

A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS

First Profession of Vows

By Postulant Ma. Joanne Zamudio



After a month-long preparation for the much-awaited First Profession of Vows of our dear Novice Anna Margaretha Fondevilla and Novice Kathleen Mae de Guzman, we gathered finally on the Solemnity of the Birth of St. John the Baptist, June 24, 2023. The Eucharistic Celebration was held in the lovely chapel of St. Scholastica's Formation House at 9: 00 am and was presided over by Rev. Fr. Anselm Manalastas, OSB of the Abbey of Our Lady of Montserrat and co-celebrated by Fr. Marlou Lemaire of the Parish of Our Lady of Annunciation in Novaliches.

The Liturgy was beautifully put together and the Missa De Angelis sung by our sisters, made it more solemn and heart-warming, like a Eucharistic celebration in heaven for our dear Novices. Mother Mary Thomas Prado, OSB and Sr. Rosalina Fajardo, OSB headed the group of sisters from different communities especially those our Novices encountered during their formative activity. Their families and friends also came to join

this joyous and blessed occasion. The verse taken from the book of the Prophet Isaiah 49:6 “I will give you as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” was the theme chosen for the celebration. At this point, our Novices would proclaim their self-offering to God who consecrated them to Himself and with His grace be a light in the midst of all people, proclaiming the Good News by the witness of their life and drawing others to communion with the Father.

The highlight of the profession rite was the signing of the profession document on the altar, showing it to the whole congregation, and placing it on the altar. Everyone applauded then and were one with them in joy. It was a great sight to witness our two sisters making a covenant with the Lord. The giving of their religious names was also anticipated by all, a sign of the new life that they will live and that they are now officially accepted as members of the congregation. Novice Anna Margaretha, now, Sr. Amanda Marie, OSB and Novice Kathleen Mae, now, Sr. Sophia Marie, OSB received their veils, symbols of self-giving to Christ and dedicated service to the Church. They left the chapel to change into their religious habits after which they presented themselves to everyone with a smile and a glowing aura. Some of the sisters and family members could not hold back their tears of joy, including myself, as we witnessed the blossoming of our two Sisters who looked so pure and beautiful before the whole assembly and before God.

Before the final blessing, Sr. Amanda Marie and Sr. Sophia Marie expressed their heartfelt sincere gratitude to everyone who had journeyed with them, supported them with their love and strengthened their resolve to seek God in their lives. They thanked our Almighty Father, their parents and loved ones, teachers, mentors, friends, the Congregation of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing, their vocation directress and formators, their co-formandeas and all the lay staff that helped in the preparation of this special day.

The love and faithfulness of God were truly manifested and felt in this celebration as we are all called to mission, be a witness of God’s everlasting goodness, and letting our light shine to all people. Everyone gathered around the newly professed Sisters, greeting them with warm hugs, signs of Pax, prayer wishes and of course, photo documentation. Reception followed afterwards in the inner courtyard where all enjoyed the delicious and festive meals prepared by our kitchen team. ***That in All Things God may be Glorified!***



Thanksgiving Mass with Renewal of Vows

By Sr. Cecille Ido, OSB

“I thank you, Lord for your faithfulness and love.” Ps 108 & Ps 138

At 10:30 in the morning of Saturday, June 3, 2023, Sisters coming from nearby communities of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters in Luzon, assembled at the St. Scholastica’s Center of Spirituality Chapel, Tagaytay City, for the Thanksgiving Mass with Renewal of vows of our Golden Jubilarians: S. Cecille Ido, OSB, Sr. Carmel Simpauco, OSB, S. Roselita Geronimo, OSB, S. Regina David, OSB, S. Anecita Paculaba, OSB and S. Ma, Teresita Lafuente, OSB and the Silver Jubilee of First Profession of Vows of Sister Mary Grace Macatuno, OSB and Sister Alexis Lamarroza, OSB. The mass presider was Rev. Fr. Giuseppe Arsi.

In the spirit of jubilation, all joined the jubilarians in “thanking the Lord for all the blessings of the past years, for families, relatives, friends and benefactors, and all who have accompanied them in their spiritual journey. Special thanks to the Congregation of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters, the Generalate in Rome, our Prioress and her Council, Superiors, Formators, Lay Mission Partners and all our communities everywhere” and to M. Irene Dabalus, OSB and S. Lumen Gloria Dungca, OSB who accompanied and guided the jubilarians in their respective Jubilee retreats. Thank you.

For health reasons, three of the golden jubilarians who are current residents of the St. Benedict’s Retirement Home, had to make their renewal of vows in the morning of June 2, 2023 at the SBH Sisters’ Chapel in Marikina. By way of a reunion, the Tagaytay golden jubilarians came over to SBH on June 4 to be with one another in a short thanksgiving prayer and to share a meal.



Manila Priory Launches History Book, Volume IV (2007—2020)

By Sr. Amadea Donadilla, OSB

“Our identity is in the beginning of our story and in its unfolding from 1906 through the decades until today,” thus said Mother Irene Dabalus, OSB, driving home the importance of history books.



On June 24, 2023, after the first profession of vows of Sr. Amanda Marie Fondevilla, OSB and Sr. Sophia Marie de Guzman, OSB, Volume IV of the History of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing in the Philippines, covering a period of 13 years, from 2007 to 2020, was launched and distributed to the communities, sister-contributors, offices and working committees.

Those who attended it were inspired by the welcome remarks of Mother Mary Thomas Prado, OSB who gave us the reason and the wisdom of why we write history books. “Written stories provide us with scripts that inspire. They give us meaning and reason for being. They help us to move forward with clarity and fervor and that those who shall come after us will have a foundation and a firm footing...But some stories are not only written in books; they are also written in our artifacts and buildings, in other documents, in our art forms. Many others are written in our hearts and in our memories and in the lives of people we have touched.”

Mother Irene Dabalus, OSB thanked the incumbent and past Prioresses for their contributions: Mother Mary Thomas gave the original inspiration to this work; M. Mary John Mananzan, OSB, the editor, gave the over-all concept and direction, and M. Adelaida Ygrubay, OSB described the life and ministry of the Priory in her 2 terms (2013 – 2021). The following were also recognized for their contribution: the Superiors and sisters in the communities, the Head of the ABS schools, SPA Coordinators, Administrators of the hospital and retreat centers, Formators and Vocation Directresses, Sr. M. Peter Mackay, OSB who prepared the cover design, Sr. Samuelle Formoso, OSB who provided the needed materials from the archives and our Oblate Kristine Gaerlan who did the encoding, editing of the manuscripts and the over-all lay out of the book.



Each of the communities in the Priory were given more than 1 copy of the book based on the following areas: 1 for the superior’s office, 1 for the sisters’ library and each of the libraries of the grade school, high school, college or hospital, accordingly.

The communities who were present during the profession received their copies and so did the Sister-contributors and Ms. Gaerlan, all those who in one way or another have contributed to the completion of this book. The copies of those who were not present will be delivered to them.

In her closing remarks, Sr. Rosalina Fajardo, OSB encouraged the sisters to read the book in its entirety as it mirrors our Missionary Benedictine Spirit that we live and breathe during our prayer and work.

“May this history book be an on-going inspiration to the young and old generations of Sisters as we explore and navigate new frontiers in the service of the Lord...” [Sr. Rosalina Fajardo, OSB]
That In All Things God May Be Glorified!



A TIME OF GRACE: Three Months with the Benedictine Sisters of Ferdinand, Indiana, USA

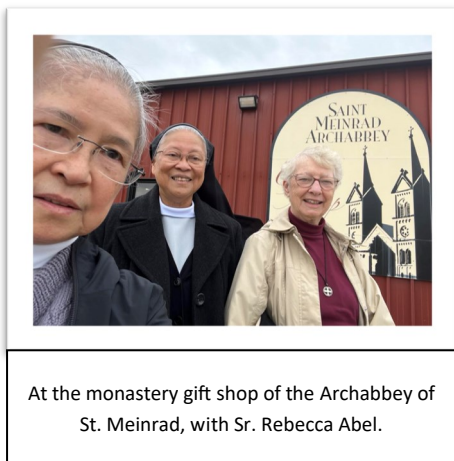
By Sr. Adelaida Ygrubay, OSB

When Sr. Pauline and I planned our renewal, we knew we did not want something academic. We wanted to experience life in a monastic community where we can pray, read and rest, but most of all, to share life with the Sisters in community. We were grateful that the Benedictine Sisters of Ferdinand agreed to accept us for this time of renewal.

THE BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF FERDINAND. The Immaculate Conception Monastery is home to about 110 Sisters who live in the main monastery and in nearby houses within the monastery grounds. For many years, the Sisters ran an academy for girls in Ferdinand, and other schools and hospitals in other places, which are now closed. They have at present two postulants who will enter the novitiate in September. While we were there, one Sister pronounced her final vows (May 2023) and another will make her final profession soon. Those who are interested to learn more about the Sisters of Ferdinand and their various ministries can visit their website at www.TheDome.org.



MEETING OLD AND NEW FRIENDS. We arrived in the monastery at the beginning of March. Meeting us at the airport were Sr. Karen Joseph and Sr. Susan Mary Hooks whom we knew from Rome. Many of you will remember that Sr. Karen came to the Prioory to give us a retreat. Sr. Pauline and I were happy when we realized that aside from these two Sisters, several other Sisters we met in Rome, in the Philippines and elsewhere are actually from Ferdinand.



At the monastery gift shop of the Archabbey of St. Meinrad, with Sr. Rebecca Abel.

The day after we arrived, we went to greet the Prioress, Sr. Anita Louise Lowe, and I was surprised that Sr. Pauline knew her from her time in Rome. Sr. Pauline even remembered that Sr. Anita plays the guitar and taught them her composition, entitled "Listen." Sr. Anita later introduced us to the community gathered in the dining room. Almost from the start, we truly felt welcomed and accepted as part of the community.

I was not yet two days in the community when I had an embarrassing experience. I was putting back my breakfast things when I dropped the whole tray! Everything on it – plate, mug, glass – broke. I could have died of embarrassment! One sister came from the other side and gave me a hug, saying something like: "It's alright. These things happen."

How kind! I was so touched, especially because I was already blaming myself for being clumsy.

But this was not the only experience of kindness and generosity we experienced there. It was still winter when we arrived and, although the monastery was adequately warm, Sisters were concerned that we did not have warm things, and before long, several sisters came to our rooms offering sweaters, shoes, jackets, etc. If we needed anything, the sisters were quick to offer it to us. In addition, in the course of our stay, we have to know almost all the Sisters – some 80-100 of them! In addition, we were made more welcome in our deaneries, Sr. Pauline in the 1st fl. West and me in the 5th fl. West. Each deanery had 10 or more Sisters. Why we were in separate deaneries, we found out later, was because they had to put us where there were available rooms – within the community. They

could have put us in the guesthouse, but they chose to put us among them. In fact, we learned that one Sister was living in another house (not in the main monastery) and when we asked, we were told that it is because there was no more room in the monastery. The community's practice of hospitality is edifying, not only towards us but also towards all who come to the monastery for Holy Mass, retreats or seminars.

THE SPIRITUALITY TEAM. In the monastery is a Spirituality Center where several Sisters work, meeting and accompanying all kinds of people in their spiritual journey. Four Sisters (Sr. Betty Drewes, Sr. Kathy Bilskie, Sr. Kathy Huber and Sr. Karen Joseph), met with us in the beginning for expectations check, some inputs on Contemplation, Lectio Divina and Prayer. They also shared materials and books with us. Our reading, praying and experiences in community – past and present - were brought to an integration in the spiritual direction sessions Sr. Pauline and I had with our Spiritual Directors. I consider this as a most important part of our renewal.

WE HAD OUTINGS, TOO. It was not all quiet and contemplation for us, though. Several times, we were invited to visit interesting places in Indiana and Kentucky. Our first trip was to the boyhood home of Pres. Abraham Lincoln with Sr. Rebecca Abel. She also took me (Sr. Pauline opted not to come along) to the museum of St. Theodora at Terre Haute, Indiana. She had a very interesting life: dispensed from her vows and banished by the Bishop, but now a canonized saint. God indeed writes straight with crooked lines! We also had the chance to visit the Thomas Merton Museum in Louisville, Kentucky. This was a good preparation for our visit to the Gethsemane Monastery with Sr. Karen Joseph and Sr. Jean Marie Ballard. In Gethsemane, we were surprised to meet Cecile Celebrado who was a novice with us. She gave us books and baked products from the monastery gift shop to bring home – what a blessing! Our final outing was to the Benedictine monastery in Covington, Kentucky. This monastery, founded from the monastery in Erie, Pennsylvania, sent Sisters to Ferdinand to start a monastery there.



Tomb of Fr. Louis (Thomas)
Merton, O. Cist.



At the Benedictine Monastery in
Covington, Kentucky, with Oblates

ALL GOOD THINGS HAVE AN END. Time flew so fast, and before we knew it, it was the end of May, and it was time to leave Ferdinand. By then, we had gotten used to the rhythm of life in the monastery. I knew I was going to miss the later rising, but also the prayers in choir. Sr. Pauline and I wondered how we could thank the Sisters for their goodness and kindness to us all these three months. The song “Love Grows Here” came to mind, for indeed we felt love there, and joy and kindness. We wanted to sing the song to them, but did not have the courage to do so. Luckily, we found the song with slides from YouTube. We played it to the Sisters, with sincere prayers for God’s blessings on their community. May the goodness that they shared with us return to them a hundredfold!

WORD OF THANKS to M. Mary Thomas and the Priory Council for giving us this chance for renewal. I remember we had a difficult time finding a place we could go to, and Ferdinand accepted us. I can only repeat the words of St. Paul: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God!” (Rom. 8:28), for we could not have gone to a better place.

That In All Things God May Be Glorified!

INTERNATIONAL WEEKS OF ENCOUNTER 2023

By Sr. Theodora Bilocura, OSB

Our IWE encounter began in Rome on April 20, 2023 to May 25, and continued in Tutzing, Germany from May 26 to June 5, 2023. There were 25 participants from the 11 Pories: Sisters of different nationalities, races, and cultures from all corners of the world. Wow! *We are all sisters!*



The theme was, “We are different, yet one. The way of Jesus... to walk united with our differences.” In order to understand one another, we were grouped into three according to our languages—English, Korean and Portuguese groups. Mother Maoro Sye, OSB and the General Councilors were the key speakers in the significant conferences. Sr. Lumen Gloria Dungca, OSB taught us about Jesus’ Journey into Interculturality. The way of Jesus in accepting all kinds of people whether one is a Jew or Gentile, and how he broke the barriers in His encounter with the Samaritan woman and the Call of Levi. It is a call to break the barriers of culture, language, beliefs, backgrounds, perspectives, etc. Sr. Vania Toscano, OSB, presented the Spirituality in Intercultural living. She posed the questions: How are we living interculturally? Are we truly happy? She tackled the message of the General Chapters, spirituality, faith, Gospel cultures and the mind of Christ. In the end, intercultural living is not a problem but a challenge, and can be overcome. Sr. Katharina Mtuti, OSB gave the topics of Interculturality and the Synodal Journey of the Early Church, Climate



Change/Laudato Si, while Sr. Regina Tesch, OSB imparted to us the Conversion for Intercultural Living. Finally, Mother Maoro Sye, OSB shared with us the Charism of our Congregation, and each participant gave a spiritual sharing on the concrete joys and particular challenges we have experienced in living interculturally in our respective communities and pories.

The exciting part was the pilgrimage journey: Setting one’s feet on the Holy Ground. Filled with enthusiasm, early in the morning we would catch the train in Aurelia station for Roma S. Pietro ready to walk and to step onto the remarkable churches in the eternal City of Rome. The feeling of awe and wonder in the beautiful architecture and famous paintings, and the imposing centuries-old structures, especially the St. Peter’s Basilica and the Square at the Vatican, where you could see the thousands of pilgrims every day. Then there were the series of pilgrimages in different famous churches, like Santa Maria Maggiore and St. John Lateran. The moving experience in the sacred place of St. Paul Outside the Walls where the tomb of Paul is in the basilica’s crypt that bears the Latin inscription “*Paulo Apostolo Mart*”—“to Paul the apostle and martyr.” When we arrived there, the Bishops of Papua New Guinea had their mass and the message of the homily was fitting the joy of the gospel, which is our Christian call to evangelization and missionary discipleship, especially for

those who are vulnerable and in the peripheries. We crossed over to the Tre Fontane, where the martyrdom of St. Paul took place in 67 AD, and the three fountains that miraculously sprouted from where the head of the Apostle hit the ground in three locations after he was beheaded. A significant day, too, was spent in Scala Santa where we went up the stairs kneeling for penance of our sins and praying for our intentions and petitions. Sr. Lumen brought us to Divina Amore, a very peaceful and serene church where people would go for special healing intentions. We went by bus together with the Juniorate and some Casa Sisters to the faraway place of Assisi, the City of Peace. We were able to explore the vast areas and many sites most closely associated with St. Francis of Assisi and St. Claire, including San Damiano, the crypt where Francis was buried. At Assisi, we were able to see the tomb of Venerable Carlo Acutis, open for public veneration. There, I offered a prayer for our young people. Other historical sites we visited were the Catacombs of San Callixtus in Rome where in the 3rd century AD, around half a million Christians and many martyrs were buried. It was a breathtaking visit to the well-known historical places of our Most Holy Father St. Benedict in Monte Cassino and Subiaco. Indeed, it is a precious blessing to experience this personally.

It is inspiring to be in the very sites where the saints walked before us, where sacred and historical events actually took place. The magnitude of the number of saints, martyrs, and relics gracing the city of Rome is truly amazing. To see the beauty of the Church that Jesus created and how universal our Catholic faith is, and to recognize God's constant presence among us, are truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience and a gift. Seeing those spectacular churches evoked in me much spiritual insight and inner growth. From all these experiences, my takeaway insight is this: When you set foot and then set off from that spectacular place, what you have seen and felt will stay imprinted in your soul. That impression and inspiration are eternal.

Our short stay in Tutzing, Germany was a very refreshing one. To encounter the roots of our Congregation—the Mother House, Haus of St. Benedict, and Bernried Community, was a genuine experience of the Missionary Benedictine life—a most precious one. I am edified encountering the old and retired Missionary Sisters who spent their lives in the mission fields of the African Continent: Peramiho, Nairobi, Namibia, Jinja, Angola, and in countries like Brazil, Portugal, Philippines, etc. The inviting Lake Starnberg, the beautiful natural landscapes, peaceful atmosphere, spring blossoms and trees, and good people added to the memorable days of our renewal. We also visited the graveyard of the Sisters, including Sr. Celestine. We also had a joyful chat with Sr. Mary Birkemeyer. To culminate our stay there, we had a Bavarian night in the garden, sharing the joys of singing, dancing, drinking and eating together.

Indeed, with a grateful heart, our six (6) weeks IWE renewal program led me to a transformational encounter in a multitude of ways and with the most diverse experiences.

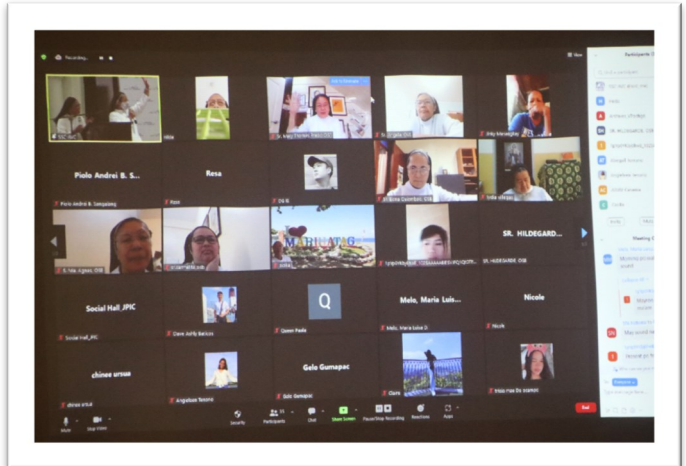
That in all things God may be glorified!



JPIC's "Blended" Assembly Held Amidst Pandemic

By Sr. Aurora Bravo, OSB

The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) implementing arm of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing (MBST) held its assembly on April 3, 2023 at SSC, Social Hall. It was held on two platforms: face to face and via Zoom. Registered in face-to-face were 66 participants, while via Zoom, 100 participants and it was greatly participated in by our different communities in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.



The assembly aimed to set up a five-year direction plan in the context of our faith and of the current socio-political order. Specifically, its goal was to

be updated on the socio-political situations, to know how the laws are being weaponized against people seeking for justice, to comprehend the current attacks on the Church through testimonies and to have a biblico-theological reflection to deepen our faith and to come up with focus concerns for planning.

To realize these objectives, five speakers were invited. Mr. Sonny Africa, Executive Director of IBON Foundation talked on the Philippine situation, the Post 2022 elections and the 1st 6 months of the Marcos-Duterte administration and beyond. Atty. Josalee Deinla, Secretary General of the National Union of People's Lawyers, discussed concrete cases on how laws were abusively used and in turn, instilled again the basic substantive right of the people that has to be availed of at once, particularly the right to a preliminary investigation. There had been narratives of many victims who had suffered years of being detained just to have the cases quashed later on!

In addition, the Church was not exempted from this weaponization of the law as shown by the testimonies on the case of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP) by the members of RMP's Board of Trustees, Sr. Rebecca Pacete, MMS and by Rev. Glofie Baluntong of the United Methodist Church (UMC). With them, the call to push back reverberates.

So in all these where lies our faith? Daniel Franklin Pilario, CM, synthesized a Biblico-Theological Reflection. SEE. . JUDGE. . ACT. The context of the situations has been seen as cited by the statistics and actual testimonies. As Christians, our role as prophets is being called for. There is a need to



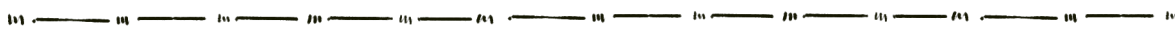
recover the prophetic voice. Works of mercy can be done in the midst of all odds. There is a CHALLENGING CALL for us to be daring and creative in expressing our Christian faith as followers of Christ even until death!

In the afternoon, Mother Mary Thomas gave the situation of the Manila Priory and set guide questions which can be a springboard to set the direction of JPIC for the next five years, (where we are now (Present) and how we move forward

(Future). Two groups were formed and each discussed the guide questions. Sr. Mary Vincent Feliciano, OSB, facilitated the plenum. There was a deepening on why the groups expressed that JPIC was not given the priority, that the Sisters-in-charge have multi-tasks and that some of our communities and institutions have different ways of living out the call for JPIC. However, other groups cited different JPIC endeavors. There was also a suggestion to sustain BEC as core for organizing and to be always in close contact with the poor. Particularities of the responses will still be discussed in detail in our respective JPIC centers and communities.



The following day, the JPIC continued its bonding activity among the sisters and lay partners at the BeneFarm - San Fernando through swimming and varied forms of games. This strengthened them to creatively face the challenges in the context of our faith...the prophecy aspect of our ministry.



27th Socio-Pastoral Assembly @ Bene-Farm, Pampanga

By Sr. Edita Eslop, OSB

After three years of suspended assemblies due to COVID-19 pandemic, the Socio-Pastoral Apostolate (SPA) assembly was finally held at the Bene-Farm in San Fernando, Pampanga on June 27-30, 2023.

Twenty-two sisters from different SPA centers in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao looked forward to a longed-for camaraderie and updating. Fr. Tim Milleza, SSP was the invited speaker.

June 28 was the start of the assembly proper with different sister-facilitators who formed the steering committee. The manner of sharing followed the synodality process of sharing, listening, and feedbacking. The Sisters prayed in accordance with the schedule of the Divine Office and Holy Mass. With regard to the food and accommodation, Sr. Fely Cabilla, OSB and Mezel Maribao provided the participants with a clean venue and simple but healthy meals. The Sisters joyfully shared the pasalubong of Sr. Theodora Bilocura, OSB from Rome. She also prepared prizes and gifts for the parlor games.

The direction setting for the planning by Mother Mary Thomas Prado, OSB culminated the assembly on June 30. The sisters were re-energized as they returned to their respective centers.



NEWS FROM THE STATIONS

Gifted to Give – the Baguio Oblates' Way

By Sr. Edita Eslopor, OSB

The presence of committed, loyal, and mission-conscious Oblates is a blessing to the Baguio community, as they would readily respond to volunteer for any tasks without counting the cost. The Oblates imbibed the Benedictine ideals wherever they may be, fleshing out the exhortation of Pope Francis: ***“We must not forget that true power, at whatever level, is service.”*** The Benedictine Oblates, who are retired professionals, shared their giftedness and made themselves available to assist the sisters whenever they are needed. The Sisters are grateful for their generosity.

In turn, the Oblates are thankful for the kindness and warmth of the sisters in the community with whom they have been affiliated since 1996. They are truly grateful to the sisters: nine sister moderators, and formators in succession. The formators influenced the Oblates, taught and showed them the Missionary Benedictine spirituality. They were also exposed to the different apostolates that enabled them to witness the Rule of St. Benedict on *Ora et Labora* in action: home visits to prisoners and sick neighbors, feeding malnourished children, holding community pantry, community outreach to the neighboring communities, a medical and dental mission to St. Scholastica Hospital in Pambujan and Tanay residents. (As narrated by Oblate Charo Caluza).

In addition, Oblate Maureen Leuzzi, who is now in the USA, shared that they enjoyed helping the sisters in the preparation of the chapel for the daily Holy Mass before the pandemic and joining the sisters at Lauds and Vespers, retreats, recollections, and in the celebration of special feasts.

The latest undertaking of the Oblates is the museum project. The superior entrusted to them the cleaning of the museum artifacts such as medals, paintings, antiques, old coins, woven cloths and bags, old hymnal books, rosaries, and crucifixes for the exhibits. The newly-refurbished room located below the chapel was transformed into a museum. Sr. Mary Samuelle Formoso, OSB from St. Scholastica's College helped and suggested ways on how to design and prepare the museum pieces for display.

Our Oblates always keep in mind the teaching of St. Benedict: “Whenever you begin any good work you should first of all make a most pressing appeal to Christ our Lord to bring it to perfection.” ***That in all things God may be glorified.***



Philberth Scholars' Recollection 2023: Taking Part in Synod

By Trisha Bitara

One should not only listen with the ears but most especially with the heart.

As the Catholic Church launched Synod 2021-2023 with the theme “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission,” the San Benito SIPAG KO, Inc. conducted the Philberth Scholars’ Recollection last Saturday, June 3, 2023, at St. Agnes Academy in Brgy. 17, Legazpi City, Albay.

To heed the people's sentiments, concerns, and present societal problems, especially in times of secularization where the culture of death, the challenges of depression, and the threat of diseases further test humanity, scholars are gathered to help them understand the church's mission to address every pressing issue which encourages youth, to actively take part, listen, speak up, and be catalysts of change.



A total of 13 scholar-participants attended the half-day recollection consisting of nine (9) graduating students who are Jenny Abellano, Maureen Miranda, Shieldeen Millete, Jerissa Nuñez, Jheyma Marbella, April Rose Lopera, Angelica Llaneta, Janina Rica Llona, and Avegail Magdato; one (1) student who is in 3rd year, Trisha Bitara; and three (3) freshmen consisting of Jasmin Belarmino, Denise Apuli, and Mandellah Marollano.

Before the recollection, a prayer song was played to set the right atmosphere and offer the time to the Lord. Following that was the discussion on faith and synodality headed by Ma'am Marisa Llorca. Furthermore, to deepen the understanding of the participants concerning the church's mission, an audio-visual presentation of the homilies given by Archbishop Socrates Villegas and Fr. Richard Lagos about synod and the seven (7) gifts of the Holy Spirit, respectively was expounded to facilitate concentration and better comprehension of the topics.

Both imparted essential lessons and faith values, greatly highlighting that the Church is not closing its eyes on the reality of this world as well as the struggles of humanity. Both also reminded how important it is to listen to each other and how it is an important skill to develop, for it allows us to gain wisdom, knowledge, and fear of God, piety, and many more.

To practice such skills and gauge the scholars' understanding, sharing among scholars together with Ma'am Llorca and Ma'am Pura Llovit took place, helping create a strong bond of faith among the participants and facilitators. The session concluded with the scholars listing their personal goals to contribute to the efforts of synodality and offering them to the Lord to guide them and do them wonderfully in the name of Jesus. In a similar way that God listens to the most silent prayers of His people, we are also called to listen to the woes of our brothers and sisters so that we may be able to lift them up to Him.



CHORAL CONDUCTING RECITAL

By Sr. Therese C. Bulatao, OSB

As an academic requirement for the Degree of Bachelor of Music in Music Performance, Major in Pipe Organ and Piano, Sister Marie Enoch Kim, OSB, conducted the Sisters' Choir composed of the following:

Sr. Imelda Halili, OSB – pianist

Soprano 1: Sr. Mary Peter Mackay, OSB, soloist,

Sr. Isabel Orito, OSB,

Sr. Mary Samuelle Formoso, OSB,

Sr. Mary Emmanuel Espera, OSB

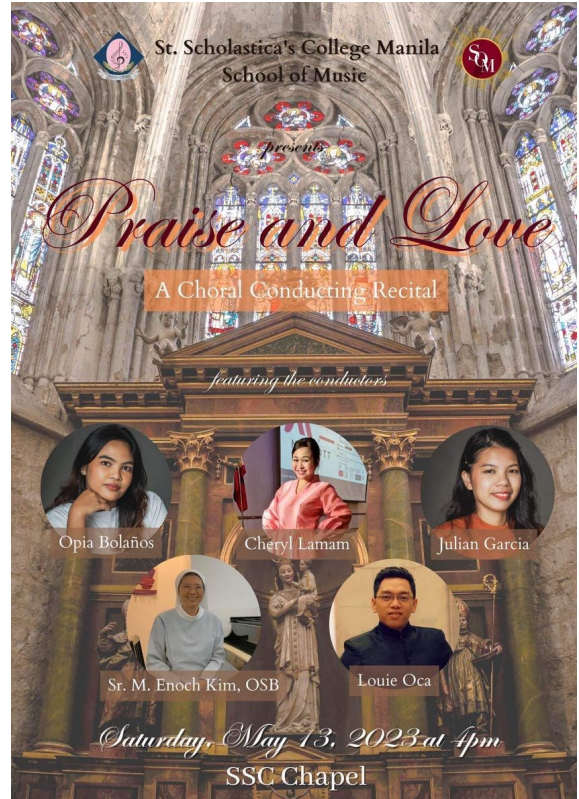
Soprano 2: Sr. Lucila Sardido, OSB,

Sr. Francis Bảo Trậ, OCist.

Alto: Sr. Angeline Arceo, OSB,

Sr. Constance Tecson, OSB,

Sr. Eugene Amar, OSB



This conducting recital was held at the St. Scholastica's School Chapel at 4 p.m. on May 13, 2023. The Sisters' choir sang two (2) songs: "Go Down Moses," a Negro Spiritual and "As Long as I Have Music." Apart from Sister Marie Enoch, OSB, the other Music students who performed in this conducting recital with their respective choirs were the following: Julian Veronica Garcia - South Cantantes Choir, Opia Beatriz Bolaños – Angelicus Choir, Cheryl Lamam – Virlane Voices Choir, Louie Angelo Oca – Coro Arcangelorum Choir.

That this conducting recital could happen after almost three years of the pandemic is a dream come true for the St. Scholastica's College School of Music. For the Finale, all five choirs sang the song, "We are One", with Louie Angelo Oca, as conductor.



Mindanao Immersion Communities: Synodal Direction

By Sr. Maria Jose Esperanza, OSB

Sr. Cecille Ido, OSB, Sr. Odilia Bulayungan, OSB, Sr. Maria Jose Esperanza, OSB, Sr. Fatima Celestial, OSB, Sr. Claudia Sampal, OSB, and Sr. Joyanne Morales, OSB from two communities of Mati, Davao Oriental and Marihatag, Surigao del Sur met for their Mindanao Cluster Immersion Communities Evaluation Session. It was held at the Sisters' Convent in Mati on May 10, 2023 and was concluded by a relaxing outing in one of the pristine beach resorts in Davao Oriental: Baybay ni Apay - *Beach of Father*, the following day.

During the session, questions were asked: *Where are we now as an immersion community? Where do we want to go? How can we go there?* Each Sister shared her experiences. One of the greatest challenges stemming from the sharing was welcoming change and the risks that accompany it. The Sisters in their different apostolates and ministries discovered that inner strength, determination and capabilities are essential factors to meet the demands of mission in a synodal way. In addition, reaching out to co-missionaries and to each Sister for mentoring can make the immersion-formation communities grow and deepen their relationship with the Lord and with the different Christian communities.

Indeed, the answers to the different questions shed light on where the two communities are now when Sister Cecile mentioned her experience on mentoring. The need to glean wisdom from an older sister's experience is very important; hence, there is a need to continue the circle of mentoring and extending a hand to a younger sister in each community.

The evaluation sessions brought a sisterly bonding strikingly similar to the communities' twin cars when they were blessed together by Monsignor Medardo Salomia, parish priest of San Ignacio de Loyola Parish – Luzon, Governor Generoso of Davao Oriental. Many thanks to the Manila Priory Government for the much-awaited vehicles.



Mother Angelica Leviste, OSB Theater: Blessed by Three Events!

By Sr. Mary Nicole Garcia, OSB

“I realized that the “failures” we experience must be celebrated, the same way we do our victories.”

These inspiring words of Juliana Zapanta, the Grade 12 Valedictorian of SY 2022-2023 - from her valedictory speech during their Commencement Exercises - stand out as that significant since they apply to the journey of the different sectors of the SSAM community in relation to the successful use of the above-mentioned Theater.

The 239 Grade 10 students were privileged to be the first to celebrate this very significant occasion, their Moving - Up Ceremony, which was originally scheduled on May 27, 2023, Saturday; however, the threat of typhoon Betty necessitated the change of schedule to Monday, May 29, 2023. It was so heartwarming to see the glowing faces of the parents and the inexpressible joy of the graduates as they celebrated their achievements in this much-awaited venue. More so, the elegant ambiance contributed to the solemnity of the occasion This JHS event was so prepared to perfection...very beautiful it was, indeed!

The 219 Grade 6 and 197 Grade 12 graduates felt the same jubilation and excitement on June 3, 2023, their most awaited day. In the morning, the theater was filled with the parents, guardians and family members of the Grade 6 students and in the afternoon, it was the Grade 12 graduates' turn to fill up the theater. It was truly an unforgettable day, not only for the graduates and their parents but also for all of us here at SSAM simply because we finally made the Theater truly functional after 7 years, including the COVID-19 years.

Incidentally, the Grade 12 Graduates of this Academic Year were the 3rd Batch of students who used the Mother Angelica Theater of St. Scholastica's Academy of Marikina. It was initially blessed in 2020, but due to the pandemic and other serious renovations, this prestigious Theater was only blessed with the limited presence of Sisters, students, faculty, parents, general services and office personnel.

Finally, after 7 years of waiting, we were able to celebrate as a community, as a family with each other's physical presence and this truly gave meaning and became a real blessing to Mother Angelica Theater! That in all things GOD may be glorified!



Sanctus Vincenzus Scholarship Foundation @ 20 and Beyond

By Sr. Mary Vincent Feliciano, OSB

June 6, 2023 marked the 20th anniversary of Sanctus Vincenzus Scholarship Foundation (SVSF), a name coined by Sr. Mary Vincent Feliciano, OSB together with lay co-founding member Ms. Gladys C. Rapay. Starting with a scant seven number of scholars, we were able to take off with the ‘seed money’ given by this lay founding member.

Thus started our aggressive fund raising drive. Soon we embarked on the ambitious formal course of ‘The Art of Fund Raising’. Through the years, applicants for scholarship increased by leaps and bounds and accordingly, our scramble for more benefactors and sponsors. Corporate donors enlisted to help are Alfonso Yuchengco Group of Companies, PASAR Smelting Plant of Isabel Leyte, LEYECO Leyte Electric Company, and several families in Ormoc, individual donors, and, of course, our relentless fund raising activities ranging from big time concerts to minor ones and even P10 raffle tickets.” (SVSF President Dr. Lisa Laurente)

The organizational structure or the business model, is in the form of a triangle—, with SVSF, the policy making body of the Foundation; the Builders, the fundraising arm; and the Partner Schools, and the Scholar in the center. The SVSF mission is to provide college and medicine scholarship to poor but deserving youth who thereby can be employed and create a better world for themselves. A trusted beneficiary, SVSF meets the requirements of SEC, BIR, DSWD, and PCNC and through its donee status, allows donors tax exemption benefits.



Sr. Rosalina, OSB receiving award on behalf of SSC Tacloban

Our Partner Schools believe in the cause of the Foundation. They give a big discount on their school fees and thus have made quality education affordable, providing a venue for an education that prepares the scholars to face challenges in life and to be useful to the society and the community where they belong.

Our scholars undergo rigorous recruiting and testing before being accepted, first of which is that their family cannot send them to college. Because of our strict academic requirements, most of our scholars graduated either as magna cum laude or cum laude or with honors. After twenty years of a ‘study now, pay-later’ plan, SVSF has graduated 165 scholars, all employed and some paying back, and others fully paid. They have paved the way for future scholars.

“Today we bear the mark of a group that is dedicated and committed to our cause and who have won the trust and confidence and respect of our donors not only in Ormoc City, but in the neighboring cities and towns, as well as donors and sponsors abroad who we reach using Facebook and internet.” (SVSF President Emeritus Ms. Leni de los Santos Larrazabal)

hemorrhoids, large body mass, mass at breasts - some were even cancerous. Twelve (12) boys were circumcised. The patients came from all over Northern Samar. On the other hand, the members of the ISM team were also grateful for their experience. Some of them had been doing missions in Northern Samar for 5 to 19 years. The ISM group has been performing the same in Biri Island for the past 9 years. They changed venue this year. It was beneficial for the patients, mostly coming from the main land not to have to cross the sea to Biri Island.

The Local Government Unit, particularly the mayor of Pambujan, was also grateful for hosting this event of providing surgical treatment in the province. SSH was thankful for the opportunity to be able to serve the sick and continue the healing ministry of Jesus.

The ISM team promised to return to SSH in 2024. ***That In All Things God May Be Glorified!***



BRINGING ST. SCHOLASTICA'S HOSPITAL SERVICES TO THE POOR PEOPLE IN NORTHERN SAMAR

By Sr. Andrea Ecito, OSB

On January 11, 2023, the office of Congressman Harris Christopher Ongchuan, representative of the 2nd District of Northern Samar initiated a partnership with St. Scholastica's Hospital. The aim of the partnership is to help the poor people of the district avail of the health services of St. Scholastica's Hospital by tapping the MAIP (Medical Assistance for Indigent Patient) Program of the Department of Health. As of this date 54 in-patients, 3 out-patients and 29 dialysis patients have availed of the said program.

Ten (10) municipalities of Northern Samar belong to the 2nd district. Eight of these are in the coastal area that is a 3 - 4 hour drive (by water and land) to St. Scholastica's Hospital, the only level 1 hospital in the district. It is in this light that the partnership thought of reaching out to these municipalities by conducting mobile clinics.

So on March 13- 24, the 1st run was done in the nine (9) municipalities where 2,976 patients availed of the free consultation and diagnostic services. The patients were also given free medicines. Then, on April 19 - 28, another mobile clinic was conducted. This time in all the 10 municipalities of 2nd district of Northern Samar and 2,844 patients were served. The MAIP program of DOH will pay the cost of the consultation and diagnostic procedures.



Most of the patients we interviewed have not seen a doctor for most of their lives. They only rely on the local "tambalan" (faith healer). Very

heartbreaking was how the people patiently waited for their turn in a crowded and extremely hot auditorium/covered court. They were just grateful and overjoyed to be able to see a doctor in their lifetime. The female radiology technician, while conducting an ECG on an old man was shocked when the man almost pulled down his trousers when asked to remove his shirt. According to the old man, it was his first time to have ECG. Another old lady got scared of the ECG thinking she might be electrocuted.

As “Jesus sent out his disciples to share in his mission and gave them authority over demons, as well as the power to heal the sick,” we too are being sent to share in the same mission.



Art Mission Possible: A Homecoming Mission

By Mary Grace Cortez, Blue Quill (1996 – 1999)

Silver Jubilarian '24

I used to wonder what homecoming and its purpose are. Literally, it is coming back home. St. Scholastica’s Academy-City of San Fernando Pampanga (SSA-CSFP) has been our second home for more or less four years, personally mine for 12, and we are coming back to give back.

SSA-CSFP Batch '99 organized and hosted an art workshop titled “Art Mission Possible (Art-for-a-Cause).” This is one among the various activities leading to the 2024 Grand Alumni Homecoming with an overarching theme, “Benedictine Spirit Blazing in Our Hearts.”



Art Mission Possible wishes to convey a message of hope through visual arts as it exemplifies the values of Ora et Labora that with prayer and work, anything is possible. Everyone, regardless of age, beginners and skilled, were all welcomed, making Art Mission Possible an avenue for the kids and the kids at heart who want to learn and practice art. With Art Mission Possible, we also had the opportunity to reach out and interact with 31 children from Bagong Sibol community that happens to be the adopted community of SSA through its Social Involvement Program.

The art activity was reminiscent of our SSA years – Scholasticans working together doing outreach programs and aspiring to share hope to our less fortunate brothers and sisters. Those years made helping innate in us. The 31 children from Bagong Sibol community and the 64 participants who registered in the day’s program – many of whom are friends and children of fellow alumni – completed the roster of 95 artists-to-be.

The event took place at St. Joseph Annex Building, SSA-CSFP on April 15, 2023. Participants, parents and guardians, teachers, and the alumni-organizers gathered for a prayer before 8:30 in the morning, after which, Batch 99 Chairperson, Maritess Tongio Halay-ay officially opened the workshop.

All the participants were taught basic sketching, tonal values, and shadows and lights. Activities included shading, sketching, mixing colors, and painting. The techniques taught were then practiced on canvas tote bags by painting still life objects using acrylic paints. Everyone looked excited and maybe we were a little nervous on the outcome as this activity was a first for the batch.

The first class was composed of 33 participants aged 9 and below and they painted an open-faced papaya. The second class had 41 participants aged 10 -11, including the 31 Bagong Sibol kids. They painted two slices of watermelon. The third class of 21 participants aged 12 and above, including current JHS students of SSA and their parents painted a still life of jars.

It was indeed a mission possible as we felt the warm support of the teachers, participants, parents and guardians, batch officers and alumni, our generous sponsors. Mr. Joel Santos, the school’s SIP Coordinator and Sr. Lydia Villegas, the Directress stayed throughout the event to show their support to our project.

Our sponsors made sure that the participants did not just go home with Art know-how from their experience in the workshop but also they brought home with them packed lunch from Jollibee, loot bags with snacks and other dry goods. There was even a surprise appearance of our favorite bee mascot.

The 31 Bagong Sibol kids were also given bags of art materials for them to continue practicing what they have learned from the workshop. Some of the kids went home teary-eyed as they expressed their happiness and gratefulness for the experience. It was a momentous event not only for the participants but also for us, organizers as we experienced how teamwork makes it work. The reward for our hard work was seeing joy in the participants’ faces. We bade every participant farewell, wishing that Art Mission Possible has inspired them to create and has given them hope that with prayer and work, anything is indeed possible.



UNIQUE EVENTS IN CONVENT AND CENTER IN MAY-JUNE

By Mother Irene Dabalus, OSB

May and June brought welcome showers to revive our plants and the flowers and days to refresh our retreatants and guests from the intense heat of the season. We saw an ever increasing number of people seeking the Center for spiritual renewal. Two unique events in Convent and Center are reported in this issue.

ENHANCING RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE GOLDEN YEARS

From May 27-31, 2023, four golden jubilarians - Sr. Cecille Ido, OSB, Sr. Carmel Simpauco, OSB, Sr. Maria Teresita Lafuente, OSB, and Sr. Regina David, OSB – went into the silence of a five-day retreat to prepare for the celebration of their golden jubilee of profession on June 3, 2023. Missing were Sr. Roselita Geronimo, OSB, and Sr. Anecita Paculaba, OSB, who stayed home for health reasons. With computers and USB drives in interactive sessions they reminisced on the fifty years of their religious life, thanking God in songs of praise for his fidelity to them in their life.



GRADE TWELVE STUDENTS SEEK GOD AS THEIR TRUE FRIEND

Sr. Carmela Mitaran, OSB, gladly accepted the request of the Tagaytay City Science National High School-Integrated Science High School of the Department of Education School Division Cavite Province to conduct the recollection of Grade Twelve graduating students. On June 9 from 9 am – 4 pm. she led 40 graduating boys and girls through a day of prayer, designed to help them “find God as a true friend who supports them in all their life decisions.” The students proved very cooperative and eager to grow spiritually and strike a relationship with God and with their classmates as they reached the end of the school year. Sr. Carmela provided thoughts for reflection through a slide show, rounded up by a rich sharing of the students on their experiences of finding God present in their lives.



Year-End Activities at St. Scholastica's College, Westgrove

By Sr. Mary Grace Macatuno, OSB

The entire school community at St. Scholastica's College Westgrove was busy with several activities practically the whole month of May. The most awaited Grade School and High School Clubfest started with a bang on May 3, 2023. A mini concert featured varied musical performances from the Viva Voce Group of Mrs. Camille Lopez-Molina and dance performances from Mrs. Abigail Yee-Alvia's Continuing Dance Education Program (CDEP) of St. Scholastica's College Manila. It was held at the covered court in the morning capped in the evening with bonfire and prayer service to send off the graduating students at the school grounds in front of the main building. It was followed by the High School Pamana ni Ate the following day, May 4, 2023. This activity highlighted the passing on the Senior High School students' legacy to whom they choose as the next role model Scholasticans. This can be from any level from the Junior High School and this year Grade 9 Class made it to the top. They have been chosen to set a good example for the younger ones in giving witness to Ora et Labora daily in the School of the Lord's Service.



The Preschool Moving Up Ceremony, held on May 5, 2023, was a 2-part activity with The Little Red Hen musical and the distribution of awards and certificates. The kindergarten students, sixteen of them, were given roles to play and to sing as farm animals, mother hen and chicks, farmers and miller with the sly fox. It was a classic story of kindness and empathy that led the characters to grow in collaboration to live as a community.

On May 6, 2023, the gates opened in the evening for the High School Dance utilizing Dress Code Cyber Y2K. It wowed everyone with the amazing Zenith o84 band concert, photo booth, jail booth, DJ AZ, and dance for all music. The activity ended at exactly 10 o'clock in the evening. The Completion Ceremony of Grade 10 was set on May 19, 2023. It started with a short prayer service followed immediately with conferring of awards and certificates. Then the 19th Commencement Exercises was held on May 27, 2023. Sr. Rosalina Fajardo, OSB, Subprioress, represented Sr. Daniela Romero, OSB, School Principal and Directress, in the Confirmation of 27 Grade School graduates and 15 Senior High School graduates. Rev. Fr Anselm Manalastas, OSB presided over the Eucharistic celebration prior to the main graduation rites.



Finally, before the month ended, Sr. Martha Lugtu, OSB and Sr. Reginalda Cortez, OSB led the employees' outing at Johndel Beach Resort in Nasugbu, Batangas on May 29, 2023. The members of the administration, faculty, non-teaching personnel and staff, enjoyed the reward of working and praying together as one happy community, that of a shared experience of rest and recreation at the beach. A sumptuous meal, light karaoke singing, and swimming to their hearts' content simply cheered everyone. They went home with hearts filled with so much joy and gratitude so that in all things God may be glorified.

FORMATION

Immersion/Exposure of Postulants '2023

By Postulant Carmela and Postulant Belle

After years of the pandemic, we, the postulants, could enjoy a five-day immersion/ exposure, from April 10 to 16, 2023 (Octave of Easter). Organized by Sr. Rosalind Tanhueco, OSB and Ms. Ma. Luisa Melo known as “Jalou”, a long-time social worker in CDC Taal, we were welcomed by the people of Barangay Pansol, Taal, Batangas. We arrived at CDC



Taal at around 9 am for the orientation by Ms. Jalou. After lunch, Nanay Lorna arrived in a tricycle with a big smile to fetch us. Nanay Lorna is our host, but during the days of April 11, 12, 13, and 14, we went to different houses of other mothers of the CDC group.

Through observation, conversation, and engagement in their daily life activities, we appreciated these persons and the culture of the people of Pansol. This is a basic rural community, whose livelihood is earned from the sugarcane field, kaong tree products (vinegar, broom and barbecue sticks), sawali (a coarse twilled matting of flattened bamboo strips used for house partitions, walling and baskets), sewing barongs (Filipino male’s long-sleeved shirt for formal occasions), carpentry, animal husbandry (pigs, chickens, goats, rabbits, and cows). We were allowed to try to weave some rows and got scratched, or broke the bamboo strips, and our lines were not straight. However, we really enjoyed and admired how skillful the women are in working with sawali. It is said that a woman in this place who does not know how to weave a sawali is lazy. A number from the younger generation in Pansol received scholarships from the government or from CDC Taal and have become professionals. We admire the resilience of the people here as they shared with us their difficult times, especially, during and after the Taal Volcano Eruption and the Pandemic. Ate Vergie shared that sometimes they did not have viand; her children went to school with empty stomachs, and she had a hard time going to the farm to feed the cows. The wedding gown tailors had to sew masks instead of gowns. Despite that, their means of livelihood revived as we can see today.

Simplicity is a noticeable character of Pansol residents. Any viand and rice for them is already good; simple clothes and slippers are the “fashion” here. They are close to Nature. Some senior women still go to the spring of water to wash their clothes, despite the slippery and stiff roads. They do not know how to judge and hate; they only know how to love, give, and laugh. That is why age does not matter to them. We marveled at Nanay Salve who can climb up the guava tree in her 60s, Nanay Precy, chopping the coconut, Nanay Lorna, being a member of the Parish Church of CDC’s Zumba group, etc.

The people in Pansol are very family-oriented. We could see husbands and wives helping together in cooking; children who have jobs help to build the houses of their parents; children who are still

studying also help out their parents with their small part-time jobs or housework. Pansol is like a large family. This is because the parents divide the lands for their children; their children get married and stay nearby the house of their parents and have more children. Thus, everyone knows one another here. For example, one day we walked to the house of Mrs. Melody, only to realize that her mother is Nanay Salve, our neighbor. We went to the houses of Mrs. Vergie and Mrs. Evelyn, and learnt that their husbands are brothers, too, etc.

Besides the family ties, community ties are also visible here. Everyone is welcomed in all the houses; the gates are just for decorations. When we wanted to ask for the fruits of someone's tree, we just ask and then they say "Oo, kuha!" ("Yes, get it!") or they will help to pick it if it is too high. Sir Jonathan is a well-off person in Pansol, since he is a principal. He invited all to his birthday party with abundant food and drinks. As we arrived here in Pansol, there were two funerals going on. One of them was of Sir Emiliano, who had no children. They told us that Sir Emiliano and his wife had no children but had many adopted children. They gave generously to others in need, to the point that they became poor. Now, seeing the lonely widow crying beside the casket, we also did not know what to say but prayed earnestly for her. The two wakes were always full of people from this Barangay. In the front yard of the wake, people played lotto and talked to one another joyfully. It seems that laughter and noise are meant to relieve the family from sorrow and grief. This is different from some cultures wherein the visitors had to appear sorrowful and silent; in some places, they even hire people to cry and weep for the dead.

Outside of the family and community, the people in Pansol are also very generous and hospitable to strangers like us. The Barangay Captain offered us a patrol car for transportation when needed. All houses welcomed us heartily and fed us many meals a day. One of the wedding gown tailors just finished assembling a gown and she joyfully allowed the two of us for a fitting in. I cannot forget the firewood experience in the houses, despite the heat and smoke, the food is outstandingly delicious. As we left, they brought a lot of pasalubong (take home gifts) and embraced us in tears. It was only six days, but these simple hearts have already loved us so much.



The Lord Jesus used to prepare meals, cook for his disciples, and multiply bread and fish for thousands. In the face of the mothers of Pansol, we see the Lord Jesus, who bore the heat of the firewood and made delicious meals for her families, neighbors and for us. Being blessed with these experiences, we pray that we, in turn will be loving, generous and simple in serving others. We especially thank our formators, Sr. Mary Paul and Sr. Leticia, the organizers, Sr. Rosalind, Ms. Jalou and the CDC staff, the mothers of Pansol and all those who were with us to make this immersion experience possible and meaningful.

An Exposure/Immersion Experience with the Aetas of Porac

By Novice Anna Fondevilla and Novice Kathleen De Guzman

On Tuesday of the Octave of Easter, Sr. Imaya Calingayan, OSB accompanied us going up the mountain to live with the Aetas for the next 4 days. Our guide was not around to meet us – she was working on their piece of land. So, we started climbing at 9:30 am and reached our destination on top of the mountain at 11:30 am. What we came upon was a bamboo “papag” – a simple bed with a thatched grass roof and a single wall made of dried banana leaves. We set down our things and had lunch “boodle fight” style with our bare hands (one of the many firsts for Novice Kathleen) – this means the food was laid out on the banana leaves and everyone dug in. Our foster family’s livelihood came mainly from farming, so on the afternoon of our first day with them, Tatay (father) Peping taught us how to remove the large root networks of “talahib” (a type of tall grass with razor-sharp edges) using a “kutsoy” (hoe). We were reminded of the parable of the good and bad soil. Cultivating the soil is hard work and takes much diligence and patience. However, it was quite satisfying to see how much of the roots we had removed after a few hours of work. We had to be careful, though, because the roots were quite sharp, and S. Imaya accidentally cut her hand. In the evening, we had meat of the “baboy-damo” (literally pig-grass) or wild boar for supper by the light of a solar lamp. The men had gone hunting during Holy Week. Eating wild boar was a first for both of us. So was finding a hidden spot among the trees and grasses to relieve ourselves. Another first was going to a “sapa” (or stream; this one came from a small pool that was being fed by the large trees surrounding the pool) to bathe, as well as sleeping on the ground when we had to evacuate to another hut because it rained. The hut was bigger than our papag, but it was still cramped because there were ten of us, plus Lala, their dog, and a puppy, Patel (sibling). During the day, Kaka, their monkey was around, and we found her very entertaining.



It was a life very far removed from the conveniences of the city. Who would imagine that it would take two days for us to eat cassava pancake because we had to make a “bayuhan” (mortar and pestle) from scratch? However, we were spared the heavy burden of fetching water because everybody was worried that our frail city legs would not be able to negotiate the steep slopes of the mountain. Instead, we had some unexpected fun, riding a “careta” (a kind of wagon) pulled by a carabao through the narrow mountainside roads (it was completely unplanned, and they only overheard our conversation that it would be interesting to ride the carabao. We had no intention of asking.). It was more exciting than any ride in an amusement park. There were no safety harnesses and we had to hold on tight if we did not want to find ourselves tumbling down the mountain. To add to our other exciting experiences, we were able to taste rice cooked in bamboo and to nibble on sugarcane. On our last night, the fog lifted and we were treated to a beautiful view of the city lights below. The next day, our last day, the sunrise was majestic. Our foster family gave us gifts from the mountain, firewood, bamboo glasses, and coconut shell bowls – we did not ask for these gifts, but they took our casual observations, such as our admiration for the bowls, very seriously. All in all, it was an unforgettable experience of grounding, connecting, and transcending, for which we are both very grateful.

OBLATES NEWS

LOOKING ANEW AT ST. BENEDICT'S OBLATES

By Sr. Hilda Buhay, OSB

Mother Prioress General Maoro Sye, OSB, in her Circular Letter No.22, dated July 11, 2022 communicated a new way of looking at our MBS Oblates: "Indeed, life of an oblate in the past largely revolved around following the rituals of the monastery and deepening one's personal spirituality under the direction of the Sisters. Now, ***Oblates are required to become not only witnesses to the values espoused in the Rule of St. Benedict, but to be the active bearers of those values. You who are Oblates must know St. Benedict, but also be the active bearers to the world at large.***" (Former Abbot Primate Notker Wolf, 4th International Oblate Congress, 2017)

Nowadays the Benedictine communities begin to see the oblates as co-workers in the Vineyard, rather than a group of nice people who like us and help out as volunteers in the monastery. Indeed, our oblates can become the people who take our mission and charism to places we can no longer go. They are carriers of our missionary Benedictine spirituality.

Online "KAPUSO NI SAN BENITO"

Oblates Online meeting for regular sharing of the Gospel and Benedictine values.

Enrollees and Novice Oblates are accompanied by Oblate Lolita Vargas (Priory House), Oblate Hilda Bulatao (SSA Marikina), Oblate Elena Regpala (Baguio Community), Sister Hilda Buhay OSB (SBH Marikina) and Sister Evangeline Madayag, OSB (SSA Marikina).



SBH Novice Oblates Investiture

Lenten Recollection in Tagaytay
March 17-19, 2023
Sr. Ma. Luisa Villanueva OSB, presiding over the investiture.



VOCATION ANIMATION

VOCATION ACTIVITIES FROM APRIL -JUNE 2023

By the Manila Priory Animators

After the Season of Easter ended, the Manila Priory Vocation Animators embarked on a series of face-to-face and outdoor vocation activities to connect with young ladies who might be interested in joining us on our Missionary Benedictine journey.

In April, our vocation animators from St. Scholastica's College Tacloban Inc. and Divine Word Hospital organized a Lenten Recollection called MBS #VocRec2023 on April 5, 2023. Fifteen (15) young women attended this event. The community also launched their "Coffee Break" sessions with the ladies (Philberth scholars, students, alumnae, staff, personnel) since January of this year and they already invited 28 ladies since then. From April 14-16, 2023, an Intensive Parish and School Vocation Promotion and postings of vocation materials took place in Kitao-tao, Maramag, and other locations, also organized by the sisters. In the Cavite area, Sr. Nicole Garcia, OSB, the Institutional Campus Minister and Vocation Animator of the Westgrove community, assigned the sisters to facilitate the annual recollection of the Junior High School and the annual retreat of Senior High School students. On April 27-28, 2023, Sr. Mary Grace, OSB, led a group of 15 Grade 12 students on an overnight synthesis retreat at St. Scholastica's Center of Spirituality in Tagaytay. Furthermore, on April 30, 2023, Sr. Marialuz Dungca, OSB, went out with Ms. Merry Jean Esparas, a prospect from Northern Samar, to visit St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Mandaluyong, Manila.

In May, there were also varied activities done by the animators. The Mati Community organized two "Dorm Hopping" events within the vicinity of Davao Oriental State University in Mati City facilitated by Sr. Claudia Sampal, OSB. The first took place on May 6, attended by 6 ladies, all Philbert scholars. On May 20, 4 ladies approached Sr. Claudia, OSB in the 7- Eleven Convenient Store. One of them was a nursing student who expressed interest after discovering that Sr. Claudia, OSB was a nurse by profession. These individuals were active participants in the church community, serving as lectors and choir members. On May 12, 2023, Sr. Marialuz, OSB, had a Zoom Meeting with the Priory Animators. Sr. Mary Grace Macatuno, OSB gave an echo on the DVP Annual Conference she participated in at our St. Scholastica's Center of Spirituality, Tagaytay last January, 2023. Animators from Priory House, Tacloban School, Marikina, Westgrove, Angeles, Formation House, and Baguio attended the meeting. Seminar materials and handouts from the said conference were shared in the MBS ANIMATORS group chat for the information of those who were not able to attend the meeting due to fluctuating Wi-Fi -signal and other concerns.

Before the month ended, a prospect from Makati, Ms. Keeshia Bernales, who was an attendee of the Vocation Retreat in December 2022, visited Sr. Leticia Saraza, OSB at the Formation House.

On June 2, 2023, the Tacloban Hospital Community of Sisters participated in the Palo WRAAP Vocation Pilgrimage. While on June 4, 2023, the Bacolod Animators headed by Sr. Eligia Cababat, OSB organized a "Coffee Colloquy" on the Solemn Feast of the Blessed Trinity. Three promising Grade 10 completers from Holy Family High School in Sum-ag, namely Alexia Fe Carmona, Princess Nicole Pinonggan from Bago City, and Krystel Salvador, participated in the event.

We continue to work hand in hand in reaching out to interested ladies and hope that in HIS time, God will grant us more vocations for our Priory and Congregation.

Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing
Manila Priory

Seek the things that last...

SEEK
God

Experience PEACE through prayer;
JOY being with the community;
and LOVE doing missionary service.

Contact us! Get to know about our life more!
(02) 8524 - 1524 manilapriory.com.ph
0933 - 827 - 4473 Missionary Benedictines
 vocationbenedictine@gmail.com

Congratulations!

Sr. Marie Enoch Kim, OSB of Daegu Priory graduated Magna Cum laude with a Degree of Bachelor of Music Performance, Major in Pipe Organ from St. Scholastica's College, Manila Philippines on June 17, 2023. She received a plaque of Sr. Baptista Battig Award for her outstanding ability and achievement in the field of music being invited



as a guest artist in the 47th International Bamboo Organ Festival, her passion to serve others and her incomparable commitment to be an instrument of God epitomizing the motto of Ora et labora.

Piano Recital in partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Music Performance Major in Piano.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW SUPERIORS

Mother Mary Thomas Prado, OSB installed two new superiors during the month of June for the first term of Office, effective June 15, 2023.



Mother Mary Joh Mananzan, OSB was installed as superior of San Fernando Community on June 14, 2023.

Sr. Agnella Capili was installed as Superior of Manila Community on June 15, 2023.



In loving memory of

+ **Sister Winfrieda Bugayong, OSB**
April 11, 1920 - April 8, 2023

+ **Sister M. Veronica Origenes, OSB**
August 22, 1927 - May 20, 2023

Rest in Peace.

MANILA PRIORY BULLETIN TEAM

EDITOR: SR. ROSALINA FAJARDO, OSB

MEMBERS: SR. ISABEL ORITO, OSB & SR. MARY PETER MACKAY, OSB

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