



Manila Priory Bulletin

Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing
St. Scholastica's Priory Manila, Philippines

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Elected and Installed: M. Mary Thomas Prado OSB **18th Prioress of Manila** By: Sr. Christine Pinto OSB

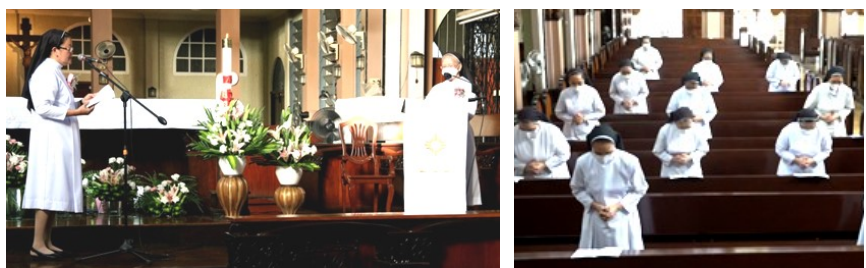


Since March of 2020, the road that we tread as a priory and as a nation had been different as well as uncertain for the landscape has been changed by the COVID-19 pandemic. After two postponements and a change of venue, it finally happened – Manila Priory's 23rd Election Chapter, February 15-16, 2021, at St. Scholastica's Center of Spirituality in Tagaytay. Sr. Lumen Gloria Dungca, Vicaress General, designated representative of M. Maoro Sye, formally opened the Election Chapter. On the second day, after the names of the Candidates were announced, the Sisters prayed in silence and discernment before the Blessed Sacrament and cast their votes. And by God's design, Sr. Mary Thomas Prado was elected Prioress.

On April 11, 2021, within the Octave of Easter and Divine Mercy Sunday, M. Mary Thomas was installed 18th Prioress of the Manila Priory by out-going prioress, Sr. Adelaida Ygrubay, as delegated by M. Maoro. The Rite of Installation of a Prioress at Vespers was live streamed via Zoom and Facebook. The Rite of Installation began with the Invocation to the Holy Spirit. After Sr. Adelaida presented the Prioress-Elect to the assembly, she read the Document of Election; and upon interrogation, M. Mary Thomas gave her YES.

The Sisters present and those online, on the other hand, as a sign of acceptance and obedience to the new Prioress, made a common reverential bow. And, in turn, M. Mary Thomas pledged her "fidelity, reverence, and obedience to Holy Mother Church, to our Congregation and to the Sisters of the Manila Priory, according to the Rule of St. Benedict and our constitutions." Towards the end of her message, M. Mary Thomas announced the appointment of Sr. Rosalina Fajardo as Sub-Prioress of the new leadership. This was gladly welcomed and accepted by the Sisters as seen in the twinkle in their eyes, smile on their lips (behind the masks) and the claps of their hands. The beautiful liturgy ended with the singing, of *Holy God We Praise Thy Name*, and then the Recessional to the Sacred Heart Courtyard for the first Table Fellowship with the new Prioress. Although physically apart, the different communities were together in one virtual space, to celebrate with food, an impromptu program, warm greetings, exchange of gifts and prayer at the end of the night.

Left: As delegated by the Generalate, out-going Prioress M. Adelaida Ygrubay installs M. Mary Thomas Prado;
Right: The reverential bow of the Sisters.



Elected and Installed..... From page 1

In the midst of the pandemic which “forms the serious background and context of [her] leadership,” M. Mary Thomas reminds us that our Benedictine way of life, our virtues, are our tools to combat the battle, “our noble weapons against any barbaric invasion and darkness – personal, physical, political, religious and now bio-chemical.”



Screen shot of stations attending via Zoom.

Community Pantries Sprouting All-around

In mid-April 2021, numerous community pantries have sprouted across the country to help others in need of food and other basic necessities through donated goods or cash by people of goodwill. This concept of Filipino ‘bayanihan’ or solidarity with those in dire need amid the pandemic enables anyone to donate what they can and for those wanting to take only what is needed. Such act of charity was an inspiration from the first pantry pioneered on Maginhawa Street, Quezon City, Philippines by a young entrepreneur, Ana Patricia Non gaining worldwide attention in mass media.

Priory House & St. Scholastica’s Manila

Hence, on April 20, 2021, the Missionary Benedictine Sisters led by M. Mary Thomas Prado launched its own community pantry in collaboration with Sr. Christine Pinto of St. Scholastica’s College, Manila (SSC-M), Sr. Theodora Bilocura of the Socio-Pastoral Center and Sr. Constance Tecson of the Priory House community. In response to the call for donations, countless alumnae, benefactors, friends, parents and students generously shared their blessings for the pantry for distribution. With grateful hearts, we thank the numerous hands and hearts playing Good Samaritan and keeping the community pantry alive and sustainable.

Moreover, in solidarity with local farmers, farm products like rice, vegetables, root crops, salted fish, eggs, and fruits were purchased and found their way in the pantries, thus making the pantry organizers become aware of the diverse sources of nutritious food so that pantry clients have a healthier food selection. Since donations have been pouring in abundance, our nearby parish also receives a lion’s share of the blessings for their own pantry in the area.



Top: M. Mary Thomas receives a donation of a tray of eggs from a young couple while the pantry was on-going; **Left:** Community pantry at St. Scholastica’s College’s main gate. School guards lend a hand to maintain order and make sure health protocols are observed; **Right:** Pre-packed items like eggs, onions, garlic, and other perishables for quicker distribution and minimal surface contact.

Community pantries..... From page 2

To date, almost all our communities are simultaneously offering community pantries thriving through donations of goods. Here are excerpts culled from the reports of the different communities:

Baguio

In coordination with Barangay Captain Emily Gundran, the Sisters of Baguio Community and Oblates prepared the pantry for six (6) barangays of Military Cut Off.



L-R: Sr. Gertrud Batan (visitor), Sr. Benita Reyes, Sr. Zita Jamisola & Sr. Maria Lourdes preparing the vegetables for the pantry



Legazpi



Sisters together with SIPAG-KO and St. Agnes Academy (SAA) personnel assist in the community pantry every Tuesday and Saturday mornings. SAA Legazpi was one of the earliest to launch such a pantry among our OSB communities.



San Fernando

The community pantry of St. Scholastica's Academy-SF was initiated by the SIP program of the school. Target recipients were the people most in need in the area. Vegetables were harvested from the school's garden. From this first day's experience, it was decided to invite particular sectors to help maintain order in queuing for the pantry. It was also decided to put the items in a bag for each person to receive instead of choosing items from the table.



Community pantries..... From page 3



Donations of goods came from students, parents, employees and alumnae as soon as the SSAB (Share Something And be a Blessing) community pantry was announced. The poor, the jobless, garbage collectors, street children, construction workers and sugar cane farm workers were the pantry clients. A rolling or mobile pantry was also organized to reach more of those who could not come to the campus school grounds.

Mati

Tsinelas pantry. Instead of food, *tsinelas* (rubber slippers), also an *essential* for those who often go on foot, were distributed to Dawan parishioners through the courtesy of Iloilo Bargain Center.

Corn grits distribution. A total of 130 families in the parish of Dawan received 5 kgs. each of corn grits. Creative means were devised to transport the sacks to the remoter areas.



Bacolod



DWH - Tacloban



April 20, 2021. Community pantry kick-off at the Divine Word Hospital, Tacloban: slum dwellers, street children, & the unemployed from Quarry, Sto. Nino, GMA and Sagkahan received rice, vegetables and groceries. The pantry thrives through donations from persons of goodwill. DWH-Tacloban was the first among the provincial stations to mount a community pantry.

Tabunok



The SSA-T community pantry is a joint project of the Sisters, faculty, and personnel, student leaders/ volunteers, alumni, and parents. In its opening, food was enough for 300 people.



SSC - Tacloban

St. Scholastica's College of Tacloban spearheaded the project: #Gugmang Kulasa Community Pantry to help the hungry and those in need in Brgy. Campetic, Palo, Leyte and to inspire and encourage students, parents, alumni and friends to share their blessings. The project is on-going and each community pantry activity begins with a prayer.



Ormoc

People lined up outside the entrance gate of St. Peter's College to receive fresh produce and essentials from the community pantry initiated by the Sisters with generous donation from kind hearted Ormocanons and the High School Batch 1988.

Pambujan



Marikina and Westgrove

The Socio-Pastoral arm of these two schools coordinated fund-raising activities and gave support through donations in cash and kind to community pantries mounted by other organizations and parishes. They also generously supported the community pantries of the Priory House, Formation House and Center of Spirituality.



Clockwise from uppermost right: M. Mary Thomas amidst goods for the pantry, some of which are donations from CBS communities; Sr. Evangeline and Tuason Center staff preparing fresh produce to be donated to a nearby pantry; Sacks of rice from SSAM, Marikina; Groceries and essentials purchased from cash donations from SSC-Westgrove for FH and SSCS Tagaytay joint pantry.

Feeding and Relief Programs Sustained Amidst Calamities and the Pandemic

Angeles

The Angeles community organized a feeding program for the community of indigenous people in Madapdap, Mabalacat, Pampanga to alleviate hunger brought about by the pandemic. The spirit of sharing and volunteerism is very evident from the women volunteers who take care of cooking the meals to parents giving up their slots to others who are more in need.



Marihatag



The sisters and “DUYOG-AMBIT” volunteers conducted the first and second wave of relief goods distribution to the remotest, most affected and least served areas--Sitios of Luknodon, San Roque and Palompon, Bgy. Mahaba. More generous individuals and groups from neighboring municipalities visited the victims in other barangays along the coastal areas and gave their share of support and relief goods distribution.

Pandemic Living

SISTERS' APOSTOLATES SHIFTING GEARS

The year 2020 saw the global and historic birth of coronavirus beyond borders which brought havoc to all aspects of life-forms on earth. Despite the numerous unknowns, the loss of loved ones, massive unemployment, and the continuing complexity of the virus situation around the globe, the pandemic has awakened in us the essence of coping creatively with the present moment hoping against hope that this current health crisis will soon end. Now we have been forced to change the rhythm of our lives, making shifts and adaptations in our various apostolates, seeing with the eyes of faith, hoping for new possibilities and becoming compassionate towards the least and those in need.

Health Ministry

Shifts in health apostolate in Tacloban and Pambujan: For a couple of months, the outpatient department of Divine Word Hospital (DWH) was closed as doctors preferred to stay home. In St. Scholastica's Hospital, Pambujan, though the doctor is available, hardly any patient came for consultation or admission out of fear for viral infection.

Yet, the services go on and changes have evolved like the **Telemedicine** where consultations and prescriptions are done online. **Quarantine facilities** both for the hospital staff and the patients were set up. Separate provisions for COVID-positive patients were added. **Hygienic equipment and other safety devices**, and health protocols for all were imposed.

The hospital's great contribution is the setting up of a **virology laboratory** for Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) tests for Region 8. Yet, the lack of nurses posed a daunting challenge. Trusting in God's mercy, we continue to pray that God will provide us with the needed personnel to carry on with our mission of continuing Christ's healing ministry.

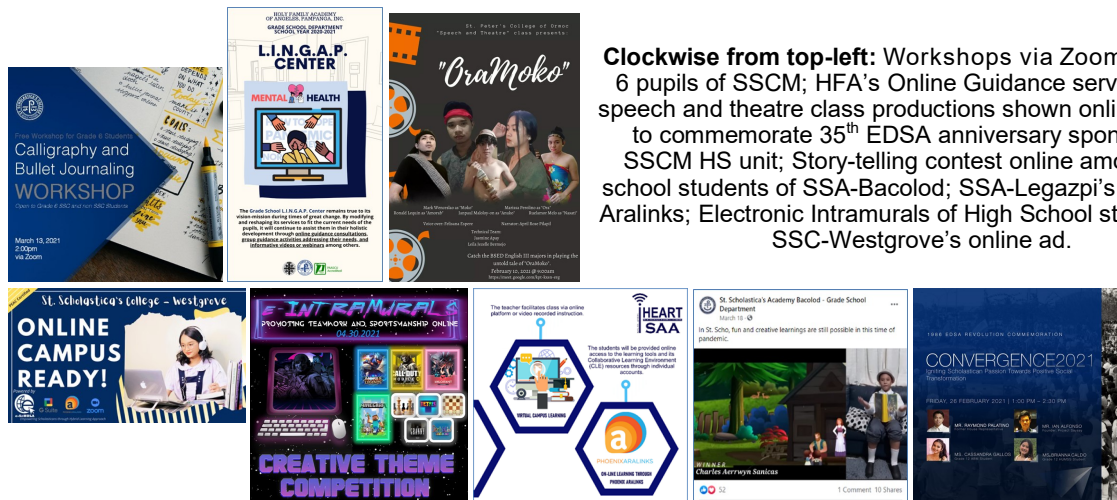
From reports submitted by staff of:
Divine Word Hospital, Tacloban & St Scholastica's Hospital, Pambujan

Education Ministry

By: Sr. Christine Pinto OSB & Sr. Rosario Obiniana OSB

The global pandemic brought abrupt shifts and changes to our educational institutions. One of the major changes in the teaching and learning process is a shift from a face-to-face instruction in the school to a **virtual teaching-learning method from home**, a novelty for the school administrators as well as for the teachers and students and parents.

True to our commitment to deliver quality education towards the holistic formation of our students, our schools responded to the challenge of Online Distance Learning due to the drastic change in the school landscape brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. A language that already existed before became prominent – Learning Management Systems (LMS), synchronous and asynchronous learning, blended learning, and virtual space, among others. Our schools created programs like: **SCOLLAB** and **e-STREAM** of St. Scholastica's Academy Marikina - **S**cholastican **C**ollaborative **O**nline **L**earning **L**aboratory and **E**ngaging **S**cholasticans in **T**ransformative **R**emote **E**ducation through various **A**pproaches and **M**odalities (Senior High School); **SHIFT** of SSCM – **S**t. Scholastica's College Manila's **H**olistic **I**nstruction and **F**ormation through **T**echnology; **HEART** of St. Agnes' Academy (SAA) – **H**olistic **E**ducation for pro**A**ctive **R**esponse to **T**ransformation, and **SPC FLEX** of St. Peter's College Ormoc – **S**tandardized **P**rograms & **C**urricula for **F**lexible **L**earning **E**xperience. Different Learning Management Systems (LMS) were adapted by our schools like, *GENYO*, *AraLinks*, *Schoology*, *e-Think*, *NEO*, *Bright-space*, and *Fast Track*. Although St. Scholastica's College-Tacloban (SSC-T) has the Learning Management System in place, the teachers use other free online platforms such as *Google Meet*, *Gmail*, *Facebook*, *Messenger*, etc. in order to reach out to students with poor internet connectivity.



Clockwise from top-left: Workshops via Zoom for Grade 6 pupils of SSCM; HFA's Online Guidance service; SPC's speech and theatre class productions shown online; Webinar to commemorate 35th EDSA anniversary sponsored by SSCM HS unit; Story-telling contest online among grade school students of SSA-Bacolod; SSA-Legazpi's adoption of AraLinks; Electronic Intramurals of High School students; and SSC-Westgrove's online ad.

Our physical classrooms have been transformed through *Zoom*, *G Suite*, and *Microsoft Teams for Education*. However, cognizant of the fact that not all students have access to internet or to gadgets like laptops, PCs, tablets or even mobile phones, our schools have provided learning packets or modules prepared by the teachers, picked-up in school by the parents, and accomplished by the students and returned on specified dates and times. To be fully equipped for virtual instructions, teachers in all levels attended in-service trainings and seminars using various online platforms for preparing digital learning modules. Textbooks though, are made available as reference materials of teachers and students.

One thing for sure, the pandemic has brought out the creativity, innovativeness, passion and perseverance not only of our students but among our faculty as well. Not even a pandemic will stop productions from being shown, competitions being launched, webinars, workshops and services offered.

Retreat & Prayer Ministry

St. Scholastica's Center of Spirituality Tagaytay

By: M. Irene Dabalus OSB

A skeleton community of five sisters maintained OSB presence in the Center: three in their 80's -- Sr. Barbara Batac, Sr. Miriam Noemi Francisco and M. Irene Dabalus as superior, and two in their 70's - Sr. Lourdes Edissa Manrique and Sr. Carmel Simpauco. We were relieved of any form of responsibility for the upkeep of the Center which came to be managed directly by the Priory. Likewise, all forms of spiritual activity were put on hold to adhere to the restrictions of an enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) to stem the tide of the pandemic. Occasionally, M. Irene would direct retreats of our sisters upon request and give spiritual direction to regular directees via Messenger.



The **shift** from a Center bustling with activities to padlocked buildings off limits to people was radical. Yet, something marvelous happened to the community this past year of sustained quarantine – from Extended Community Quarantine to General Extended Community Quarantine to Modified Extended Community Quarantine. We discovered with new eyes the treasure of the Eucharist celebrated daily in our midst by the Focolare fathers, our good neighbors. Our Center of “spirituality” shifted from the world outside to the Center of cenobitic living inside, where the monastic day of worship, community and mutual service became our paramount pre-occupation. Our living union with Christ in the Eucharist sustained our momentum in prayer as a cenobium.

St. Scholastica's Retreat Center, Baguio

By: Sr. Benita Reyes OSB

In January of 2019, the booking calendar of St. Scholastica's Retreat House, Baguio was fully booked until October of the same year. With the advent of the global pandemic, all the reservations were cancelled and hence, the center reimbursed all advance payments to clients. Consequently, our community of four sisters: Sr. Benita Reyes, superior, Sr. Hilda Buhay, Sr. Ma. Lourdes Obejas and Sr. Zita, Jamisola, creatively shifted gears to adopt to the current situation helping together in the upkeep of the buildings and grounds. In the succeeding months, the sisters together with a downsized staff planted vegetables in the backyard. The endeavor though was not sustainable due to monsoon rains. Rising above the inclement weather amid the pandemic, the sisters started baking “lebkuchen” for the Christmas season and cooking *embotido* (meat loaf) and salad for sale. Fortunately, this new small scale food business venture helps augment our subsidy from the Priory.

St. Benedict's Home - Marikina

By: Sr. Ma. Luisa Villanueva OSB

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, the community of 44 elderly and sick sisters at St. Benedict's Home in Marikina have been forced by circumstances to forego the face-to-face celebration of the Eucharist to avoid transmission of the virus. Communion service is held daily, whereas on Sunday and solemnities, they attend live-streamed masses. Health protocols are strictly followed: 2 weeks self-isolation before joining the community, no guests are allowed and visits to the doctor are limited.

Formation News

by Novice Jennifer Flor

In spite of the on-going pandemic, the formation programs for the Pre-Novitiate, Novitiate and Juniorate were not compromised. Formation classes, both face to face and online continued. Except for days when a strict lockdown was imposed in Tagaytay, the community was also able to have a daily Eucharistic celebration with priests coming from neighboring convents.



God is truly present in the missionary endeavours of the Formation House Community. Through the overwhelming generosity and support of our dear families, friends, and benefactors, we were able to organize several community pantries and out-reach activities. To date, we have been able to mount six (6) pantries - two (2) in front of the Formation House gate, one (1) as a joint activity with the Sisters' Community in the Center of Spirituality, and four (4) were set-up in barangays to bring the pantries closer to the people. We were also able to have out-reach activities with relief distributions -- twice in Marikina after a series of typhoons hit the country, and two (2) in Rizal and in Biñan, Laguna, respectively.

We are grateful to our Almighty God, who made our community an instrument of His overflowing love to all during this pandemic. Truly, the Holy Spirit intervenes and touches many people to openhandedly share their blessings with others. We hope and pray that God will continue to sustain us and our benefactors so that CHRIST's presence will be more and more palpable to our brothers and sisters in this time of uncertainty.

Above: First pantry in front of the Formation House gate; **Left:** Manning the pantry at one of the barangays outside Tagaytay; **Right:** Joint activity with the Sisters' community of the Center of Spirituality.



Oblates

Manila Oblates Sustain Activities Virtually

By: Sr. Pia Lansang, OSB

A description of how our Manila Priory Oblates of St. Benedict keep a “strong online community” in this pandemic time, through their prayer and activities, was published on February 2021 in “*Global Sisters Report*” (GSR), a Project of National Catholic Reporter (D. Stockman). In a free intercultural exchange, religious communities in different parts of the world shared experiences on their Oblates or Associates affiliated to their monasteries and convents in this pandemic time.

The quote from me refers to how “virtual connections have brought the order's (Manila) Oblates closer”. Below is the published text:

"We were never so widely spread and yet so closely-knit together spiritually and socially. Whereas before physical presence limited us to those inside a given physical space, now 'being present' can be from any point, and place, any country in the world ...



Manila Oblates..... From page 9

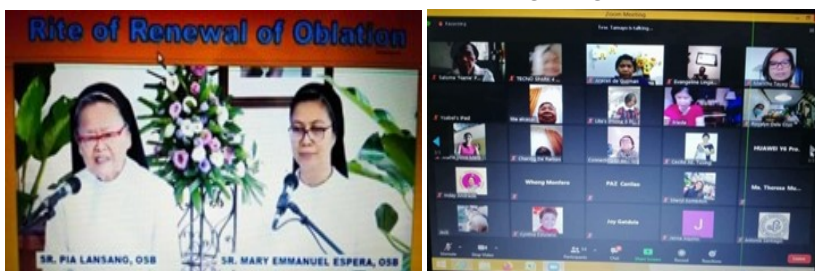
All this keeping in touch have been to them a source of sustenance, nourishment, hope, encouragement, a source of emotional strength, stronger faith. No one is really alone with a strong online community where each one supports the other”.

Oblates’ “Online” Vespers 3x-a-week have been sustained since the month of August last year bringing together members here and abroad. Through the growing familiarity with and fidelity to Vespers developed a new taste and love for Benedictine common prayer.

Monthly Formation Meetings are ongoing despite initial difficulties and ongoing adjustments to mastering Zoom (specially for the elderly in the group). For some, WIFI connection is not available; for others it is unstable. With patience we bear with calls to “mute” and “unmute” during practice, not to mention other tricks to learn. Now we look forward to seeing one another in small square frames as in a collage of ID photos.

Because of restrictions in mobility and gatherings, especially for seniors, the Oblates’ group continue to support the priory’s continuing projects such as the Feeding Program through their own cash donations as well as from friends and relatives.

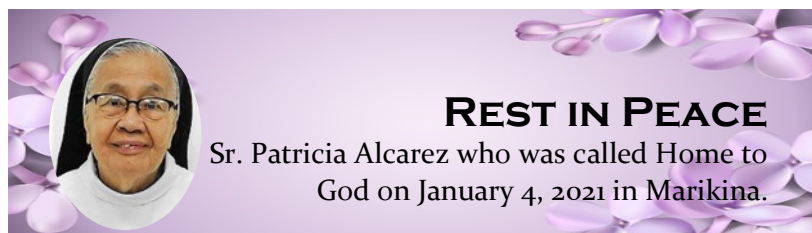
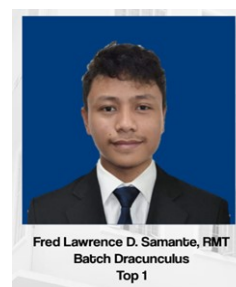
May this journey, hitherto unknown, continue to open for our Oblates, and for all of us new perspectives, new discoveries and life-giving experiences.



Left: Screen shot of Sr.Pia facilitating Oblates’ Renewal of Vows via Zoom -- the first time the Oblates used the platform. Sr. Mary Emmanuel co-hosted with her.
Right: Screen shot of Oblates in a Zoom meeting.

A graduate of the Medical Technology/Medical Laboratory Science Program of St. Scholastica’s College Tacloban ranked Number 1 in the January 21-22, 2021 Licensure Examination for Medical Technologists. **Mr. Fred Lawrence D. Samante** topped the board examinations, leading 1,919 passers out of 2,835 examinees.

CONGRATULATIONS to administrators and faculty of St Scholastica’s College –Tacloban.



THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED.

MANILA PRIORY BULLETIN

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