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MAY BIRTHDAY CELEBRATORS
3 Br. Mark Christopher Biscocho, OP
5 Br. Francis Borre, OP
6 Br. Wenifredo Padilla III, OP
8 Br. Michael Sales, OP
Br. Jesus Miranda Jr., OP
10 Br. Dennis Maquiraya, OP
11 Br. Arden Xerxes Dacuma, OP
13 Br. Boyd Sulpico, OP
15 Br. Rodel Aligan, OP
Br. Cecilio Vladimir Magboo, OP
21 Br. Valentinus Bayuhadi Ruseno, OP
24 Br. Melencio Garcia, OP
29 Br. Anthony Eudela, OP
30 Br. Raymund Fernando Jose, OP
LETRAN MANILA ALWAYS A MISSIONARY SCHOOL
By Br. Art Vincent M. Pangan, OP

Colegio de San Juan de Letran Manila has always been welcoming the students and teachers of Lyceum of Camiguin for their enhanced formation program. On 25 February to 12 March 2020, the Colegio received and embraced 10 Grade 12 learners and 3 teachers from Lyceum of Camiguin. The 10 Grade 12 learners had their work immersion in the offices of the Colegio and the 3 teachers had their professional development and benchmarking in order to improve the identity and service of Lyceum as a Catholic and Dominican institution. In particular, the 3 teachers were trained in the drafting of curricula and the delivery of Religious Education subjects. They were also trained at the Colegio's Student Affair's Office to accompany learners in their struggles in a more Catholic way.

Fr. Clarence C. Marquez, OP, the Colegio's Rector, with the Vice Rectors generously welcomed the Lyceans. All arrangements in the Colegio were laboriously prepared by the hard-working Fr. John Stephen Besa, OP, Vice Rector for Religious, who was himself the 13th Director of Lyceum of Camiguin.

Included in this stay at the Colegio is the Lakbay-Aral of the Lyceans. They visited Colegio de San Juan de Letran Calamba to learn more about the One Letran System and imbibe more the Letran Spirit. They also visited the house of Jose Rizal and Caleruega. The brothers in the House of St. Mary Magdalene in Caleruega also welcomed the students and teachers from our only surviving mission school with sumptuous snacks. St. Albert the Great Community also extended its hospitality to the Camiguenios by hosting a lunch for them during their visit to Calamba. Fr. Tereso Campillo, OP, the 10th Director of Lyceum, also hosted a congratulatory lunch for them at the end of their program in Letran.

The Lyceans were supposed to end on 15 March 2020 but the program was cut short by the looming of the pandemic. They left Manila on 12 March 2020 just in time for the community quarantine. Their visit to Letran was short but sweet and its effects are indelible.

DOMINICANS HELP FEED THE MUSLIMS DURING COVID-19
From an FB post of the Dominican Family Justice and Peace - Philippines

Amid the spread of COVID-19 and its economic effects in Indonesia, the Dominican Priests in Indonesia are offering help to the poor and unemployed people. Fr. Johannes Robini Marianto, OP, and Fr. Mingdry Hanafi Tjipto, OP, through the Indonesia Dominican college, STKIP Pamane Talino, initiated a program named *Indonesia Peduli dan Bersatu*. In this program, the priests collaborated with an Islamic organization called GP Ansor to collect donation from benefactors and distribute the donation to the poor and unemployed people.

On April 23, 2020, the Dominican priests through its college, STKIP Pamane Talino, launched the program “Dapur Umum” in Landak. STKIP Pamane Talino provided forty-six million rupiahs for this program. This program covers two hundred and twenty-five (225) Muslims in Landak District. Each of them would receive daily a box of food for the duration of Ramadhan. Some of STKIP
Pamane Talino staff and lecturers would prepare the food. Meanwhile, GP Ansor will distribute the food. The food would be eaten when the Muslims have their iftar.

Pastor Robini, OP, said that COVID-19 is making a humanity crisis; we should help the people as much as we could. The donation would be given to the people of whatever race or religion since COVID-19 does not know races and religions.

**ITINERANCY**
(as a Priority of the Province)

Br. Christopher Garinganao, OP, is returning back to the Priory of St. Thomas Aquinas after the completion of his mission assignment at St. Vincent Ferrer Parish in Camiguin Island in March 2020.

**DEEPER FRATERNAL INTEGRATION**
(as a Priority of the Province)

**FEATURED BATCH**

We pray as he journeys in heeding God’s call!

**First Name:** RAYMUND FERNANDO  
**Middle Name:** PAYPON  
**Surname:** JOSE  
**Nickname:** “Fr. Raymund”  
**Birthday:** 30 May 1976  
**Entrance to the Novitiate:** 30 Mar 1996  
**Simple Profession:** 14 May 1997  
**Solemn Profession:** 9 May 2000  
**Ordination:** 30 Apr 2005  
**DPP ID No.:** 199701  
**Current Assignment:** Sto. Domingo Convent (since Aug 2016)  
**Previous Assignments:** Convent of St. John Lateran (Jun 2014-Jul 2016); Priory of St. Thomas Aquinas (Jul 2010-Jun 2014); Sto. Domingo Convent (Jun 2006-Jul 2010); Priory of St. Thomas Aquinas (Oct 2005-Jun 2006); Convent of St. Albert the Great (Jun 2005-Oct 2005); Sto. Domingo Convent (May 1997-Jun 2005)

**A RELUCTANT INFIRMARIAN**
By Br. Mervin G. Lomague, OP

Never during my entire initial formation years have I been assigned as an Infirmarian until recently, when the Holy Spirit made a prank on me and moved the Studentate Council to give me such task. I was neither excited nor displeased, and I welcomed it simply because I thought it would not demand much time from me. Now that I am on my second cycle of my academic studies which only has a number of class days (I take up MA in Cultural Heritage Studies today in the University of Santo Tomas) and I am back as well to the Social Communications Team of the Studentate which only operates seasonally, the additional task of being an infirmarian was sure to be as easy as eating *butong pakwan*. In fact, when a brother is sick, all an infirmarian does is to bring him food or prepare him an excuse letter for the class he will be missing. As an infirmarian, I may be assigned to accompany a brother to the hospital but very seldom does it happen since usually a brother succumbs only to a simple cold, fever or stomachache.

Then COVID-19 struck Manila and we are all in lockdown.

After the localized quarantine of the Studentate and the precautionary measures were put into place, we all felt safe. After all, we all look healthy and no brother is manifesting any shortness of breadth or flu-like symptoms. KADAUPAN, our JPCC Group, started packing relief goods. A brother ingenuously devised an improvised face shield and with the help of the rest of the brothers, they had these face shields reproduced for the benefit of the frontliners connected to Sto. Domingo. As for us working in the media ministry, we started having the Holy Mass viewed via digital platforms, prepared an online recollection for the people and had almost everything streamed in the internet from the Exposition and Benediction of the Holy Eucharist to the Exorcism Prayers and Deliverance Prayers against Covid-19! For the sake of social distancing, all that we hold in common were done in a manner that we should not come close to one another.

As for me, I was doing my personal 14-day countdown while praying to Our Lady of La Naval that we all be spared from the virus, lest an entire generation of Dominicans will be left in a building turned into an infirmary. What we were dreading about took place when one after another, brothers began manifesting symptoms similar to that of COVID-19 patients. Within a span of 2 weeks, we had people under strict room quarantine. One of my batchmates was among them. The task I thought would be as simple as eating *butong pakwan* turned out to be like eating a whole *buko*. Personally, the burden of being an infirmarian is not in assisting the sick brother. It lies on the fear that one may contract the virus and become an asymptomatic carrier himself. For me, nothing is scarier than being a carrier of this virus. Imagine, one negligence...
on my part may cause a possible outbreak in the building occupied by more than 50 persons.

Our anxiety later turned into sighs of relief a week later when we were told that he was tested negative. He told me that he actually cried the moment he learned the result. I understood what he meant. He was brought to the hospital one night without any idea of what he was suffering from. All he knew then was that he could hardly breathe – a symptom that a person under quarantine should take seriously. I was told that he was crying sorry to his brothers repeatedly as they frantically brought him inside the van. He asked our head infirmarian who happened to be a nurse as they were on the way to the hospital: “Am I going to die?”

When the news came to me, it hit me hard. I cringed with the thought that it all happened when I, the infirmarian who was assigned to look after him, was not around. I was in the set of Lakbay-Buhay doing our last minute production for our online recollection. You cannot imagine the guilt-feeling I had then, for I admit that since he was placed under quarantine, I was not really looking after him. One of my batchmates volunteered to check on him daily and bring him meals since everyone knew I was busy over the daily coverage of the Holy Mass. That night when he was brought to the hospital, I was waiting anxiously for updates. It was around past 2 in the morning when they came back. He looked fine except that he moved slowly and breathed heavily. He was smiling at me as he tried to describe what happened earlier that evening. He did not know that deep inside, my guilt was eating me up for not being there during the time when he needed most his infirmarian. Seriously, the next day, I brought him all the food I could bring from the refectory and stuffed them all to his stainless steel meal container. It became this way for quite some time until he messaged me one afternoon: “Fray, bawal akong kumain ng marami...” See. That’s why even my other batchmates do not trust their health concerns to me.

Looking back, I learned that the work of the infirmarian reminds us of something fundamental to our preaching as Dominicans. For how could we preach charity if it has not been given first to a brother or sister in our own community? How could a preacher preach about the suffering of the world if he in the first place is estranged from the suffering of his brother? And if indeed every apostolate we do outside our convents stems from our own practice of apostolate in the community; it should imbibe those endeavors, such as Justice, Peace and Care for Creation, should first find its place within our own communities. As for us who are more encouraged to stay indoors during community quarantine, I know now that I do not have to go far in order to reach out to someone.

An infirmarian knows very well where to start.
On the morning of February 27, after the Mass and Liturgy of the Hours, the novices bade their goodbyes to their foster families and had their breakfast at the Fathers’ house, prior to their return to Sto. Domingo.

It was indeed a blessed experience for the novices as they were able to have a glimpse of the day-to-day reality and problems encountered by the poor people residing in Metro Manila. This immersion enriched them and ignited the Dominican missionary spirit in them.

Aeta Community of Porac, Pampanga (Villa Maria)

The 16 Novices arrived at the Adrian Sisters’ Covent in Porac Pampanga at around 4 o’clock in the afternoon accompanied by Sr. Meriam Litor, OP, the Novice Mistress of the Siena Sisters. They were warmly welcomed by the adopting families as well as Sr. Liza of OP Remedies. Sweet potato (camote), planted, harvested and cooked by the locals, was served to them for their merienda. After a short orientation from Sr. Liza, the group was divided into two, the first group consisted of 8 novices, were sent to Inararo and the remaining 8 were sent to Tarik. Both places are in Villa Maria, and as the name implies, one is on top of the mountain while the other one is near the plain. The group was divided strategically, because there were only 4 Filipinos in that group of 16. They were divided so that 2 Filipinos accompanied the foreigners in Tarik and in Inararo.

The following day, February 25, was spent in prayer and meditation as the novices together with Fr. Beltran and the newly-appointed Parish Pastoral Council went on a pilgrimage to the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy and the Healing Mountain of Padre Pio at Marilao and San Jose del Monte, Bulacan, respectively. The afternoon was spent helping in the preparation for the Liturgical Rite of the Burning of Palms for Ash Wednesday. Evening prayer was also conducted inside the church before the novices returned to their respective families.

On February 26, 2020, after attending the Mass, the novices visited the Physical Therapy facility within the compound, which was constructed through the effort of the Parish. This facility accommodates persons with disabilities who suffered from stroke and other accidents, free of charge. The novices were also able to participate in the Feeding Program catering to almost 300 children. The Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help have been conducting this apostolate for almost twelve years from Mondays to Fridays. The afternoon was spent touring around the slums of the area, Market 3 and Smokey Mountain.

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their morning affair in the school, they went back to their houses, and some of the novices, went to the farm again with their family. In the evening, the novices together with their respective families, gathered at Tarik, to have a simple thanksgiving gathering. Different types of Camote were served, brought by the different families as a share in the potluck. It was a night of singing, dancing and thanksgiving to the families who adopted the novices and treated them well.

February 27, was the day to say Farewell to a place they called home for the past days. In the morning at 8 o’clock, the novices again gathered at the Adrian Sisters’ Convent to wait for their ride back home. The families gave the novices a lot of pasalubong, camote, banana, gabi, ginger, bamboo coin banks, etc. The novices assured the people of their prayers. They went home happy, filled with many good memories, new learnings and stories worth sharing.

Upon arrival at Santo Domingo, the novices shared their stories, learning and realizations, as well as funny experiences. The Mass was celebrated afterwards. After which the novices with their formators had their lunch before leaving for their respective convents. The following day, a picture presentation was delivered by each group. Fr. Napoleon Sipalay Jr., OP then conducted a processing session and identified the main problem in their mission area, and tracing its roots. Everyone also gave suggestions on how to possibly help and alleviate some of their challenges. Fr. Roberto Reyes, OP, also proposed that the next batch of novices who will be assigned at the IP community will teach basic hygiene practices to the people especially to the children.

It was indeed a grace-filled experience for the novices!

It was the first time for novices to gather at Santo Domingo for the Common Study on Missions. Because of the positive feedback from the attendees with regard to the ease of gathering and of minimizing the stay in distant places for orientation and processing, it was decided that Aula San Pio V of the IP building will still serve as the venue for future Common Study gatherings.

PS. The Novices would like to thank the House of San Lorenzo Ruiz and Companion Martyrs and the Dominican Sisters of our Lady of Remedies (Adrian Sisters) of Pampanga for the warm accommodation and for coordinating with the foster families. Further, utmost gratitude is also given to all the Dominican communities and congregations who extended their financial help to be given to the adopted families through the Novices’ Christmas greeting cards. Dios mabalos!

TWO STUDENT-BROTHERS MAKE SOLEMN PROFESSION

By Br. Gian Linardo Mari T. Estrella, OP


Given the community quarantine currently in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Eucharistic celebration was attended only by the Dominican fathers and brothers plus a handful of guests. However, live streaming was made available to allow everyone, especially the other family members and friends of Br. Mata and Br. Iñigo, to witness this milestone in the religious life of Br. Mata and Br. Iñigo as they make their promise to fulfill the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience until death.

In his homily, Fr. Sipalay enjoined everyone to praise and thank the Lord for the gift of Dominican vocation of Br. Mata and Br. Iñigo whom he described to have shown courage in their respective journeys and in deciding to make a definitive commitment to offer themselves.
wholly to God for the rest of their lives even at a time of a pandemic. He also encouraged the two brothers and everyone listening not to lose courage even in the midst of failures, doubts, struggles and challenges noting that the mercy of the Lord always abounds.

Br. Mata composed two hymns, namely, Tanggapin Mo Panginoon and Sumpang Ikaw Lamang, for their solemn profession which were sung during the Mass. He also arranged the Responsorial Psalm.

Br. Iñigo gave the word of thanks. He noted that their being in love for the mercy of God and the community made them choose to profess their solemn vows. He also said that April 20, 2020 reminds everyone that there is something greater than COVID-19 that is no other than the Lord.

The two student-brothers made their First Profession on June 4, 2016.

TWO ORDINATIONS DURING COVID-19
By Br. Siddharta B. Chiong, OP

On April 21, 2020, at 3:00 pm, Holy Mother Church proves herself fruitful despite the COVID-19 pandemic by ordaining two Dominicans to the Holy Orders: Rev. Michael M. Sales, OP, was ordained to the presbyterate, and Br. Junel C. Pedroso, OP, was ordained to the diaconate. They were both ordained in Sto. Domingo Church, Quezon City, by Bp. Bartolome G. Santos, Jr. D.D., the Bishop of the Diocese of Iba.

Due to the community quarantine, the newly ordained priest and deacon were accompanied by an intimate group of people, their closest family and the confreres of the Order. Bishop Santos, reminded the newly ordained of their vocation of service to Christ and the persons next to them, always and every day of their lives.

The word of thanks was given by Fr. Michael Sales, OP, who despite his many “sana” brought by the pandemic, praised God and thanked the many people who helped them reach their dreams. Amidst the ordinary situation, their ordination witnesses to the triumph of priestly vocations.
SIETE PALABRAS 2020
By Br. Fergie Joshua A. Lasugas, OP

Holding its longest running live telecast Lenten special on Philippine television, the Dominican Province of the Philippines presented the Siete Palabras 2020 with its theme: “Kausapin ang Diyos, pag-usapan ang Diyos tungs sa Pag-kakaisa” last Good Friday. It was aired live last April 10, 2020 on Sto. Domingo Church, Quezon City from 12:00 nn – 3:00 pm over GMA Channel 7, Radyo Veritas 846 and member stations of the Catholic Media Network. The said event was also made live through some social media platforms that allowed other Catholic faithful to listen and watch across the country and even abroad.

The Siete Palabras or the Seven Words of our Lord Jesus Christ presentation was traditionally remembered as we commemorate his passion and death on the cross. Throughout the centuries, the seven last words that Jesus spoke before he died were made into reflection by Catholic faithful especially the clergy. This year, some chosen Dominican Friars and Diocesan clergy shared their reflections, to wit:

1. Rev. Fr. Paul Raegan Talavera, OP, the parish priest of Santisimo Rosario Parish in the University of Santo Tomas
2. Rev. Fr. Carlo del Rosario, the Parish Vicar of San Fernando de Dilao Parish in Paco, Manila and a member of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Dominic de Guzman.
3. Rev. Fr. John Stephen Besa, OP, from the Convent of St. John Lateran, Intramuros, Manila
4. Rev. Fr. Carmelo Arada from the Archdiocese of Manila and a member of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Dominic de Guzman
5. Rev. Fr. Napoleon Sipalay Jr., OP, the Prior Provincial of the Dominican Province of the Philippines
6. Rev. Fr. Roland de la Rosa, OP from Santo Domingo Convent
7. Rev. Fr. Virgilio Ojoy, OP, from the Convent of St. John Lateran, Intramuros, Manila

To give hope and consolation to the people as we face pain and suffering was the purpose of the reflections shared in the Siete Palabras 2020. In these trying times, it is imperative to reflect on the seven last words on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be able to draw inspirations and hope from the Reddemer Himself.

LITURGY: ONLINE SERVICES
By Br. Laurence Ryan V. Mata, OP

Since 2019, the Dominican Students’ Media Center (DSMC) started to produce an online Lenten recollection.
This project is intended for those who cannot attend the Lenten recollection in their parishes. For this year, the online recollection of the DSMC became a very useful instrument in its ministry of preaching through social media, especially now that we are experiencing a global crisis. The faithful are longing for spiritual nourishment; they cannot receive the sacraments physically. Nevertheless they can participate in the liturgy virtually through social media.

Last April 8, 2020, Holy Wednesday, the DSMC under the video department headed by Br. Mervin Lomague, OP, produced this year’s online recollection with the title “Lakbay-Buhay: Lakbay Tungo sa Bagong Buhay Year 2”. It was aired in all Dominican social media accounts, live in Facebook and YouTube channel. The preachers of this online recollection were Fr. Tereso Campillo, Jr. OP, Fr Rolando de la Rosa, OP and Br Wilson Nucum, OP. It received a very positive feedback from the viewers. Especially during these trying times caused by COVID-19, the DSMC will continue in carrying out and proclaiming God’s word in whatever possible way.

Because of the recent development, a live broadcast of Siete Palabras from Sto. Domingo Church will not be possible this year. The usual live format of the program will have to be revised. There will be no more choirs and prayer leaders for each word. Music videos which were mostly produced by the Dominican Students Media Center (DSMC) will be used instead of the choir. The entire cast of the program will be reduced to the two hosts and the seven preachers. Some of the preachers who will be coming from outside Metro Manila, and as far as Indonesia, expressed their sentiments regarding the challenges that the “lockdown” may pose with respect to travel restrictions. It was then that the Provincial Social Communication Team started meeting online, through Viber, to come up with alternative plans on this year’s broadcast of the preachers’ reflections on the seven last words of Jesus. The team considered three options: first was to go on with a pre-recorded program; second was to broadcast a replay of a past program; and third was to cancel this year’s broadcast altogether. The team (headed by Fr. Jose Martin Sibug, OP - Promoter for Evangelization through Social Communication and Executive Producer of Siete Palabras 2020, with members Fr. Clarence Marquez, OP, Fr. Christopher Jeffrey Aytona, OP, Bro. Jun Banaag, OP and Mr. Vic Alcuaz) voted that we go on with a pre-recorded program.

As the days drew near Good Friday, the day of the program’s broadcast, the rules on enhanced community quarantine got stricter and the Social Communication Team actually considered the idea of “preach from home” for the annual Siete Palabras which has always been broadcast live for the past 26 years. The line-up of the seven preachers was already complete in February. But in the midst of all the preparations for Siete Palabras 2020, President Rodrigo Duterte declared the entire Luzon area under “enhanced community quarantine” (ECQ) on March 12, 2020. Two days later the Catholic Church suspended Masses in Metro Manila, after the government announced a lockdown for the whole of Luzon due to the 2019 novel corona virus (COVID-19).

A DIFFERENT SIETE PALABRAS 2020

By Br. Jose Martin L. Sibug, OP

As early as January 2020, the Office of Evangelization through Social Communication has started preparations for the annual Siete Palabras which has always been broadcast live for the past 26 years. The line-up of the seven preachers was already complete in February. But in the midst of all the preparations for Siete Palabras 2020, President Rodrigo Duterte declared the entire Luzon area under “enhanced community quarantine” (ECQ) on March 12, 2020. Two days later the Catholic Church suspended Masses in Metro Manila, after the government announced a lockdown for the whole of Luzon due to the 2019 novel corona virus (COVID-19).
to be recorded on their own by the preachers, using whatever basic gadgets they have. But the members of the production team thought that the recorded materials from the preachers might not be good for broadcast in terms of its quality. And so, three weeks prior to the date of airing, we had to make adjustments in terms of the line-up of preachers, how to produce the recorded program, where and how to shoot the video recording of the preachers. Finally we had to scrap the idea of "preach from home" and go on with the video recording of the preachers at the Perpetual Adoration Chapel of Sto. Domingo Parish.

Two days were allotted for the video recording of the preachers and the hosts. An entire week was devoted to post production work and video editing which were done by Dino Dimar, a Dominican volunteer and an alumnus of the College of Fine Arts and Design of the University of Santo Tomas (UST). Dimar was also the videographer and art director of the program. Bro. Jerone Geronimo, OP and Bro. Fergie Joshua Lasugas, OP were chosen as the hosts of the program. The seven preachers were:

Fr. Paul Reagan Talavera, OP – Parish Priest of Santisimo Rosario Parish in UST
Fr. Carlo Del Rosario, JCL – Parochial Vicar of San Fernando de Dilao Parish, Paco, Manila and a member of the Dominican Clerical Fraternity of the Philippines
Fr. John Stephen Besa, OP, from the Convent of St. John Lateran, Intramuros, Manila
Fr. Carmelo Arada, Jr. – Parish Priest of Our Lady of Penafiancra de Manila Parish, Paco, Manila and a member of the Dominican Clerical Fraternity of the Philippines
Fr. Napoleon Sipalay, Jr., OP – Prior Provincial of the Dominican Province of the Philippines
Fr. Rolando Dela Rosa, OP, from the Convent of Sto. Domingo, Quezon City, and
Fr. Virgilio Ojoy, OP, from the Convent of St. John Lateran, Intramuros, Manila

The theme of Siete Palabras 2020 is “Kausapin ang Diyos, Pag-usapan ang Diyos...Tungo sa Pagkakaisa”. It was based on “Dialogue Towards Harmony”, the theme of 2020 as the Year of Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue and Indigenous Peoples. The script for this year’s program was written by Rizalino Pinlac, Jr. and Fr. Clarence Marquez, OP. Rizalino Pinlac, Jr. a former lector of Sto. Domingo Church and an alumnus of UST Communication Arts also directed the program. A special music video which featured priests, religious and church workers working hand in hand with frontline workers in this battle against COVID-19 was made by Bro. Ariel Adolfo, OP, and Bro. Reginald Zamora, OP. The song of the music video “Breathe on Me”, is from the album of Inggo 1587 entitled Lead Me On and was composed and performed by Fr. Giuseppe Pietro Arsciwals, OP.

Siete Palabras 2020 was aired over television network GMA7 and simulcast over radio station Radyo Veritas 846 and other member networks of the Catholic Media Network on April 10, 2020, Good Friday from 12:00pm to 3:00pm. It was also available on the internet through video streaming on the Facebook Page of the Dominican Province of the Philippines Official.

**TURNING THE PANDEMIC INTO SOMETHING LIGHT AND PRODUCTIVE**

**OP-Siena Postulants 2020**

COVID-19 scare made us in the Postulancy heightened our daily prayers. Aside from our common prayers, we prayed the complete sets of mysteries of the Holy Rosary kneeling on the floor and with outstretched hands (9 ways of Prayer by St. Dominic) as our way of “contemplative involvement in the world” as St. Catherine of Siena would do. Offering these sacrifices and penance hopes to bring solace and consolation to those who were affected worldwide. We also created an Activity Book for children (The Activity Book on Coronavirus Disease 2019 COVID-19) about the pandemic trying to turn it into something light and productive. The reason behind the making of the activity book is to explain what Covid-19 is to the young generation in their own level of understanding.

**UNITED WE STAND!**

*By Sr. Maria Roselyn Felisilda, OP*

When the world was alerted by the PANDEMIC that became worse each day, people’s daily routines were disrupted. It brought panic, worries and confusion for some. Personally, I was affected with it. My investiture to the Novitiate was re-scheduled because of the enhanced community lockdown.

The human side of me felt bad because everything was already in place, like the program and the invited priest, to name a few. I should have had it last March 22, 2020. I find that date perfect because it was on March 22 of last year when I finally bade goodbye to my life in Singapore. It is a coincidence that exactly a year after, I will start my journey to religious life. However, the pandemic took away that assurance from me. I asked God in my prayers to do something about it. I know that nothing is impossible with Him. Nevertheless, as the days passed by, the problem became worse. More and more people were affected, more lives were taken. I became more fearful. I do not just fear...
for my own life but also for my family, those whom I hold dear, and for everyone. I got frustrated in my prayers and even questioned God. Why He could not stop the spread of the virus? Why He could not just make this pandemic end? How can He allow his creation to suffer? Just like the disciples when they were caught by an unexpected storm, and Jesus was asleep as if nothing was wrong (Mt. 8:24).

I brought these questions to my formator and was asked to read the story of Job. Reading his story made me realize how shallow my faith was, I thought that God did not see the sufferings of his people and I perceived God as a magician. After reading the story, I grasped that God allows certain things to happen because He trusts me. He created me and he knows my capacity. I might not see it right now but He is beyond the scene working things out. As what He said when his beloved Lazarus got sick. “That sickness will not end in death but it is for God to be glorified”. (John 11:4)

We are all affected and suffering in different forms. It seems that the solution to our problem is too hard to find. We do not know what to do next; what is the best strategy to use to lessen its effects. All of us are hurting but if we share what little we have like the small boy with five barley loaves and two fish (John 6:9) no one will be deprived and feel alone. As the song goes “United we stand divided we fall.”

DEATH IN THE FAMILY
We pray for the eternal repose of the souls of:

Sr. Emilia Lagumbay, OP, of the Dominican Sisters of the Trinity, who passed away on April 11, 2020.


Mr. Ricardo Venegas Rodero, OP, of the Dominican Laity of the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary (San Juan City) who passed away on April 10, 2020 due to complications from COVID-19.

Mr. Gregorio A. Ojoy who passed away on April 9, 2020. He is the brother of our Br. Virgilio A. Ojoy, OP,

FOR OUR DECEASED BROTHERS
Per mandate by the Eleventh Provincial Chapter Statute 26, V, we kindly request all communities to include in the intentions of their Conventual Mass and Evening Prayer our deceased brothers during the anniversary of their death in the month of May.

May 1 + Br. Agusto Antonio, OP
11 + Br. Edgardo Lumboy, OP
22 + Br. John Francisco, OP
29 + Br. Fernand Tanguay, OP
30 + Msgr. Jose Salazar, OP

April and May in DPP History
(Culled from the Archives of the Province)

1972 April 13 – +Br. Amador Ambat, OP, was installed as the first Parish Priest of Santo Domingo Parish, Quezon City.

1975 April – A new parish was established in Quezon City called the Parish of Resurrection. It was entrusted to the Filipino Dominican priest, Br. Rogelio Alarcon, OP. The Parish was composed of two barrios of Paltok and Bungad with a population of 20,000.

2008 April 16 – Installation of Br. Quirico Pedregosa Jr., OP, as the 10th Prior Provincial of the Dominican Province of the Philippines at the Angelicum College, Quezon City.

1977 May 5 - The St. Martin de Porres Shrine of Laoac, Pangasinan was inaugurated. It was built under the charge of St. Martin Association of the parish under the leadership of its Parish Priest, Br. Domingo Nacion, OP.

1985 May - The Parish of San Lorenzo Ruiz and Companion Martyrs in Dagat-dagatan, Navotas was offered for the apostolate of the Province in exchange for the Resurrection Parish in Paltok, Quezon City.

2000 May 6 - The first pre-novitiate formation house of the Province outside the Philippines was established in Kandy, Sri Lanka.

2001 May 2 - Celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of the canonical coronation of the Our Lady of the Rosary of Manaoag.

2005 May 10 - The Most Rev. Deogracias S. Yñiguez Jr., DD, Bishop of Kalookan, gave his canonical approval for the establishment of the House of San Lorenzo Ruiz and Companion Martyrs in Dagat-dagatan, Navotas.
Dominican Family for Justice and Peace - Philippines
https://www.facebook.com/OPjpcPh

#DominicansInAction  #DominiCares   #OPcares

The Dominican Family COVID-19 Response Project, a Dominican Family collaborative efforts during the community quarantine to curtail the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

(Some photos from the Facebook page of the Dominican Family for Justice and Peace-Philippines)

The Siena Sisters distributed rice to some 200 tricycle drivers in the area near their campus of Notre Dame - Siena College of Polomolok in South Cotabato.

Siena School in Marbel, South Cotabato, the Sisters community and some Alumni prepared bread for distribution to the frontliners in the hospitals and those manning the check-points.

The Batangas Medical Centre received the PPEs sent by Dominican Family for Justice and Peace. We are happy to help our frontliners!
Hot meals were delivered to 100 families in Barangay 450, Manila. Service was also extended to the police and military personnel at checkpoints as well as to the barangay frontliners. Special shoutout to our partners in this project – Casa de Lasa who prepared and delivered the food packs and to FSDPI - Fili Sancti Dominici Philippinensis, Inc. who sponsored the event.

The gallant security personnel of the University of Santo Tomas who keep the campus safe everyday were given financial assistance by the University, as well as food packs, gift certificates, and vitamins from the Santísimo Rosario Parish - UST, Caritas Manila, the UST College of Nursing, and the St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Taguig City.
The Sisters at the Notre Dame Hospital and Siena College of Cotabato, Inc. gave sacks of rice as their continuous support for their personnel during the Enhanced Community Quarantine.

The Lay Dominican Fraternity of St. Martin de Porres-UST (Pan de Martin) partnered with a Letran-Manila Alumna restaurateur Kirbz Sarmenta (Mamang’s) distributed a total of 250 foodpacks for medical frontliners in Valenzuela Alert Center, Valenzuela Medical Center, Valenzuela Waste Management, the Molecular Laboratory of the Philippine Red Cross in Mandaluyong City and to the homeless they came across along the way.
The appreciative recipients of the PPEs we sent to Tarlac Provincial Hospital showed their gratitude by posting photos about them wearing the protective gears while holding Thank You messages. You’re very much welcome TPH! We’re happy to help our frontliners!

Domini-CAN! As said by the alumni of Colegio de San Juan de Letran-Bataan. This group of graduates from the Dominican school gathered and contributed to help those affected by the COVID-19 in Bataan, Philippines. To date, the group has already raised funds to help frontliners in this battle against the pandemic. They’ve already helped distribute food packs, care packs, personal protective equipment, and even contributed to the production of a Hands-free Door Opener.

Apart from helping others, the Dominican Youth in the Philippines is encouraging the whole Dominican Family to continue to pray for the safety of our frontliners around the world, and of course for each other.

STKIP Pamane Talino, through a program of Indonesia Peduli & Bersatu (@indonesiapedulidanbersatu), and the local government of Landak distributed staple foods, known as sembako, and personal-protective-equipment to students, people and Health Office of Landak Regency. A public kitchen would be built as well in order to provide food packages.

The distribution would be done in two stages. The first is the distribution of sembako for the students who stay in the boarding houses amid the Covid-19 pandemic and subsidies of data quota for joining online learning. The second would be the distribution of 225 food packages for each day in 25 days. In addition, the personal-protective-equipment would be given to Health Office of Landak Regency.

The regent (@dr_karolin) as well as administrative secretary of Landak (@vinsen_137) represented these distributions to the students at the lobby of STKIP Pamane Talino. We hope that this covid-19 would be over soon.

Misericordia Veritatis!
The deliveries for the Calayan Missions of the Order have arrived. Supplies of bottles of alcohol, bleach and others were through the efforts of Fr Joemar Sibug, OP - Promoter of the Missions of the Province, while the PPEs were donated by the Dominican Family Justice and Peace. All these came in with the banca after 19 long hours of travel - 12 hours by land from Manila to Aparri then another 7 hours by banca from Aparri to Calayan.

Through the generosity of Caritas Manila and its benefactors, Sto Domingo Parish was able to distribute P5million worth of gift checks to 5,000 urban poor families. We would like to thank Fr. Ferdinand Bautista, OP, and the Dominican Student Brothers for making the face shields for the volunteers and other frontliners.
The Dominican Sisters of our Lady of Peace in Tarlac have engaged themselves in many activities in their effort to give assistance in this time of pandemic in our country.

The Dominican Sisters of St. Joseph in Bulacan definitely know that no high fences would prevent them from extending help to those in need. Sr. Emily Bantigue, OP, and the rest of the Sisters from her community started packing goods and distributed them to the informal settlers at the back of their school in Paombong, Bulacan.

Thank you very much for providing food to our frontliners. We highly appreciate your company’s efforts to support our healthcare providers.

DOMINICAN SISTERS OF MOLO
March 25, 2020
Ang “PAGDUNGAW” ng Mahal na Ina sa kanyang mga anak
sa Linggo ng Muling Pagkabuhay ni Hesus
Sto. Domingo Church, Quezon Avenue, Quezon City
Penitential Procession against the CoVid-19 Pandemic
Santísimo Rosario Parish
University of Santo Tomas, Manila
Bahay Dominiko community joins the UST community in the ‘Malalagpasan’ tribute music video for the frontliners.
There’s a first time for everything. And when we do something for the very first time, it is always exciting; exciting in a sense that you feel different emotions. It’s so funny that it’s scary. Thrill is there but at the same time the nervousness is also there. We want to make our things memorable for the first time, we wish to be perfect, but it’s where our actions become awkward; just like when we fall in love the very first time. It feels good to see and be with the person we love. We like every single moment to be memorable together with that person whom we adore. Must be perfect, right?

And this is absolutely true to my case. I was just ordained as a priest last August 2019, I have not had a year yet. So the things I do seem to be first time for me. The things I did first time as a priest are so fresh in my memory. The first Mass I celebrated in my home town in Bulacan. My first epiphany. The first wedding that I solemnized: the wedding of my high school classmate.

The first anointing of the sick. The first house blessing. The first confession that I heard. All of these sacraments and sacramentals I administered the first time, I tried to do them with utmost care and I really savored each and every moment. Exciting. It’s funny. Scary. Thrilling. It was frightening.

My first assignment as a priest is also here in the Shrine of our Lady of Manaoag. That is why I am so happy that our Provincial brought me here. This was where I celebrate my first Christmas as a priest. The Church is always full of people here in Manaoag, lots of pilgrims. A lot of devotees. That is why I was so happy when I celebrated my first Night Mass, as well as the barangay Masses. So I was expecting that my celebration of Mass would also be exciting during Holy Week and Easter. I imagine that the Church is full of people. A lot of confession. Many will join the processions. But my excitement vanished when there was an enhanced community quarantine because of Covid 19. Mass with the public was banned for the sake of us all. It has been a few weeks since we have not been able to say Mass with the faithful inside the Church. My excitement was replaced with sadness. In my mind, on Easter day, when Mary Magdalene saw an empty tomb, what I would be seeing is an empty Church. Jesus Christ is
not in the tomb. The People of God are not in the Church. Bereavement is there to give communion to those who want to accept the body of Christ. There is that longing to give the sign of peace to our brothers and sisters in Christ. There is the longing to proclaim God's Good News in front of the congregation. Because of all these deprivations, we can feel the loss, emptiness.

Because people cannot go to Church to see Jesus, the Church goes to people when they feel Jesus is with them now that we are filled with apprehension and sadness caused by the crisis in our future. One day, we toured around the barangays in Manaoag to bless, bring the Holy Eucharist in a monstrance and bring the Cross of Christ to attest that the Church is with the faithful in their sorrows and apprehension. I saw the thirst of men for Christ. As we passed through the streets, we could see people kneeling and praying; the joy that Christ went to their faces in their community himself. I was deeply touched seeing people crying. I felt their thirst and hunger for Christ.

I realized that God allows us to feel this emptiness in our heart so that He could fill it with His love. And where did I find that love during these trying times? I saw God’s love in the people I saw in our rounds. They filled my heart with the love of God for the faith they had shown. And perhaps, the love of God was in their hearts when they saw Christ in our rotation to their community. We have to experience loss in order for us to experience that we are filled.

My dear brothers and sisters, this Covid 19 crisis too shall pass. This will come to pass. Many will change and I hope things will change for the better when all of these finally end. But my prayer remains that something will not change. Let us keep our hearts empty; empty of selfishness, of pride, of self-righteous, of lust and of greed. St. Paul in the Second Reading said, “Let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor 5:8). Keep our hearts empty so that God can fill it with his love.

The tomb is empty. Christ is not there. The Church is empty. The People of God is not there. But this emptiness gives us hope. This emptiness strengthens our faith. This emptiness is needed for us to receive the unconditional love of the Risen Christ.

This is my first experience of Easter as a priest. I have to feel this emptiness as a young priest so that I will not be full of myself, so that there will be space in my heart for the love and peace of Jesus Christ. Very memorable, indeed. A blessed Easter to everyone!

QUARANTINE THOUGHTS ON COVID-19

Before the virus hits me, allow me to share these thoughts. The virus might one day catch up on me but, I know, these insights will someday help conquer it. The virus is a great equalizer. It can put on their knees the destitute and the affluent, the loudmouthed and the voiceless, the president/senators and the powerless, even the physicians, acknowledged healers who, at some point, cannot heal themselves. Catholics, Muslims, INC members, Reformers, born-again Christians, all can be vulnerable to this plague.

In the face of this pandemic, we realize that as creaturely beings, we can sometimes reach the point of our human-limit-situation. Thus, we turn to God, the One who has no limits, to acknowledge to Him our excesses and shortcomings. We humbly accept that we did not respect the laws that He infused into this world when He created it. We used the forces and gifts of nature for our selfish, individual, familial, political party or national territory motives. Thus, like Adam and Eve, we are driven out of Paradise and imprisoned in the cages of our own homes. We experience the hell of isolation, the loss of many of our freedoms, and the scarcity of food and luxury. In this situation, we need to once more turn to the Almighty Creator, be thankful for the beautiful gift of creation and make a solemn vow to respect its natural and social laws.

As we are confined in our cage-homes, we realize that in the most trying times of life, we have family to always be around. Yet, many times, we take one another for granted. We neglect to engage in useful activities and conversations that enrich one another. We fail to share
with one another our problems, our deepest longings, our profound thoughts that could make relationships stronger. Many times, we are strangers in our own homes and among our immediate family. In these weeks of quarantine, we can take the opportunity to discover the richness and beauty of family.

While we are safely nestled in our cage-homes, we usually turn on the television or go online through the social media. There, we hear the cries of the poor, the lamentations of hungry people, the anxiety and worries of the frontliners, the anguish of those who lost a loved one over whose body they cannot mourn, or for whom they could not hold a wake until their grief subsides. As we become aware of these tragedies, we are spontaneously moved to reach out through prayers, kind thoughts and through material support. In these trying times, we are being made aware of our common solidarity as human beings, of our being ONE FAMILY OF GOD. Thus we need to discard all labels that tend to weaken this fundamental unity – religion, nationality, political party lines, blood ties.

Or better, we may preserve them, but always bearing in mind our fundamental unity that leads all of us to respect one another’s beliefs and affiliations.

We can save ourselves from this pandemic, and prevent another one from afflicting all of us, not because we are Catholics or Muslims or Reformers, not because we belong to this or that political party, not because we are highly educated or among the richest in the world, not even because we are Chinese or Americans, or Australians, Europeans or Filipinos. We can save ourselves because we acted as ONE – recognizing our common humanity and our need for one another.

When we are finally allowed to get out of our cage-homes, we would do well to acknowledge and love the Supreme Creator, humbly recognize and respect the laws of nature that came from Him, and effectively live the human solidarity that He so desires. Only then can we, once more, live in Paradise where our homes are not any more our cages.

THE FISH IN THE OCEAN AND THE OCEAN IN THE FISH
In the Face of the Covid-19 Pandemic Crisis

By Br. Quirico T. Pedregosa, Jr. OP

There is much to learn from the wisdom of St. Catherine of Siena, whose feast the universal Church celebrates today. In the midst of the current pandemic crisis, these words of hers resound in my ears: “The soul is in God, and God is in the soul, as the fish is in the ocean, and the ocean is in the fish” (Dialogue, Catherine of Siena). This beautiful and pregnant statement can be broken into two.

“The soul is in God, as the fish is in the ocean”

True, we are in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic crisis. The havoc of Covid19 envelops us, lording over and controlling our lives, robbing us of our treasured forms of security: wealth, money, power, pleasure, loved ones, dearest friends, etc. We are caught unprepared and powerless to overcome this novel virus, until a vaccine against it is found. Once caught by the virus, anyone, without sure remedy in the present, can die and be reduced to a handful of ashes.

To those who have faith in God, St. Catherine reminds us that “the soul (human person) is in God, as the fish in the ocean.” Yes, we are “in” the pandemic crisis, but that does not destroy the truth that we are in God. We are in Him; we are in his hands. God is the source and giver of all life. In his goodness and power, He sustains us; his love envelops us. As long as we stay in him, we live and will live forever. In time, we will prevail over this virus. At the bottom line, come what may, we will never die but live forever. But only if we remain in God. We are all called today more than ever to be steadfast in our faith in Him to place all our hope in him, and sink our roots deep in our love for God and for one another. Humans, can poison or destroy the ocean, seas and rivers; and sadly some do it today. But God remains as our invincible refuge, our eternal salvation. The invitation to all is clear: “Cast all your cares in God, as he cares for you” (1 Pt 5:7). And let us care more for one another, especially the afflicted, the dying and those in dire need among us. May we be the visible loving, caring and healing “hands of God” for one another; may we hold precious every human person, within the reach of our hands.

“God is in the soul, as the ocean is in fish”

True, the virus has aggressively intruded into our human life, health and safety. In a sense, the destructive Covid19 is in us humans from bad to worst; it has gotten into our loved ones, in our homes and places of safety, work, rest, leisure, etc. It seems nothing is secure against its viral attack. Wherever it gets in, it brings chaos, despair,
even death itself. In the face of all these uncontrollable phenomena, St. Catherine reminds us of the beautiful and undying truth that “God is in the soul, as the ocean is in the fish.” Yes, God is in us! There is nothing more consoling than that. God is infinite; and there is a bit of God’s infinite presence and life in the soul (in each human person), that makes us live, move and have our being. Indeed, “in God, we live, move and have our being” (Acts 4:12). First, we bear in our persons God’s image (Gen 1:27-28), by reason of our rational nature. He brought us into being in a wonderful way; he created us a being of intellectual nature like Himself. He endowed us with the life of reason. Thus, we have the intellect, the power to know the truth, and will, the power to desire, choose, love and do the good—for ourselves, for others and the world. To a limited extent, by the light reason, we carry in us God’s light and wisdom. With this gift and imprint of God’s image in us, it is but a matter of time, that with our human genius, creativity and great sacrifice, our scientists and medical experts, and technocrats in health sciences will soon discover the sure antidote to Covid19. And God will help us accomplish this, for the good and health of humanity and his glory. For “the glory of God is man fully alive” (St. Irenaeus).

Secondly, God is in us, because he created the human person to be a bearer of his own divine life; he created us not only in his “image” but in his “likeness” too. Man shares in God’s divine life, in the beginning, by the gift of “original justice” or grace, which humankind lost through rebellion against God, sin. But, in his unwavering goodness and love, by the saving death and resurrection of his only begotten Son, through faith and baptism, and by the power of the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:16; Rom 8:14-17), God has restored to us the grace of adoption as his children. Thus, we bear in our persons, the gift of eternal life, the indestructible seed of divine life. And no virus, or earthly power can ever overcome God’s life, presence and power in us. We are destined to share God’s eternal power and glory. But, even here and now, this grace as God’s children works in us powerfully. Grace does not destroy our intellectual nature, but builds on it and perfects it. It elevates and perfects the power of our intellect and will. This grace, through faith, hope and love, works like a gentle and penetrating ray of light in our minds or intellects, and like a warm and intense ray of power in our hearts or wills, upgrading our human genius, creativity and capacity for sacrifice to know, to choose, love and do what is good for all humans and whole world. By the help of God’s grace, we, the human family, will soon, without unnecessary delay in God’s wisdom and love, find the vaccine and other necessary measures to overcome this ongoing viral plague. In the face of it all, this is our crucial challenge, in the words of St. Augustine: “Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended upon you.” We, humans, and God are not competitors; God and humankind are in a beautiful love-relationship. God is our All-Good Creator and Loving Father; we are his wonderful creatures and beloved children. God extends to us his light, guidance and power; he wants us to become the living instruments of his goodness, healing and love for the world.

Indeed, with God in us, and we in God, the global human family will soon be able to accomplish the healing of our ailing world. When that happens, I hope that we would say with gratitude and joy: “Lord, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us” (Isa 26:12). Or, as Catherine of Siena would poetically say: “The soul is in God and God is in the soul, as the fish is in the ocean and the ocean is in the fish.”

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**“MAHAL MO ANG DIYOS? MAS MAHAL KA NG DIYOS!”**

*by Br. Rocky Niño L. Manire, OP*


complaining brings us to another reality that is a praiseworthy value. But though often viewed in a accepting whatever reality offers us with resignation By social constructs, we are forced to believe that early years by imposing silence as the opposite virtue. for discontentment, the act itself is tempered in one's associated with many negative connotations. A misnomer but to accept as an undeniable fact.

Napakamapagbigo ng Diyos. Kung gagamitin ko ang salita natin upang ipaliwanag angpagbibrong ito sa akin ng Diyos, maari kong sabihin na ito ay isang prank mula sa Kanya. Pagkatanggap ko ng resulta ng acting test, para bang narining ko ang Diyos na nagsabi “Rocky, it’s a prank!” Diyos ko! Takot na takot ako dahil hindi pa ako handang mamatay, tapos sa huli nagbibiro lang pala ang Panginoon. Diyos ko! Sana naman po, sa susunod na magbigo kayo, huwag naman po ako buhay ko!

Ngunit sa aking pagninilay-nilay habang ako’y mag-isang nagdarasal sa harap ng malilit na krus na inihanda sa aking designated quarantine room, ang lahat ng ito’y nangyari upang bumalik ang nanghihina kong pananampalataya sa kanya. Para akong si Pedro na iniwanda sa aking mag-isang nagdarasal sa harap ng maliit na krus na inihanda sa aking designated quarantine room, ang lahat ng ito’y nangyari upang bumalik ang nanghihina kong pananampalataya sa kanya. Para akong si Pedro na

features

QUaRantING: EASTER MUSING DURING THE QUaRaNTINE

By Br. Jimbo M. Mendejar, OP

The human heart is insatiable. Our impulse to complain, to nitpick what is lacking, and to express our dissatisfaction over a variety of concerns overwhelms history, expressed subtly in a litany of criticisms and frustrates future attempts to keep at pace with the seemingly endless demand for the better. In every act done, no matter how good intentioned the doer might have been, side comments of all sort still find their way. Everything is falling short and imperfection has become a second nature of the profane; something which we can always complain about yet are left with no choice but to accept as an undeniable fact.

Due to this, complaining has always been closely associated with many negative connotations. A misnomer for discontentment, the act itself is tempered in one’s early years by imposing silence as the opposite virtue. By social constructs, we are forced to believe that accepting whatever reality offers us with resignation is a praiseworthy value. But though often viewed in a bad light, complaining brings us to another reality that touches the core of our humanity and unites the divisive subjective dimensions of our preferences: our desire for order, for beauty, for perfection. We complain because of the absence of something good which is ought to be there. Like the weeping Magdalene, we search for the dead Jesus, and ask grievingly where they had brought him with the intention of bringing Him back. Our grief, after all, no matter how shallow it may be, originates ultimately from the very Source, whose absence we mourn through our complaints. This may be a hyperbole but it is only in the beauty of order found in God, Beauty and Order itself, where our craving for goodness is satisfied. This longing which neither the sight of empty tomb nor the burial linens could suffice to fill, but the Risen Christ alone. The news of resurrection does not fully relieve humanity’s craving for the beautiful; man’s complaints would continue to rise up until he encounters the Risen Lord.

But he did not choose to be seen, at least, by everyone except for a chosen few. And just as it was, he permitted strife, wars, disease, famine and all sorts of evil to continue afflicting the world even after the accomplishment of the greatest divine act of all. Resurrection did not end man’s strife; an enigma which still continues to baffle thinkers until now and a perennial subject of the unbeliever’s complaints. Christ willed it in order that the imperfections which often disturb our sense of complacency in our
earthly living might be a constant reminder that this world is not the end of all and our constant complaining about our present world directs us unconsciously to the hope of a better one where our demand for perfection will be finally satisfied to the full. What is heaven, if the perfection it embodies can anyway be met in the world we are living in?

Saint Augustine’s wisdom on spiritual restlessness may have been a poetic expression of a complaining heart: dissatisfied, unquenched, in search for the good the world cannot give. And this somehow justifies our nagging nature and our tendency to grumble. But despite the gnawing gap in our hearts, there remains the consolation that the Augustinian maxim did not conclude with the word “restless”. Restlessness is only a transitory stage toward perfection, a purgation of the passive heart that is upset by the void that keeps it incomplete. Finding the lost Jesus can only be done once we recognize the emptiness of the tomb and satisfying this heart only begins when we bewail this absence through complaints: “if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him”.

A response to Mary’s desperation is unnecessary. She finally found Jesus and her hearth, satisfied.

WORD OF THANKS
Delivered by Br. Vince Stanley B. Iñigo, O.P. during the Solemn Profession, April 20, 2020

Take my hand, take my whole life too
For I can’t help falling in love with you.

Maybe that really is the reason why we chose to profess our solemn vows – we just can’t help but fall in love with the mercy of God and the community. Sabi nga ni Apostol San Juan sa kanyang Unang Liham: “Kaya tayo nagmamahal kasi tayo ay una Niyang minahal.” Kaya ang nais ko lamang ipahayag sa kasama kong nangungabla sa araw na ito: kuya Lau [at syempre sa aking sarili], sana kaawaan tayo ng Diyos na maging mas mapagmahal sa Kanya at sa ating kapwa. Yung tipong head-over-heels in love tayo kay Lord. In fact, iyon naman ang bokasyon nating lahat at iyon ang iiwan nating tanda ng ating pagiging tunay na alagad ni Kristo. Let us not be afraid to love. Let us not be afraid to embrace not only the perfections but also the flaws of the brethren. Ganoon din namin tayo, may kabutihan ngunit may kaunting kahinaan din. Let us remember that all of us are products of mercy. Walang namang nakatungtong dito dahil siya ang pinaka-magaling, pinakatanyag o pinakapaborito.

Marami na tayong pinagdadaan. Labas-pasok na sa seminaryo, nagdamayan sa hirap at ginawa, tinuring ang bawat isa na parang tunay ng kapatin at bahagi ng isang mapagmahal na pamilya. Sa aming mga batch mates na narito ang mga naunang nagpakapaborito, naunang nagpakasarian, naunang nagpakapaborito.

To all of the brothers present here today, thank you very much! – sa awa, sa habag, sa pagbibigay inspirasyon sa amin – maraming salamat talaga.

To our formators, simula pa noong aspirancy hanggang sa ngayong Student-Brothers na kami, maraming salamat po.

To our family lalung-lalo na sa aming mga magulang na nagdala sa amin sa mundo ito, maraming-maraming salamat po.

To our family members, relatives, friends, benefactors, convent workers, classmates, school mates who are present online, maraming-maraming salamat po.

To those who continuously pray for us to nourish our Dominican vocation, sa mga Dominican nuns, Dominican sisters, Dominican laity, maraming-maraming salamat po.

Minsan napagtanto ko, bakit nga ba naitapat ang Solemn Profession sa petsang madaling tandaan – April 20, 2020? Upang malimutan ba natin ang COVID-19? Malamang hindi. But April 20, 2020 will allow us to remember that there is Someone greater than COVID-“19” and that is no other than the! Lord. To our Almighty God who calls us to this vocation, maraming-maraming salamat po.

This is history. This is HIS story.

To HIM be all the glory.
is choice worthy to each so too, or similarly at least, is his friends’ existence.” (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics). Ang aking kaibigan ay ako rin sapagkat ang ibang tawag sa kaibigan ay ang pangalawang ako. Gano’t rin ang aking pagnilay sa pagkakaibigan namin ni Kristo, sa tuwing ako ay nakatingin sa Kanya ang aking ring nakikita ay ang aking sarili na makasalanan subalit lubusang minahal hanggang sa kamatayan sa Krus. At sa pagtatagpo ng aming pagtingin natutupad ang sinabi ni Hesus, “on that day you will realize that I Am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I Am in you.” John 14:20. Ngayon ay nagkakaroon na ng kabuluhuan ang sinasabi sa kanta, “sinful is man who kneels before you, worthy of you are you alone.” Ang nararapat sa Diyos ay kagaya rin Niya at ginawa Niya tayo kay Niya noong tinawag Niya kaibigan, tayo ay aking pangalawang Siya.


**Sumpang Ikaw Lamang**

*M&L by: Br. Laurence Ryan V. Mata, OP*  
*Solemn Profession*

1. **Tinawag Mo ako, Panginoon ko. Rinig ng puso ko ang tinig Mo.**  
   Narito ako, Panginoon ko. Upang sundin ang kalisan, Pagtalima’t Pagdarala, sumpang ikaw lamang at wala nang iba.

   *Refrain:* Ang aking pangako sa Iyo Panginoon, ay maging tapat sa nag-isip Mo. Kalinisan, Pagtalima’t Pagdarala, sumpang ikaw lamang at wala nang iba.

2. **Iniaalay ko Panginoon Ko, ang aking buhay sa palad Mo.**  
   Narito ako Panginoon ko sumusumpa ng katapatan ko.  
   *Refrain:* Tanggapin Mo Panginoon ang aming alay sa Iyo, tinapay at alak, mula sa kabutihan Mo. Basbasan Mo Panginoon ang aming handog sa Iyo, gawing maging katulud ng pag-aalay Mo.

**Tanggapin Mo Panginoon**

*M&L by: Br. Laurence Ryan V. Mata, OP*  
*Solemn Profession*  

*Refrain:* Tanggapin Mo Panginoon ang aming alay sa Iyo, tinapay at alak, mula sa kabutihan Mo. Basbasan Mo Panginoon ang aming handog sa Iyo, gawing maging katulud ng pag-aalay Mo.

1. Ang tinapay at alak, ’yong biyayang kaloob, kung iyong babasbasan ay magiging pagkaing nagbibigay buhay.  
   *Ref.*

   *Ref.*
Ever since the Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine, the lockdown brought about a gradual shift from boosting one’s immune system to maintaining one’s sanity. Of course, we cannot say that we’re completely isolated since there’s still a large compound in which the brothers can freely roam around, not to mention social media which helps us keep in touch with the outside world and with our loved ones as well. And yet, it goes without saying that many of the activities that we usually take for granted are now taken away, if not greatly diminished. It’s a good time to make a psalm of my own: “If I walk into the field, look! those slain by the virus; if I enter the city, look! those consumed by hunger even the friar and the priest are getting bored.”

Days immediately following the lockdown, there was a heated discussion in our community regarding the understanding of social distancing. It may seem a petty concern, but for us Dominicans who see our community as a non-negotiable element in our life, the thought of doing things in isolation is almost unimaginable. This is proven by the fact that even on how not to be together, we still discuss together!

To cut the story short, the community was able resolve the problem which was more or less amenable to all. We decided to have our common liturgy just outside our cells. Social distancing was practiced and at the same time, attendance was greatly boosted. It’s amazing how a multitude of perspectives can enhance our vision into new possibilities. Our community can allow spaces of freedom, especially when things get uncomfortably tight, by allowing each member to find a part of themselves which, without the other, could never be discovered.

C.S. Lewis argued that it takes a community to know the individual. It means that when a member is lost, an aspect of another brother that is brought out only through the interaction with that brother is also lost. Yes, no one in our community is indispensable, but no one is disposable. Lewis writes: “By myself, I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets” That is why, he adds, the angels in Isaiah 6 are crying “Holy, Holy, Holy,” to one another. Each angel is communicating to others a part of the glory that he sees through the rest.

Obviously, we are not the heavenly host. And as long as difficult realities arrive, things need to be discussed and new ideas need to be explored. In the face of the tragic irrationalities of life like this pandemic, our freedom as a community consists in counterbalancing it by an equally irrational commitment to our way of life. One time, I noticed that a brother was well dressed, hair well-kempt with perfume and all. I asked him where he was going (a typical Filipino small-talk) and he answered quite irked: “Bakit, nag-aayos ka lang ba kapag aalis ng bahay?” Aside from the perfume which I thought was too much, I guess that brother was right. Charity for the community in the time of Covid-19 can be as simple as doing the tasks that even now we take for granted, before even those things are also taken away.

DO NOT BE AFRAID... HE GOES BEFORE US

An Easter Reflection

By Mr. Aldrin Michael D. Varsovia, OP

President, Lay Dominican Professionals Group, Dominican Province of the Philippines

“But after My resurrection, I will go before you into Galilee”, says Jesus after the Last Supper in the Gospel of Matthew. And yet again when the Lord has risen we hear the very same words, now coming from the angel who appeared to the women: “He will go before you into Galilee”.

That early Easter morning, the women must have felt a sense of surprise. Upon arriving at the entrance of the tomb, they discovered that the stone was rolled aside. Then suddenly an angel appeared and told them that Jesus has risen from the dead and “will go before you into Galilee.” At this point, their surprise must have turned into excitement. As they were running quickly to announce the news to the others, Jesus met them on their way back. He greeted them thus: “Do not be afraid! Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, there they will see me.”(Mat 28:11)

“Going before”, according to scholars, is a very pastoral expression. We are reminded at this point of the 23rd Psalm: the shepherd “goes before” his flock in order to lead...
them to where he is going - to green pastures. “Although I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for you are beside me; your rod and your staff comfort me.” (Ps 23: 4).

Amidst the darkness and death caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic, the more we must celebrate Easter. For many families however, the effect of the pandemic tends to plunge them into the sorrows of Good Friday. Will there be a glimmer of hope? Does suffering have value and meaning?

For some time now, most of us have spent time in our respective homes. It must be admitted that staying at home can lead to a daily life that is almost monotonous and uneventful. But we are always encouraged to see the positive side of being in quarantine. Each day, we must allow ourselves some time to reconnect with what is truly essential in life - relationships, both with God and our loved ones.

Being in quarantine gives us a great opportunity to spend some time in quiet reflection. Silence gives us the chance to hear once more, that interior voice that calls us to prayer and reflection. We are called once more to look into our interior life. Silence in prayer makes us ever more vigilant to that loving and assuring voice of Jesus that tells us: “Do not be afraid!”

The past Holy Week is indeed a time to reflect once more on the value of life and the Christian meaning of suffering. This week ought to make us realise that life must be treasured. Each day there are families losing loved ones, and the most painful part of which is not being able to say a final goodbye.

We may never truly understand the purpose of such suffering unless we turn and have recourse to a God who “goes before us”, one who knew and experienced every suffering there is. Only Jesus who suffered much, died, was buried, but rose again can fully understand and help us in our present struggle. He “goes before us” in order to show us a pattern to follow. In this pattern, suffering finds new meaning - it becomes a source of hope and a means of redemption.

Good Friday is not just about plain suffering - rather it is about love, a persistent, and even stubborn love that is never afraid to suffer in order to save and to redeem. After all, it is love that redeems. This is what Jesus meant when He said that He is the good shepherd who will lay down His life for His sheep (Cf. Jn 10:11). The Lord on the cross is authentic and perfect Love enfleshed.

We still ought to have hope because the Passion story does not end in the darkness and sorrow of Good Friday - after suffering Jesus rose victoriously from the dead. The Lord’s resurrection becomes a beacon of hope amidst suffering, and a strong testimony against death. Rightly we must hold on to what the Lord, “who goes before us” is telling us even now: “Do not be afraid!”