

TREASURERS MEET IN - PERSON AFTER PANDEMIC

By Sr. Vida Mones, OSB



Twenty-three treasurers of the Manila Priory assigned in different apostolates and communities gathered for their annual meeting last February 17 – 18, 2023 at St. John/ St. Paul Boardroom of St. Scholastica's College - Manila. It was a joy for everyone to attend the meeting in person after two years of virtual meetings during the pandemic. The planned 3-day meeting was shortened to two after they were able to cover all the topics in the evening of the second day. This provided for an opportunity for some of them to tour the newly-transformed farm in San Fernando, Pampanga, now called the Benefarm, where they enjoyed looking at all the beautifully designed facilities and landscapes.

Although Mother Mary Thomas Prado, OSB was away for her canonical visitation in SSCS Tagaytay, the Treasurers were privileged to listen to her short but profound pre-recorded Welcome Address. She took the readings of the day to drive home her point on how important it is to be united, with Christ at the center. For all the financial challenges brought about by the new government regulations and policies, her encouraging words were to “meet the challenges head on, deal with the problems by looking for a solution, and meet the pressure with a force of dedication to our task of stewarding our resources and thinking way ahead into building a creative future.”

Our invited resource person on the economic situation of the country was Dr. Jose Antonio Tan, III. He is currently the Director at ADB's Southeast Asia Department, handling operations in Public Management, Financial Sector and Trade Division. He came with his wife, Sheila Tan, a very good friend of Sr. Constance and the sisters. He expertly explained the Philippine economy beginning with the growing GDP, the revenue and spending activities that caused the growth, the challenge on how the growth can be sustained, the need for good governance, stating the fact that there is inefficient tax administration and the need for budget tightening, among others.



Another invited speaker was Atty. Sabino Jose Padilla, III, a faithful friend and legal counsel of the Priory. His topic was on the BIR RMC 78-2022, (Clarifying the Income Tax Treatment of the Different Classifications of Educational Institutions and Their Tax Obligations), which he is critical of because it may cause problems for Non-Stock, Non-Profit Educational Institutions as it is contrary to their exemption from taxation based on the Constitution. He emphasized on the revenues which should be “actually, directly and exclusively used

for educational purposes” in order to be tax-exempt. He shared important legal opinions and advices such as the need for proper documentation, i.e. requiring Official Receipts for all payments, the need for proper withholding of tax for purchases of goods and services in order to avoid tax assessment, and other important legal issues. He also shared his frustration about the differing interpretations of the tax laws within the BIR itself, which burden the institutions.

The in-house speakers were the four Sisters from the Finance Technical Committee (FTC), Sr. Celeste Licas, OSB, Sister Marianne Razon, OSB, Sr. Shirley Roble, OSB and Sr. Constance Tecson, OSB, who discussed extensively the Draft of the New Procedures of Recording Contributed Services, New Accounting System of the Priory, New Templates of the Schedule of Investments, and the planning for the next Business Office staff development, respectively. The Sister-presenters who were at the same time assigned as facilitators in the previous sessions, greatly appreciated the active participation of the Treasurers as they shared their ideas, experiences and concerns in their respective apostolates and communities as well as their consensus with regards to the major issues tackled throughout the meeting.

The treasurers wish to extend their gratitude to all the Sisters, friends and lay mission partners for their support that filled their gathering with so much blessings. May God bless them all a thousandfold for their generosity and singleness of heart in serving God.

That in all things God may be glorified!

Brother Monks and Sisters Celebrate Feast of St. Scholastica

By: Sr. Mary Samuelle A. Formoso, OSB

After almost three years of not gathering for the celebration of the feast of St. Scholastica due to Covid-19 pandemic, the Sisters and the Monks from San Beda finally were able to celebrate the feast together last February 9, 2023 at the Priory House. M. Prioress General Cecile Lanas, OSB and the Benedictine Sisters of the Eucharistic King, Rev. Fr. Carmelo Arada, Jr., Fr. JD Zaldivar and Fr. Jay of the Santissima Trinidad Parish also joined in the celebration.



The affair started with First Vespers in the nicely decorated chapel. The beautiful voices of the Sisters, the Monks, and the Priests resounded as they chanted the prayer of thanksgiving. The reception followed in the newly renovated Stations of the Cross Area where sumptuous foods were prepared and served, buffet style.

The highlight of the celebration was the showcase of talents during the short program. The Benedictine Sisters of the Eucharistic King Sisters in costumes with vibrant colors performed an Ifugao Tribal Dance. The young monks, on the other hand, rendered a love song, and while singing, Abbot Austin, OSB, Fr. Rembert, OSB and some other Monks handed each Sister a beautiful statue of the Sto. Nino with a cholocalte as a gift. They also rendered a dance number.



Surprisingly, Fr. JD joined them and delighted the audience with his dancing skill. The Sisters of the Priory House and Manila communities sang "Love Grows Here" by Don Besig. They also presented a Sinulog dance choreographed by Sr. Eugene Amar, OSB. The statue of St. Scholastica was carried and used during the dance instead of the Sto. Nino. At the end of the dance, they shouted, "Viva Santa Eskolastika"! Truly, it was a celebration of joy and thanksgiving which concluded with Compline. That in all things, God may be glorified!



Sisters Welcome La Purisima

By Sr. Rosalina Fajardo, OSB



On March 2, 2023, M. Mary Thomas Prado, OSB and the Sisters of the Priory House welcomed Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception (*La Purisima*) to her new home. She is now enthroned at the Prayer Room of St. Scholastica's chapel.

The Jarencio family, represented by Yvette Jarencio, (GS '59, HS '63, College '67) and Ramon donated to St. Scholastica's Priory, the century - old image of Our Lady of Immaculate Concepcion (*La Purisima*), complete with her apparel. It was on October 25, 2021 when M. Mary Thomas Prado, OSB signed the deed of donation in the presence of Yvette Jarencio, the family curator.

Neni Sta. Romana, a classmate of Yvette, facilitated the transfer of the statue from the family residence in Eurovilla, Santa Ana, Manila to the Prayer Room of St. Scholastica's Chapel.

According to the story of Yvette, the life-sized sacred statue has been with her family since the early 1900s and passed on from one generation to the next. The statue originally came from Spain, destined for the Jesuit community in Manila, but for some reason, they had ordered another one. Fortunately, her great-grandfather, Don Juan Pimentel, purchased it for their parish's festivities. Our Lady was welcomed into the ancestral home of his parents-in-law, the Baldeos. From 1900 until the 1990s, *La Purisima* participated in all Marian festivities of the Paroquia de San Juan Bautista in Daet, Camarines.

Towards the end, Yvette said to the sisters gathered at the Prayer Room: "We are grateful for your welcome, as this is like Our Lady coming home to where my mother lived as a boarder at St. Scholastica's College from grade school to college" to which Mother Mary Thomas replied: "We trust that she will hear our prayers and petitions to her Son."

With heartfelt gratitude, we thank the Jarencio family for entrusting to our care their precious heirloom.



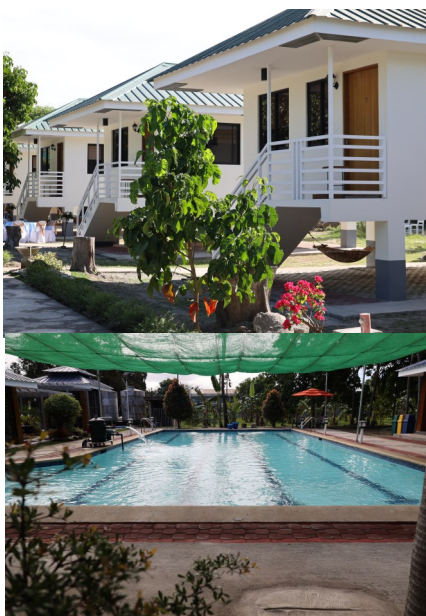
BeneFarms: A Fusion of our Long - Held Benedictine Tradition

By Sr. Mary Emmanuel Espera, OSB

Welcome to Benefarm - San Fernando! One who enters the place would right away sense the invitation to “just-be” and re-charge, appreciate the beauty of creation and ultimately give thanks to the Creator!

The Benefarm - San Fernando was inaugurated last February 12, 2023 with the Blessing Rites presided over by Fr. Cesar Violenta, SSP. Sisters and guests were delighted to see the transformation of the place to a space where our Benedictine tradition of the hermitage experience, Lectio Divina and mindfulness practices can be shared to anyone who knocks at the door of our Benefarms.

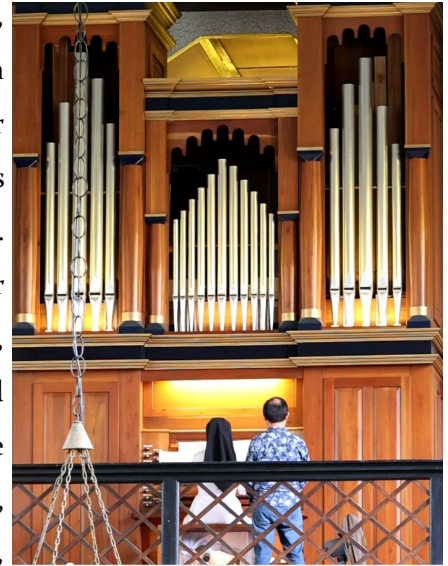
The farm offers various facilities to guests- a spacious pavilion that can accommodate 25-35 persons, five hermitage houses, a lectio divina cabana and a pool area with 3 more cabanas. Forming part of the Benefarm ecosystem are the cows, pigs, chickens, ducks, a peahen and a peacock. *Tilapia* or St. Peter’s fish inhabit the ponds surrounding the pavilion and the lectio cabana area. When the pandemic hit the country in 2020, the 3.45 -hectare (8.53 acres) property was reforested with nearly 1,000 indigenous trees, hardwood and fruit trees. In support of Care for the Earth advocacy, organic farming has been continuously practiced in the farm since the beginning. Guests and Sisters who come for quiet and relaxation are guided by the Ten Ecological Principles of the Farm. “We do not leave this farm and forest without concrete action for Mother Earth”, the 10th Principle states. Just as we who have come and left the BeneFarm being nourished, body and soul, it is but proper to give back to Mother Earth by way of a concrete action-no matter how simple or small- to help protect Her and glorify our Creator!



Sound of Pipe Organ Reverberates at SSC Chapel

By Sr. Isabel Orito, OSB

After some weeks of patient and determined practices, Sr. Marie Enoch Kim, OSB, performed her graduation recital in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Music Performance, Major in Pipe Organ at St. Scholastica's College, Manila on Thursday, February 16, 2023 at 2: 00 p.m. The audience composed of Sisters were seated at the Sisters' choir behind the altar and her other guests: her teachers, classmates, other Music students including Dom Eugene, OSB accompanied by Abbot Austin Cadiz, OSB and friends were seated below the altar facing the choir loft. As soon as the performer, her mentor, Professor Armando Salarza and the Dean of the College of Music, Sr. Agnella Capili, OSB were there in the loft, the program began with a prayer followed by the Philippine National Anthem.



Soon George Thalben - Ball, followed by Joseph Haydn's Works for Musical Clock, filled the chapel with the strains of Johann Sebastian Bach's Prelude and Fugue in A minor, then the meditative Elegy for organ. There was a six-minute intermission to give rest to those hands and to her mentor who stood by her side the whole time, always alert in giving assistance and guidance. The second part elicited a different reaction because the piece was the familiar "Purihin ang Panginoon" by Fr. Fruto Ramirez, SJ with variations arranged by Guy Bovet, a Swiss organist and composer. To cap it all, Sr. Enoch played the powerfully persuasive Prelude and Fuga on a B-A-C-H Theme by Franz Liszt. There was an enthusiastic and appreciative applause and Sr. Rosalina Fajardo, OSB went up the loft bringing a bouquet of flowers. More bouquets of flowers awaited our performer below as the picture taking by groups was held. The guests were treated to packed snacks of Korean food at the parlor and at the pergola. That in all things God may be glorified!

INTER-PRIORY SHARING

My Shanti Nivas Monastery Experience By Sr. Marialuz Dungca, OSB

As a missionary, monastic Benedictine Sister, I am always grateful for experiencing God's love wherever I am sent. God is palpable in every person I meet and his/her expression of His love is always felt just like what I have had in our Shanti Nivas Monastery in Punalur, Kollam District, Kerala, India for 28 days.

I arrived in Thrivandrum Airport, Kerala on February 16, 2023 at around 11 p.m., almost 4 hours ahead of Sr. Lumen Gloria Dungca, OSB, Vicaress General's arrival, who would be on her visitation at that time. From there, Sr. Rimolda Flory, OSB, superior and Sr. Mary Judette Elias, OSB accompanied us to our monastery. At the break of day, the community welcomed us with their Southern Indian custom of prayer and song ritual.



Our monastery, situated up the hill, is surrounded by trees like coconuts, banana, jackfruits, guava, etc. and it was my first time to see the real rubber trees perforated for "sap collection" (almost 80% of the place, down the hill and up, are rubber trees). Adjusting was never an ordeal because the weather and the environment are somewhat similar to ours in the Philippines. The food and their other delicacies were new to me but my tongue was able to "carry the curry flavor and spices" of viands served daily because I discovered that our Indian sisters are really good cooks.

I can say that my stay there, living with our 4 Observers (Shibani, Dipikha, Sikharani, Jharana) and 6 perpetually professed sisters (Sr. Rimolda, Sr. Benedicta kavalippaden, Sr. Cristina Lassar, Sr. Fausina Varghese, and Sr. Marie Rose Xavier) enabled me to appreciate more the beauty of communal living in diversity, an experience worth remembering.

During my stay there, I had the chance to meet the Bishop of Punalur, his eminence Bishop Selvester Ponnuthan, with Sr. Lumen Gloria, OSB and Sr. Rimolda, OSB, had Sunday masses, attended traditional street procession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and visited apostolate areas of our sister. I also visited historical structures/institutions within Kerala, met religious sisters and priests of other congregations, and had outdoor bonding with the observers and our sisters.

We shared time together in the Divine Office, during manualia in the different areas of the house (kitchen, refectory, chapel, garden), in the classroom, imparting to them my experiences and life lessons on our Monastic Practices and Decorum, Liturgy, Formation and Catechism of our Faith.

I am grateful for this short visit in the "Land of Coconuts" (Kerala in Malayalam "Kera," meaning "coco" and "la," meaning "land"). Big thanks to Mother Maoro, OSB and her Council and to Mother Mary Thomas, OSB and her Priory Council, for this exposure and opportunity to be part of the community. My heartfelt thanks, too to Sr. Rimolda and her community for their warm welcome and Benedictine hospitality. I really felt that I have lived there for so long maybe because my heart felt each one's warmth, generosity, and authenticity of heart. Thank YOU, LORD.

That in all things God may be glorified!



NEWS FROM THE STATIONS

BAPS CONDUCTS VOCATION ANIMATION IN LEGAZPI

By Mr. Owen del Castillo and Sr. Celine, OSB

February must be a special month for nourishing one's heart for LOVE. A way of Love that differs from just giving a bouquet of red flowers or a red balloon was shown in two events in Legazpi City.

At the SAA Centennial Gymnasium on February 11, 2023, the Bicol Association of Philosophy Seminarians (BAPS) conducted their awarding ceremony. Seven seminaries with a total of 192 seminarians participated in this year's BAPS Meet. The following seminaries and formation houses were present during the activity: St. Benedict's Diocesan Seminary (Libmanan), Holy Trinity College Seminary (Daet), Sedes Sapientiae Formation House (Masbate), Holy Rosary Major Seminary (Caceres & Virac), Our Lady of Peñafrancia Seminary (Sorsogon), Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity College Seminary (SOLT), and Mater Salutis College Seminary (Legazpi).

The 2023 BAPS Meet was hosted by the Mater Salutis Seminary of the Diocese of Legazpi and lasted for almost three days. May these seminarians be guided by the Holy Spirit and achieve their ultimate goal to serve God and His Church.

To continue the day's activity for Vocation Promotion, the community of Benedictine Sisters of St. Agnes Academy, Inc. joined Ms. Annie Dino in her 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. program, "HOME SWEET HOME" over Radio Veritas Legazpi. Sr. Judith Diaz, OSB acted as co-anchor while Sr. Eunice, OSB and Sr. Celine, OSB were on hand to share valuable insights on their respective vocation journey. Sr. Daniela, OSB of SSC Westgrove presented a video clip and expounded on the life of St. Scholastica with St. Benedict. She also enlightened listeners on the inquiry about discernment of one's calling. From Marihatag, Sr. Maria Jose, OSB and Sr. Joyanne, OSB enthusiastically added their share on this important topic. More questions from listeners were received.

However, it seemed an hour was not enough to respond to all. It is hoped then that similar sessions over Radio Veritas could be conducted for this purpose. Together with more vocation animation activities, we continue to pray for openness and generosity for ladies, as well as young men in listening to the voice calling them to follow Christ respectively in religious life and priesthood.



1 Billion Rising: Post Pandemic Comeback @ SSC-Manila

By Sr. Therese C. Bulatao, OSB

After two years of non-face to face classes at St. Scholastica's College, Manila, February 14, 2023 made the school grounds teem again with Scholasticans from the Grade School until the College Unit, as well as with all support staff and teachers. Two prominent newspaper dailies pictured this event on the front page of their February 15, 2023 issue: Philippine Inquirer and Philippine Star.



What is 1 Billion Rising? It is a global movement to end violence against women and girls, gender expansive, gender non-conforming and gender diverse people as well as the planet. It has been a tradition for SSC-Manila to hold this event every February 14.



Miss Monique Wilson, a known celebrity film and stage actress gave a privileged speech to trace the decade-long themes of this movement. She said it is a form of activism using art, particularly, dances. She said that: “all the dancing that you have been doing here has ripple effects all over the world because many have already been awakened by the energy, and the passion and the empowerment of all the girls and young women here as well as all your faculty and staff. So now, we are rising together in almost 100 countries around the world. Today there are over a thousand 1 Billion Rising

happenings all over the world and you are a part of a global movement to end violence against women, girls and the planet Thank you so much for keeping this tradition alive, burning and really looking to the future.”

Year	Theme
2013	Just Strike, Dance, Drive
2014	One Billion Rising for Justice
2015 & 2016	One Billion Rising Revolution – how to have a shift in mindset and how to commit oneself to this cause
2017 & 2018	One Billion Rising Solidarity with women who are exploited
2019	Raise the Vibration: this theme means to escalate our action. One Billion Rising is an art and activism movement. We use dance, music, poetry, theater, but mostly dance, to advocate for the change that we want. This is to get peoples’ attention to our issues and to also harness collective energy among ourselves and to communities beyond ourselves
2020	Rising Gardens- for the first year of the pandemic
2021 & 2022	Rise for the Bodies of Old Women and Girls and the Earth. These are all under the umbrella of patriarchy. We want to end patriarchy that is at the root of all violence against women, children and the planet.
2023	1 Billion Rising : Rise for Freedom

Why Rise for Freedom? Miss Wilson explained that:

“It is the testimony of people like you that made the 1 BR to last for 10 years now. Your commitment to rise for change is very, very strong. We heard it from Sr. Mary John, our theme for this year is Rise for Freedom. Are we not free yet? It is true that in the last 10 years we have had a lot to celebrate for our victories and changes: we have changes in legislation, in culture, in education in ways of thinking. But there are still a lot of obstacles that women, children and gender diverse people must overcome. What we really want is a future and a present that allow us not just to survive but also to really thrive in the fullness of our ability and to live a dignified life. Many of us hold many privileges and many aspirational things in terms of the future because we can carry it forward.”

She ended her speech with this challenge:

“And this is my message to young women, to the young girls, the young activists here today...please continue the fight, continue the struggle. Continue to insist on the future that you deserve.... a future that is free. Are you for the right for freedom? Are you going to commit everything, your heart and soul, your talent, your intelligence, your ability for everyone to be able to live with freedom? Are we going to rise for freedom today and the whole year and until we get that freedom? Rise for freedom!”

In Sr. Christine’s welcome remarks, she traced the beautiful memories that had happened on the SSC- school grounds and gave the reason why we can consider our SSC-Green field, a sacred space.

“our field is a sacred space...we sent forth graduates, we celebrated Masses in this field, we have sent our athletes from this field....when it rains, I see girls playing under the rain... For 10 years, we have danced in this field because we want every girl, woman, to be safe... As one Scholastic community, we want to do this... We know why we are here... why we come together every 14th of Feb. So we will rise and dance for freedom”

Sr. Mary John who made it a point to tell all present that she is the “oldest person standing here, “appealed for concrete action. This means:

1. Continue the “celebration mula sa preso ng pandemic
2. Become aware of concrete cases of abuse of our OFWs one of which is Jennifer Dalques - she was sent to death row because when she was being raped by the son of her employer, she fought and struggled and in the process she killed him. She was later freed and is now in Cebu, starting life anew. Another case is the woman employed in Kuwait; she was raped and killed by the 17- year- old son of her employer.
3. Free Leila de Lima and Jun Lozada
4. Campaign against online sexual exploitation and abuse of children wherein the pimps are the parents themselves.

The pledges to commit oneself to address gender concerns and issues were led by representatives of the three units Grade School, High School, College, offices and service personnel.

Isang Bilyong Babae Babangon was the song that accompanied the dance. Students, teachers, all employees and administrators, and Sisters joined in one exhilarating **One Billion Rising** dance. In addition, it was on Valentine’s Day love day hearts day February 14, 2023.



SISTERS JOIN SANTO NIÑO FIESTA

By Sr. Maria Jose Esperanza, OSB

On the third Sunday of January 2023, the **Santo Niño Parish in Marihatag, Surigao del Sur** celebrated the 31st GKK or BEC (Gamay'ng Kristohanong Katilingban or Basic Christian Communities) Day.

Before the **GKK Day**, the *Marihatagnons* celebrated the 9-day novena masses in honor of the Balaang Bata (Holy Child). On the feast, after the High Mass presided over by Father Ruben Delos Reyes, the image of the Child Jesus enthroned in the parish church was brought out on a *caro* and led the *foot* procession. It ended in the Holy Child Academy school grounds where the festive program was held. Sister Odilia Bulayungan, OSB helped in the different working committees of the parish pastoral council for this year's GKK Day.

The Marihatagnons who are devotees of Sto. Nino interpreted the fiesta theme: *Pag-inambitay sa Gasa sa Panahon: Talento, Bahandi, Isip Usa ka Katilingban ni Senior Santo Niño*.

Each GKK of the parish showed their talents in the variety show. Sister Maria Jose Esperanza, OSB and Sister Joyanne Morales, OSB joined a GKK in their Sinulog dance which was part of the variety show. It was a real expression of the Synod's call for participation, communion and mission where everyone, young and senior parishioner, every family and community experienced the spirit of love, joy, peace and mutual service. *Viva! Pit Senyor!*



Grade 12 Students Honor Virgen de los Remedios

By Sister M. Lydia Villegas, OSB

Last February 9, five sections of Grade 12 had their culminating activity in Physical Education entitled "Magnificat" at St. Cecilia's Covered Court. A tribute to Virgen de los Remedios, each of the 5 sections had a group dance highlighting a Benedictine hallmark of the class's choice. A parent was chosen by each class to represent the Blessed Virgin Mary.

After the 5 presentations, floral offerings were given Our Lady. A grand procession bearing the Image of the Virgen de los Remedios went through the covered court's center aisle with the school community bowing in homage.

The celebration was both festive and prayerful evoking the religious fervor of the Filipino.



Divine Word Hospital Celebrates 58th Founding Anniversary

By Sr. Sarah Gocela, OSB

On Tuesday, 7th day of February 2023, Divine Word Hospital celebrated its 58th Founding Anniversary. The joy of celebrating such an important milestone is having the opportunity to share it with those who have supported Divine Word Hospital during its 58 years of serving the people of Region VIII.



We commemorated our legacy throughout the year with a variety of activities and events, such as Holy Mass.

In honor of the occasion, a celebratory Mass was held in the magnificent surroundings of the St. Therese of Lisieux Chapel at the Liceo del Verbo Divino, Tacloban City.

The mass was presided over by His Excellency Most Rev. Archbishop John F. Du and concelebrants, Rev. Fr. Rogelio N. Bagao, SVD and Rev. Fr. Charles Gingco, SVD. The special participation of the Sr. Battig Orchestra Ensemble of St. Scholastica's College – Manila's School of Music enlivened the liturgy.



Foundation Night

One of the highlights of this event was the awarding ceremony of the people behind the installation of the Divine Word Hospital-COVID-19 Laboratory. It was a timely opportunity to express gratitude for all of their hard work, resources, support, and time invested in Divine Word Hospital.



Divine Word Hospital celebrated the foundation night in style, wrapping off our 58th Founding Anniversary celebration with "glitz and glamour," with all of the attendees donning their best dazzling attire.

2023 FIRST QUARTER @ SSCS

By M. Irene Dabalus, OSB

The “amihan” brought intermittent showers and an interplay of rain clouds and sunshine at the beginning of the year. This introduced the series of events in SSCS in 2023. The most prominent ones included the DVP 1st Batch of the Seminar Workshop for Vocation Directors held from January 23-27. It was attended by 87 diocesan/religious clergy, sisters, brothers and lay collaborators from all over the islands. It was facilitated by Fr. Aljun Maglangit, Sch.P, who guided the participants through a program of talks and reflections on the “Basic Orientation on the Spirituality and Pastoral Works for Vocations”. Sr. Mary Grace Macatuno, OSB, featured actively in the liturgy of the five days, as well as, Fr. Randy S. de Jesus, Secretary of the Episcopal Commission on Vocations, Fr. Larry Cebedo, Sch. P, and Fr. Mario Tejada, MSP.

SEMINAR WORKSHOP FOR VOCATIONS



Fr. Aljun Maglangit, Sch.P



Sr. Mary Grace Macatuno, OSB

MUSIC AND CONTEMPLATION

An interesting one-day “trial” seminar on the use of the “kalimba” instrument for “Music and Contemplation” was held on February 5. Sr. Agnella Capili, OSB, initiated the program as a kind of “test” to find out if music lovers would warm up to the idea of contemplation with the help of a simple instrument like the “kalimba”. The “kalimba” is an African thumb piano made of a wooden or acrylic soundboard with steel in a rectangular of 6x7-inches.

Three sister-participants – Sr. Carmela Mitaran, Sr. Barbara Batac and Sr. Marianne Shilengifa - and a music alumna, Myrna Ortiz, joined for a day of praying the psalms while plucking the “kalimba” according to a rhythm of one’s own bent. There would have been more participants, but unluckily work conflicts set in at the last moment as sometimes happens. The next seminar would be published in the Priory website via Facebook.



(L-R): Sr. Agnella Capili, OSB; Sr. Marianne Shilengifa, OSB
Sr. Barbara Batac, OSB; Myrna Ortiz, Sr. Carmela Mitaran, OSB



“Kalimba”

CANONICAL VISITATION BY M. MARY THOMAS PRADO, OSB

The canonical visitation of the Tagaytay Community was a singular experience, because there was a gap of eight years after its last visitation in 2016. This time Mother Mary Thomas Prado made a thorough work of it from February 16-19.

At 4 p.m. the day before, M. Mary Thomas arrived and was welcomed by our staff of 16 with a song accompanied by Eva Formoso on the guitar. This was followed by a singing of the Benedictus and a prayer for the visitation in the convent chapel. MMT (as she is fondly called) and the Community took a simple merienda together after which she retired for a free afternoon and a free evening before the start of the visitation the following day.

On February 16, she started our canonical visitation at 8.30 a.m. with a touching prayer of benediction and a *Te Deum* followed by the Report of the Prioress to the F-S Meeting in 2022. The report gave the state of the priory in terms of personnel, ministries in school, Socio Pastoral Apostolate, health, farm building in six areas, and Priory finances. The rest of the day was spent in interviews. At 5 p.m., the video conference of M. Irene on the charism of the congregation was shown to the Community until the time of Vespers. It was a serious leveling off of information for the entire Community of five, namely: Sr. Barbara Batac, OSB, Sr. Carmela Mitaran, OSB, Sr. Carmel Simpauco, OSB, Sr. Marianne Shilengifa, OSB, and M. Irene Dabalus, OSB. Sr. Marianne is a missionary from the Windhoek Priory on an Interpriory sharing for four years.

On the second day of the canonical visitation, M. Mary Thomas continued with her interviews of the Sisters. At 10 a.m., she gave a lecture on *Intercultural and Intergenerational Living* until noon. It provoked personal and communal reflections. In the afternoon, the Community went on an outing to the SVD farm, except for M. Irene and Sr. Barbara who stayed behind. They visited the seven hermitages, the center for vacationists, the eatery and the farm on a seven-ha. area. They were back before Vespers.

At 9 a.m. on the third day of the canonical visitation, M. Mary Thomas and the Community evaluated their community objectives against the provisions of the Constitutions on the six constitutive elements of our Congregation charism. Then they discussed the future directions of the community and its ministry in giving retreats and accepting groups for renewal and updating in their Christian way of living. The morning session, an intense discussion, ended at 12.20 p.m.

In the afternoon, M. Mary Thomas, Sr. Carmela and Sr. Marianne visited the community of the Focolare Fathers and marveled at the beauty of their view of the Taal Lake and their farm plot.

M. Mary Thomas devoted the fourth and last day of the canonical visitation to the writing of the recess. At 4 p.m., M. Mary Thomas met with M. Irene over the recess. After the reading at Vespers M. Mary Thomas read the recess of the visitation and concluded the visitation. The Community thanked her for the days of meetings and reflection and handed her a token in gratitude. The whole experience made up for the gap of eight years, which the eruption of Taal volcano and the disruption of the pandemic had created. The future will attest as to how the recess of the visitation will be turned from a mere text to an instrument of Community growth and fruition.



Love Abounds @ SSC-Westgrove

By Sr. Mary Grace Macatuno, OSB

The Community of Benedictine Sisters at Westgrove warmly welcomed 17 orphans from the Little Angels' Home in Mendez, Cavite. The children accompanied by Sor Pauline Cortez, HRC and a few social workers visited the Sisters on January 14, 2023. On the one hand, the playground and the wide space caught the young children's attention. At once, they were playing and running around to their hearts' content.



On the other hand, the young teens found themselves more comfortable spending time at the covered court to play volleyball, basketball, and badminton. The Sisters served them snacks and a sumptuous lunch. Parlor games and raffle held at the lobby allowed everyone to join the fun-filled activity. Prizes abound for all who were present. What a joy to see bright faces with smiles radiating gratitude and love!



On February 12, 2023, St. Scholastica's College Westgrove celebrated its 21st Family Day and Open House. After three years of holding it online, the Parents Association (PA) eagerly grabbed the opportunity to gather all families of young Scholasticans. For them bringing back the most awaited face-to-face event also meant taking the theme: The Homecoming: Reuniting as One Family. It started with the Holy Mass at 8:00 in the morning presided over by Rev Fr. Anselm Manalastas, OSB. It was immediately followed by Parade of Colors with Ten-ten, SSC- Manila's mascot, wearing the school uniform of the students. More interactive fun activities were included in the series of Family Games, Grade School and High School Exhibit, Photo Booth, and Food Bazaar for all. Big and small families actively participated. Parents and even grandparents did the same. Some families pitched tents; others were on a picnic mode; all booths were jam packed, too. The students did not only entertain but also wowed everyone in the audience during the Field Demonstration at the open space. The whole day was indeed a blast. If it were not a real coming home and if it did not reunite all families as one, then what is?



I. B. O. Festival Features excerpts of St. Matthew's Passion by J.S. Bach

By Sr. Agnella Capili, OSB

Through all these 48 years of its existence, the International Bamboo Organ (IBO) Festival has been traversing a long and winding path. What does it hold for us to give importance to it, given the many other concerns that we have to deal with in our present national and international landscape? Let me quote from the Welcome page of the program:

“.....Three schools with a common concern for the future of liturgical music met to address the lack of **well-trained organists**. These institutions (San Beda College, Alabang, St Scholastica's College, Manila and St. Joseph's Academy plan soon to offer organ performance to high school students, following the module that was developed around the Bamboo Organ. The future instructors are now taking up organ performance at St. Scholastica's School of Music, the only institute that can offer a bachelor's and master's degree for this discipline.

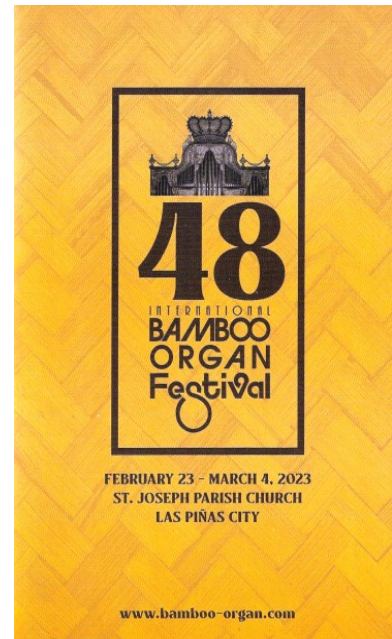
Sufficient reasons to continue the Festival are the celebration in 2024 of the 200th anniversary of the completion of the Bamboo Organ and the organ in Baclayon and in 2025 for reaching the 50th Bamboo Organ Festival, each with the performance of master pieces that only can be heard here.”

On March 4, 2023, St.Scholastica's College became the venue for the last day of the 48th International Bamboo Organ Festival, which had its run from February 23 – March 4, 2023. Sr. Christine Pinto, OSB, President of St. Scholastica's College gave the welcome remarks. The works of Johann Sebastian Bach were featured, in particular: Music for the Holy Week and St. Matthew's Passion. Only some episodes: the opening chorus, the closing of Part I and the “Garden” episode picturing the anxiety of Jesus, ending with the betrayal of Judas and the escape of all his disciples, were performed. Each of these stages of the story are followed by reflections in musical forms: recitatives, arias and chorales.

Noteworthy is the featured performance of Professor Armando V. Salarza. He studied under Fr. Manuel Maramba, OSB and at age 14, became the official accompanist of Las Piñas Boys Choir. “He is the only person in the country left qualified to offer a Bachelor's (and Master's) degree in Organ Performance at the St. Scholastica's School of Music. He also teaches aspiring organists from different parishes and schools and conducts pipe organ workshops. His real challenge is the formation of future organists for the country where more and more churches are investing in a pipe organ which, if properly played, will provide the solemnity one may expect in the liturgy.” (Program notes, page 18).

Other performers included the following: Collegium Vocale Manila; Las Piñas Boys Choir; Stefanie Quintin-Avila, soprano; Ryan Arcolas, altus; Ervin Lumauag, tenor; Shad Gabuya, narrator; Manila Baroque Ensemble; Beverly Shangkuan-Cheng, conductor.

The entire event was a music festival in Lent pointing to Christ's Passion, the pathway for our salvation.



FORMATION

For the First Time

By Aspirant Joni Gail A. Morales

On the first day of March and on the first quarter of the year, another first was happening. To more than 200 young students in Tagaytay, it was their First Holy Communion. While it was a typical school day for most of their schoolmates, it was a special day for the young Catholics. They prepared for this day to receive for the first time the Body of Christ, after a long wait because of the pandemic. Not only were the students busy preparing for this day, but also the catechists who prepared them for several months prior to this event.



We, the Aspirants, were very proud that day to be the catechists of 12 young students from Purok 97 and of the children of our House Staff. It was a great opportunity to share our faith with deeper conviction, because this moment ushers in for the communicants a union with the Jesus they usually associate only with Christmas. That day was the fruit of the many Sundays spent in learning and memorizing all the prayers each Catholic should know by heart. While some of them shed tears with the priest during confession, as it was their first time to face their sinfulness before the Lord, it was a victory won for Heaven. We only have God to thank for, for allowing us to be molders of more witnesses to our faith.



LENTEN JOURNEY IN THE YEAR OF SYNODALITY

By Sr. Pia Lansang, OSB

A hundred retreatants gathered at St. Scholastica's Center of Spirituality in Tagaytay City on March 17-19, 2023 to participate in a three-day Lenten Journey in the Year of Synodality. The theme: *"Walking Together as a Diverse Christian Community": A Common Path of Encounter, Listening, Sacrifice and Prayer*".

A diverse community of families, couples, religious, educators, and a few of other nationalities, -- from near and far -- learned about the retreat from the posting in the priory website "BeneCom", or in the website of St. Scholastica's College, Manila, and Facebook platform. Others were invited by the Sisters or by friends of the friends of the Sisters. Therefore, the "ripples in the stream" of information grew larger. The power of communication. The power of social media!

The priory Retreat Center barely a year after re-opening in a more relaxed "post-pandemic" time is running on still limited work force. Powered by the prayerful resident community (M. Irene Dabalus, OSB, Sr. Barbara Batac, OSB, Sr. Carmel, Sr. Carmela Mitaran, OSB and Sr. Marianne Shilengifa, OSB) the Center once more proved true to its name, indeed, a spiritual oasis to God-seekers. In addition, an answer to what someone said to a Sister on why she came, "I thirst".

The conferences given by Sr. Pia Lansang, OSB covered such topics as *"Walking Together on a Common Path"*, journeying with Jesus in Lent; *"With CHRIST in His Hour of Darkness": The Passion in the Gospels*; *"Sanctification of Low Moments"*. Our own human experience of darkness as graced moments and opportunities for growth and finding Jesus (C. Connelly; Pope Francis): *"Lighting up the Flame of Christ in My Life"*; the Highest Point of Our Lenten Journey, Easter Vigil and its invitation to become light and be light-radiators of hope and encouragement to others.

The Eucharistic liturgy as well as the Divine Office (Lauds and Vespers) daily nourished the retreatants. Quiet personal time was provided for solitary reflection and reading the Scriptures (account of the Passion in the Gospels), and for personal prayer and adoration. The group was blessed with three priests for confession, and two Sisters (Sr. Mary Vincent Feliciano, OSB and Sr. Mary Paul Baul, OSB) for individual spiritual direction.

Another highlight was the common Stations of the Cross, which wound its way through the sprawling grounds, with groups taking turns to carry the large wooden cross from station-to-station. This culminated in the last stage of the Way of the Cross - the resurrection where the group hung white ribbons" on an improvised bare wooden tree (symbolic of the wood of the cross) virtually transforming it into a "mosaic" of glory and victory. *CHRIST is risen. In the cross is salvation. In the cross is victory. In the Cross is our redemption. In the Cross is Life.*

Sr. Edna Quiambao, OSB and Sr. Carmelita Lazaro, OSB skillfully facilitated the flow of the entire retreat, and led the group discussions on the last day for a synthesis. Sr. Carmel Simpauco, OSB gave the Word of Thanks before the Closing Mass. Moreover, the theme ("Light") of the second reading (Eph 5:8-14) and Gospel (John 9:1-41) of the 4th Sunday in Lent beautifully complemented the theme of the final conference.

We thank Sr. Mary Samuelle Formoso and the Audio Visual Center staff of St. Scholastica's College, Manila for the technical support given during the retreat.



VOCATION ANIMATION

VOCATION JAMBOREE IN BATANGAS

By Aspirant Ma. Joanne Zamudio

The most awaited event finally pushed through last March 4, 2023 at the National Shrine and Parish of St. Padre Pio located at the City of Sto. Tomas, Batangas. The venue was perfect for the said event not only because of the beautiful architectural designs but also because of the serenity and tranquility of the place. This year's theme is: Sa Paglalkabay sa Bokasyon: KASAMA ALL! And indeed, everyone was well represented as 68 congregations all over CALABARZON came together and more or less around 2000 participants from 40 different diocesan youth groups and 40 different Catholic schools participated. One can truly feel the enthusiasm and anticipation of everyone as they actively took part in all activities.



The event started with a Eucharistic Celebration presided by no other than Archbishop Gilbert Garcera, D.D who gave a meaningful yet challenging message in his homily. He first mentioned that vocation comes from the Latin word *vocare* meaning “to call” and jamboree is a coined term meaning “in joy and festive gathering”. So each person has this “call in joy” that he needs to respond to. We all have one call and that is to be HOLY. He commended the efforts of the organizers who initiated and made the jamboree possible and the congregations who participated because they gave the youth the opportunity to also respond to their calling.

The whole day was jam-packed with activities including two conferences from Fr. Dakila Ramos and Sr. Diwari Laurio, animation and performances from the youth and some congregations, and a mini vocation concert led by active and joyful Seminarians. The youth was also given the time to visit the exhibits of all congregations, interact and converse with the religious fathers, brothers and sisters and received brochures together with some treats.



As a whole, the event was a success and everybody felt fulfilled and satisfied with what transpired. We hope that this gathering will yield a bountiful harvest and we pray that the Lord's Divine Hand will work in each participant's heart.

Vocation Awareness On Air

By Sr. Claudia Sampal, OSB

The Legazpi - Marihatag - Mati Cluster hosted the monthly Life Direction Session (LDS) on air last February 11, 2023 from 1:00- 2:30 pm with the theme, “St. Scholastica”. It was conducted through the radio program of Ms. Annie Dino in Home Sweet Home Radio Veritas -Legazpi. Fourteen (14) young women joined the radio program on vocation awareness. The flow was facilitated by Ms. Annie Diño, the main anchor and her co—anchor Sr. Judith Diaz, OSB. The guest sisters introduced their names and places of assignment.



It was followed by the introduction of the main speaker, Sr. Daniela Romero, OSB. A video of St. Scholastica and St. Benedict was played as a starting point for discussion. Questions were asked: “What is the relation of St. Scholastica to St. Benedict? What are the special qualities of St. Scholastica that inspire the sisters to become a nun? What is a Benedictine Vocation and how does it relate to Ora et Labora?” Sr. Celine Saplala, OSB and Sr. Maria Jose Esperanza, OSB shared their vocation stories and their reflections on the questions asked.

The anchor asked questions to be discerned by the ladies, leading them to think of entering the religious life. Sr. Daniela gave the important points and deepened the discussion on the life of the Benedictine Sisters especially the community, prayer and apostolic life.



Canonical Visitations in Progress

M. Mary Thomas Prado, OSB completed ten (10) canonical visitations from November 2022 until March 2023. Below are the schedule:

November 10 - 13, 2022	Marihatag Community
November 22 - 25, 2022	Mati Community
December 2, - 6, 2022	Legazpi Community
January 11 - 14, 2023	Bacolod Community
January 17 - 20, 2023	Tabunok Community
February 16 - 19, 2023	Tagaytay Community
February 24 - 27, 2023	Angeles Community
March 6 - 9, 2023	Ormoc Community
March 13 - 17, 2023	Tacloban School Community
March 24 - 28, 2023	San Fernando Community



St. Scholastica's Academy Marikina



Junior High School for having been re-accredited Level III Status for 5 years by the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU)

MANILA PRIORY BULLETIN TEAM

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