

Celebrating the Season of Creation 2024: Hope and Act with Creation



L-R First Row: Sr. Rosalina Fajardo, OSB, Sr. Juliane Nogueira, OSB (Olinda Priory)
L-R Second Row: Sr. Aurora Bravo, OSB, M. Mary Thomas Prado, OSB, Sr. Mary Emmanuel Espera, OSB

September marks the celebration of the Season of Creation, a time to reflect on our responsibility to care for God's creation. Inspired by Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* and its seven goals calling to respond to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor. The theme for the 2024 Season of Creation, *To Hope and Act with Creation*, emphasizes the need for decisive environmental action.

On Thursday, September 5, 2024, the Priory House community journeyed to Tanauan, Batangas despite intermittent rain to enjoy the fresh countryside air. As part of the Sisters' efforts to protect local biodiversity, they planted 56 native guava trees on their 4-hectare farm overlooking Taal Volcano.



Care for God's Creation

By Sister Maria Lourdes L. Obejas, OSB



The Community of Baguio celebrated the Season of Creation in a simple yet meaningful way, it commenced on September 1, 2024. The celebration began with an introductory conference by Bishop Pablo David, DD, representing the Catholic Bishop Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

On Saturday, September 14, Sr. Celine Saplala, OSB led a serene prayer service joined by Sr. Benita Reyes, OSB, Sr. Maria Lourdes Obejas, OSB, Sr. Zita Jamisola, OSB and Sr. Seraphina Wanjii, OSB along with the Oblates. Together they participated in a reflective *nature walk* around the PAX garden mindful of the sounds of birds, the various shapes and shades of green leaves, gliding worms, the hum of insects, the fragrance of herbs, the fluttering of butterfly wings, and the vibrant colors of flowers while listening to the *whisper of God* in their hearts.

After the 30-minute walk, the group prayed the Season of Creation Prayer and offered individual prayers of praise and commitment to care for God's creation. This was followed by the singing of the *Our Father* and the hymn *How Great Thou Art* in gratitude to the Almighty God, the Creator of all the beauty around us.

The next day, September 15, the Sunday Eucharist included the Sisters, regular Sunday Mass goers, and 34 retreatants from St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Bambang, Nueva Vizcaya. Father Jose Panabang, SVD, was the main celebrant, with Father Tony Addawan and Father Dennis de Leon as concelebrants. During the Offertory procession, each mass-goer carried a plant to be blessed by the priest. These potted plants were then taken home as a simple reminder and act of participation in the call to *Care for Creation*, as encouraged by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*.



Planting Seeds of Creation

By Jonathan Espina



On September 7, 2024, a meaningful tree-planting activity took place on the grounds of St. Scholastica's Hospital as part of our nationwide participation in the launching of the 50th Anniversary of the Socio-Pastoral Apostolate of the Manila Priory and the celebration of the Season of Creation. Organized to promote environmental stewardship, the event began with a short program in the chapel, featuring

moments of prayer, reflection, and the blessing of the saplings, which symbolized hope for a greener future.

The participants, including St. Scholastica's Hospital employees, Philberth scholars, and Grade 12 students from Pambujan National High School, who were undergoing their immersion program at the hospital began the activity at 8:00 a.m. They planted a variety of native trees on the hospital grounds contributing to the collective effort to preserve and restore the natural environment. The event emphasized the importance of caring for creation and working together to address today's environmental challenges.

Through this initiative, St. Scholastica's Hospital, Pambujan not only honored the beauty of creation but also reinforced the importance of environmental protection and conservation, especially in the face of climate change.

SSA- Tabunok Prepares for 60th Jubilee with Ecology-Focused Interdisciplinary Activities

By Sr. Vicenta Anuran, OSB

As part of the preparation for its 60th Jubilee year, St. Scholastica's Academy- Tabunok (SSA-T) launched the celebration with a liturgy on July 19, 2024. The main highlight for September focused on ecology-themed initiatives that emphasized environmental responsibility and care for creation.

One key event was the "Prayer for Creation" recited during Angelus, incorporating prayers and reflections that encouraged the community to appreciate and protect God's creation. This set the spiritual tone for a month of ecological activities.



The highlight of the month was an **Inter-Disciplinary Schematic Webbing** activity, where eight subject areas integrated Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* 7 Goals on Care For God's Creation into their lessons. *The teachers prepared and demonstrated lessons focused on various ecological themes fostering collaboration across disciplines. These demonstrations involved educators teaching specific classes, while colleagues observed to gain insights on how to incorporate ecological awareness into their particular subjects.*

For example, in the **TLE** subject, Ms. Maanne Tumitit delivered a lesson on **Ecological Education**, encouraging students to reflect on sustainable practices. In **Math**, Ms. Catherine Encenales explored the topic of **Ecological Economics** teaching Grade 11 students the economic principles behind environmental sustainability. Similarly, the **MAPEH** session led by Ms. Kheagene Pacquaio emphasized **Community Involvement and Participatory Actions** fostering a sense of responsibility toward collective ecological efforts.

Other subjects like **Christian Living Education** and **Science** addressed themes such as **Response to the Cry of the Poor** and **Response to the Cry of the Earth** supporting the school's commitment to integrate moral and scientific perspectives on environmental stewardship. Such lessons encouraged students to adopt simple lifestyles and explore ways to reduce their ecological footprint reflecting Pope Francis' call to decisive action.



This interdisciplinary approach not only deepened students' understanding of environmental issues but also demonstrated the practical application of ecological principles in everyday life positioning St. Scholastica's Academy as a leader in fostering eco-

consciousness within the academic community.

On September 21, 2024, members of the ECRO Science Club from St. Scholastica's Academy actively participated in the **Global Coastal Clean-Up Event**, an international environmental campaign focused on preserving marine ecosystems. This initiative provided students with a hands-on learning experience, reinforcing their commitment to global sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Through these activities the school takes a significant step towards its Jubilee year, strengthening its dedication to holistic education and ecological sustainability.

SSC-Westgrove Celebrates Season of Creation with Environmental Activities

By Sr. Edita Eslopör, OSB



The community of St. Scholastica's College-Westgrove traveled to St. Scholastica's Farm in Tanauan, Batangas to celebrate the Season of Creation. Set against the stunning backdrop of Taal Volcano, the event kicked off with a prayer setting a reflective and spiritual ambiance followed by a Shibashi session, which combines gentle movement and meditation to promote inner peace and mindfulness.

The Sisters, students and employees engaged in planting (13) avocado and (25) lemon trees. In addition to planting, they also took part in weeding to nurture the land, ensuring a cleaner, more organized environment.

Creation-themed games were held fostering a deeper connection with nature and unity among the group, followed by a communal boodle fight lunch that strengthened camaraderie and shared purpose of ecological stewardship.

Marihatag Community Celebrates SPA's 50th Anniversary with Mangrove Planting and Bonding

Sr. Evangeline A. Madayag, OSB



The immersion community of Marihatag celebrated simultaneously the launching of the Socio-Pastoral Apostolate's 50th Anniversary and the Season of Creation on August 29, 2024. The theme was *"SPA Legacy at 50 Years and Beyond... Celebrating the Season of Creation 2024... 'And So It Happened.'"* The Sisters together with the GKK (Basic Ecclesial Community - BEC) of Tagdarao,

Barangay Sta. Cruz, Marihatag, Surigao del Sur and representatives from Sto. Niño Parish (Holy Child Parish) gathered for the celebration of the Holy Mass presided over by Rev. Fr. Ruben delos Reyes, the parish priest.

During the event, Fr. delos Reyes also blessed the mangrove seedlings gathered by the

community members. The group then proceeded with the mangrove planting where participants of all ages—from children to adults—joyfully took part in the activity. Even the little ones contributed by searching for water sources so the group could wash their hands before the *agape*.



The gathering left everyone nourished not only with physical food, but also with the spirit of friendship and community. We are filled with a joyful hope that the planted mangroves will contribute to food security and the protection of Mother Earth.

SSA-Bacolod Community Celebrates the Season of Creation

By Sr. Ana Maria Raca, OSB



The community is blessed with an abundant harvest from various fruit trees. The sisters especially enjoyed gathering the first fruits of the cranberry tree.

On September 21, 2024, selected students, teachers, parents, and Sisters participated in the International Coastal Clean-up Day BENRO organized this day to protect marine life and preserve our shores.



On September 26, 2024, the Grade 6 pupils held a prayer service at the St. Lorenzo Garden seeking the intercession of the first Filipino saint to help save the planet. His feast day is celebrated on September 28.

Finally, on September 28, 2024, Sr. Ana Maria Raca, OSB, gave a talk on the relevance of the Season of Creation, challenging the 44 participants—comprising women leaders from the area, the center's seamstresses, and Philberth scholars—to hope and act in solidarity with creation.



Forum Highlights Effect of Oil Spills and Reclamation Projects

By Gino Lisondra

In line with the call to address environmental issues, particularly those affecting our seas, a forum was held on September 10, 2024 in St. Scholastica's Archives Museum conference room on the impact of oil spills and reclamation projects on fishing communities and ecosystems. Over 59 participants, including OSB Sisters, lay mission partners, faculty and high school students attended the forum. This was organized in partnership with the Promotion of Church People's Response (PCPR) as part of their ongoing campaign to protect Manila Bay.

Ms. Rachele Junsay, NCR Regional Coordinator of the Youth Advocates for Climate Action (YACAP) was the keynote speaker. She highlighted the severe environmental and socio-economic effects of oil spills and reclamation projects on fishing communities. Fisherfolks from Navotas also shared personal stories about how these projects have disrupted their livelihood.

One of them, Salvador Diesta, addressed the youth urging them *"You are the hope of the future. If you are given the chance to serve in government, do not forget the poor. Serve with kindness and righteousness. Do not become like others who are corrupt, selfish, abusive of their power."*

The forum concluded with a call to action, encouraging participants to sign a statement of solidarity for environmental protection. In all things, God may be glorified.



SSC-Westgrove Holds Relief Mission in Cavite

By Sr. Edita Eslopor, OSB



In the wake of Typhoon Carina, which struck on July 22, 2024, and caused severe flooding in the creek where several families reside in Brgy. Uno, Silang Cavite, Candelaria Parish, a coordinated relief effort was swiftly organized by the local school community. Sisters, students, teachers, and non-teaching staff came together in solidarity to support those affected by the disaster.

The relief mission conducted in coordination with the parish priest, took place on August 19, 2024 with the school community donating a total of 100 food packs. These were distributed efficiently to the families most affected.

The initiative aimed to alleviate the immediate suffering caused by the typhoon and to provide vital assistance to the community as it begins the recovery

process. "The spirit of unity and compassion within our school community was truly remarkable," a representative from the relief team shared. "This initiative reflects our commitment to helping those in need, especially during times of crisis."

Lastly, the affected families expressed deep gratitude to the school personnel and students who crossed a bamboo footbridge to personally deliver food packs. Their direct involvement not only provided essential supplies but also conveyed care and support, highlighting the school community's commitment to easing the hardships caused by Typhoon Carina.



Sisters Deliver Relief to Typhoon Victims and Fire Survivors

By Berliza Lablabong



On Tuesday, September 3, 2024, the day after Tropical Storm Enteng caused heavy rains and flooding in Manila and Rizal, the Priory Disaster Response Committee (PDRC) swiftly launched relief efforts. Sisters, lay partners, and volunteers prepared over 630 food packs (chicken adobo, egg, and rice), along with water and coffee, for distribution to affected communities. A total of 633 individuals from Barangays Malanday (San Mateo), West Bank Road (Cainta), Taguete, Cupang, and Bagong Nayon (Antipolo) received aid. Likewise, the administration and staff of St. Scholastica's College, Manila (SSC-M), extended their support by delivering boxes of food supplies to typhoon victims in Cainta, Rizal, on Thursday, September 4, 2024.

During the second wave of relief, PDRC distributed 316 relief packs (containing rice, canned goods, coffee, bananas, bottled water, and slippers) and over 300 food packs to flood and landslide-affected areas in Antipolo. 316 families received assistance: 71 families (295 individuals) from Sitio Hinapao, Barangay San Jose, and 245 families from Barangay San Luis, Antipolo. The team personally visited the landslide victims' families and offered both condolences and financial assistance for burial expenses.

Just a week later on Sunday, September 15, 2024, a fire in Aroma, Tondo left 1,600 families homeless. The next day, PDRC delivered boxes of bread donated by a benefactor. Witnessing the victims' urgent needs, a larger relief effort followed on September 17-18, with the distribution of 50 toiletry packs (containing pails, soap, towels, laundry bars, alcohol, and other essentials), mats, water jugs, sanitary napkins, diapers, and over 340 food packs to 84 families. This was done in coordination with Fr. Rey, parish priest of San Pablo Apostol Parish.

These efforts were made possible through the generosity of donors, Sisters, SSC-Manila alumnae, lay partners and volunteers of the Priory House community. Thank you for opening your hearts to help those in need. That in all things, God may be glorified.



Manila Priory Celebrates M. Mary Thomas' Feastday

By Sr. Sophia Marie De Guzman, OSB



Every 3rd of July, the Church celebrates the Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle, whose influence unites believers from diverse backgrounds. On this day, the Manila Priory also honors the feast day of our Prioress Mother Mary Thomas Prado, OSB whose leadership brings together Sisters from various cultures and places.

Sisters from the different stations joined the celebration both onsite and online, demonstrating unity and the theme: ***“Benedictines Far and Wide, Set the Continents Ablaze in Sparks of Hope.”*** The event featured

intercontinental presentations, beginning with a dance from Italy, where the Sisters from Angeles and San Fernando communities performed the Tarantella. From Italy, we traveled to Germany as the Marikina community entertained us with their rendition of the Maibaum, a traditional German dance around a decorated tree.

The program highlighted one of our African priories, significant to Mother Mary Thomas, who once served as prioress in Windhoek Priory, Namibia. Sr. Marianne Shilengifa, OSB and Sr. Remedios delos Reyes, OSB delighted everyone with a Namibian dance. The St. Scholastica Center of Spirituality, Tagaytay Sisters added excitement with a skit titled *Quarrel of the Continents*, while the *St. Benedict's Home* community surprised the audience with beautiful songs, reflecting the enduring sparks of love and hope in religious vocation.

In this digital age, the event spanned continents and generations, connecting us virtually with our Sisters from the Visayas and Mindanao communities. The program culminated with a grand performance by the Priory House and Manila Communities, highlighting the Philippine West Sea issue. Mother Mary Thomas gave a heartfelt thank you, and the day ended with a festive lunch, celebrating both community and the joy of shared life.



Benedictine Monastic Renewal Institute Concludes at SSCS

By Sr. Adela Arabia, OSB



The second Benedictine Monastic Renewal course was held at St. Scholastica's Center of Spirituality (SSCS), Tagaytay City from August 1-15, 2024. Fr. Mauritius Wilde, OSB, from Sant' Anselmo, Rome, Italy conducted the two-week course titled *The Life of St. Benedict: A Model for Contemporary Spirituality*. He covered key topics such as "The Dialogues of Pope St. Gregory the Great," the historical context of St. Benedict of Nursia and the symbolism behind "The Journey in the Cave" and "The Journey to the Mountain." Fr. Mauritius also explored "The Steps of Detachment," addressing the process of detachment from family, church, culture, sexuality and power.

The course attracted fifty (50) participants, including Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing, Daughters of

Mary Consolatrix, Benedictine Sisters of the Eucharistic King, Benedictine Nuns of the Eucharistic King from Cogon, Davao, and Vigan, the Trappistine Sisters from Polomolok, Missionary Benedictine monks of St. Ottilien from Digos, Davao, and Monastics from Our Lady of Montserrat Abbey in Mendiola, Manila. There were two lay participants: Mr. J. Dacillo, a teacher at Miriam College and ASI, and Dr. Maria Teresa Gustilo-Villasor, a retired Clinical Psychologist. In addition, six (6) Sisters from St. Scholastica's Center of Spirituality and the Formation House communities attended the sessions.



The course provided deeper insights into *The Dialogues*, particularly the symbolism of the cave where St. Benedict stayed representing the journey of detachment and the purgative way .

Fr. Mauritius also explained the three stages of the spiritual journey: the path of purification of memory, the illumination of the mind, and the unitive way, leading to union with God's will. As he described in this purified state, "Where there are no thoughts, desires, or attachments, there is only God." Quoting Meister Eckhart: "Where man goes out, God enters.

If you cling to yourself, you keep God from entering."

Chapter 31 of *The Dialogues* narrates the story of *Lectio Divina*, the sacred space, and the vow of stability. Meanwhile, Chapter 34 highlights the simplicity of heart demonstrated by St. Scholastica, St. Benedict's twin sister.

We are deeply grateful to Mother Mary Thomas Prado, OSB and the OGF Team for this time of renewal. It was a grace-filled period



allowing participants to pause from their busy missionary duties and reflect on their spiritual journey. We recognized our present gifts, blessings and challenges as opportunities to grow as religious and Missionary Benedictines. St. Benedict reminds us that God is always with us no matter what happens. We must be mindful and find balance in our daily tasks. When we fail (as we inevitably will), we must rise again and again. Our journey to eternal life is long, but we must trust and remember that God is always there!

Let me conclude with this prayer.

“May the Lord of Love sustain each of us as we go down from the “mountain, the sacred ground” and return to our communities and missionary duties to spread His Word.!

My Lord and my God, take from me everything that distances me from You.

My Lord and my God, give me everything that brings me closer to You.

My Lord and my God, detach me from myself to give my all to You.” Amen

That in All Things ,God May Be Glorified!

Cluster Retreat: Rekindling the Fire of God's Love

By Sr. Amanda Marie Fondevilla, OSB



1st Cluster Retreat



2nd Cluster Retreat

The annual eight-day cluster retreats of the Manila Priory took place at St. Scholastica’s Center of Spirituality in Tagaytay from July 12–19 and July 22–29, 2024. Father Abbot Michael Ryan, OCSO from Bolton Abbey in Kildare, Ireland traveled to Manila to conduct the two retreats. Each began with an opening Mass, where Abbot Ryan invited the Sisters to approach the burning bush, reflecting on Moses’ encounter with God in the desert. He urged the retreatants to enter the sacred ground, setting a contemplative tone for the retreat. His deep devotion to the Eucharist was evident in every Mass he celebrated and he expressed heartfelt admiration for the Manila Priory’s Divine Office, calling it “gorgeous” and telling the sisters how fortunate they were to participate in it.

Father Abbot delivered a daily conference lasting 45 minutes to an hour, allowing the rest of the day for reflection. He began by inviting the Sisters to take the retreat as a personal *burning bush* experience reminding them that the present retreat—rather than past or future ones is the most important calling for full presence and attention.

Building on the Burning Bush theme, he encouraged the Sisters to reflect on their vocations, explaining, “Each of us has a burning bush in our lives. It did not make sense. We investigated. And now we are here.” He highlighted the role of vulnerability in fully embracing one’s vocation, noting that while vocation demands much, we often try to shield ourselves from those demands. He urged the Sisters to remain open to God, to listen with the heart of a child and to find their own fire in this divine relationship.

In subsequent conferences, Father Abbot discussed the concept of *littleness* as the foundation of a relationship with God. He stressed that perfection lies in friendship with God, which requires walking with Him. Prayer, he emphasized, is essential to nurturing this friendship—not just with God but also with others, for whom we are called to intercede. He

shared his practice of holding each community member in his heart before God, quietly interceding without words. He encouraged the Sisters to do the same, reminding them that in prayer, they are never alone. "We are alone with the Alone, together with others."

He also spoke about inviting God into the *gaps*—those moments in daily life when one is not formally at prayer. While we cannot "live on the edge of holiness" constantly, Father Abbot encouraged mindfulness of God's presence throughout the day.

In one of his final conferences, Father Abbot addressed the topic of brokenness and the obstacles that hinder fully living out the Christian life within the community. He emphasized that to be signs of God's love to the world, our orientation must be directed toward God. He reassured the Sisters that God's goodness is more powerful than any brokenness in our lives and that often our greatest pains can become our greatest blessings.

The retreats provided a profound and enriching experience, leaving the Sisters inspired and renewed in their vocation. We are deeply grateful to Abbot Michael for his wisdom which helped rekindle the fire of God's love in our hearts. May we carry that flame to everyone we encounter, both within our community and in our ministries, so that in all things God may be glorified!

SSA - SF Launches Centennial Celebration with Grand Kickoff Event

By Juliet Tayag, Grade School Principal



The vibrant journey towards a century of Benedictine and Catholic mission in Pampanga officially began on July 27, 2024, as St. Scholastica's Academy-San Fernando (SSA-SF) launched "SSAndaan," a yearlong celebration leading up to its 100th anniversary in July 2025.

This commemoration honors the school's history and its lasting impact on students, alumni, and the community with events scheduled from July 2024 to June 2025. Under the theme "Love and Service," the festivities kicked

off with a gathering at St. Cecilia's Court, bringing together students, alumni, faculty, Benedictine Sisters, religious leaders, parents, community representatives, and special guests.

The celebration began with a Eucharist presided over by Fr. Deo Galang, set a spiritual tone for the day. Following the Mass, Directress Mother Mary John Mananzan, OSB, delivered an inaugural speech, reflecting on the school's mission and legacy.

One of the key moments was the unveiling of the Centennial Logo, representing SSA-SF's rich heritage and bright future. This was followed by the presentation of initiatives planned for the centennial year, emphasizing the theme of love and service. A lighthearted moment came with the appearance of mascots Ika and Benny.

Mika Roque introduced the official Centennial Hymn, titled "Hundred Fold," with music and lyrics, additional lyrics by Atty. Bong and Liza Rogus, and vocals by Juris Roque. The Centennial Prayer, composed by retired campus ministry officer, Ms. Evelyn Chavez, was also recited at the end of the Eucharistic celebration.



The launch of the "Gawad HuSSAy at SSAYSay" program, honoring alumni for their outstanding contributions to the school and the community, highlighted SSA-SF's commitment to community engagement.

The ceremony concluded with the symbolic release of 100 doves, signifying hope, peace, and the school's aspirations for the future. That in all things God may be glorified!

Pampanga Honors Kumander Liwayway

By Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB

On July 12, 2024, Sr. Carmel Simpauco, OSB accompanied by Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB, Sr. Victoria Bulacan, OSB, and Sr. Andrea Ecito, OSB went to San Fernando to attend the unveiling of a monument honoring her relative, Remedios Gomez Paraiso, also known as "Kumander Liwayway." The monument was unveiled at the Gomez Legacy Park in Anao, Mexico, Pampanga.

Who was Kumander Liwayway? According to Wikipedia:

"Kumander Liwayway was the daughter of Basilio Gomez, the vice mayor of Mexico, a provincial town in Pampanga, Philippines. As a teenager, she was interested in making dresses and perfume and often participated in local beauty pageants. In 1941, during World War II, Japan invaded the Philippines. Her father organized resistance against them for which the Japanese tortured and executed him. His corpse was displayed publicly. Her father's death inspired her to join the guerrilla forces against Japan. Remedios and her brother Oscar were recruited by the Hukbalahap, a guerrilla movement near Mount Arayat. The guerrilla forces gave her the name 'Kumander Liwayway,' meaning 'Commander Dawn.' She was known for dressing formally and wearing red lipstick in battle, fighting for the right to be herself."

During the Battle of Kamansi, despite orders to retreat, Liwayway and her squad stood their ground. Though outnumbered, they fought off the Japanese forces forcing them to retreat. After this battle, her fame spread to other provinces."[3]

In 2014, she passed away at the age of 93 due to cardiopulmonary arrest.

The event began with a Holy Mass at St. Michael the Archangel Church presided over by the Most Rev. Paciano Aniceto, Emeritus Archbishop of the Archdiocese of San Fernando, Pampanga. After the Mass, the official program took place across the road in the Gomez Legacy Park. Sr. Carmel led the opening prayer. The program included speeches recalling the life and bravery of Kumander Liwayway, eulogies, a ballet performance, and the singing of the National Anthem by her relatives. The highlight of the event was the unveiling of her statue, placed beside the monuments of her father and her brother, Oscar, who was also a Hukbalahap commander.

A leaflet narrating her life fittingly concludes: *"Remedios Gomez Paraiso, alias Kumander Liwayway, lived an extraordinary life that defied conventional notions of women's societal roles. She proved herself as competent as men in leading a guerrilla combat unit while retaining her femininity."*



Benedictine Sisters Retrace Pioneers' Legacy in Tanzania

By Sr. Daniela D. Romero, OSB



The Tanzania Mission Renewal Program 2024 took place from June 30 to July 21, 2024. This year's program welcomed 23 participants from 12 priories and 10 nationalities. Under the theme "*In the Footsteps of Our Pioneers: Reclaiming the Missionary Zeal*," the program aimed to rekindle the participants' passion for Christ and the mission, reigniting the spirit of missionary zeal demonstrated by our pioneers in the first mission country.

We were filled with profound joy as we visited the places where our pioneering ancestors once walked, driven by their passionate desire to make Jesus known. The pilgrimage began in Dar es Salaam and took us through significant historical sites in Peramiho, Ndanda, and Mtwara. Highlights included visits to shrines, sacred graveyards, and sites of martyrdom of our early missionaries, as well as the apostolates they established. These experiences filled us with immense pride for our Benedictine missionary heritage.

Tanzania's vibrant and growing Christian community stands as a testament to the enduring impact of our Benedictine missionaries. Their sacrifices and dedication to evangelization have left an indelible mark. By learning from their struggles and unwavering zeal, we rediscover the essence of our Benedictine vocation. With renewed hearts, we are inspired to deepen our missionary zeal and continue their legacy.

Diocesan Directors of Liturgy Meet

by Sr. Marialuz Dungca, OSB

The 38th National Meeting of Diocesan Directors of Liturgy (NMDDL) and hosted by the Diocese of Antipolo, organized annually by the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Liturgy (ECL), took place from September 2 - 6, 2024. Themed "Liturgy and the Jubilee Year 2025", the event gathered over 200 participants, including diocesan liturgy directors, liturgical commissions, and representatives from various religious communities. Among them were Sr. Eligia Cababat, OSB and Sr. Marialuz Dungca, OSB from the San Beda University Graduate School of Liturgy.

The conferences which focused on the spirituality of the Jubilee included, "The Ordinary Jubilee Year of 2025 and The Liturgy" by Bishop David William V. Antonio, "Liturgy Toward Spiritual Renewal and Evangelization" by Fr. Genaro O. Diwa and "A Renewed Insight into the Four Constitutions" by Dr. Josefina M. Manabat. Other sessions focused on fostering prayer through liturgy in parish communities, families and among the youth. The following topics were covered: "Liturgy in the Year of Prayer" by Rev. Fr. Reginald R. Malicdem, DL, "Promoting and Fostering Prayer Through the Liturgy in the Parish Community" by Rev. Fr. Andres S. Vadlera, SLL, "Family as the School of Prayer" by Rev. Fr. Dennis Soriano, MAL, "Prayer and the Youth" by Rev. Fr. Oliver Yalung, DL, and "Forming

Catechists and Lay Liturgical Ministers as People of Prayer and Promoters of Prayer” by Rev. Fr. Florencio Salvador, Jr., SLD.

The participants also visited four shrines in Rizal Province, including the Antipolo Cathedral and the Minor Basilica of St. John the Baptist where they prayed and celebrated the Eucharist. The meeting concluded with the drafting of proposals for submission to the ECL for implementation.

The NMDDL 2024 provided a meaningful platform for collaboration and preparation for the upcoming Jubilee Year 2025, reinforcing the liturgical leaders' dedication to spiritual renewal in their communities.



2024 Luzon Youth Assembly: Strengthening Mission through Youth Empowerment

By Gino Lisondra



The 2024 Luzon Cluster Youth Assembly was held at St. Scholastica's Archives Museum in Subiaco, St. Scholastica's College, Manila on August 24-25, 2024. This two-day event brought together 20 youth participants, 6 lay partners and 4 SPA Sisters from various youth centers in Luzon, aiming to empower the younger generation and deepening their role in our Socio-pastoral Apostolate (SPA). Inspired by Pope Francis' *Christus Vivit* and centered on community building, youth development and mission alignment, the

assembly became a defining moment for the Luzon cluster, as it sought to actively engage and empower the youth in its programs.

One key objective of the assembly was to provide the youth a platform to share personal experiences, social observations, and ideas while strengthening their connection to the SPA community. The program, guided by the themes of *Christus Vivit* included discussions, workshops and activities allowing participants to reflect, express their thoughts and collaborate on youth-centered plans for the future. This event aligned with the broader goals of the SPA's 27th National Assembly Development Plan for 2023-2028.

Sr. Juana Maria Rivera, OSB opened the event with a welcoming remark followed by an inspiring talk from Sr. Rosalina Fajardo, OSB, Sub Prioress, on the importance of youth involvement in the mission. Gino Lisondra, a Tuluyan volunteer, led the workshop on key national and international issues facing today's youth, offering the participants a space to

voice their concerns and aspirations. A film viewing on the lives of Saints Carlo Acutis and Thérèse of Lisieux provided further inspiration and reflection.

Sr. Theodora Bilocura, OSB, SPA Chairperson, emphasized that the assembly was a vital step in deepening connections between youth participants, lay partners, and Sisters. "We wanted to listen to our youth, understand their aspirations, and co-create a plan that reflects their needs while staying true to our mission," she said. The event laid the foundation for future collaborations and mission-driven activities in the Luzon cluster and possibly beyond.



A cultural celebration, highlighted by performances in dance, song, and poetry, honored *Buwan ng Wika*. Participants also enjoyed Filipino children's games, fostering camaraderie and unity. The cultural activities aimed to promote pride in Filipino heritage while encouraging creativity and connection among the youth.

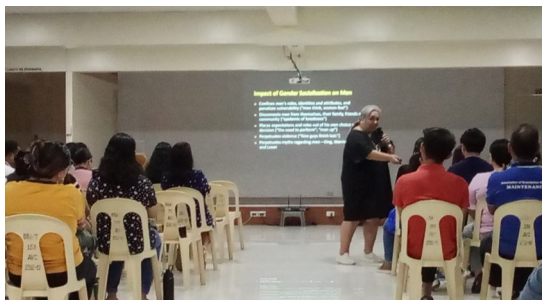
The assembly culminated in a collaborative planning session where participants drafted a one-year plan for youth activities within the Luzon cluster. This plan aligns with the SPA's 27th National Assembly Development Plan, ensuring continued youth engagement and empowerment in the SPA's mission. This assembly marked a significant milestone in building a vibrant, mission-oriented community within the Luzon cluster.

NEWS FROM STATIONS

TABUNOK

SSA-Tabunok Conducts Gender Sensitivity Training

By Sr. Amanda Marie Fondevilla, OSB



On July 8-9, 2024, St. Scholastica's Academy – Tabunok (SSA-T) conducted a Gender Sensitivity Training (GST) as part of the In-Service Training (INSET) days for teachers. Both teaching and non-teaching personnel attended the training which was facilitated by Ms. Becky Padilla Marquez from the Institute of Women's Studies at St. Scholastica's College-Manila and Ms. Itty Gaerlan.

During the two-day training, Ms. Becky and Ms. Itty led the participants through exercises designed to uncover unconscious gender biases, such as "blue is for boys, pink is for girls," "men are strong, women are emotional." They also discussed how culture, social media, and even religious beliefs influence how we view and treat women and girls. Furthermore, they provided statistics showing how gender discrimination could negatively influence a young

girl's prospects and future.

On a more positive note, they highlighted examples of women who overcame gender-imposed limitations, citing those who became firefighters, surgeons, and fighter pilots, etc. Ms. Becky also shared stories of Filipino heroines who took up arms, cared for the sick, or undertook dangerous missions as spies in the fight for our country's freedom.

The facilitators also provided guidelines for recognizing and addressing gender-based violence, emphasizing that even boys experience discrimination and violence related to gender, such as being discouraged from crying or showing vulnerability for fear of ridicule. They stressed the school's responsibility to create a safe environment free from gender-based discrimination and violence for both girls and boys. They noted that all school administrators and personnel share this responsibility.

The training concluded with a symbolic ritual in which participants wrote their commitments to making SSA-T more gender-sensitive on paper "lotuses." These lotuses were placed in water, where they "bloomed," much to the delight of everyone.

Thank you, Ms. Becky Marquez and Ms. Itty, for sharing your time, energy, and expertise with SSA-T. We look forward to being part of the movement to make the world a fairer, safer, and more respectful place for both women and men.



MATI

Sisters Celebrate St. Benedict's Feast with Farmers

By Sr. Claudia Sampal, OSB



On the Solemnity of St. Benedict, July 11, 2024, the Mati community organized a three-in-one celebration at Enfide Institute Dawan, Mati, Davao Oriental. The day began with a Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr. Alfie Alimbon, DCM, the parish priest, with Fr. Rollie Fernandez, MI, as concelebrant. To incorporate local culture into the liturgy, Sr. Joyanne Morales, OSB, sang the responsorial psalm in Visayan.

The celebration continued with a festive lunch featuring a free tasting of organic food. The event was designed to display products made from organic materials, with farmers offering samples of organic dishes they had prepared. Members of the Women's Association for Peace and Development and the Farmers' Association on Sustainable Agriculture and Development (FASAD) also contributed by bringing their own organic dishes for a communal potluck.



In the afternoon, Fr. Rollie Fernandez, MI, gave a lecture on feed formulation using organic materials, highlighting the benefits of organic feeds for raising chickens and hogs. Following the talk, the farmers participated in a hands-on session where they prepared animal feed themselves.

TACLOBAN

SSC-Tacloban Welcomes 9th President Sr. Mary Frances Dizon, OSB

By Sr. Rose Ann Leonardo, OSB

Sr. Mary Frances Dizon, OSB, was officially installed as the ninth president of St. Scholastica's College Tacloban, Inc. (SSCTI) at St. Ottilien Hall on August 27, 2024. The ceremony began with a Eucharistic celebration led by Most Rev. Bishop John F. Du, D.D., of the Diocese of Palo. Sr. Rosalina Fajardo, OSB, representing Mother Mary Thomas Prado, OSB, read the document of appointment, and Dr. Maximo C. Aljibe, Director of CHED Region VIII, administered the oath of office.

During her inaugural address, Sr. Mary Frances emphasized the importance of strategic planning for a sustainable future, saying, "With unwavering faith and collective effort, we will transform our vision into reality."

The SSCTI faculty, staff, students, alumni, and other members of the Scholastican community attended the event.



MANILA

Solemn Investiture of Sr. M. Rosario R. Obiniana, O.S.B., as the 21st President of SSC- Manila

The Solemn Investiture of Sr. M. Rosario R. Obiniana, O.S.B., as the 21st President of St. Scholastica's College Manila, took place at St. Cecilia's Hall on September 12, 2024. The momentous event was graced by the Benedictine Sisters, the Scholastican community, distinguished alumnae, faculty, staff, students, and special guests, marking a new chapter in the institution's leadership.



PRIORY HOUSE

Tech, Tradition, and Faith: A One-Week Adventure at UTP Malaysia

By: Sr. Mary Peter Mackay, OSB



As part of my studies at De La Salle University, I had the privilege of participating in the Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP) Familiarization Programme in Perak, Malaysia from June 23 to 30, 2024. Our group consisted of 15 participants, including 4 postgraduate students.

Throughout the week, we attended lectures and workshops led by UTP professors, covering topics such as cloud computing, data analytics using Power BI, database systems, IT infrastructure, and distributed and parallel computing. A highlight for me was exploring AR/VR technology, which I found particularly engaging. These sessions enriched my knowledge of technology and contributed significantly to my personal and academic growth.

Beyond academics, we immersed ourselves in Malaysian culture. We learned to play traditional gamelan instruments like the Bonang, Gambang, and Gong, and visited Masjid An-Nur, the Floating Mosque. This experience deepened my appreciation for the Muslim religion and their devout practice of Islam, which stood in contrast to the more flexible approach of Christianity that I am familiar with.

One of the most memorable moments was meeting a small group of Catholic students the night before our departure from UTP. Together, we shared our faith and prayed the rosary. Given the university's predominantly Islamic and Hindu population, I have not expected such an encounter. However, meeting these students made me feel at home. I encouraged them to keep their faith alive, reminding them that even as a minority, God is always with them. These students regularly gather every Friday to pray the rosary.

I would like to extend my gratitude to M. Mary Thomas Prado, OSB, and the Priory Government for giving me the opportunity to join this De La Salle University mobility program. The experience provided me with invaluable academic insights and cultural lessons while fostering new friendships. It was a reminder that cultural differences are not barriers to meaningful connections. **Terima kasih** (Thank you)! That in all things, God may be glorified.



Sr. Constance Helps Ease Traffic in Vito Cruz Area



On September 9, 2024, Sr. Constance Tecson, OSB took on an unexpected role as a traffic enforcer at the busy intersection of Vito Cruz and Singalong Streets. As traffic congestion worsened during the rush hour, Sr. Constance stepped in to assist in directing vehicles, ensuring a smoother flow of traffic and safer conditions for pedestrians. Her quick thinking and calm presence helped ease the heavy traffic, earning the appreciation of motorists and passersby alike. Sr. Constance's

actions reflect the Benedictine spirit of service and community involvement in unexpected and extraordinary ways.



OBLATES UPDATES

New Oblates Commit to the Benedictine Way of Life

By Sister M. Hilda Buhay, OSB

Novice Oblates Benita Comila, Julius Martinez, and Editha Lorenzo made their Benedictine Oblation on September 11, 2024. The Eucharistic celebration integrated with the Rite of Oblation was presided over by Fr. Elpidio Sibug, Parish Priest of St. John Bosco Parish, Baguio City. These new oblates are active parishioners involved in catechetical work with children. Their recollection day took place on September 10 at St. Scholastica's Retreat House, Baguio.



The Oblates of Kapuso ni San Benito are online affiliates of St. Benedict's Home Community of the Manila Priory. They commit to participate in the prayer and activities of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of the Manila Priory as their state of life allows.



to the Administrators and Faculty of **Holy Family Academy, Angeles**, on receiving the initial accreditation for your **Senior High School Program** for three years, until August 2027.



Warmest congratulations to **Sr. Mary Frances Dizon, OSB**, on her installation as the 9th President of St. Scholastica's College - Tacloban on August 27, 2024,

and to **Sr. Rosario Obianiana, OSB**, on her installation as the 21st President of St. Scholastica's College - Manila on September 12, 2024!

As you both step into these new roles of leadership, we pray that you are blessed with wisdom, courage, and grace. Your dedication to Benedictine education and service will undoubtedly lead your communities toward new heights of academic excellence, spiritual growth, and transformative action in the world.

May your journeys as presidents be filled with strength, guided by the Benedictine values of *Ora et Labora* and inspired by the legacy of St. Scholastica, with a purity of heart that leads and serves with compassion and integrity. We look forward to witnessing your vision unfold as you continue to shape the hearts and minds of future generations.

MANILA PRIORY BULLETIN TEAM

EDITORIAL TEAM:

SR. ROSALINA FAJARDO, OSB, SR. THERESE BULATAO, OSB,
SR. MARY PETER MACKAY, OSB

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