

## Novice Kamille Pronounces Her First Vows



On the evening before her profession, Novice Kamille Sioson, was initiated with the Rite of Mandatum, a tradition of welcoming a novice to the community. The 15th of May 2021 was a special day as she had her First Profession of Vows at 10:00am at the chapel of St. Scholastica's Formation House, Tagaytay. The rite was within the beautiful Eucharistic celebration presided by Father Dennis Irisari. Because of travel restrictions and risks caused by the pandemic, no guests were accommodated except for those sisters who had liturgical roles. Even her parents and family members were unable to join the celebration. Despite the odds, Novice Kamille was still grateful and was never half-hearted in committing herself in following Christ.

The different communities of the Priory, Novice Kamille's relatives, and friends were able to join in the celebration in real time via Facebook. She received her religious name, Sister Jovita Marie OSB, a name that conveys joyfulness and jubilation.

We thank Mother Mary Thomas Prado OSB, for welcoming and receiving our newly professed sister as part of the Manila Priory and the Congregation. Moreover, we thank God for the beautiful gift of Benedictine vocation and with that, we pray that Sr. Jovita Marie OSB may continue to persevere wholeheartedly in seeking God in all things and all ways.



## Silver Jubilarians Celebrate with Tree-Planting Activity

By: Sr. Edigna E. Jumangit OSB

Unable to gather in a big group due to the pandemic, our jubilee celebration had two separate venues on May 12, 2021 done in a simple yet meaningful manner. The jubilarians stationed in Luzon: Sr. Angela Bingan OSB, Sr. Agnella Capili OSB and Sr. Teresa Ordoño OSB renewed their vows of religious profession in the presence of M. Mary Thomas Prado OSB during the Eucharist at 6:45 in the morning in the chapel of the Priory House, Manila. Those stationed in the Visayas: Sr. Andrea Ecito OSB, Sr. Felicity Boy OSB, Sr. Amadea Donadilla OSB and Sr. Edigna Jumangit OSB had their renewal of vows in the presence of Sr. Celeste Licas OSB, representing M. Mary Thomas. This was integrated in the Eucharist held at St. Therese of Lisieux Chapel in Tacloban City, Leyte.



## Silver Jubilarians... From page 1

Our 3-day retreat with Sr. Pia Lansang OSB as facilitator on May 8 to 11 was online with the theme: "Journeying with Jesus: In my Journey of 25 years of Religious Profession." The retreat allowed us to immerse ourselves more into this blissful time of reflection, solitude and prayer.

On May 11, we ended our retreat with a Eucharist and confession in the morning and tree planting in the afternoon at St. Benedict Farmers' Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (SBFISA) farm in Alang-alang, Leyte for the Tacloban group: Sr. Andrea, Sr. Felicity, Sr. Edigna and Sr. Amadea. The Manila group: Sr. Angela, Sr. Agnella and Sr. Teresa planted fruit-bearing-trees in the Priory House backyard, as an expression of our **affirmative action** to the 13th General Chapter message and Pope Francis' Encyclical letter, *Laudato Si* on the care of God's creation.



It was a journey of winding roads with its twists and turns, ups and downs, scaling mountains and plumbing the depths of mystery in the great abyss, where we found and felt God's presence and kept monastic profession daily before our eyes. We were reminded, after 25 years, of our radical act of giving – dispossession and dependence on the community. Henceforth, we are so blessed having reached 25 years of our religious life and hope we also in return may become a blessing to our respective communities and in our apostolates. Our silver jubilee celebrations reminded us once again of our monastic commitment and fidelity to our vowed life. It also invites us once more to a higher and greater degree and level of living our monastic life concretely and seriously in community under a rule and a superior.



Our jubilee of 25 years in religious life imprints significant milestones for us that commenced on the very day we answered God's call with unwavering faith. This day has been a blessed time in our religious lives characterized by gratitude, contrition, and renewed commitment to love and serve Him and his people. It is a journey of faith which consists of discovering God's limitless mercy and love, of memories and

experiences filled with joys and grace moments.

## Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission Holds General Assembly By: Sr. Mary Samuelle Formoso OSB

The General Assembly of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) of the Manila Priory was held last July 24, 2021 via Zoom. A total of 229 participants from the different Socio-Pastoral Apostolate Centers and communities from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao joined, including some administrators, faculty, and staff of St. Scholastica's College-Manila. Three esteemed speakers shared and gave updates on prevailing issues in the country.



Screenshot of speakers from top-left: Ms. Palabay, Fr. Alforque MSC, Atty. Colemnares

**Justice, Peace and Integrity... From page 2**

Ms. Cristina Palabay, the General Secretary of *KARAPATAN* (a non-governmental organization and human rights alliance), gave updates on the current socio-economic, political and comprehensive human rights scenario, particularly the extrajudicial killings of innocent citizens and the plight of the indigenous people. Despite the grim reality, the strength of growing peoples' movements for an honest and compassionate governance give hope for a brighter Philippines. Fr. Benjamin Alforque MSC, social activist priest of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, discussed the prophetic engagement and challenges of the forthcoming national elections in May 2022. He challenged the participants to be vigilant, acting like a good shepherd to one another in the work of evangelization and in educating people toward genuine democracy and justice, guarding votes, and asserting basic freedom and rights. The loving kindness of the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd, offers a spark of hope amid darkness. He reminded, "As religious, we should never lose sight of the Kingdom of God. Whatever happens we are with His people..." The third speaker, Atty. Neri Colmenares, chairperson of the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL), presented major issues such as the harassment and malicious blacklisting of individuals or organizations critical or not fully supportive of the government administration's actions. These individuals and organizations are "tagged" as either communist or terrorist or both.

After the open forum, a planning scheme was given to the participants to map out concrete actions for implementation towards justice, peace and integrity of creation making it a reality in accord with God's dream.

The JPIC's gratitude goes to M. Mary Thomas and the Priory Government, St. Scholastica's College and technical personnel, all the communities and the socio-pastoral centers for their steadfast support and collaboration which made the first virtual JPIC General Assembly 2021 a success.



**Clockwise from top-left:** Sr. Rosalind Tanhueco, JPIC Chair; Sr. Mary Samuelle Formoso & Sr. Mary Nicole Garcia, emcees; St. Scholastica's Manila office staff and General Services personnel attend at the Social Hall; Atty. Neri Colmenares talks on burning issues affecting the forthcoming November 2022 elections.

**Gifted to Give: Launching of  
500 Years of Christianity  
in the Philippines**  
By: Sr. Maureen Cariaga OSB

On April 14, 2021 the 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines with the theme: "Gifted to Give" was launched in Cebu City with a Mass presided by the Papal Nuncio, Most Rev. Charles John Brown, DD. The solemn Eucharistic celebration was held at Plaza Sugbu at 4 in the afternoon and was attended by various select groups – government officials, church and religious leaders – Catholic, Christian, and Muslim – members of civil society, and the youth.

Being an officer of the Association of Consecrated Women of Cebu (ACWC), I was privileged to participate in this historic event of the Roman Catholic Church and our country.





Gifted to Give... From page 3



Sr. Maureen and officers of ACWC pose in front of the Quincentennial logo

After the Mass, the religious sisters and brothers, priests, and some lay leaders were treated to a festive dinner held at the inner courtyard of the Colegio de Sto. Niño, which is within the vicinity of Plaza Sugbu.

After the meal, we watched the cultural show, “Credo In Unum Deum” (God’s gift for His Filipino children), held at the Basilica Minore del Sto. Niño Pilgrim Center. Our Sisters Maria Jose Esperanza OSB, Mechtilde Juntado OSB, and Edigna Jumangit OSB, three of our Benedictine Oblates, and three employees were in attendance to enjoy the presentation.

## AMRSP taps OSB to lead the Holy Rosary

The Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP) requested our congregation through M. Mary Thomas Prado to lead the online praying of the Holy Rosary to be aired on July 10, 2021, the first Vespers of the solemnity of St. Benedict. The event was pre-recorded on June 25, 2021 in the chapel of St. Scholastica’s Priory, and participated in by the Sisters from the Priory House and Manila communities. The episode of the online Rosary was streamed at 8:00 in the evening via the AMRSP Facebook page and YouTube channel. It was also shared with other media partners of AMRSP such as TV Maria and Jesuit Communications.



## M. Mary Thomas Prado Celebrates First Feastday as Prioress

By: Sr. Mary Emmanuel Espera OSB

July 3 is the feast of St. Thomas the Apostle, known as the doubter but recognized as the model believer by the Church. The day was special for M. Mary Thomas Prado and for the entire Manila Priory as we celebrated her first feastday as Prioress. The celebration commenced with a Holy Mass in the Priory House Chapel live streamed via the Priory’s Facebook page. Sisters from different stations, Oblates, staff, alumni and some friends attended the online Eucharistic celebration made vibrant by the beautiful singing of the Sisters. After the joint Vespers and Supper with the Sisters from Manila Community, the highly anticipated priory-wide program was done through Zoom platform.

The theme for the evening’s online feastday gathering was “*Open the Windows of Your Soul: The Choice to Awaken*”. The adapted theme was inspired by the opening text of the Message of M. Mary Thomas during her Installation Rite as Prioress. Sisters from our various communities brought out their artistic talents while they entertain, humor us to laughter and health, inspire and move us by their creative presentations. The numbers highlighted optimism, joy, delight and the wonder of life amid the pandemic. The feastday program was capped by the sisters’ virtual singing of Our Father from The Mass of Prayer and Work. After Compline, we retire grateful for the celebration where love, unity and sisterhood conquer the threat of the pandemic that keeps us apart.

# Celebrating God's Creation: Planting Trees



The 22nd Manila Priory Chapter held in April 2019 has endorsed to all the communities: “that each community shall plant and nurture at least 100 trees within 2 years as a manifestation of our Benedictine stewardship.” Likewise, this is an affirmative action to the recommendation of the 13th General Chapter message, “the congregation commits itself to have planted at least 1300 trees within the next six years as a sign of commitment for the care of God's creation,” in response to Pope Francis’ Encyclical on the environment and human ecology.

June as our Environment month and with the onset of rainy days, it is most favorable to plant trees for restoring and healing our planet. Besides, a green environ is essential for our survival against coronavirus. Our different communities reported their tree planting activities since 2019.

## Priory House Community

To celebrate Philippine Independence Day on June 12, 2021 and as a sign of our commitment to care for God’s creation, the Sisters of the Priory House community trooped to Tanauan Farm to plant trees. Breathing fresh air, basking under the sun, and being amid the greenery and wide, open spaces in the farm proved to be the best time to heal tired bodies and spirits as a long-term investment against the raging pandemic.



Priory House Sisters plant tree seedlings while enjoying the time-out from the city as part of the community's Independence Day celebration and as a sign of their commitment to care for God's creation.

## Marihatag Community

From 2019 to 2020, the community of Marihatag planted and nurtured more than one hundred varied fruit-bearing trees: avocado, *guyabano*, *marang*, *calamansi*, *kamias*, grafted *dayap*, *rambotan*, durian, cacao, *langka*, different kinds of banana suckers (*lakatan*, *kwarenta dias*, *latundan*, *sab-a*, *carnaba*), dwarf and native coconuts, and many others that were planted at the San Benito Mabog farm, Cabahian farm, and our convent front garden. Additionally, last April 2021, Sr. Odilia Bulayungan OSB and Sr. Joyanne Morales OSB planted fifty (50) propagules and bitaog seedlings.



Some of the many fruit-bearing trees planted by the Marihatag Sister's Community (from L-R): bitaog, guyabano, native coconut, durian and rambotan.





## Legazpi Community

Community tree planting: coconut, mango, narra, pomelo, guyabano and money tree seedlings at Taysan and within St. Agnes Compound on June 19, 2021.

## St. Scholastica's College & Manila Community

Since 2018 until 2021, St. Scholastica's College has been conducting a yearly institutional tree planting activity in Tanauan and Tanay farms with representatives from the different sectors of the school community. Each tree planting begins with a liturgical service.

For the past four years, the school community has been able to plant a variety of fruit-bearing and hardwood trees. To name a few: 30 marang (johey oak), lanzones (longkong), 30 cacao, 10 langka (jackfruit), avocado, dwarf coconut, and dragon fruit. Seedlings were also planted by the Sisters' community within the school campus grounds.



## Ormoc Community

Sr. Adela Arabia OSB and Sr. Leticia Saraza OSB planted fruit-bearing trees in St. Scholastica's Housing in Brgy. Dayhagan. St. Scholastica Housing is a housing project for employees of St. Peter's College, Ormoc City.

## Pambujan Community

From 2019 up to the present the sisters have planted 392 trees. Today, 211 are growing sturdily in the St. Scholastica's hospital grounds.



**Top:** The Sisters receive some fruit-bearing and hardwood seedlings for the hospital from representatives of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.  
**Far-left:** M. Adelaida Ygrubay OSB plants a narra tree with the help of the Sisters & hospital staff during her canonical visitation in October 2019.  
**Left:** Dr. Remo Dandoy plants two avocado seedlings in September 2019 as farewell remembrance.



## Formation House Community

The Formation House Community started planting trees in June 2020 with avocado and araucaria trees. To date the grounds are filled with greenery of fruit bearing trees: mango, dragon fruit, *mabolo* (velvet apple), *santol* (cotton fruit), *atis* (custard apple or sweet-sop), coconut, etc. Our nursery has new seedlings ready for the next planting season.

**Right:** Planting araucaria trees near the garage grounds. **Top:** Avocado trees behind the Novitiate and Pre-Novitiate Building ( Bld. B) growing nicely with the cool weather.



## Mati Community

*Sterculia foetida* is a soft wooded tree that can grow up to 35 metres (115 ft.) tall. In the Philippines, this species is popularly known as Calumpang. Branches are used for fencing posts while its leaves are fed to goats. Seventy-five of these trees were planted on November 25-30, 2020 in San Isidro Mission Farm, Baon, San Isidro, Davao Oriental. Forty more trees were planted in St. Scholastica's EnFIDE Institute, Dawan, Mati City.

## Baguio Community

Baguio Community planted 50 Baguio Pine Trees inside the compound of St. Scholastica's Convent, Baguio City last March 17, 2021.



## St. Scholastica's College - Tacloban & Sisters' Community

The Sisters joined the students, faculty and staff for tree-planting activities within and around the school campus.





## Divine Word Hospital Community

The Sisters' community, together with hospital staff and medical personnel have been planting fruit-bearing trees at St. Benedict's Farmers' Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (SBFISA) in Alang-alang since November 2018. The Sisters also carried out this activity during their community outing to St. Scholastica's Hospital in Pambujan. They pledged to continue planting more trees this year and the years to come.



## Tabunok Community

In 2019, 400 mangrove seedlings and 200 coconut trees were planted by Grade 11 and 12 students respectively with the guidance of teachers. The sisters together with the school personnel planted 8 Araucaria trees on the 113<sup>th</sup> Foundation of the Manila Priory last September 14, 2019. The school's Peace Garden was planted with ornamental and fruit-bearing trees by the Sisters, students, and school personnel. In addition to tree planting, the community shared seedlings of hardwood and fruit-bearing trees from the school's 'mini forest' to another Eco Farm Resort in Cebu.



## Angeles Community

On July 19, 2020, the Sisters Community's Justice and Peace for Integrity of Creation (HFA-CBS JPIC) was launched. Its main project is tree planting. A nursery of mahogany and *kamansi*

(bread fruit) trees was created to prepare the seedlings for planting a year after. On July 30, 2021 the Sisters and other members of the school community and other mission partners had the tree planting activity. The nursery had an overflowing number of mahogany seedlings. Some of these were shared with the Dominican School of Angeles Foundation and with Mary our Help Technical Institute for Women in Mabalacat.



In 2019, St. Scholastica's Academy, San Fernando had their bamboo planting activity. The Sisters, students and maintenance employees planted 87 bamboo shoots that were given by the Alumni Association of SSC Manila.

## San Fernando Community





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## EDUCATION MINISTRY

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### Benedictine Educators Gather for Congress 2021 By Sr. Edna Quiambao OSB

The two-day Congress opened with a prayer prepared by St. Scholastica's College, Westgrove followed by the singing of the Philippine national anthem and the welcome address and opening remarks of Association of Benedictine Schools (ABS) Chair Sr. Christine Pinto OSB to all 599 administrators and faculty present online.

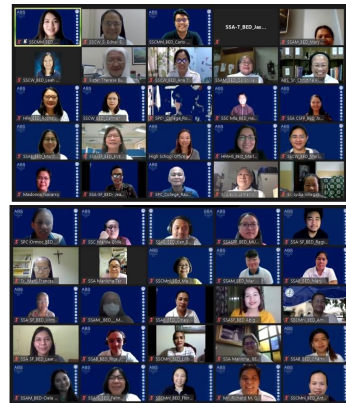


She mentioned that the last meeting of all ABS schools was in St. Scholastica's Academy, Bacolod in 2019. Although there were other plans the following years, everything was put on hold due to the pandemic.

The theme adopted by the ABS Coordinating Council this school year was "Benedictine Education: Mission at the Service of the Human Person." The focused Benedictine value depended on the context of each school. This ABS theme was inspired by the message of Pope Francis on Global Compact on Education. The Pope emphasized that "education - is the responsibility of the whole village" In other words, it needs a whole village to educate a child. As an Association of Benedictine Schools, we are a village in itself, therefore we will have to support one another - in order to realize our Benedictine mission.

Two resource speakers were invited: On the first day Dr. Greg Pawilen, an expert in Curriculum Design explained the importance and value of Curriculum Design for Flexible Learning that will serve as a guide in teaching and learning; on the second day, Mrs. Mildred Garcia, discussed Social Emotional Learning for Educators as a guide and journey with our students.

Participants listened intently to the Inspirational Message of Mother Mary Thomas Prado, Prioress. She emphasized what the Benedictine intellectual tradition has to offer in crises situations which are unfamiliar, uncontrollable and undoable. She explained three essentials in our Benedictine tradition in the field of education and how they could make sense in our present experience, namely: that Benedictine Education is flexible and adaptable, is deeply relational, and is integral in content and processes. She ended with a note of hope and encouragement that we can take chances, a hope that says we can, and hope that says there is no other option but to hope. In these times of uncertainty, may we all hold on to that hope.



Credit goes to Sr. Christine, Dr. Virginia Fornias, and Dr. Jonna Lim for sponsoring the ABS Educators' Congress 2021.

### SSC-Tacloban Tops Pharmacist Licensure Exams

*"It takes a village to raise a child. It takes the whole school to obtain excellence, Congratulations!"*

This was the message sent by M. Mary Thomas Prado OSB to Sr. Rosario Obiniana OSB and the school community. St. Scholastica's College in Tacloban ranked Number 1 among the top performing schools in the Philippines in the 2021 Pharmacist Licensure Examination with a 100 % passing rate. All administrators, faculty, non-teaching staff and service personnel received cash incentives from the Priory as a token of appreciation for their hard work and a job well done.

# PANDEMIC LIVING

## OGF Hosts Webinar on Mental Health

By: Sr. MariaLuz Dungca OSB



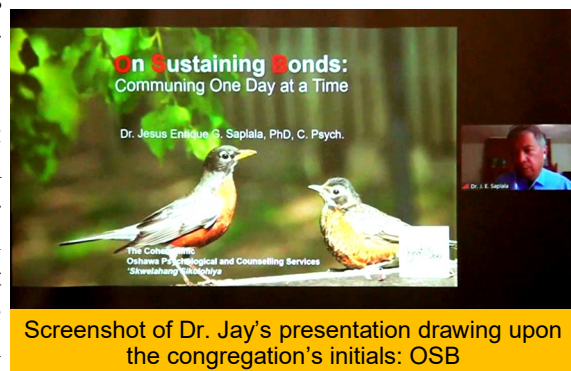
The On-going Formation (OGF) Team hosted its first virtual conference on Mental Health held last July 29, 2021. A roll-call of each participating community preceded the opening prayer led by Sr. Mary Grace Macatuno OSB.

M. Mary Thomas Prado, Prioress, gave the welcome remarks and explained the importance of understanding the difference of the term “mental health” from “mental illness”, with a holistic view of one’s personal and communal struggles and finding healthy ways of coping, and utilizing responsibly the practical tools from the webinar and integrate them in one’s life and in one’s apostolate.

Sr. Celine Saplala OSB, introduced the resource speaker, her nephew, Dr. Jesus G. Saplala. Dr. Jay, as many call him, is a registered and practicing clinical psychologist, an officer/member of various Psychological Associations in the Philippines and abroad, a Jesuit volunteer in his younger years, and a father/lecturer/ professor/author, now based in Toronto, Canada.

Dr. Jay’s talk entitled, “On Sustaining Bonds: Communing One Day at a Time,” was formulated in the context of communal living of sisters in this pandemic time. He started his talk with a disclaimer that his material was designed to provide information and educational information based on psychological science not a therapy, and a Land Acknowledgement, a practiced rite in Canada to start an activity for those residing within an aboriginal territory. The conference focused on three themes : (1) the impact of the pandemic on the Sisters, anchoring his discussion from the results of his pre-conducted mini Needs-Assessment Survey, identifying the participants’ two distinct generations (the Gen.-X and Boomers) with different concerns and possible rate of exhibition of anxiety or depression. (2) The impact of the pandemic on the mental health across the lifespan, where discussions on the struggles of people, including the Sisters in the context of their internal and external communities and their possible concerns within the specified stage of human development from childhood to adulthood. (3) On sustaining the bonds: communing one day at a time, where discussions revolved around the religious and the pandemic, giving pro-active self-care management such as: consistency in regularly maintaining communication with loved ones/family/ friends; regular daily schedule in this time of lockdown/quarantine, physical exercise /leisure; commitment to life-saving habits; flexibility and becoming an agent of change; choosing to have reliable information; and reclaiming one’s energy, taking breaks and time to unwind to become more resilient.

In sum, amidst the continuing pandemic and lockdown, sustaining one’s mental health entails positive disposition and awareness of oneself and surroundings. It is up to each individual on how one can possibly acknowledge, accept and adjust oneself with whatever shift or possible changes might arise given the unpredictable and uncertainty of the virus situation.



Screenshot of Dr. Jay's presentation drawing upon the congregation's initials: OSB



The conference concluded with Pope Francis' message, "We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other."

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS: SURVIVING COVID-19

*Dealing with COVID-19 is tough with its complex implications that could possibly cause death. Its adverse effects on every aspect of the human psyche is beyond imagination. Journeying through COVID-19 has been a real experience for some sisters teaching them life-long lessons amid the raging pandemic. Having recovered from the dreadful disease led them to value life and develop a deeper relationship with God and others in compassionate living.*

Having been quarantined four times, I never expected I could be infected with COVID-19 virus despite religiously observing health protocols. It was on December 21, 2020 at 11:32 AM when I experienced the symptoms of the infection. It started with a very dry cough and itchy throat. Then in the evening, fatigue and fever. COVID-19 is REAL.

I was confined in the hospital for almost three weeks. Spending Christmas and New Year in isolation was a new and unlikable experience, but I tried to be calm despite the uncertainties. I decided not to inform my family so they would not worry. With doctors and nurses who continuously monitored my condition, I was confident that everything would be alright with me. I helped myself by eating whatever was served despite the loss of taste and smell. Though I suffered from insomnia, I pushed myself trying to get plenty of sleep and rest. I also did "tuob" (steam inhalation) before going to bed. Daily meditation, praying the rosary, attending Holy Mass online, maintaining a positive outlook of the situation sustained me.

It never dawned on me that I would die of COVID-19 infection. The experience was just a wake-up call. The month-long journey of isolation taught me that life is extremely short, and I do not know when I am going to lose everything I have. So, I have to make every day as an opportunity to help, to reach out, to use and share my God-given talents and skills, to be more sensitive to the needs of the Sisters especially those who are sick. I have learned to empathize with those who have no resources for hospitalization. I have also learned to be more mindful of my physical well-being considering my medical history. With the experience, I was renewed physically and spiritually.

**It was my profound faith, positive attitude, prayers and support of the Sisters that contributed a lot to my fast recovery. I survived Covid-19 because of God's compassionate and boundless LOVE.**

Life has too much to offer provided we have the right attitude and mindset. I believe it was my profound faith, positive attitude, prayers and support of the Sisters that contributed a lot to my fast recovery. I survived COVID-19 because of God's compassionate and boundless LOVE. He is the utmost reason for my HEALING. I am truly grateful and humbled by the experience. Yes, COVID-19 is REAL, but God's love is equally REAL.

**- Sr. Mary Samuelle Formoso OSB**

We are all learning to live with the ongoing impact of a virus that appeared more than a year now. The current period of misery and even despair surround us. It is an opportune moment to reflect on our lives and attitude as individuals, as community and society in general.

Like everyone affected by the pandemic, I find myself intensely wrestling with the effects of this virus. On so many levels, in so many ways, my life is fundamentally changing after being infected by the disease twice. The roller coaster of emotions were overwhelming especially when I was quarantined in the hospital and the retreat center in Tagaytay for 43 days. It was truly an opportunity for personal soul searching, for analysis and reflection of my life both as human and as a Benedictine Sister.

In general, this pandemic made me topple the defences I created, unconsciously and consciously, that hinder somehow my relationship with God and with the people I live and work with. Life is indeed short, and I only live once. Learning to live life to the fullest is a vital step in making the most of every day.

- Sr. Eugene Amar OSB

***When will I come to the end of my pilgrimage and enter the presence of God?***

(Antiphon Week II)

My 14-day pilgrimage with COVID-19 caught me off guard which I spent in isolation within the walls of my cell during the Christmas season. It began as a nightmare because fear overcame my whole being. By God's grace, I found solace when I finally accepted and completely surrendered to my present state of health – being infected with the coronavirus, I opted to act appropriately towards healing and full recovery through positive thinking and eating healthy food despite loss of senses of taste and smell. I waited eagerly for victory over the disease. The most-awaited moment dawned when I unceasingly lifted all my cares in prayer with one voice with our co-Sisters, begging for God's mercy and compassion for restored health. I thank my co-Sisters who extended their help, care and concern in time of need. Above all, I thank God who never abandoned me during those moments of uncertainty of what the future holds for me and the rest of my companions on the journey.

- Sr. Rosalina Fajardo OSB

When the whole Priory House Community had a swab test last December 21, 2020, I was informed that my result was positive. This surprised me because I had no fever, no cough, no running nose, no body pains, etc. I was just feeling tired from previous activities and longing for some sleep, but I was feeling fine and even having a good appetite. I was asymptomatic.

We had just finished celebrating the feastday of M. Adelaida Ygrubay OSB. I was now busy planning and putting up schedules for our Christmas activities. Then I was told I was COVID-19 positive. So I simply went into quarantine, following orders. The very next day I found out that 8 of our sisters and 4 house girls were brought to the hospital for COVID-19. Four of us Sisters, who were also positive, had our quarantine only in the Priory House. I did not expect that I would be on quarantine. I welcomed the opportunity to be in solitude. I took the chance to pray, to read, to rest and to take medications for protection against COVID-19.

- Sr. Pauline Triviño, OSB



On December 18, 2020, I woke up feeling very weak, almost to the point of physical exhaustion, accompanied by severe headaches—which was unusual. The swab test yielded positive for COVID-19. Hence, I, together with my fellow Sisters were rushed to the hospital on December 22, 2020 where I experienced additional symptoms with unbearable pain that forced me to take pain reliever. Lying in bed, I focused on getting better, and gave myself time off from all the communications I usually do, which made my battle against the virus tolerable. I felt a bit better, calmer.

Looking back, I am most grateful to Sr. Constance Tecson OSB for her selfless delivery of food supplies to the hospital. Such loving and thoughtful gestures made a real difference in my speedy and full recovery. Though I lost my senses of taste and smell, I forced myself to eat, drink *salabat* or ginger tea and religiously followed all the doctors' instructions and took all the prescribed medicines.

As in everything, in good times and in bad, especially with an almost insurmountable sickness, calling God for help and strength and believing in His faithfulness, was all that mattered. I prayed and pleaded to God to heal us and grant us life. Indeed, the Lord is ever faithful, most kind and merciful. His love endures forever. Blessed with His grace, we regained our strength and one by one we all tested negative.

God works through His people. I'm grateful for the kindness and care shown to us by our health workers and frontliners, the nurses and doctors at the San Juan De Dios Hospital, who sincerely, thoughtfully, and meticulously took care of us all the way to total healing and recovery.

Our recuperation period at St. Scholastica's Center of Spirituality, Tagaytay was rewarding and rejuvenating, ever grateful for the quiet time and opportunity to rest, reflect, pray, relax, and to just be.

While recuperating, boredom and sadness took over me. Was it a post- COVID reaction? Stress from the apostolate concerns and/or pressure with the numerous year-end reports I needed to get back and attend to? But whenever these thoughts came, I reminded myself of the overwhelming love and support from friends, family, my co-Sisters in the different stations, and the people who offered countless prayers for us -- all of these strengthened me. Often I reminded myself to make the most out of what was happening. So while I rested and recuperated, I did some recreational activities which enabled me to bounce back to renewed vigor and life. I prayed: God has always been with me, my refuge and my strength. He blessed me again the gift of life and sound faith.

**“...with an almost insurmountable sickness, calling God for help and strength and believing in His faithfulness, was all that mattered.”**

**- Sr. Theodora Bilocura OSB**

## **Orientation and Installation of New Superiors Conducted Online**

**by Sr. Adela Arabia OSB and Sr. Edita Eslopor OSB**

The pandemic has challenged all of us to adapt, to flex and be creative in coping with the new normal way of life as COVID-19 virus continues to rage around the globe. M. Mary Thomas Prado OSB has been given a green light by M. Maoro Sye OSB, Prioress General to conduct online orientation and installation of a new superior via *Zoom* platform due to travel restrictions.

The first ever in the history of the Priory, the virtual orientation was done together with the members of the community. On May 25, 2021 Sr. Leticia Saraza OSB and the Ormoc community attended the online orientation for new superior conducted by M. Mary Thomas and Sr. Rosalina Fajardo OSB, Sub-prioress.



### Orientation and Installation... From page 13

This was followed by the installation rite of the new superior integrated with Midday prayer in the presence of Sr. Eloisa David OSB, Sr. Adela Arabia OSB and Sr. Fatima Celestial OSB, Community members.

On May 28, 2021, the installation of Sr. Andrea Ecito as Superior of Pambujan community took place as planned and attended by Sr. Edita Eslopoc OSB, Sr. Amadea Donadilla OSB, Sr. Noella Montiel OSB and Sr. Anna Mary Adikini OSB. However, the virtual orientation was halted due to weak internet connection. Instead, M. Mary Thomas proceeded with the installation of Sr. Andrea and promised the community that she will travel to Pambujan for a face-to-face orientation in July with the hope that the virus situation will eventually ease out.

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## SOCIO - PASTORAL MINISTRY

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### San Isidro Farm Yields Bounty for Mati Community

By: Sr. Susan Abellana OSB



St. Isidore

In 2018, the Manila Priory bought a three- hectare lot located in Baon, San Isidro, Davao Oriental, 30- minute ride from the Community of Benedictine Sisters' convent in Dawan. The place is named San Isidro Mission Farm in honor of St. Isidore, the patron of farmers. The Mati Community was delegated to care for the lot. It is planted with around 300 coconut trees with some portions interspersed with bananas and some fruit trees like mangoes and avocados

The area is productive with the regular yield of 5,000 nuts more or less. These are then halved and dried or baked in the *pugon* (an oven constructed in the site specifically for this purpose) and turned to copra. A buyer sends a truck to fetch the dried copra where they are weighed and quantified. The Sisters then go to the copra warehouse to collect earnings from the copra sales.

Coconut is indeed the Tree of Life. Aside from the contents of the nut, all other components are useful. The husks are used for firewood and soil mulching. The coconut shells, known as *bagul*, are converted to charcoal. Coconut water can be recycled and processed into vinegar or *tuba*. The leaves are used for fertilizer and/or decorations and the midrib or sticks at the leaves' center are turned into brooms. The trunk, when cut, are used for lumber.

The farm income sustains our mission in Mati. With the pandemic happening at present, Sisters often go there to oversee and integrate in the farm work and with the community especially during the one - week copra processing. During the feastday of St. Isidore on May 15, a simple para-liturgical celebration was held together with the mission partners in the area. We thank our loving God for this grace continuously flowing in our mission apostolate.



**Left:** Coconut husks used for soil mulching; **Right:** Coconut trees interspersed with other plants in the farm.



# CDC Reaches out to Survivors

By Sr. Rosalind Tanhueco, OSB

The Caysasay Development Center (CDC) has sustained its community-building mission by partnering with women and youth who have been formed as community leaders pursuing concerted actions in response to spiritual and socio-economic challenges of their respective communities, even beyond, as need arises and capacities permit.



Prior to the Taal volcanic eruption and outbreak of COVID 19 Pandemic, the CDC organized women and youth of Taal, Batangas for on-going education and advocacy work, namely: values and basic faith formation, team building projects, awareness raising sessions on issues affecting their lives, etc. They also joined community concerted actions and organized the Benedictines for Peace for women and youth.

Mindful of the impact of the eruption of Taal Volcano, the center focused on the rehabilitation project of survivors of the eruption and the COVID 19 pandemic. Concrete actions were undertaken through community building for food security and advocacy on pressing issues: backyard gardening and giving of loans without interest for livelihood income generating projects (IGP) in the community such as selling of broomsticks, etc.

Moreover, due to travel restrictions and health protocols during the pandemic, the center's ecological advocacy work in response to the Message of the General Chapter's commitment for care of God's creation is being done through online communications.

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## FORMATION NEWS

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By: Sr. Jovita Marie Sioson OSB

### Renewal of Vows

On the 14th of May 2021, Sr. Stella Marie Martinez OSB, a 4th year Junior Sister, had her renewal of vows which was integrated during Midday Prayer. Sr. Rosalina Fajardo OSB, Sub-prioress, was delegated by M. Mary Thomas Prado OSB to officiate the rite.



**Clockwise from Top-right:** Renewal of Vows; Rite of Acceptance to Postulancy; Rite of Acceptance to Novitiate, and Sending off Rite for Formative activity.

### Rite of Initiation and Acceptance

A day after the Solemnity of Pentecost on the 24th of May, the formandeas had their Rite of Initiation and Acceptance to the next level of their Formation. After the reading of the Scripture at Midday, the Superior of the Formation House community, Sr. Melanie Lumauig OSB, delegated by M. Mary Thomas, officiated the rites. Aspirants Maria Carmela Malinao and Ngoc Tan Lam were accepted into Postulancy. Postulants Anna Margaretha Fondevilla and Kathleen Mae de Guzman were initiated into the Novitiate, while Novice Jennifer Flor had her send-off rite for Formative Activity to Legazpi community. The blessing song "Thanks be to God" closed the rite.

Indeed, we thank God for these formandeas who answered His call to follow Him in the Benedictine way of life.

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## OBLATES' NEWS

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By: Obl. Eggie Galan & team

On May 9, 2021, during the regular monthly spiritual formation of the Oblates of St. Benedict, Sr. Angeline Arceo gave an engaging online spiritual input on the topic of "Deepening Our Call as Oblates." In her talk she brought to life some selected inspiring biblical characters such as Abraham and Jonah from the Old Testament, and Mary and the Samaritan Woman from the New Testament.

In each of the characters the participants were led by the speaker to discover how the initiative for a call comes from God who meets the person in the circumstances of his/her ordinary life. Each person's call is *"always personal and unique"*, and, therefore, no two vocations are alike. Similarly, the individual's response to God's call and the invitation to a task varies. But God always gives the grace, strength and the means to respond to His invitation. Sr. Angeline posed to her listeners the point of how God seems to pursue us even more as we struggle with our calling. An eye-opener to the group: *"our brokenness and imperfection are used by God."*

The Oblates of St. Benedict were not only moved by the spiritual input of Sr. Angeline but thoroughly enjoyed the online group discussions in different "Chat Rooms", a first experience for most. In summary, the Oblates all richly benefited in terms of a more profound knowledge of the meaning of a Call, as well as facing the challenge of an ever deepening relationship with God. One outstanding and lasting realization - *"Everyday God is calling us radically, completely, awaiting a response that is not lukewarm nor half hearted"*.



Screenshot of participant-Oblates on Zoom

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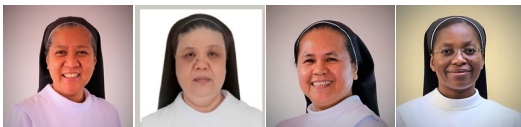
## NEWSBITS

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### Inter-priory Sharing

- ◆ Sr. Ana Maria Raca OSB left for Rome on May 16 to assume the post of **General Secretary**.
- ◆ Sr. Ma. Victoria Bulacan OSB left for **Peramiho** on July 2 for her new mission assignment.



Left to right: Sr. Ana Maria, Sr. Ma. Victoria, Sr. Ma. Gabrielle & Sr. Pia

### Until we meet again...

- ◆ Sr. Ma. Gabrielle Costumbrado OSB flew back to Peramiho on July 2 after her homeleave. She and Sr. Ma. Victoria travelled together.

### Congratulations...

- ◆ His Eminence **Jose Forte Cardinal Advincula, 33rd Archbishop of Manila** who was installed on June 24, 2021 -- the 450th founding anniversary of Manila.
- ◆ Sr. Pia Iita OSB who graduated with a degree of **Bachelor of Science in Nursing** from St. Paul's University, Manila (SPUM) on May 28. She flew back to Windhoek, her home priory on July 13.
- ◆ The **25 new pharmacists** who graduated from St. Scholastica's College - Tacloban for a **100%** passing rate.



*That in all things God may be glorified.*



ST. SCHOLASTICA'S PRIORY MANILA JOINS THE WHOLE COUNTRY IN CELEBRATING  
**500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines (1521 - 2021)**

MANILA PRIORY BULLETIN TEAM:

SR. ROSALINA FAJARDO OSB / SR. ANGELINE ARCEO OSB / SR. MARY PETER MACKAY OSB