Suyuan. It was worth the 3-hour drive to Padre Garcia. As we entered the gate, we saw wide smiles, bright-colored houses with beautiful blooming flowers, a big open kiosk which serves as a multi-purpose hall, and a small school. Tito Danny says there are 65 GK houses, with 35 more to be built. We expected 25 couples; 29 registered (26 couples

Continued on page 6

Blessings of LSS

Sharing by Neth Alon – ME Class 92

Before the day of our LSS came, I was worried and nervous because I didn't have any idea what would happen the whole day aside from what Ms. Joy told us during the orientation. There were two things that came into my mind: first, I might be bored sitting for such a long period, just listening to the speaker. And second, I was afraid I might spend the whole time crying because I thought we might be asked to share our experiences about our married life. And I don't like that since I will just remember the saddest moments, problems and trials. Honestly, my

husband and I were both hesitant to attend, thinking that we were not prepared, we were not able to accomplish the requirements before attending the LSS - the confession and the letter to God - due to our very busy week at work. But still, God compelled us to go there.

On the day of our LSS, I have proven that I was wrong. I was awake the whole time and attentive. I was very interested listening to the stories of the speakers, and I learned a lot from them. I most specially felt that the Holy Spirit was within me, that God really blessed me. I was very much inspired by the speakers specially by Mr. Jess, that even

though he lost his son, his faith is still within him, he never lost hope, he still keeps on believing that God is always in us!

LSS helped me in many ways...it made me realize na madami akong pagkukulang kay God, that I need to do my obligations. It helped me to be closer to God, it helped me on how to communicate with God. It made me feel that I am very much blessed.

I am most willing to share what I've experienced in LSS with my friends and will surely recommend it.

Thanks po for bringing us to LSS.

Continued on page 5

Sunday Homily

February 22, 2009

Ruben M. Tanseco, S. J.

EDSA 1, 2, 3

In today's Gospel reading (Mk. 2: 1-12), we see how faith heals both body and spirit. This was how Jesus responded to the faith of the paralytic. "My son, your sins are forgiven....Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home" (vv. 5, 11). And he did! But faith involves a conversion of the heart, and it is faith-in-action. "Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying" (v. 4).

This was how the Lord healed us as a nation at Edsa 1, back in February of 1986. As a people of faith, through active non-violence, we ended a regime of moral corruption and went back to the ways of God. The ever-compassionate Lord healed us in body and spirit. But weak humans that we are, we succumbed once again to moral corruption in the course of time. Again, the ever-forgiving God intervened, and we courageously succeeded in driving away another corrupt regime. That was Edsa 2 in 2001.

It is now 2009, and where are we as a nation? Almighty God, why are we so stubborn as a people? How shallow is the Christianity that we claim to embrace. We need no less than another moral-spiritual revolution. This time, it will have to be an on-going, prolonged, lifelong effort on the part of each one of us to do our utmost within our sphere of moral influence - toward moral integrity that will stay and last and be an intrinsic part of our national lifestyle. This is Edsa 3.

Let us first focus on our families, for everything in human life starts there. Forms of cheating are still done in many families. You have this grade school son

who cheats by having his homework done by his mother, who consents to save time, instead of tutoring the child. What about this husband-and-father who womanizes behind his wife's back, and even denies it when confronted with evidence? And this wife-and-mother, who overspends beyond her budget, and keeps borrowing money from friends without the intention of paying them back. We can go on and on to show that cheating, the seed of big-time corruption, starts in the family. How, then, can we expect the children from such families to grow up with moral integrity as second nature to them? The children and youth of today will be our public leaders of tomorrow. What will they do for our one and only country, the Philippines?

Our challenge and mission today is to be the role models of our Filipino children and youth, the only hope of our tomorrows. Yes, Edsa 3 as our ongoing, lifelong moral revolution. More and more religious institutions, as well as NGOs and coalitions of organizations, are dedicating their efforts on this.

The Marriage Encounter Foundation of the Philippines regularly conducts renewal seminars for couples and families, including the Christian Parenting for Peace and Justice. The latter focuses on challenging issues like moral integrity and non-violence in the family; an alternative lifestyle of Stewardship, Simplicity, and Sharing; reaching out to the poor and victims of social injustice; and ends with Christian nationalism and love of country.

The Center for Family Ministries (CEFAM) offers professional programs in pastoral care for persons engaged or to be engaged in the pastoral care of individuals, couples, and families. It



likewise offers counseling services and growth and healing seminar-workshops. All of these are centered on psycho-moral-spiritual formation.

Just yesterday, the Simbahang Lingkod ng Bayan (SLB), a socio-political ministry of the Jesuits, launched the Citizenship by Good Example (Cge!) Movement. This will create ways to foster participation and vigilance among Filipino citizens in the socio-political and economic affairs of the state. It has a special focus on our Filipino youth, and one of its very challenging programs is to be part of the National Secretariat of Task Force 2010 for clean, honest and peaceful elections.

A most heroic, single-handed effort in this moral revolution is that of Gov. Ed Panlilio of Pampanga. His courageous efforts in fighting moral corruption are no less than God-inspired. Through our prayers and in whatever ways we can, let us support him all the way.

All this is part of Edsa 3, and God calls all of us to be actively and courageously involved. No Filipino can be truly a man or woman of God without loving our country. To love God is to love our country, for this is God's country. To love our country and our people with deep passion and compassion ::orth living for, and dying for.

Mga kapwa kong Pilipino: Sa harap ng Panginoong Diyos at sa harap ng buong mundo - MABUHAY ANG PILIPINAS!

EDITORIAL

Who Am I? Who Are We? What Do We Stand For?

Sunday a week ago in Tagaytay, Aida and I joined others from Magis Deo at the *harana* for the new ME Class 96. We were unexpectedly invited to welcome them to Magis Deo on behalf of the Council. This led us to introduce ourselves in the ME “endearing-qualities-way” and to acknowledge the great debt we owe Magis Deo for the spiritual compass and the company of similarly encountered couples that has inspired our search for spiritual meaning over the last 22 years.

Tagaytay brought up reminders of our own ME: the magic of our encounter, the realization that GOD had come into our lives, the drive to share our “couple power” with others, and to become MEW team couple sharers and shepherds.

Where have the intervening years gone? They have brought many “consolations and desolations.” Aida and I have discovered that bringing GOD into the center of our lives is not a “one-time” thing but a continuing process. It is a continuing struggle to live out the four “esses” of St. Ignatius, viz., Simplicity, Stewardship, Sharing and Service, that is at the core of being MORE FOR GOD in MAGIS DEO.

On March 7, the new MEW graduates have been invited to join us at our monthly ME Community Celebration. We pray that the freshness of their “DISCOVERY” will inspire us to recover the promise of our own. We hope that walking with us will also help them to sustain and

further enrich what we both have found.

As I write this, it is Feb. 25, Ash Wednesday. It is a time of preparation for the coming of Easter, for revisiting WHO WE ARE and what GOD impels us to BE. Perhaps this will also show us how we may be able to DO MORE in realizing the THRUSTS of our Community discerned during our recent Planning Session.

Our respective Ministries have submitted their proposed program. The Magis Deo Council has reviewed them. Council Chair Monchito Mossesgeld observes that much good work has been done, but there appears to have been little response to the challenging “Signs of the Times” posed by our Spiritual Director Fr. Ruben Taneco, S.J. and Executive Director Vincent Lazatin of the Coalition Against Corruption (CAC). The Ministries have thus been invited to express what might be their response in the context of their respective programs.

The challenges we collectively perceive in the Signs of the Times are perhaps most visible in the widespread reports of corruption and the lack of responsible governance in our country. Very deep roots underlie the evil we instinctively perceive. At the risk of repeating myself, this not likely to be eradicated overnight. We will need to educate ourselves. We will need to develop a common view of the issues and the problems they pose. We will need to develop a common response. We may have to learn to draw some comfort from little victories. But we

must learn to take a long-term view. For the EDSAs of recent memory did not happen overnight. Nor did they establish a lasting cure. It has bred a certain sense of “ennui,” of weariness, about marching in the streets again.

It is not enough to fight unjust regimes. We must help BUILD strong institutions manned by persons of integrity and competence. This means we must START WITH OURSELVES. In the spirit of Lent, let us ask forgiveness for the times we have stumbled and pray for the strength to resist the little compromises that unwittingly lead us to a culture of tolerance, if not of compliance, with corruption. We also need to develop a stronger sense of Community to help us “WALK OUR TALK.” This is what our Magis Chair Couple call for: to BE MORE and let DOING MORE flow naturally from it. For this reason, our Magis Council sees a deliberate process of spiritual reaffirmation, of community dialogue and discernment and, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to let THIS shape our Community Response.

There are some among us who will be impatient with the deliberate approach. We must respect their “FIRE.” There are also some among us who may be sensitive to the foregoing issues but have other more pressing priorities. We must respect their views too. So let us PRAY that the Holy Spirit will guide us, and call us, IN HIS TIME.

Tony del Rosario
Council Member / John BCGG

COUNCIL CORNER

Finding God in Community

During one of our recent Magis Deo Council meetings there was some discussion about the relatively low attendance of our community in our monthly community gatherings. This led our Council Chairman to restate an important objective of the **Community Services Ministry (CSM)**, viz., to **build community**. Attendance in our monthly Community Celebrations is an important indicator of the state of our common search to bring GOD more closely into our life. We need to **understand the reasons why** for an effective **response**.

The Community Celebration is the principal venue for members to come together as a community. We do it once a month. Its central activity is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which may be accompanied by a “homily” of the priest-offerer or by a “teach-in” by someone specially chosen to speak on a particular topic of his choice or area of expertise. There used to be a particular theme or themes that weave these topics together over the course of a year and is/are inspired by the Council, the Formation and/or Praxis Ministries. In past years, these were formulated and disseminated in advance.

This is not the first time we are focusing on attendance in our

Community Celebrations and may well not be the last. I recently reread the editorial I wrote in our Magis Deo Newsletter of June 2008 entitled: **“Rediscovering the Magis in Magis Deo.”** It was written **last year** shortly after we had gone through our Lenten Season and Easter Week. And now, we are revisiting the subject just as we begin **this year’s** preparation for Lent and Easter Week. It touched upon the meaning of *metanoia*, our change of heart and mind....taking a look at where we are and trying to see where we ought to be....testing our values and discerning how we measure up to the values of Jesus.

For many of us, Magis Deo led us to our *metanoia*. It is in Magis Deo that we experienced our **encounter with self** and learned to experience the encompassing Presence of GOD in all things. Perhaps there has been a **waning of the magic** we experienced for that magic should **impel** us to **revisit** it and to **share** it with others. A **first response** might then be to **start with ourselves** and use this Lenten Season to rekindle it again.

For **Magis Deo as a Community**, perhaps there is also a need for its own *metanoia*. As Ed and Claire Palma wrote in October 2006, our **Sense of**

Community appears to be in need of a **“burning platform.”** What can galvanize us to make our community life more relevant and meaningful? How do we build up a **heightened anticipation** for the monthly Community Celebration? In our Community programs and projects? How do we address competing needs, priorities, and other impediments?

We know many of the reasons we resort to for **NOT** going to the Community Celebration. Do not have the time. It’s so far away. Can’t leave the kids. I have another obligation. It’s so boring. Etc., etc., etc. If it’s for praying together I can do it in my parish, with my BCGG or at my Sector meeting.

There is a great sense of “family,” of belonging, in our “household” groups, the BCGGs. This is also beginning to be seen in the geographic sectors of our community, which are made up of the BCGGs. What does it take to **extend** that sense of family to the wider membership of our community? **The answer is within us. Let it lead us to attend** our next community celebration. When there, let us **MAKE it NOT** boring.

Let us search for the **GOD** that resides in one another in Community too.

Tony del Rosario, John BCGG

Continued from page 2

Sharing by Rose Ambata – ME Class 92

I have no clue what LSS is all about, besides the fact that it has some similarity with charismatic movements and the “Slain” thing, as mentioned to us during orientation. During my childhood years I remembered my mother bringing me to such gathering.

At first, I was a bit nervous, not knowing what’s in store for me and for us. I admired those speakers for sharing with us their lives, knowing that in my own life there are many struggles, many turning points. But still, I choose to be where I am right now.

Being married at an early age, was tough.. With all the problems we’ve been through, with all the sorrow and pain, in the end we realized that we were still

lucky because we were able to stand up from our mistakes, make up for our shortcomings. With God’s grace and guidance we’ll make it through everything in our everyday lives. We know that we can inspire others, just by simply being a couple of Magis Deo, a couple for others.

completed the Suyuan). Because of their number, the participants were divided into two groups, with Ronnie and Jean handling the other group.



Tita Charito and househelp had to sleep Saturday evening in their beautiful house in Lipa to prepare food for the event. Everybody ate well - we had yummy bibingka and suman for snacks and luscious adobo for lunch.

From time to time, I would peep through the window of the classroom where veteran facilitators Pocholo and Merly handled one group. I spent more time listening to Ronnie and Jean while holding a baby (born Aug. 5, reminding me of Egay's death anniversary). Indeed in every Suyuan, the facilitators are instruments of the Lord. Ronnie and Jean confidently handled the seminar (they have conducted Suyuans for Marsman employees in Davao, Payatas

couples in Montalban, and GK Aya couples). Ferdie Joson and I assisted Ronnie and Jean by handling the talk on "Infidelity," drawing out sharings from the participants. The participants knew Ferdie and I were not a couple, and we skipped the "lip to lip" portion. (At the Feb. 22 reunion they were glad to see Sheila Joson who did the "lip to lip" with Ferdie.)

At 5 PM we gathered in the function hall for the graduation. Tito Danny had to rush to a hospital a woman who fainted while listening to the sharings on death, thus he was not able to witness the joyful graduation. Gen. Felix and Rita serenaded the couples



with love songs. The participants' children joined Pocholo in cheering "1, 2, 3" while the couples kissed. Mike, in his pink Croc shoes, thanked the couples



for their warm welcome and gave tips like "say 'I love you', one for the mind, one for the heart and one for the soul." The couples' renewal of vows and red long-stemmed roses from Tita Cathy highlighted the graduation.

To end the day, our shepherds invited us to their Lipa home for a sumptuous dinner of crispy tawilis, ginataang langka, chicken and turon. We went home tired but happy, and most of all grateful to God for giving us this chance to serve Him.



Continued from page 1

reality, it has become the other way around – couples and families have become tools for technology, they have become slaves of technology. For example, when the cell phone rings, *it has to be answered* at said instance. It is taken for granted that cell phone technology provides features so that you need NOT answer the call or text back immediately. Calls can be forwarded, put on hold, or through technology advise the caller that the called party *cannot be reached* or *has turned the cell phone off*. Even the SILENT MODE feature of the cell phone has been taken for granted. Technology has even dictated that ETHICS in the use of technology favor it rather than its users.

In counseling, Fr. Gascon provides a way out from the hurtful effects of technology. He outlined seven suggestions:

1. Discuss the use of technology. It has to be clear why technology is introduced to, and used by couples and families.
2. Set up boundaries. Assess how much technology has taken away from personal relationships with your spouse and family.
3. Rule technology rather than have technology rule you.
4. Faster is not necessarily better. Fr. Gascon encouraged everyone to count the blessings that come because of being "low tech." He added that patience is still a virtue.
5. When it comes to cell phones and computers, be parents, not peers, to your children. Kids become more savvy than their parents in the use of cell phones and computers. However, this does not mean that mom and dad give up their parenting roles in favor of technology.
6. Ask about and educate yourself on technology so you can use it instead of it using you.
7. Make conscious and informed decisions on the desired role of technology in your life as a couple. Don't let technology encroach on your relationship as a couple.

Continued on page 10

World Marriage Day

Deacon Neil Smoyak

If there is an appointed time for everything (Ecc. 3:1-4), then today is a time for joy and laughter. People all over the world and in all ages of history have enjoyed marriage as the ultimate consummation of love, as a sign of life, and as the assurance of the continuation of the species. Today we have all these reasons for joy.

The Book of Genesis tells us many things. The climax of creation is reached in humankind; Genesis shows this by pointing out the divine consultation with the heavenly court concerning God's creation of humankind. Humankind is not God, so the word "image" is softened by "likeness" to show that there's only a resemblance between the two.

Genesis also points out that the distinction of the sexes is of divine origin and therefore good. The full meaning of "humankind" is realized only when there is a man and woman. This makes possible a special kind of love – a love that is a necessity, not a luxury. It's the only ingredient capable of welding together husband, wife, and children. It's the only cement strong enough to unite into a nation the poor and the rich, the strong and the weak, the employer and the employee. If we don't have love within the home, then we won't have it elsewhere. No human relationships will ever be satisfying if not inspired by love that is learned and experienced in the home. In the context of love, our procreative power is the result of a special divine blessing; by using it, we fulfill a divine precept.

The trouble with love today is that people think mostly of romantic love. There are many humorous aspects of that. For instance, young people think of being head over heels in that kind of love – but head over heels is an uncomfortable position to be in. And it's no coincidence that we celebrate romantic love on the feast of St. Valentine, a martyr. Who better to be a patron saint of lovers than someone acquainted with pain? Palpitations, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, mood swings, constant sighing, and obsessional thinking are common symptoms of romantic

love. Those afflicted are apt to be told, perhaps in the form of a song, "You're not sick; you're just in love." This is meant to comfort them. The same kind of theory suggests that a person with severe abdominal pains should be glad to learn it's just gallstones.

In a more serious vein, it was Jesus' teachings about the mutuality of man and woman that ultimately made possible the modern version of love, called "romantic." Romantic love has three dimensions: intimacy, passion and commitment. When all three come together in a relationship, one can get complete, or consummate, love. This is the state toward which married people should strive.

Intimacy is one term for the emotional aspects of romantic love. It includes closeness, sharing, communication, and support. Intimacy increases steadily in the beginning of relationships, then slows, then eventually levels off. Communicating inner feelings; sharing possessions, time and self; offering emotional support – are ways it is expressed.

Passion is the motivational side, leading to physiological arousal and an intense desire to be united with the loved one. It develops quickly, and married people quickly adjust and get used to it. Hugging, kissing, touching and making love are how it is expressed.

Commitment is the cognitive side. In the short term, it is a decision to love another person, and in the long term, it is a pledge to maintain that love. It is expressed by fidelity, and by staying in the relationship through hard times as well as good.

The importance of a relationship is increased when there is a willingness to change in response to each other and to tolerate each other's imperfections. In the beginning, some of the other's flaws might seem unimportant, or even cute. After a while, those imperfections might grate. Both parties have to be willing to adjust and to change.

Why people should be afflicted with love is a mystery. An ancient Greek legend said that humans were originally hermaphroditic,

and that no one loved anyone, at least not romantically. Then one day, an angry god divided humans into two, creating one-half male and the other half female. Ever since, people have felt incomplete. Therefore, when someone finds another love, the ecstasy, bordering on torture, is romantic love.

Some psychologists even suggest that the head-over-heels kind of love is a form of addiction. Addicts, or people in love, display two principal characteristics of addiction: tolerance and withdrawal. At first, lovers are satisfied with brief togetherness, but tolerance builds and the dosage must be increased. Often you hear lovers say, "I can't get enough of you."

More seriously, love is the key to everything. St. Paul's hymn reminds us that love is invisible and immaterial, yet as real as steel. It is as elusive as smoke in the wind, yet stronger than death. Paul tells us that love is other-centered and big-hearted. If nurtured, love will continue to build in strength and beauty, despite advancing age.

Paul's message is that love is patient, the product of strength, not weakness. It can be heroic. Love is kind. A young child in a family asked, "Mommy, what do people say when they get married?" Not sure about this question, the mother answered: "They promise to love and be kind to each other." The child looked puzzled and said, "Oh, you're not always married then, are you, Mommy?"

Love is not jealous, which is a kind of meanness of soul. It does not put on airs, yet is not self-effacing. Lovers marvel at being loved, and are in awe and wonderment about the mutual good feelings. Love is never rude; it is gracious, courteous, tactful, polite. Lovers do not take each other for granted.

Love is not self-seeking, offering more than what is returned. Love does not brood over injuries, having learned the great lesson of forgetting. Love is not gleeful over wrongs, but weeps with those who mourn. Love is pleased with the truth, even at times when we don't necessarily want to hear the truth. *(continued on p. 10)*

Sharing, Receiving

Reflection on ME Weekend February 13-15, 2009

Ramie & Mimi Santos

The ME Valentine Weekend at the La Verna House of Prayer was a realization of the blessings the good Lord has bestowed on us.

First and foremost is the gift of ME Class 93 for us to shepherd. Of the original 18 couples, 7 couples and 2 better halves untiringly served during the weekend. The class was led by Ricky and Trixie Sun who guided the flow of the weekend. It was also the Sun couple who designed and spearheaded the making of the directory which was amazingly completed by Saturday night. Assisting Fr. Allan in the conference room were Trixie Sun, Vangie and Archie Lazaro and Marge Yambao. Paola Llorando (husband Ronnie is in Australia), Issa Tongol, Rose Ilagan and the pregnant Lyn Salazar manned the registration while Margie Yambao handled the finance side. Arvin and Jo Santos made sure the vigil room was always occupied, while Rene and Bing Viernes made sure the food was available on time. Arvin and Rene

were also our bell ringers. Victor Tongol served as one of the guitarists as well as the official photographer. His wife Issa sang beautifully during the reconciliation service. Mike Yambao, our mascot and famous lead dancer, handled the logistics and provided the comic breaks, and Randy Ilagan set up the sound system. Although the auxies were assigned specific tasks, each was always ready to help and assist the others. The weekend gave the class the opportunity to bond closer.

The gift of community was very evident during the weekend. We were blessed with 20 couples, a priest, and a CEFAM student. The community responded to the appeal of Ike and Josie Llamas, ME Ministry Head, for

help in recruiting couples. Ed/Sol Macalalad, Rey/Lucy Mella and Boyet Ambata sent 4 couples from Sunpower, Jojo and Jane Aldeguer sent a couple from Tangent Solutions. ME 90 (Mon/Ting Yupangco and Dodo Sta. Maria) sent 2 couples. Willie/Nora Melaya of ME 14, Myr/Joe Seranilla of Mustard Seed sent a couple each. A couple was sent by Art/Grace Santos and Rufo/Louren Dacanay. This is not to discount the efforts of other Magis Deo members who endorsed couples who failed to make it to the weekend.

ME 92 under Rey/Lucy Mella sponsored one couple; Art/Grace Santos also sponsored another. Ed/Sol Macalalad partly sponsored a couple, while the



ME Class 96 with Fr. Allan Abuan and couple sharers Cesar and Marivic Pareja.

Tandang Sora group pooled funds for a 50% sponsorship of a couple. Leony/Mia Parada of Psalm 46/Samaritans provided chocolates for the wives of ME 96 during the renewal of vows. Edwin/Lulu Monzon of ME donated Coffeehaus drinks. Ricky/Trixie Sun provided everyone with boxes of Summit drinking water and flavored drinks.

The community came in full support for the harana. ME 93 commented that there were few haranistas at their weekend. At the ME 96 harana, we had representatives from ME 92, ME 95, John, Psalm 46, Samaritans, Jeremiah, Micah 6.8, Beatitudes, Mustard Seed, Emmanuel, Mt. Olivet, Genesis, Exodus, Magnificat, Archangel Gabriel, and House of David. The Music Ministry provided the music for the Mass.

The gift of membership in the ME Ministry. We have been with the ME Ministry for some time, and we are witness to the dedication of Ministry Head Ike and Josie Llamas. Their dedication is something many of us in the community can emulate. The generosity of Cesar/Marivic Pareja in sharing their lives once again with a new set of strangers is truly heartwarming. Eli/Edith Prieto are so kindhearted that they offer their time and talent, among the other things they do for the community, to serve as guitarist/prayer warrior for couples in every ME weekend. Being in the Ministry also allows us new insights every time we serve on weekends, especially from the ME spiritual director. For this weekend we had

Fr. Allan Abuan who was able to reach out to the candidates who were all ears to his interesting delivery of his talk.

The gift of service and sharing. Serving in any ME weekend always leaves us with a sense of joy and fulfillment. Moreso this

weekend when, of all days, a severe anxiety attack chose to visit me. Being both a team sharer and the shepherd of the auxiliaries, I became anxious that I would not be able to serve properly during the weekend. I was proven wrong as my dear ME 93 ably took over and conducted the weekend with utmost efficiency. The attack was also a blessing as Ramie and I were left emotionally vulnerable by my anxiety attack, allowing us to share our experience with more sensitivity.

The gift of fun and camaraderie. The design of La Verna is a cardio challenge as the auxies needed to go up and down several flights of stairs from the refectory and chapel at the top floor to the conference

Continued on page 9

MEWsings

Ricky & Trixie Sun, ME Class 93

Time indeed flies so swiftly. We reminisce the time we were candidates attending the MEW at the BLD Convent House in Cavite in June 2008. We remember the feelings of joy, hope and excitement at the end of the weekend. We recall the eagerness of wanting to reach out to other couples that they may undergo similar experiences and acquire the knowledge we just had.

Our first reunion was two weeks after that weekend. Half of the couples had dropped out by then. In the succeeding months, other commitments and concerns conflicted with scheduled reunions that we oftentimes had to reset the dates. We grew anxious that only a handful would remain to plan and work for the MEW where we were to be auxiliaries. After five reunions, it was evident that 5 to 7 couples in our batch would be at the February 2009 MEW. As assignments were divided among us, our anxiety about not being able to accomplish all that had to be done abated.

Our efforts then shifted to recruitment. Our anxiety about being undermanned was immediately replaced with a new one: how many couples would we be able to convince to attend? Two weeks before the MEW, we only had seven. Tita Josie advised us to pray simultaneously at 9PM every night. A week later, the number rose to 16. Then more couples confirmed their attendance during the next four days. Although three

candidate couples were not able to make it to the MEW, we had a total of 20 couples and 2 students. We were relieved and excited at the outcome of participants.

Next came the daunting challenge of making sure the weekend would go smoothly, that the couples would be comfortable, that all necessary activities be done satisfactorily and on time. The weekend was run on adrenaline, caffeine, sugar, and most importantly, commitment to God.

Hours lapsed into days and before we knew it, the weekend was over. Everyone worked efficiently, everything fell into place properly. If facial expressions, smiles, laughter and tears are signs to gauge the success of an MEW in terms of touching the couples, then this weekend was resoundingly so. For how can an outpouring of emotions concur with insouciance? We were moved and affected by the talks of Fr. Abuan and the sharing of our team couples. The participants' letters to God were letters of gratitude for having been called to the MEW and for having been given the chance to start improving relationships with their spouses, families and God. The exhilaration was palpable.

Were we tired? Yes. Was it worth it? Definitely! All the auxiliaries felt contented and jubilant at having been emissaries, albeit minor, in making God's plans known. Having been able to start "giving back"



brought to us a "natural high." As Tita Josie put it, "I know you're all tired but think of how many couples you've touched." We know that much is in store for us, and even much more is expected of us. We know now that we need not be anxious. We find comfort in the thought that if we give of ourselves, God will work miracles. Crucibles may come our way, but knowing that God always watches over us enables us to conjure whatever it takes to endure them.

We are very grateful for the blessings God has showered upon us and continually pray that He guides us to be the persons He wants us to be. We humbly ask Him to bless us with wisdom, enduring love and patience that we may be the parents our children deserve. We beseech Him to show us how to help our children grow spiritually. We are much more deeply in love with each other than we were 17 years ago.

Time indeed flies so swiftly. Are we heeding the call to attain Holiness? Are we giving back? We hope we have started to do so.

Continued from page 8

room located 4 floors down. It was taxing for those who are of age hence it was a good thing that majority of the auxies are young. Despite all these, the auxies sang and danced for their candidates with so much energy and fun. Camaraderie among them was evident as they went through their tasks with gusto.

The gift of new insights. Every time we serve in an ME weekend, we are delighted to always learn something new. We may hear the same things, but there are always fresh realizations.

Yes, we went to serve in the weekend. But with these gifts, we received more than what we gave.



Auxies (ME 93) with Fr. Allan, shepherds and couple sharers Ramie & Mimi Santos, couple sharers Cesar and Marivic Pareja. Auxies Arvin and Jo Santos were in the vigil room (they made sure someone was in the vigil room 24-7) hence they are not in the picture.

The Answer is in our Hands

Willie Melaya

More than twenty years under a dictator, and four presidents taking their turns running the country, our people are still suffering. Day by day our people's lives and living conditions are getting harder. It seems like a hopeless case.

We are constantly praying to God. People who are suffering pray the most and more fervently. We pray for deliverance from the corrupt governments and politicians who have taken control or are fighting over the control of our land. Yet, nothing happens!

Could it be that God has already forsaken us? Could it be that God has turned His ears away from us? I don't believe so. But why have we not seen any improvement in our lives despite our collective prayers? That's the big question especially among our poor. Why?

Could it be possible that God is telling us something else? Maybe we have not discerned carefully what God is trying to say to us. Maybe God is telling us to take a different approach to our problems. Maybe He wants us to take a more active role rather

than a passive one, more proactive rather than reactive.

It was after the dictatorship that the Church started coming out with pastoral letters to guide the Laity in choosing candidates to vote for. The PPCRV was also organized in order to help in the election process. Guided by the pastoral letter and granting that we all voted according to our conscience, we cannot guarantee that the person we voted for will perform well, or will not be corrupt and will not steal public funds. ***Simply, because in the first place, we are limited in our choices.*** Limited by the power play, limited by the compromise-controlled dynamics of stupid political parties. We also have political dynasties wanting to perpetuate their stay in power in order to protect their vested interests. It is just like picking good eggs from a rotten batch. That is a futile exercise. And this is what happens all the time!

Why don't we Catholics be more proactive in dealing with the never-ending political turmoil in our country? Maybe we

should do some more discerning. Maybe God is telling us something else. Maybe God wants us to be more proactive, such as selecting and fielding our own candidates. We believe there are still a lot of honest, God-fearing and competent people who can run our country. Why don't we choose them ourselves, starting from the local level up to the national level? We can field our own candidates instead on relying on corrupt politicians, political families and clans who want to perpetrate themselves in power.

This may sound drastic or radical. But given our national situation or rather, the national disaster that we are in now, we need very urgent and radical measures. With so much poverty, hopelessness and apathy around us, we have no other choice but to be radical and aggressive.

Finally, I would like to quote what George Bernard Shaw said: *Some men see things as they are and ask "Why?" But I imagine things that never were and ask "Why not?"*

May God bless us all!

Continued from page 6

The basic drawback of technology between couples and among family members is: it has taken away what Jesus of Nazareth has shown us in His lifetime, namely, the personal touch in communicating. Technology has provided efficiency, but not necessarily effectiveness. It has increased quantity through speed (and even through multi-tasking), but it has never assured quality. We are always reminded that with technology, "garbage in" results in "garbage out." Effectiveness and quality still reside with the users of technology. We are thankful that technology and its development have had a significant impact in our lives. They are God's gifts to us. However, we have to come to terms with the fact that communication through the internet or text can never replace the love, affection and human touch displayed in face-to-face conversation and interaction.

*Eli & Edith Prieto
Council Members / MEM*

World ... continued from p. 7

There is no limit to love's forbearance; it can handle any disappointment. Love is always ready to trust; it believes the best about people. Love is ready to hope, remembering Jesus' example, and teaching that no human being is hopeless. Love has the power to endure, not just to passively put up with the status quo. Love conquers and changes things. Love lasts. When all things in which people take pride have passed away, love is still there.

Jesus referred to himself as the vine, and we, as his branches. The vine image is part of our Judaic heritage. The vine is a symbol of Israel; it can be found as emblems on temples and on the coins of the Maccabees. A living relationship with Jesus, the vine, will spare us from a fate of being non-bearing branches. To live in his love, we have to keep his commandments. Everyone must obey God's commandments, regardless of where we find ourselves in our lives. Marriage, which symbolizes the close and holy union of Christ and his church, brings serious obligations, so

serious that God gives the grace of a special Sacrament, so that they can be fulfilled.

All of us are called to love. We are in the world not to compete with one another, or to fight with one another, but to love one another. Lest Jesus be accused of demanding of others what he did not do himself, be reminded that he adds to his commandments that we love one another, as he has loved us. When we remember that no one has greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends, we are humbled and inspired to greater love, both within and outside of marriage.

The words of an old poem are appropriate for all of us:

*I want to love you without clutching,
appreciate you without judging,
join you without invading,
invite you without demanding,
leave you without guilt,
criticize you without blaming,
and help you without insulting.
If I can have the same from you,
then we can truly meet and enrich
each other.*

Angels in my midst

Anne Yared-Naldo, Psalm 46 BCGG

I'm sure you and I have been taught at home and in school that angels are celestial beings with long flowing white robes and wings who form our Lord's entourage in heaven. They carry trumpets and provide music to a magnificent heavenly vision. We pray for their protection before sleeping at night. We always believed that each of us has his/her own guardian angel to safeguard us from harm and the evils of Satan. My life in Dumaguete City, though filled with happy moments, also has its share of trials which have tested my belief in the ability of my guardian angel to keep me safe from evil and injury.

One such trial came last July 12, 2008. That day I went for my routine pap smear. The doctor's secretary took my blood pressure and was shocked to note it was abnormally high. After my pap smear I was brought to the Emergency Room and was given first aid for what turned out to be the start of my hypertension (as the saying goes, "Life begins at 40; so does hypertension").

Two weeks later, my ob-gyne called and asked me to come to her clinic early. As woman's intuition goes, I had an inkling that something was not right with my results. I rushed to her clinic where she informed me that the tests show I had CIN (cervical intraepithelial neoplasia) Stage II-III. I didn't know what CIN meant, though I remember a friend having the same condition some years ago. The doctor continued to explain that CIN is the abnormal growth of cervical cells which is quite not cancer yet, but can develop into cervical cancer. She advised me to seek immediate medical attention in Cebu or Manila.

As I walked out of my doctor's room, I tried to stay calm though inwardly I was in denial. I believed I was too young to be so sick. The word pre-cancer alone chilled my soul with thoughts of death. In a dazed state, I began texting family and friends in Manila, and be it perfect timing or divine intervention, Tita Mimi Santos knew of an ob-gyne oncologist at Cardinal Santos who recently joined the Marriage Encounter Weekend. We were even able to arrange for an appointment with Dr. Trixie Luna-Sun right away. My husband Lito and I flew to Manila Aug 4. Mimi and Mia Parada accompanied us for our appointment with Dr. Trixie the next day. Dr. Trixie patiently

explained to us everything we needed to know about CIN including the options for treatment, performed the necessary confirmatory tests, and harassed the laboratory staff to process my biopsy ASAP. It was finally decided that I had no other option but to undergo hysterectomy to hopefully prevent the sick cells from progressing to a cancerous stage. My post operation biopsy showed that



Anne with her treasures: her family. From left - Michelle (11), Lito, Manuel (7), and Miguel (17).

although I really had CIN stage III, Dr. Trixie told me that I was truly lucky my condition had not progressed to cancer yet.

It was a truly an emotional and overwhelming experience for me. Amazingly, I remained calm and accepting of what I was going through mostly because I had Lito beside me all the time. My recuperation period was long and painful but it afforded me the time to think and reflect on how I have been taking my countless blessings for granted. This experience has brought me closer to Lito and children Miguel, Michelle and Manuel, who have been the greatest source of my strength. This experience has proven to me beyond any doubt that Lito truly loved me for he was there when I needed him the most. I have also come to realize how blessed I am for the love and support of family and friends. They took turns watching me in the hospital, made sure I was comfortable despite the pain, and most of all, they all prayed for my safety and recovery. In fact, it became a standing joke among us that with so many people praying in my behalf, it was simply impossible for me not to have a successful operation.

And I have never been so grateful for my Magis Deo family who played major roles in my struggle with my medical predicament. To

the whole Psalm 46 BCGG who were with me all the way to a point that the nurses commented I was having a party in my room every night because there were so many visitors all the time! To Mimi and Mia who accompanied me to all my consultations and who had the tenacity to ask my doctors questions I hadn't thought of so that my cardiologist called them my chuwaruwap girls.

Mimi was also instrumental in linking me with Dr. Trixie and was also my emergency medicine source as she virtually had a rolling pharmacy in her handbag! To Leony Parada who stayed at Lito's side to allay his fears while I was in the operating/recovery room. To Tito Ramie Santos who generously donated blood for my cause and for providing us with endless supply of mami and siopao! To the Samaritans BCGG and other Magis members who offered prayers and encouraging text messages for my recovery, my sincerest gratitude.

My doctors were truly miracle workers. Dr. Ricky Choa (my cardiologist), Dr. Marmie Llaguno (my anesthesiologist) and Dr. Trixie Sun (my ob-gyne oncologist) who, simply put, saved my life from hypertension, possible cancer and a life threatening post operative bleeding. Had I not been guided by some unexplainable power to go for a pap smear when I consciously had no plans to do it, and had I not been for family and friends who somehow connected me to all those who helped save my life, I would possibly have cervical cancer by now.

Since I have returned to my life in Dumaguete, I have tried to be an advocate for the fight against cervical cancer in my own little way. I remind all women I meet of the need to go for regular pap smear and mammography once a year for early detection of cancer. This is my way of giving back what others have done to save my life. But I am grateful the most to everyone who have helped me in the fight for life. I have unknowingly been living with so many angels in my midst. Angels with neither white robes, wings nor trumpets, but who have been with me always to keep me from harm and evil. Thank you Lord, YOU are truly great!

SCENES AND SIGNS OF FAITH

Clyde Abapo, Jeremiah BCGG

Rediscovering God: A Dual Existence

We believers know who God is but knowledge is not enough. We have to experience God in our lives. God said, "Don't be afraid. I will always be with you till the fullness of time." God is so powerful that He can be present everywhere. Nothing is impossible with Him. I have great admiration for people who share their experience of how God revealed Himself to them.

Sometime late December I happened to watch a TV program about a religious community and its outreach activities. Towards the end of the program, I was struck by a question the host asked the panel head, "Who is God to you?" I didn't care much about the reply because my mind was focused more on the question. The following day I opened the Sacred Space for my daily readings. And for the first time, the mystery of God's existence lingered in my mind. I want to believe that He exists not only outside our sphere but also within us.

God as Outsider - From a prayer workshop I attended, a similar question was asked about our concept of God. I remember everybody seeing God as an outsider, a Supreme Being who touched our lives through the working of the Holy Trinity. We made prayer petitions and asked for healing and guidance so that God intervenes and makes way for the right path to salvation. Of course, the common belief is that God is real and alive. He is a compassionate and forgiving God.

God Within Us - God can also be within us. The Bible says our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The more we provide a space for the Spirit, the more sacred we are, the more we become one with God. Non-believers

and non-Christians call this oneness as enlightenment, eternal presence, unifying force, etc. Whatever it is, God has His own way of revealing Himself to us. For me, He is the inner voice that tells me to stay away from temptation and go on. He is the moving spirit that inspires me to do good, to be honest and true to myself. I believe God is present in each one of us. Contemplation in the Awareness Portion of the Sacred Space will bear this out. Let me share this experience and see how God exists.

One Sunday afternoon, Rey and his wife came to our house to buy some shells. Months earlier, I met him as a co-supplier to an exporter. As he was selecting the different shell materials in our factory, a heavy downpour caused him to be wet down to his shirt. My wife knew he had to go home to Cavite, quite a distance, and offered to give him a clean, dry and unused shirt. At first he was hesitant, but was later convinced to change, after acknowledging the risk of getting sick. The scene is very ordinary but unfolds the spirit of God's compassion and concern.

Here is a moving story as told by a photojournalist assigned in a remote area somewhere in South America, in a third-world country where extreme poverty, oppression and injustice reign. Dole-out was a common scene and the queue was long. Among those in the last line was a girl of 10 who kept on glancing at her siblings who were waiting under the shade of a tree 15 meters away. Her little brother must have been 3 years old and the sister around 5. When her turn came, she was handed only a banana. She flashed a big smile upon receiving it and zoomed away toward her brother and sister. She opened the banana and split it into two. She gave each half to

her siblings, while she scraped the peeling for her own consumption.

Here is Sheila in our faith-sharing last February 8. A week before, she and her teammates made some location shots in Intramuros as back-up photo material for their Thursday presentation on value formation, with credibility as the topic. Their approach was something like treasure-hunting a la Indiana Jones. Accordingly the videos had to be edited and arranged to come out as a movie with sound effects. The whole thing would be processed in the computer. On Wednesday, she brought 3 DVDs to make sure everything would be okay. She burned the first disc in the evening after dinner and came out unsuccessful. She made some adjustments and burned on the 2nd DVD. Again, it was unsuccessful but she couldn't understand why. It was deep into the night already when she tried burning the last disc. This time she prayed over the whole process for more than 30 minutes, for God's intervention. "Kinikilabutan ako. When I opened my eyes, parang nakikita ko ang mukha ng Diyos, at the same time I read the word 'successful' in the computer," she said. She then narrated how the readings in the Sacred Space were connected to her experience.

The late bishop Benny Ttudud was asked by a student, "Where and when can I see God?" His reply, "I can see God now in you." I cannot forget him as my teacher in Catechism II, on the subject of sacraments. He made a lasting impression on me about focusing on God instead of our problems. He cited the example of Peter walking on the water and began to sing when distracted by waves and strong winds.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

Zarah Gagatiga, Mt. Olivet BCGG

E-mail Technology: Rated PG

Nico, our eldest, got an email account last year when he turned eleven years old.

I helped him get an email account after months of endless badgering. His father gave him consent weeks before his 11th birthday and since I am the teacher in the family, it was my task to facilitate this rite of passage for our eldest. Nico wanted an email account because his friends have them too. Thank God he did not ask for a top of the line cell phone, an iPod or a PS2. More than anything, we believe that our kids must be responsible when using technology for pleasure or perfunctory purpose.

Indeed, the environment of a growing child these days is more complicated. Back in the 70's, we only had TV and radio to fill our leisure time. Then came the betamax and the game-and-watch of the 80's. Our kids these days, on the other hand, are exposed to multi-media technology that amaze, dazzle and stimulate their many senses. On top of that, there is a great influx of information seen, heard, created and communicated from the variety of media and formats available for their perusal. That is why, as parents, we make sure that our kids grow up appreciating the many advantages these technological wonders can offer. At the same time, we're also aware of the necessity to teach

and model the correct ways of using them. Parenting is not a walk in the park. And with the evolution of digital technology having a powerful effect in our children's lives, parenting in this day and age is more like a careful and watchful journey on a road less traveled (at least for us).

We sat down together the evening he was to apply for an email account. The typical teacher, I asked him questions on using email and his answers were put down as his ten reminders. It's important that the input came from him and not imposed by the parent or the adult. This way, he claims ownership and responsibility on the reminders as well as the actions expected of him.

So, for starters, allow me to share Nico's Ten Email Reminders with you.

1. Use email to communicate with family and friends.
2. Email time is limited to 30 minutes only.
3. No joining (yet) of social networking sites like Friendster, Multiply, etc.
4. Avoid spamming and flame wars.
5. Send good and proper information via email.
6. Inform mama and/or papa when encountering information that makes me (Nico) feel uncomfortable.

7. Tell mama and/or papa if there are problems encountered when using email.
8. No online bullying.
9. No online games unless allowed.
10. Respect other people when using email.

This is only the beginning of our son's online journey. His ten reminders will change as he grows and develops. It is not a set of static guidelines. Children and teens are very dynamic. The technology they use in their daily lives is in rapid progress as well. It would be difficult to catch up, but establishing a formation of values at each stage of a child's development can make a difference.

Very soon, he will be entering the tollgates of cyberspace more independently. His teachers will ask him to search and research using online resources. He will be forced to learn, relearn and unlearn skills to understand this digital environment better. That's a big task, I tell you! And it is highly cognitive too! As much as we're compelled to guide him through these changes and challenges, values like trust, patience, discipline and responsibility must be integrated in the experience of guiding and facilitating a young global netizen.

E-mail from Fr. Simon Kewandi to Ike Llamas

Date: Wed, 18 Feb 2009 00:59:07 -0800
Subject: Marriage Encounter Weekend Feb 13-15 La Verna Retreat House Tagaytay City

Dear Ike,

Hello and regards to you and Josie.

It took me some time to say thank you for the wonderful weekend we had together at Tagaytay City. I was deeply touched in the way the Magis Deo Community arranged this seminar for

couples. I would say it is super, and more than a marriage encounter. I personally felt that those who attended the seminar must have gone home with renewed hearts and minds. It's super, I must say it again.

Your efforts, time, personal sharing and overall the couple-power were clearly demonstrated by the Magis Deo Community. Your love and concern for others were clearly shown in your organization and this has a tremendous

effect on those new comers. I want to express my deepest words of appreciation and I promise to remember you all in my daily mass and prayers.

Thanks and may God bless you all.

Fr. Simon Kewandi

Fr. Kewandi is a priest at the Catholic Diocese of Kundiawa in Papua New Guinea. He is currently taking higher theological courses at CEFAM. He took the MEW as part of his curriculum. – RCD

SPIRITUAL TIDBITS AND HUMOR

Rey Mella, Cana BCGG

Listen as God speaks to us

During those days when I wasn't really touched nor inspired and my prayer life was stale and unexciting and there wasn't much to think or worry about, God sent someone. At the annual audit of our SPC (statistical process control) and continuous improvement teams, Jake Sredni, a Jew and our global SPC guru, spoke of the plight of the Israelites at Mt. Sinai and of the Ten Commandments, in relation to following rules in our process. What a beautiful reminder. Sometimes it is not easy to comprehend how God speaks to me through other people and in varying situations. I conclude He does love me.

Fr. Tanseco continues to harp and remind us about family. I just finished reading *The Outliers*, by Malcolm Gladwell, a book about stories of success. Amongst many things, it discusses research on the differences in performance of various (supposedly) geniuses. In one chapter, the author proves with facts and figures that family background and family support at a young age is one key ingredient in a person's success. While I have no reason not to expect such conclusion, I am amazed that Malcolm Gladwell and Fr. Tanseco are on the same page on family.

These days, people are losing their jobs. While tough and difficult, people can try to count their blessings. In an article in *Business Week*, "people who lost jobs have found some upsides and bittersweet upsides. The unemployed are stressed out about unpaid bills, dashed retirement plans and the loss of workplace camaraderie. But many say life minus work also has its bittersweet upsides, including more time with family and friends, learning new skills, focusing on their health and pursuing hobbies."

In a crisis, I found out from my own past experiences that being with the community at a time of many challenges - financial, health, my children's accidents, dealing with my teenagers, job-related issues - has had its merits. While the community does not necessarily provide all the answers,

surely, it gave me a shoulder to cry on, gave me comfort and showed me how to count my blessings. In our prayer meetings, I am always able to hold my head high, to stay



ME Class 92 at Amadeo Eco Park in Cavite. Rey and Lucy find friendship with this class who finished LSS last Feb. 21.

confident that all is well and to breathe God's air of hope.

The opening prayer in www.sacredspace.ie reads: "Lord, remind me that the best things in life are free. Love, laughter, caring and sharing."

I used to think leisure and family activities have to be expensive or that you have to spend to do it. And we had to spend money to eat out, go to places and go malling. I discovered it did not have to be a long time ago. And yet, from time to time, we succumb to the temptation to spend in order to have fun. I keep on re-discovering inexpensive ways of having fun being with the family. We would go on picnics and breakfast after walking together as we exercise and talk - all 5 of us - in the memorial park. Recently, I had a pingpong table (bought 10 years ago) repaired and repainted. I dug up somewhere in the house several rackets and bought a box of balls. Every other day, for an hour, I sweat it out with my son and daughter and even with my wife over a game of table tennis, right in the comfort of our home. So, now instead of my regular 1-hour walk alone, my regular cardiac exercise involves

members of the family and I have more fun trying to be healthy. For free.

"Everything about the future is uncertain but, one thing is for sure... God has already arranged all our tomorrows; we just have to trust Him as He leads."

On Ash Wednesday, after mass and ash imposition at lunch time, I had a profound experience in the afternoon. I talked to a resigning employee, who happens to be the daughter of a colleague and friend (from two previous companies) who had died 9 years earlier. I did not know whether to feel happy I finally met her, or sad knowing my friend Marlon is gone. I had a weird feeling it was all in God's plan for me to stay connected with my past. In the evening, I found time to buy a bible for my eldest daughter who had a great experience at the LSS and had been bugging me to buy her a bible. What better gift could I give someone I love than a bible? I feel so blessed and happy that another loved one is trying to be nearer to God. That same evening, my wife and I met with our old prayer group after several months of simply texting and emailing. All in one day. What a way to start the Lenten season.

"Fasting is something we do religiously. We eat what we want and pray we don't gain weight."

A Jewish couple had a son who was . . . well . . . a holy terror. By the time for his bar mitzvah, he'd been kicked out of every school they put him in. Desperate, the parents went to the rabbi for advice. The good rabbi stroked his beard and meditated. Finally, he told them to enroll the boy in a Catholic school.

The shocked parents did as their rabbi directed and took their son to the nuns at St. Jude's and left him.

After school, the son came home and said, "Good afternoon, Papa. Good afternoon, Mama."

The young man went to the table and did his homework. The parents looked at each other in amazement, afraid to speak.

Continued on page 15



Magis Deo Community

Update: 20 Years of Magis Fund Raising Project

In celebrating its 20th anniversary last year, the Magis Deo Community launched the “20 Years of Magis Fund Raising Project” to raise funds to support the Marriage Encounter and Outreach Ministries’ Projects of the Community as a way of “Reaching Out to the Filipino Family.”

One of the objectives of the Fund Raising Project is to Promote Social Responsibility wherein we will target and involve our Corporate Partners through your personal solicitation.

In several meetings with the Sector and BCGG Heads, the Fund Raising Committee offered to prepare solicitation letters to be addressed to prospective corporate sponsors, benefactors and donors for the Fund Raising Project.

As of February 19, 2009 we have distributed a total of 124 solicitation letters addressed to prospective corporate sponsors, benefactors and donors. We have received a total of **Six Hundred Ten Thousand Eight Hundred Pesos (P610,800.00)** from seventeen (17) sponsors/donors, with pledges for the next two (2) years amounting to Three Hundred Ninety Thousand Pesos (P390,000.00).

Only four (4) BCGGs out of a total of 24 BCGGs have actively participated in soliciting sponsors/donors and these are **John, Beatitudes, Cana** and **CIA/Wisdom**.

Inasmuch as this fundraising project will benefit the whole Magis Deo Community, we would like to remind all of you to lend a hand in this important undertaking. This 2009 we are targeting a total ACTUAL collection of at least P2,000,000 which will enable us to attain our noble objective of reaching out to the Filipino Family.

How can you help?

First, for those BCGGs who have not yet submitted their prospective sponsors, donors and benefactors, please submit the complete name, designation, company and address to the Secretariat c/o Jane at telephone number 426-7191 and/or Levy Espiritu at telephone number 923-2836 on or before March 31, 2009.

Second, for those BCGGs who were already given solicitation letters, please follow up on your solicitation letters.

We thank you for your utmost support and cooperation and we hope to receive a favorable response soon as this will be crucial in the funding requirements of our Outreach and MEW activities for 2009.

All for Magis.

Levy & Roxanne Espiritu
Fund Raising Committee Chaircouple

Summary of Donations per BCGG
as of February 19, 2009

Date	Donor	Amount Paid	Balance	Total Pledged
JOHN		350,000		350,000
23-Sep-08	Aurotech & GreenChem	50,000		50,000
25-Nov-08	E Meralco Ventures, Inc.	50,000		50,000
26-Nov-08	CIS Bayad Center	50,000		50,000
17-Jan-09	Phinma Foundation	100,000		100,000
17-Jan-09	Magis Deo Member	100,000		100,000
CANA		25,000		25,000
27-Oct-08	Magis Deo Member	25,000		25,000
BEATITUDES		230,800	390,000	620,800
8-Nov-08	Arsebel Foods Corp.	10,000	20,000	30,000
8-Nov-08	Belares Foods Corp.	10,000	20,000	30,000
8-Nov-08	Belarsen Foods Corp.	25,000	50,000	75,000
22-Dec-08	Datem, Inc.	100,000	200,000	300,000
17-Jan-09	Mark Dexter Koo	5,000		5,000
30-Jan-09	Filipinas Teknomed	5,000		5,000
30-Jan-09	Janet Malaya	300		300
30-Jan-09	Nanette Castelo	500		500
5-Feb-09	Magis Deo Member	25,000		25,000
10-Feb-09	Uni-Strong Phils.	50,000	100,000	150,000
CIA/WISDOM		5,000		5,000
31-Jan-09	Roxas Food Ventures	5,000		5,000
Grand Totals		610,800	390,000	1,000,800

Continued from page 14

The mother wrung her hands and the father twisted his beard all the while their boy helped serve the evening meal, bowed his head for prayers of thanks, and even helped with the dishes.

No longer able to contain himself, the father asked, “We’re ever so grateful, my son, but what in Moses’ name did they do to you?”

“Papa, when you left, the nun took me from class to class all day, each time saying they knew how to deal with rowdy boys. Those Catholics mean business! They got some Jewish-looking guy nailed up on boards in every room!”

“Nothing, how little so ever it be, if it is suffered for God’s sake, can pass without merit in the sight of God.” ~ Thomas a Kempis

**Calendar of Activities
March to May 2009**

March

03	Shepherds & Ministry Heads Meeting-1	Sanctuario de San Antonio Parish Office	Magis Deo 426-7191
07 Sat.	Community Celebration - 4:00-7:30 pm	San Carlos Lay Formation Center (MPH)	CSM John & House of David NORTH SECTOR Magis Deo 426-7191 Joy Uy-Tioco 0917-8166745
11	Council Meeting	Magis Deo Office	MEFP 426-4206
13-15	Annual Ignatian Retreat (AIR)	Sacred Heart Novitiate	MEFP 426-4206
14-15	Shepherding Seminar-1 (Free)	CEFAM	Magis Deo 426-7191
28-29	Shepherding Seminar-2 (Free)	CEFAM	
31	Sector & Ministry Heads Meeting-2	Magis Deo Office	
April			
03	Community Celebration	San Carlos Lay Formation Center (MPH)	SSFM SOUTH SECTOR Magis Deo 426-7191 MEFP 426-4206
08	Council Meeting	Magis Deo Office	
09	Lenten Recollection	AFP Theater, Camp Aguinaldo	
May			
05	Sector & Ministry Heads Meeting-3	Magis Deo Office	Magis Deo 426-7191
08	Community Celebration	San Carlos Lay Formation Center (MPH)	CENTRAL SECTOR
13	Council Meeting	Magis Deo Office	Magis Deo 426-7191

March Birthday Celebrants

3	Nitz Eslava	Micah 6:8
8	Marivic Pareja	Agnus Dei
10	Lou Sta. Maria	Magnificat
12	Greg Dizon	Arch. Gabriel
	Elvira Lubguban	Magnificat
	Lucy Almodovar	Mt. Olivet
	Chet Lok	ME Class 91
13	Dennis Rago	Agnus Dei
	Ising Cordero	Music Ministry
	Mon Yupangco	ME Class 90
14	Rolly Macabuag	ME Class 91
16	Dodo Sta. Maria	ME Class 90
17	Shane Pangilinan	Mustard Seed
18	Philip Panlilio	Mustard Seed
19	Josephus Jimenez	Cana
	Jojo Sarigumba	Emmanuel
22	Laura Cayabyab	Philippians
23	Shari Consulta	Mustard Seed
24	Gene Bañez	Agnus Dei
	Jane Fernandez	Admin. Asst.
26	Mely Peralta	ME Class 90
27	Tatic Castillo	Cana
28	Glo Dumlao	Ignatians
	Siony Martinez	Magnificat
	Nita Monte	ME Class 90
29	Celso Martinez	Magnificat
30	Chit Garcia	Mt. Olivet

March Wedding Anniversaries

3	Allan & Edna Pestaño	Psalms 46-Samaritans
5	Mike & Celine Magpayo	Sirach
12	Jo & Lucy Almodovar	Mt. Olivet
13	Ricardo & Carmelita Yumol	ME Class 81
15	Pocholo & Merly Cea	Isaiah 66
16	George & Beng Pascual	Corinthians
18	Francis & Dolly Llamas	Philippians
25	Monchet & Mary-Lou Albert	Isaiah 66
26	Ciel & Manette Yap	Corinthians



Official Publication of the Magis Deo Community

Council Chaircouple

Monchito and Tina Mossesgeld

Managing Editors

Rufo and Louren Dacanay

Staff Writers

Rey Mella
Clyde Abapo
Zarah Gagatiga
Kimi Abapo

Editorial Board

Tina Mossesgeld
Tony del Rosario
Tony Narciso

Photographers

Ferdie Cruz
Anchit Chua Chiaco
Lito Quimel

Publication

Ramie and Mimi Santos

Please send articles, reactions, feedback to
magisdeonewsletter@yahoo.com