



QC WORD NEWS

The Newsletter of the Verbum Dei Missionary Family of Quezon City



Youth and teens in photo after 'the "Let Go and Let Love" (LLL) talk and sharing

'Let Go and Let Love'

By the Newsletter Team

On April 3, one of the youth from Verbum Dei's School of Life gave a talk to teens and youth from the Pansol neighborhood. Kyle Abaya shared with them how to "Let go and let Love" (LLL) in moments of pain and anxiety.

"Let Go and Let Love" captures in a simple but catchy way the Lord's invitation to everyone in the season of Lent. In this issue of QC Word News, we try to capture stories of "letting go" and "letting Love" in: young people taking the bold step of sharing their faith, teens awakening to a new identity in Jesus, youth accompanying teens, singles exploring the faces of love, adults who share testimonies of growing in love, people from all walks of life opening themselves to God's love through Lenten retreats. Finally we have stories of missionaries who have dedicated their lives to sharing God's love to a wider world. We thank the Lord who is the author of all these stories, and who guides all of our journeys to **Love**.

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By Gelo B. Balsita

In March of 2022, the School of Life for the youth celebrated its one-year anniversary! The Lord has been faithful in giving us His life and in moving us to give that very life to others.

Kyle, one of the active participants, gave a talk online last March 12. He shared with us how to "Let go and let Love," especially in times when we are anxious. He said: "Remember LLL: (1) Look for the root cause of your negative feelings, (2) Live in the now, and (3) Let Love into your life." Kyle was also able to give this talk face-to-face to a group of teens in the Pansol neighborhood.

Dre, another youth participant, gave his first talk in our weekly online encounter, and shared it face-to-face to the same group of teens in the Pansol community. He spoke about the importance of having an "end vision," to find our "why" that moves us and integrate our "why" with the Most High, our Lord Jesus Christ, whose "why" is us.



Kyle Abaya preaching on "Let Go and Let Love"

This experience was very memorable for me. I was able to share a story close to my heart that shaped who I am today. What touched me the most is when some of the teens went up to me and thanked me for the talk. They realized things they needed for their lives. Through this experience, I learned to be humble and grateful for everything I have in my life. I also learned that I must always be willing to help others through my actions and words.

- Dre A. Forlales

This was an eye-opening experience. I was challenged to step out of my comfort zone to speak in front of many. The most fruitful part was being able to hear the different realities coming from the teens. I learned to empathize with each of them as I felt that I was part of something bigger than myself. It was a true gift to be given the chance to spread the word of God.

- Kyle M. Abaya

Meeting the ‘Junta General’

By Shahani R. Horida and the Newsletter Team

When college student and Pansol youth leader Shahani Horida learned that Verbum Dei’s *Junta General** in Rome wanted to meet with Filipino youth leaders, she felt happy and honored to be invited—but also very nervous.

During the March 6 online meeting, however, her fears quickly melted away, as she sensed the Board Members’ warmth and genuine interest. With Filipina misionera Board Member Luisa Mesina translating, Shahani, Justine and Ann (two other youth leaders from Manila and Cebu) were able to share with the Board about their activities as youth working with the youth. They also answered the Board’s questions on the ratio of boys to girls, the reactions of their families, the question of integrating fun activities into the apostolate.

**Verbum Dei’s General Board, which discerns and sets directions for Verbum Dei missions worldwide*



Shahani (second from left) in a sharing group



Shahani leading action songs for a youth activity

Shahani remembers that James McTavish asked about challenges. When she explained the difficulties of time management, of balancing school, family, formation and mission, and about how hard it is for their small group of active youth to also take care of a big group of teens (whom she called the “future of the youth”), Verbum Dei President Rodrigo Carizo complimented her on a good analysis of the issues, something she truly appreciated.

Shahani cherishes this experience, as she learned a lot from her fellow youth leaders, and from the *Junta General*.

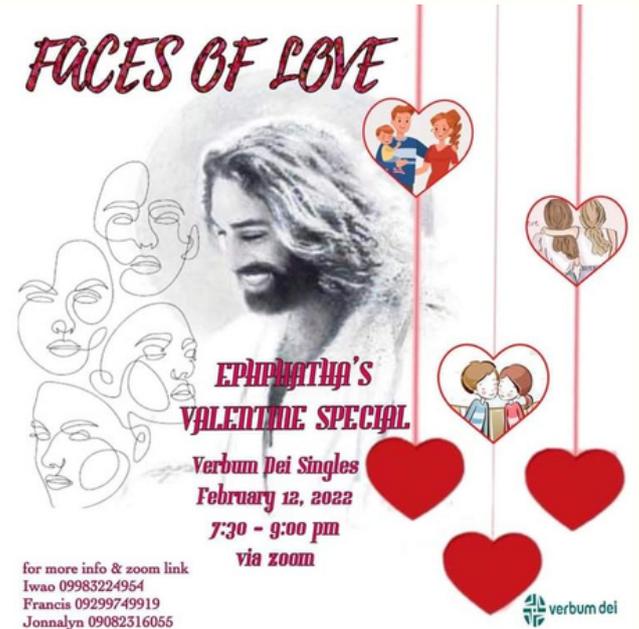
She said: “Because the Board Members occupy the highest positions in Verbum Dei and they listened to us, I really feel that the youth had a voice. The youth need to share also to the ones in authority so that they know what is happening to young people. They didn’t see us as ‘mere youth.’ They looked at us as members of the community, as family. The way they talked to you, they were so welcoming, they could talk to you even if they are from far away, even if they have high positions in Verbum Dei. I told Fr. Bong afterwards that I didn’t want the meeting to end.”

The Faces of Love

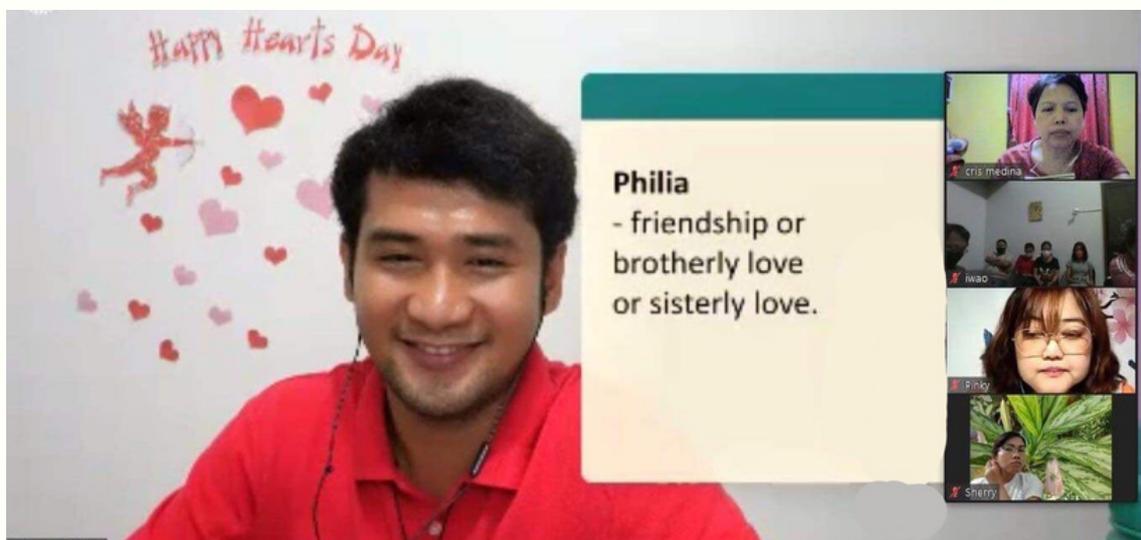
By Cris L. Medina

When I attended the Singles' Valentine celebration on zoom, to my surprise, it took me to "a different state." The celebration opened with a "pick-up lines" portion-- which made the mood light. My favorite: "Keyboard ka ba? Type kasi kita ...". This was followed by a sharing on the question: how do you define love? I patiently listened to everyone's definition, because I was not sure if my answer would be good. Some said love is their families, friends and Jesus. I think my answer, however, would make me win "best hugot line" ("hugot" means to pull something out from a deep place, often a painful one): Love is a big pain in the heart!

Then our speaker, Bro. Rudy Esmeralda, started to tell us about the many faces of love. He talked about *eros* (romantic love and human love), *philia* (friendship, brotherly or sisterly love) and *agape* (God's unconditional and selfless love).



He quoted 1 Corinthians 14:4-8a. Nowadays, we might get confused about the meaning of love, but in this passage love is defined, in its deepest sense, as raw and selfless. The best face of love is God's love that does not make you feel any less nor better than others, His assurance that you are loved no matter who you are. That is love without parallel.



My Vote, My Mission

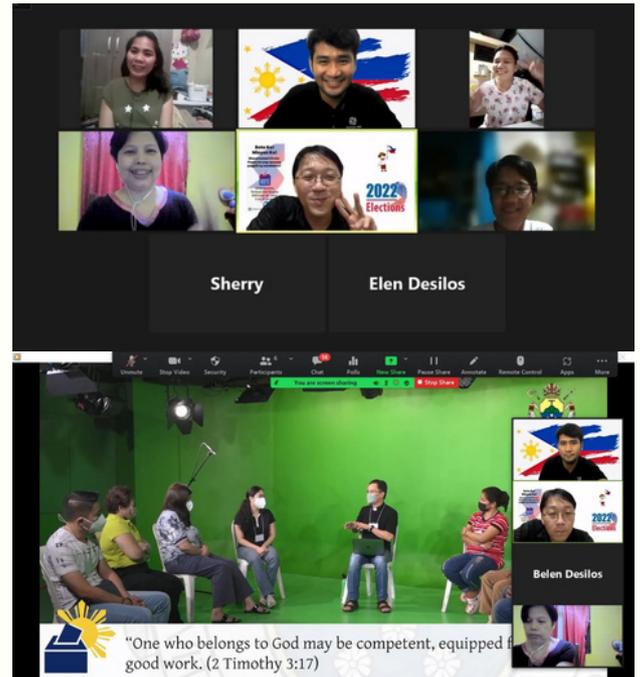
By Rudy S. Esmeralda

To help people prepare for the coming national and local elections, the Diocese of Cubao formulated an electoral discernment process called “Circles of Discernment.” The goal is to educate and guide Christians in choosing leaders who are most like Jesus, the Servant-Leader.

The Ephphata Singles group was fortunate to receive a copy of the Diocese of Cubao’s video of Fr. Nelson Orqueta conducting a circle of discernment.

The group went through their own discernment circle using this video as a guide. Through the video, Fr Nelson helped the singles begin to see voting as a mission, too, and helped them learn about the criteria of a good servant leader: character, competence, commitment and compliance (the 4 C’s).

One of the singles, Cathy Guzman, commented, “*Mas lumawak ang pamantayan ko sa pagboto at mas naging bukas ang aking isip sa maraming tips na naibahagi.*” (My standards for voting became broader, and I became more open-minded as many tips were shared.)



**Boto Ko!
Misyon Ko!**

**Discernment Circle:
Paano ba ang tamang
pagpili ng kandidato?**

VOTE

**EPHPHATHA
Verbum Dei Singles
February 26, 2022
7:30-9:30 pm**



 verbum dei

A Catechist's Journey

By Muriel H. Garcia

I started joining Verbum Dei's School of the Word (SOW) in 2015. I still remember the two friends of mine who invited me to attend the SOW: Siony Eduarte and Alicia Olvida who also are my colleagues in SMDS (Santa Maria della Strada) Catechetical Ministry.

Then I met Bro. Jojo David who is now a priest. While listening to his preaching I felt so guilty because I never opened my Bible even though I had Bibles at home given by my friends. I hardly made time to read it despite being very active in different Church activities. I followed his advice, to read the Word of God daily, and it has enlightened my days and given me inspiration to go on no matter how hard life gets. Since then I became consistent in attending the SOW.

One time, Bro. Jojo assigned me to give the guidelines for prayer. I remember that I went up in front of the School of the Word group, a bit nervous, with my hands shaking. Thanks to Bro Jojo's help and to the power of the Holy Spirit, I was able to deliver it well. There was a sense of deeper joy at being able not only to receive the Word of God but also to share it to others by preaching.

Sometime after, I was requested to be part of a team who handled the SOW for kids. I was not expecting this but I felt happy.



Teacher Muriel in action in 2019

In spite of my doubt, I said YES, trusting in the Lord that as I strive to do my best, he will do the rest.

I was warmly welcomed to the team of the Kids' SOW. We joyfully responded as a team in journeying with 20-25 kids who attend regularly.

When Covid-19 struck, we were not able to continue the face-to-face SOW for many months. In October 2021, we were able to re-launch it—online. The kids were so excited when they heard the good news! We were even able to celebrate our Kids' SOW Christmas party online!

Currently the Kids' SOW is still held online every Saturday morning, following the video catechism uploaded by the SMDS Parish. We hope we can go back to face-to-face gathering soon and journeying with the kids so that we can help them grow spiritually. May they, too, like Jesus, “advance in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man (cf. Luke 2: 52).”



Friends of Jesus

By Rudy S. Esmeralda

A group of teens from Pansol are very much into the environmental mission of vermicomposting.

They had jokingly referred to themselves as the “Bulate Boys” (Earthworm Boys). But after their enlightening recollection in Tagaytay last December, where they listened to talks on “Life and Love”, “God the Father”, and a special formation on the value of rest as growing teens, misionero Bong Guinoos gave them a brand new name: “The Johns,” inspired by John the Baptist. The intimate encounter with the Lord helped the teens assume a “new identity” as friends of Jesus.

Life Change

By Corazon Royandoyan and the Newsletter Team

Corazon Royandoyan attends the Tagalog School of the Word (SOW) facilitated by misionero priest Jojo David in Pansol. She recalls how her life has changed immensely since she started attending four years ago.

There was a moment in her life that she decided to turn a new leaf. Upon the prodding of her neighbor, Carmilita Leysa, she finally attended a Verbum Dei School of the Word. With the help of the community, she found herself quitting her gambling vice which had been going on for several years.

When she started serving in her parish, someone cautioned her that she would likely face challenges. The biggest challenge came when her husband turned ill and eventually, passed away. She nonetheless persevered in the School of the Word, for she found strength from praying with the word of God.



She learned to be humble and self-giving. Her biggest regret was that her husband passed away before he could witness the change in her life. Now, Corazon is a faithful SOWer who has invited many of her friends and family to join the SOW every Thursday. She is grateful for the blessings and finds joy in her life despite the constant struggles. She continues to serve the Lord and only desires that others to do the same.

Rooted in and Built Upon Christ

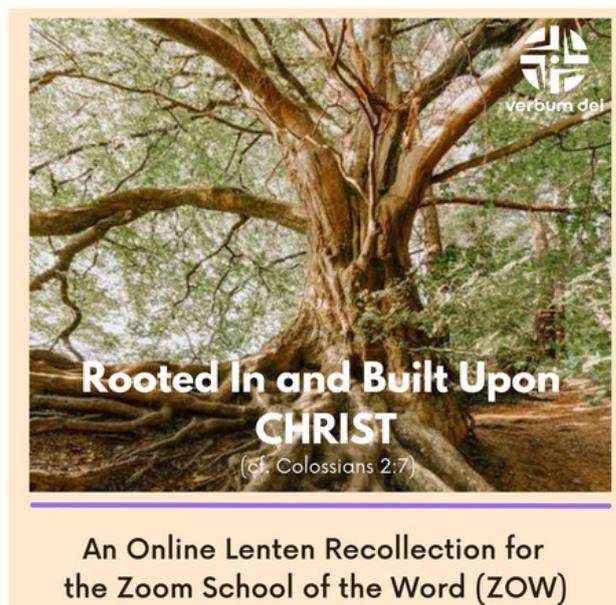
By Carol S. Uy

"Lent is a journey of return to God." - Pope Francis. On Ash Wednesday, the 2nd of March this year, CTK-School of the Word started this journey with an Online Recollection aptly titled "Rooted and Built Upon Christ."

Fr. Vic's first talk: "Rooted in Him through Prayer" focused on the importance of deep Christian roots that results in a faith that does not just believe; but develops a personal relationship with Jesus. Like branches, to bear fruit, we have to remain with the vine of Jesus. Our faith life must be nourished through prayer, so we can be deeply rooted in Christ... Then we can raise our minds and hearts to God; and grow toward complete fulfillment.

Chickie Locsin, a Verbum Dei Disciple, gave us an eye-opener, as she walked us through her spiritual journey. She piqued our imagination with images of fallen trees because the roots were shallow—we will likewise be uprooted when we are not grounded on good spiritual soil. Attending Mass, bible classes, retreats and other activities are essential but to secure these roots, we must also include being with, and praying with like-minded souls.

The last talk "Build your life on Christ" was given by Fr. Michael. Quoting from the song "Thrive", he inspired us to begin a whole new life - "We were made for so much more than just ordinary lives. We were made to thrive." He assured us that it's never too late! Now is the time to seek God's will as a habit of life.



We must build our lives where others see and know that we can all do wonderful works in the midst of crisis and our ashes. Now is the time to pray, listen, do, discern, and act upon it by responding positively to God's call. We must start building our home on Christ, so we can go home to Christ.

The morning ended with a Holy Mass presided by Fr. Michael, with a moving homily by Rev. Jojo who challenged us to curb our wants, so we could sharpen our appetites for God. He reminded us that now is the time to re-evaluate our values and re-establish our relationship with God. Prayer, fasting and abstinence, the 3 pillars of Lent are not meant to suppress our desires, but to raise and purify them. They give us an awareness of where our hearts are.

I was reminded that consistent small acts of love each day are bricks that build the foundation of my faith. To be rooted and built upon Christ is when God's will becomes my will.



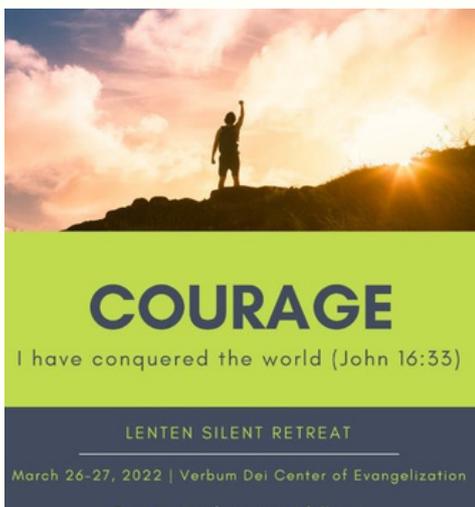
See Me in Galilee

By Emy M. Abaya

Last March 7-9, Fr. Michael Cheong together with Sr. Cecilia Teo led a small group of friends to ‘go back to Galilee’ to meet Jesus in the waters of Batangas. This was in a way a pilot project to launch a recollection for a larger number of participants in the future. The theme of this retreat was to invite the participants to move out of their ‘Jerusalem’ where we all have been in the past two years of the pandemic, locked down in fear over health and death and to go back to ‘Galilee.’ ‘Do not fear; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me” (Mt 28: 10). Galilee was the first place the disciples were called and Jesus wanted us to go back where it all started. The participants were asked to remember the experiences of pre-pandemic but at the same time recall those experiences that have marked each one during the pandemic. Despite experiencing many losses, there were many gains as well. The recollection was able to help process the learnings of the past two years and ignite the courage to face the “world” once again. This renewed spirit enlightened each one to move from confusion and fear to courage and love.



The retreat did not only give a respite for the attendees from the world of zoom to a semblance of community once again, together in prayer, like in pre-pandemic times. The blend of social activities, impromptu skits, dynamics, singing, dancing and eating together filled everyone with a joy that was beyond words. It was a joyful encounter with Jesus that is meant to be shared with others. Fr. Michael challenged the group to perpetuate this culture of encounter to build up relationships in the family, community and society.



Courage in the Lord

By Gina C. Abary and the Newsletter Team

On March 26-27, I was blessed to have attended a silent retreat facilitated by Sr. Amy Hernandez and Fr. Vic Caritos from Verbum Dei. My fruits from this retreat: I was reminded again about the importance of persevering in prayer and constant dialogue with God, and of always believing in God’s presence, especially in times of trials and difficulties.

I was happy that I was able to share a testimony during the Stations of the Cross. I shared a very difficult moment: when my husband was diagnosed with a heart problem in 2021. Fear and worry consumed me then. But God gave me the grace to choose to trust and believe in his grace and mercy. And indeed, He took care of everything. “Do not fear: I am with you.” (Isaiah 41:10)

Faith, Hope And Love

By Jojo V. David, FMVD and the Newsletter Team

On April 3, 2022, Fr. Jojo David, FMVD and Sr. Juvy Tenorio, FMVD conducted a half day Lenten recollection for 120 participants from Barangay Pansol, Quezon City and Barangay Palatiw, Pasig City. The recollection theme was: “Kuwaresma: Pagpapalalim ng Pananalig, Pag-asa at Pag-ibig.” (Lent: Deepening on Faith, Hope and Love). Fr Jojo and Sr. Juvy talked about how to renew the experience of faith, hope and love in this season of Lent by following the teachings of Christ thru prayer, fasting and abstinence. The recollection ended with Holy Mass. Participants shared their fruit: “I felt light and happy after the retreat. I learned that when I help others, I am doing it for the Lord.” (Corazon) “I realized that I have to be strong for my children and that I need more humility in order to forgive someone I’ve been angry with.” (Jennelyn) “I am grateful for the grace I received here, and I should share this to others.” (Felixberta)



Serving God in My Workplace

By Cecilia S. Bautista

Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men. When they came to land with their boats, they left everything and followed Jesus. (Luke 5: 10-11)

In prayer, being a teacher, I imagined Jesus coming to school. I wondered if He would notice and call me. Would he say come, follow me and then tell me to leave the work I’ve so loved and dedicated my life to and go somewhere else? That was what I often thought—to serve God, I would have to leave everything and do missions in other places. But I realized that sometimes, the call is to stay where you are. When Jesus noticed and called me, He said to come and follow; but he didn’t ask me to pack up my bags and go. He asked me to share Him just where I am and just as I am.

For 15 years now, I’ve been so blessed to be able to do what I love and to serve God in my work place. From sharing about His great love inside the classroom all the way to the different parts of the country. From my tiny dream of teaching young children, to sharing Him with teachers and families. From face to face to online. The Holy Spirit has no boundaries and as my desire to follow and share Jesus grew deeper, His inspiration grew stronger. In my heart, I felt the need to share Jesus to young children; without me even knowing that God had also planned to touch the lives of teachers, families and even communities outside the school. And through Verbum Dei, He has opened highways to ensure that they all happen.



Cecilia teaching “Jesus Discovery” classes



Annual Retreat



First Communion

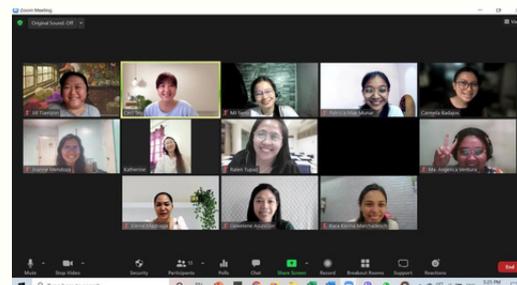


Family Mission Trip to CDO hosted by Verbum Dei

I have been truly blessed to be able to serve God just as I am, just where I am. To be able to take part in this mission of making God real in other people’s lives has been an experience like no other. It is a gift to hear my students’ prayers, to hear them say that they love God and also know that God truly loves them, to see them go to confession unafraid, and look forward to receiving the Eucharist at mass. I know my students are still young and have yet to experience the “world,” but God assures me that all I need to do is plant the seeds, He will do the rest.

Service sometimes feels that there’s a need to give up a lot of things and make sacrifices. I suppose sometimes that is true, but it also means that there is a lot to gain; often even so much more than what I give up. It is truly a blessing that this is my vocation, God’s call on how to serve Him in this world. And, according to our Verbum Dei Constitutions, no. 24: *This vocation and state of life will prove to be easy, spontaneous and even fascinating to whoever is seriously and humbly determined to put the means which, without doubt, will introduce him/her into the sublime knowledge of Christ and into the true meaning and fulfillment of his/her life in God.*

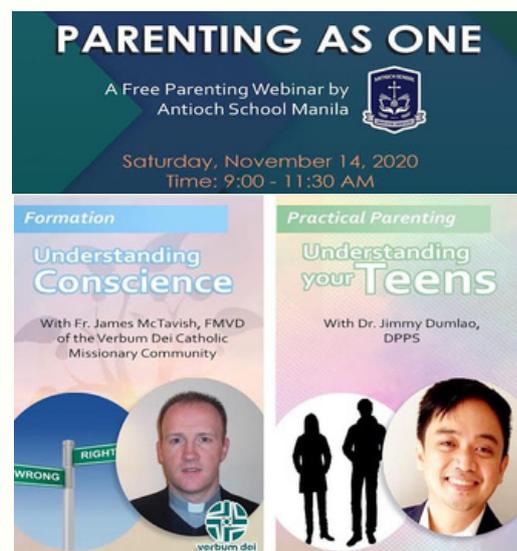
Cecilia Bautista completed Verbum Dei’s School of Apostles 1 in 2021. She and husband Dr. Resti Bautista are now taking part in a pre-formation course intended for those who discern a call to join the missionary married couples of Verbum Dei. To read about the launching of the pre-formation course last February 14, 2022, visit verbumdeiphilippines.com.



Teachers’ SOW led by Joanne Mendoza



Online Teachers’ Retreat



Parenting Seminars



James, Our Braveheart Bagpiper

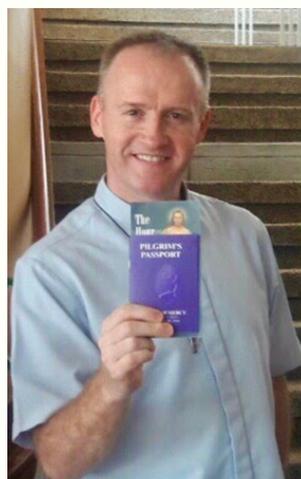
By Stella P. Deriquito

When James McTavish left for the UK in December 2020, it was only supposed to be for a month-long home visit. The COVID situation in the Philippines, however, made it extremely hard for him to return. Return he did, however, in March 2022, to joyfully take part in the priestly ordination of Jojo David, whom he had helped form, and also to have a chance for reunions and goodbyes.

He had, by then, already received a new assignment: to serve as a member of Verbum Dei's General Board in Rome.

In various gatherings, James surprised everyone with his newly acquired skill in playing the bagpipes, the musical instrument of his native Scotland. Dressed in his Scottish kilt, he played songs such as "Amazing Grace" and "Highland Cathedral." The bagpipes, he explained, is really an instrument of battle. "Until World War I, every regiment had a bagpiper," he said. "The bagpiper had to be quite brave because he would lead the troops into battle, and his only weapon was the bagpipes, nothing else."

For the past 18 years, James was, in many ways, Verbum Dei's "braveheart" bagpiper in the Philippines. He did pioneering mission work here, armed only with the Word of God.





James speaking at QC Community's School of Apostles

He helped set up the misionero community of Quezon City, putting up and running schools of the word, schools of apostles, and other apostolates, giving retreats, recollections and formation. He formed future priests, married couples, and lay people from all walks of life. He wrote many books such as “Sharper than a Sword,” “A Time of Mercy,” “Choose Life,” “Guidelines on End of Life Issues,” “Matters of the Heart,” “Heart on Fire,” “Jesus, the Divine Physician,” “Form Apostles” and “A Life of Prayer.” He “led the charge” in his various capacities as formator, as head of the male missionaries in the Philippines, and as head of the entire Verbum Dei missionary community in the Philippines.

At a gathering organized by the Zoom School of the Word, he talked about the many fruits of the Spirit in the past 18 years. “One of them is **joy**,” he said. “When you have been in a place for a long time, you bring a lot of gratitude for the missionary experience. When I went back to Europe, many of the things I shared there were things we prayed together and prepared together here ... I feel I have had a very rich apostolic experience in the Philippines, and so I am very grateful to God and to each one of you also.”

And yes, he has missed and will continue to miss the Philippines. “Miss” is part of the word “mission,” he said. Mission, he said, will always entail “missing” people and places that one leaves behind, as one is sent by the Lord to new places to continue His evangelizing work there. James will definitely be much missed here in the Philippines. But we give thanks to the Lord for the “amazing grace” that the Lord has given us through His brave and faithful “bagpiper.”

James’ final call to those he leaves behind: to continue to persevere as a Christian community. He shared his apostolic experiences of many painful realities in the Philippines—realities that continue to cry out for the life and love of God, and for the prayer and action of communities that care.



Little Green Shoots

By David Rolo, FMVD

Since January 2019, Verbum Dei has had a new community located in Saigon, Vietnam.

Setting up a community in Vietnam was the fruit of a discernment process that lasted several years. It was at the 2018 General Congress of the Verbum Dei Fraternity in Spain that the decision was finally made to actualize the call for greater expansion in Asia. Two missionaries were asked to take charge of establishing this new foundation: Darwin Capuras, a Filipino, and myself, David Rolo, a Spaniard.

There were two main motivations: the desire to continue spreading the seed of the Word of God in other Asian countries, thus expanding the Verbum Dei Missionary Family, and the need to find new Asian vocations to face the evangelizing reality in this continent.



From the very beginning, the challenges have been many: the language, the culture, the sociopolitical situation of the country that strongly affects religious freedom, our role as foreigners, etc. Still, we prefer to focus on the little green shoots that can now be seen after the first 3 years of mission in Saigon.

One of them is the perseverance of the first two Vietnamese vocations in Verbum Dei, Hai and Andy. After a year and a half in the community in Vietnam, they begin their second stage of formation in Manila in 2022. We hope that, in the near future, new young Vietnamese people will feel called to follow Jesus in this charism.

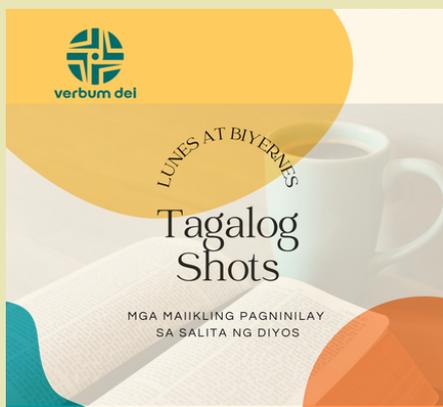


Andy and Hai: "graduation" and send-off mass in Vietnam before leaving for Manila

Another fruit is the opportunity we have been given to do work with the international Catholic community of the Diocese of Saigon: helping with the celebration of Mass, or with catechesis to prepare couples for the sacrament of marriage. Darwin Capuras helps with giving catechesis to teen-agers to prepare them for Confirmation. From the beginning, this international Catholic community has been a space for pastoral work and for living the faith with other foreigners present in the city. We have also helped provide spiritual accompaniment for a small Spanish-speaking community. We also collaborate with other religious communities, in the training of their members, spiritual accompaniment or giving retreats and spiritual exercises.



David Rolo, FMVD (in green stole), Darwin Capuras, FMVD (left) with two Vietnamese contemplating a missionary life with Verbum Dei: Andy (second from left) and Hai (right)



Now on Season 5!

Tagalog Shots are short audio reflections on the Gospel of the day—reflections shared by missionaries and lay people from the Verbum Dei communities of Quezon City, Manila-Pasig and Tagaytay. These “shots” of inspiration are meant to help people pray.

To receive Tagalog Shots (shared on Mondays and Fridays), kindly contact the Verbum Dei missionaries.

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