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April - June 2020

THE BRIGHT SIDE OF COVID 19

A Special Pandemic Edition

DMII: RISING ABOVE THE PANDEMIC

*A*s the Covid 19 pandemic rages, lives of people around the globe have turned topsy-turvy. When it will end is nowhere in sight at this point.

The Daughters of Mary Immaculate International has been so affected as all activities requiring mass gathering have been put on hold. The 22nd Biennial Convention, originally scheduled on May 8-10, 2020, then moved to August 26-27, has again been re-scheduled on May 1-2, 2021, a result of the decision by the DMII International Officers and Board during a series of meetings via Zoom in late April and early May in close coordination with the Convention Organizing Committee headed by Past International Regent Sis. Perla Arguelles.

International Regent Sis. Ruby Macario then issued on June 6, 2020 a certification for all registered convention delegates to re-book hotel accommodations and airline tickets without penalties.

A memo circular was likewise issued by Sis. Ruby allowing paid delegates to cancel their convention reservation and be refunded P3,400 net, the difference to cover initial receipted expenses incurred by the Convention Committee during preparations as well as charges for remitting the refund. Requests for refund will be entertained until October 31, 2020.

All religious services including Eucharistic celebrations have gone virtual as Mass goers were prohibited to go to churches to prevent transmission of the corona virus

The *Sangguniang Laiko ng Pilipinas*, working closely with Bishop Broderick Pabillo, apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of Manila, held a

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Message



Our beloved Daughters of Mary Immaculate,

“Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid,” said Jesus as He walked on the water while the boat where the disciples were was being tossed by great winds in the middle of the sea. Peter dared Jesus to bid him walk on the water. Jesus said “Come.” “Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how strong the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me. Immediately, Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Today, we live in a world where tomorrow is uncertain. The Covid 19 pandemic has not abated but rather it continues to surge relentlessly. There is yet no vaccine. Many are dying. Various kinds of quarantines are in place. Lockdowns are enforced. Many businesses have closed. People are hungry. This is the storm we are in.

There are two responses to what is happening today. One is to be afraid, anxious and doubtful. This leads to despair and loss of hope. The other is to have faith and trust in Jesus. This brings peace, tranquility and a sense of security. We can choose our response but no matter what Jesus will be there to take our hands and save us.

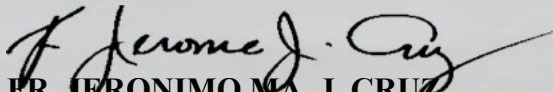
Beloved, it is your choice to be victims of circumstances or victors with Christ.

This pandemic should make our faith even stronger. Believe that God is God and He holds our lives in His hands with great love. If we want to walk on the water like St. Peter did, we have to stay focused on Jesus.

Many of us want a miracle. That miracle is right before us. We may be locked down but we are with our family. We gained time to know deeper the beauty of each person. Perhaps because some businesses are closing, people have become more conscious of other's needs and are willing to share their resources. We have discovered that there are many things we do not need and can live without. We have learned that a lot of our needs stem basically from wants that are unnecessary. We are slowly learning what truly matters in life - what is of true value.

We should not be afraid to get out of the boat, to venture into new things. We may be separated by great distance but technology has made us closer and within reach of one another and our loved ones. A whole new mode of worship and evangelization is realized through the social media. Spiritual formation, recollections and retreats, mental health seminars and a whole gamut of meetings are conducted on-line. In this time of pandemic, there's a lot of things to rediscover and a lot of things to create. Even more importantly, we are given a great deal of opportunity by God to be better persons, to have courage in our hearts and a firm faith in God who can make all things possible.

There are invaluable treasures hidden in this pandemic that we can unearth and cherish. With Mother Mary, let us keep these treasures in our hearts and be strong. “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid,”


FR. JERONIMO M.A. J. CRUZ
International Chaplain

From the International Regent

Message



My beloved sisters,

In the 40 years of DMII's history, we have faced and overcome challenging periods. We began 2020 with so much optimism and high hopes in anticipation of the culmination of our 40th anniversary preparation, which we hyped as the grand celebration. I myself went to Iloilo three times last year to make sure that the event would be seamless.

It is with heaviness in my heart that I address you today at a time that many describe as unprecedented in our lifetime and beyond our imagination. This thing we now call as pandemic has disrupted us since March and put a temporary stop to our planned biennial convention grand celebration.

An invisible enemy lurks and yet we remain hopeful in spirit that our God Who is invisible and ever-present will be our shield.

During this period, we have focused our attention to our well-being and of those around us. We are heartened that everyone remains healthy as we keep ourselves protected by our face masks, face shields, alcohol, disinfectants, gloves, sanitizers and everything else for our body. All these are just supplemental to our most important defense – our personal and collective prayers.

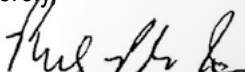
We are grateful that mass media platforms have afforded us the means to attend online masses, recollections, webinars, and pray together via zoom and other chat sessions. These have made quarantine restrictions bearable. Many of our projects have been put on hold but many of you have devised creative means to push through with them. A clear example are Squirettes' projects and donations sent through the banks or in person, and livelihood projects, with physical distancing protocols.

We are faced with many current issues at hand affecting our country and fellowmen on the political and economic fronts but we as an association of women Catholics have aligned our objectives, programs and actions with the Catholic Church.

Let us continue to be pious yet vigilant in these trying times and gather as much learnings as we can from this experience which should help us thrive in the good times ahead.

Meanwhile, let us keep our distance but stay virtually close. May God and our dear Mother Mary continue to bless us all.

Sincerely,


SIS. RUBY P. MACARIO
International Regent

series of Post-Quarantine Conversations via Zoom. The DMII, a member of the *Sanggunian*, was represented by Sis. Ruby and Sis. Lorie Manalansan, Luzon Coordinator for Upliftment of Women Workers, and in some sessions, by International Chairpersons Sis. Cora Afuang of Pro-Life and Sis. Cathy Pineda of Morality in Media. Started in April, topics of the weekly Conversations include: New Mindsets for Emerging and Alternative Ministries, Mental Health, Religious Services as Essentials, Laudato Si, Transitioning Towards Digital Evangelization and ARISE for Economic Recovery. The topics are relevant issues in transitioning to a “new normal” environment. The last is a bill in Congress filed by Congresswoman Stella Quimbo of the 2nd district of Marikina which proposes various measures for the country to be able to transition to full economic recovery and prevent massive loss of jobs. Congresswoman Quimbo is a DMI sister from the St. Paul of the Cross Circle of SSS Village in the Diocese of Antipolo. She is a Ph.D. and a summa cum laude graduate of UP-Diliman’s School of Economics.

At this point, the DMI sisters, with their families, all over the country are storming the heavens with prayers for the end of the pandemic and for the protection of front liners, of those vulnerable to Covid 19 infection, of those already infected by the disease and those who have died, for those who have been deprived of livelihood and unable to provide for their families, and for the poor and the homeless.

Serving in the DMI missions has become second nature to DMIs. Using their resources and some measure of creativity, they are still able to serve their parish communities and one another in various ways. Some of them are recorded in this special issue on “The Bright Side of Covid 19”.

Then too, their creative juices flowed freely resulting in very inspiring reflections and experiences, and yes, poetry, showcasing positivity in a negative environment that the pandemic brought about.

Please read on . . . and continue to pray that the 22nd Biennial Convention in Iloilo on May 1-2, 2021 will push through and that DMI sisters will be able to hug and kiss each other again in the foreseeable future.

oOo

HUGOT CHALLENGE AN SMI ACTIVITY DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

*By: Sis. Biannah Villanueva,
Youth Welfare/SMI International Chairperson*

During this quarantine period, the prevailing question among most households is “What else can we do? We are just stuck in the house!”

Ano nga kaya from a Squirette’s point of view? This is actually what we wanted to find out in conducting the SMI Hugot Challenge with the theme “*Hugot Laban sa Bagot sa Panahon ng Covid na Salot*”.

We truly believe in the creativity, originality and Mary-like point of view of our Squirettes that we collected their reply and pictures to answer the question. At the end of the contest, we received 39 entries from 16 SMI circlettes from all over the country.

The entries are all very good and entertaining and the contestants are all winners in their own way. But

there were truly outstanding ones to which we decided to give added recognition based on the following criteria: creativity, originality and relevance to the theme.

The International Chairpersons of the five DMI Missions composed the Board of Judges who selected the most beautiful and inspiring entries. The winners are:

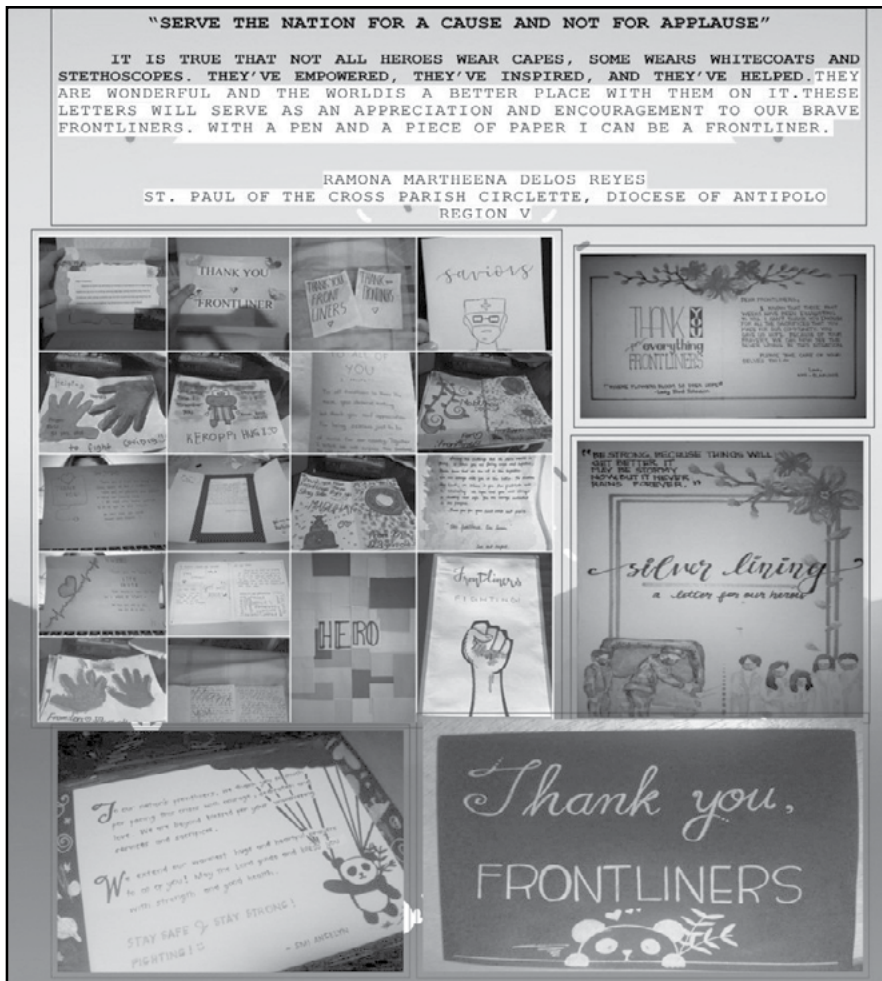
1. **First Place** – From Sq. Ramona Martheena de los Reyes of St. Paul of the Cross Circlette,, Diocese of Antipolo, Region V
2. **Second Place** – From Our Lady of Peace Circlette, Archdiocese of Zamboanga, Region XIV
3. **Third Place** - From Sq. Germelina Pavo, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Circlette, Archdiocese of Davao, Region XIII

A special prize, the Early Bird Prize, was given to Sq. Grace Ann Balaba of Our Lady of Fatima Circlette, Diocese of Cubao, Region V for submitting the very first entry in the contest.

International Regent Sis. Ruby Macario gave cash prizes to the winners. Non-winning participants were

each given consolation prizes as a token of appreciation for gamely participating in the event.

The Youth Welfare/SMI Committee thanks all the participants and the Board of Judges for generously giving their time, talent and effort to make the project a success, serving as a bright spot and inspiration in the midst of such a challenging environment.



The entry by Sq. Ramona Martheena de los Reyes of St. Paul of the Cross Circlette, Diocese of Antipolo (Region V), the grand prize winner.



The second place winner is from the Our Lady of Peace Circlette of the Archdiocese of Zamboanga (Region XIV)



The entry of Sq. Germelina Pavo of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Circlette, Archdiocese of Davao (Region XIII), third place.



Early Bird entry from Sq. Grace Balaba from Our Lady of Fatima Circlette, Diocese of Cubao. (Region V)

ST. VINCENT FERRER CIRCLE SISTERS MAKE, DISTRIBUTE BAKED GOODIES TO FRONTLINERS, OTHERS

*By: Sis. Marlin Abratique,
International Secretary and Region I Representative*

The DMI sisters of St. Vincent Ferrer Circle of the Diocese of Baguio had as their Covid-19 Pandemic outreach project the distribution of free cupcakes and other baked products which they themselves made. Recipients were frontliners and community workers such as the staff of the Public Order and Safety Division, Barangay officials and workers, market vendors, police officers and health workers all over Baguio City during

the Enhanced Community Quarantine period in the city. The ingredients used for the baked products were donated by private individuals and groups.

The project was one way that the DMIs expressed their appreciation to frontliners for the invaluable services they did for the community during the lockdown to ensure people's security and safety.



The St. Vincent Ferrer Circle's baking team at work in the kitchen.



Cupcakes: ready to go



A beneficiary receives a pack of baked goodies from a DMI sister.

From the Archdiocese of San Fernando – Pampanga (Region III)

ECQ ACTIVITIES OF THE IMMACULATE HEART CIRCLE OF ANGELES CITY

*By: Sis. Ruby Santiago,
Circle Regent*



AMCEM Mass, the last to be attended by the circle members before the lockdown.



Launching of Group Prayer Brigade by circle members initiated by Sis. Beth Pallasigue participated by 30 stay-at-home families praying 100 Hail Marys and donating P500 each for their outreach activity. In photo is Region III RR Sis. Joan Dizon turning over her cash donation to a DMI sister.



An outreach project: relief goods and cash distributed to coastal families through their respective parish priests: Fr. Nito Mallari of Holy Rosary Parish, Sasmuan; Fr. Elmer Calonga of Holy Rosary Parish in Bulacus, Masantol and Fr. Reagan Barrameda of San Agustin Parish, Caingin, Masantol, Pampanga.



Nightly video prayers by DMI sisters with the image of the Blessed Mother transferred to another household every week. In photo, Sis. Aida Lumanog turns over the image to Sis. Erlinda Mandap.

ST. DOMINIC DE GUZMAN CIRCLE'S "GET FIT FOR A GREAT CAUSE"

*By: Sis. Thelma Manansala,
Diocesan Newsette Correspondent*

The town plaza of Abucay, Bataan was the venue of an activity of the St. Dominic de Guzman Circle last March 7, 2020. A fund-raising project, the "Get Fit for a Great Cause" drew more than 300 Zumba enthusiasts from the community and nearby towns who paid entrance tickets as donation to the Circle's fund to finance its projects for the year. As a come-on, special prizes were awarded to the oldest Zumba dancer (an 80-year old), the best execution of all Zumba steps, and the best Zumba outfit. Some generous participants donated

additional cash knowing that the fund to be raised is for a worthy cause.

Some of the projects that the St. Dominic de Guzman Circle has lined up include the yearly aid for the sick, bloodletting project and others in pursuance of the 5 DMI Mission thrusts. The fund will also finance a special project that has been assigned to the Circle by the parish priest – the beautification of the church front yard including its landscaping and year-round maintenance.



The officers and members of the St. Dominic de Guzman Circle



Participants in the "Get Fit for a Great Cause"

ASSISTANCE EXTENDED TO PARISHIONERS DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

The St. Dominic de Guzman Circle donated hygiene kits to indigent parishioners in Abucay, Bataan in response to the need for hygiene articles such as alcohol, soap, tissue paper, disinfectants and facial masks. Food supplies had been adequately provided by private individuals and other groups but the DMI sisters found that hygiene kits were urgently needed. The target beneficiaries' top priority is to put food on their tables

During the distribution of the hygiene kits, the DMI sisters also reminded the recipients about the importance of proper hygiene such as frequent washing of hands, wearing of mask and social distancing as protection against Covid-19.



Hygiene kits are readied for distribution.

STO. ROSARIO CIRCLE DONATES MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO FRONTLINERS

The Sto. Rosario Circle of Orani, Bataan donated medical supplies to health workers who are in the frontlines as the country wages war on the Covid-19 pandemic. The medical supplies consisted of one unit of Aerosol Box, 30 pieces of Personal Protective Equipment with face shields, 20 gallons of alcohol and 8 boxes of face masks. The supplies were purchased with funds from members' personal donations.

The project was launched during one of the nightly prayer sessions of the sisters led by Circle Regent Sis. Olga de la Cruz as they reach out to the brave and dedicated frontliners in Bataan. Project beneficiaries were the Balanga General Hospital & Medical Center, Orani District Hospital, Rotary Clinic and Metro Bataan Development Authority. - Anna Capuli



Sisters Sheryl S. Villarico, Regent Olga de la Cruz, Vice-Regent Anna Lourenda Arit and Karen Soriano turn over their donations to the Orani RHU.



The hospital staff of the Balanga General Hospital & Medical Center receive the circle's donation from Sis. Socorro Bongco..



From the Diocese of Pazanaque (Region V)

MARY MOTHER OF THE CHURCH CIRCLE: STAYING AT HOME PRODUCTIVELY

The DMI sisters of the Mary Mother of the Church Circle, BF Resort Village, Las Pinas City stayed home with their families during the Enhanced Community Quarantine and complied with the requirements and protocols that the government required during the lockdown.

The ECQ which started on March 15, 2020 gave the opportunity for families to bond together, in prayer, at work and at play. Then, too, the DMI Missions that have become second nature to the DMI sisters continued to be pursued through outreach activities to help provide the community with much-needed assistance. The accompanying photos show some of the sisters' activities with their families during the lockdown.



Preparing face masks for distribution to friends and neighbors



Family bonding in the kitchen (Shown is the family of Sis. Mimi Crisostomo.)



Donation of Personal Protective Equipments (PPEs) to health workers at the Perpetual Help Hospital and the Las Pinas District Hospital

STO. NINO DE MOLINO CIRCLE IN QUARANTINE: STORMING THE HEAVENS WITH PRAYERS

*By: Sis. Catherine Longcob,
Past Regent*

The DMI sisters of Sto. Nino de Molino Circle in Bacoor City, Cavite spent their quarantine days literally storming the heavens with prayers for the Almighty Father to put an end to the COVID 19 pandemic.

A prayer brigade was organized with the sisters praying the 2000 Hail Mary devotion twice a day at 6:00 am and 6 pm as well as the Holy Rosary and the Divine Mercy chaplet.

Circle Regent Sis. Jocelyn Frias assigned sisters to pray petitions for the safety and well-being of medical frontliners who tirelessly minister to the sick at the risk of their own lives and others who provide basic and essential services to the community, for those who have fallen ill that they may be cured of their affliction and for those who have succumbed, that they may have eternal rest. They also prayed for their families and friends, the Filipino people and the world, and yes, for each other as Pope Francis has exhorted.

Past Diocesan Regent Sis. Emelie Ramos also asked that they pray the 9-day Novena before the celebration of the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Oratio Imperata every 12 noon and 8 pm.

The doors of their parish church remained closed for the duration of the ECQ and GCQ. On June 27 when news of the partial opening of churches to the parishioners for religious services was heard, the DMI sisters felt happy that their long wait was about to end. In preparation for its opening, they cleaned the front yard and surroundings of the Sto. Nino de Molino Parish Church readying it for the time to open its doors to welcome people back inside for Mass and other religious activities.

The long wait is about to end . . .



Sto. Nino de Molino Circle sisters: Storming the heavens with their prayers



Cleaning the parish front yard in time for the opening of the church doors.

COPING WITH THE PANDEMIC THROUGH DMI's MISSIONS

By: Sis. Fortunata Aquino,
Region VI Correspondent

The DMI sisters in the Diocese of San Pablo continue to accomplish their mission thrusts during the COVID-19 Pandemic by playing a vital role in serving the community, especially the frontliners and those in need. Each circle in the Diocese had its own special project to address the crisis.

Under **Pro-Life**, the Vicariate of St. John the Baptist donated packed lunches and bottled water to the frontliners of the Dr. Jose P. Rizal Memorial Hospital in Calamba City while the Vicariate of St. Polycarp donated face masks. The Vicariate of St. Paul the First Hermit donated cavans of rice to the less fortunate within its vicinity.

The **Upliftment of Women Workers** Committee continues the promotion of backyard gardening and hog-raising

projects ensuring adequate food supply during the lockdown.

For **Morality in Media**, praying together as a family at home and attending live streaming of Masses on TV and internet were encouraged.

For **Youth Welfare/SMI**, the youth were encouraged to pray the rosary daily at home.

To extend help during the crisis does not need the sisters to be physically present at an area during the distribution of support. Everything was done online – the food chains were contacted by the DMII to deliver the donation to recipients; hence, the call of government to STAY HOME and to STAY SAFE was observed.



Distribution of food packs and bottled water by the Vicariate of St. John the Baptist . . . and face masks by the Vicariate of St. Polycarp to the frontliners of the J.P.Rizal Memorial Hospital.



KALINGA NI MARIA SA PANAHON NG PANDEMIA

The San Sebastian the Martyr Circle of Lumban, Laguna through its project *Kalinga ni Maria sa Panahon ng Pandemia* extended help to 80 families of Bgy. Bagong Silang in Lumban. The relief goods consisted of milk and diapers for children and free masks for adults.

The goods were turned over to Fr. Edilberto Mesias, parish priest, and members of the PPC headed by Bro. Rommel Ladub who took charge of the distribution to the targeted beneficiaries.



Preparing the relief goods for distribution



Distribution of relief goods with assistance from the Parish Pastoral Council

SMI CIRCLETTES ORGANIZED IN REGION IX

*By: Sis. Ging Manulat,
SMI Coordinator for Visayas*



Diocese of San Carlos, Negros Occ. Five new SMI circlettes were organized in the Diocese of San Carlos during the latter half of 2019 through the efforts of Diocesan Regent Sis. Monina Prado Tan. Photo shows the Squirettes during their investiture.



Diocese of Kalibo. The St. Isidore Circlette was organized at the St. Isidore Parish in Lezo, Aklan on Dec. 14, 2019 with 26 Squirettes during investiture rites held at the St. Isidore Parish Church. Circle Regent Sis. Tess Icwalo and Lady Counselor Sis. Madel Landauz initiated the formation of the circlette. Present during the investiture were Fr. Hubert Sarabia, parish priest and Diocesan Regent Sister Jean Velarde of the Diocese of Kalibo.

DMI's OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF ZAMBOANGA: BEING CREATIVE IN DOING MISSION WORK DURING THE PANDEMIC

By: Sis. Pinky Saavedra,
Past Diocesan Regent, Archdiocese of Zamboanga

A pandemic of such huge impact on the lives of not only the community but also the world began last quarter of 2019 making its ripples felt in our city with Enhanced Community Quarantine on March 20, 2020.

On keeping the faith, online masses began together with some spiritual upliftment by parish priest locally besides EWTN programs. Many options are presented through internet social media. Home Quarantine meant a time to distance self from worldly distraction and be one in prayer for world healing. A time to enrich our soul and continue our journey as Daughters of Mary Immaculate.

In response, Sis. Lowell Tantoco of Our Lady of Purification Circle and Sis. Zeny Torres of Our Mother of Perpetual Help Circle began live streaming of the Holy Rosary Prayer.

To keep connected, St. Joseph Circle had its monthly meeting through ZOOM technology. The well-being of members were discussed as well as how to think outside of the box to accomplish the 5 missions of the DMII.

Pro-life: St. Joseph Circle, through the parish social activity and upon Msgr. Crisologo's appeal, came up with a number of donors from its members to donate sacks of rice, noodles and sardines to be distributed to the marginalized poor in identified barangays.

SMI. The SMI Our Lady of Peace Circlette participated in the program of the SMI International "SMI Challenge: HUGOT LABAN SA BAGOT SA PANAHON NG COVID.



Pro-life donation of relief goods to indigent families in the community.

Upliftment of Women Workers. During these times we have to be innovative and creative and think outside of the box as we adapt to the pandemic situation. It is heartening that the DMI sisters in their own way have become flexible and creative to come up with crocheted products, backyard gardening, rosary making, baking and the like to uplift and strengthen their lives. The feeling of accomplishment, no matter one's age, cannot be outdone, a mentally healthy activity for the young at heart.

To be positive is not what we wish for in Covid 19 crisis, but thinking positively and being productive at this time is what we should aim for. COVID-19 KILLS, BUT PRAYER HEALS. Let us heal as one and continue our journey as Daughters of Mary Immaculate.



Work at home activities produce various products: ornamental plants, cakes and pastries, crocheted articles among others.



Masses and other spiritual activities online

CORONA VIRUS SILVER LINING

*By: Bishop Broderick Pabillo,
Apostolic Administrator, Archdiocese of Manila*

Black clouds signify dark and even stormy times are coming. But at the edge of the dark clouds one can see a silver lining which shows that not everything is black and behind the darkness there is the sun shining. The darkness will pass away and the brightness of light will come back again.

The COVID-19 brings a lot of darkness and uncertainties. It has really put our lives topsy-turvy. It has affected our work, our income, our leisure, our routine and even our religious activities. And we do not know up to when and up to what extent! But we have to see that no reality is totally bad. No matter how dark, some brightness is also brought out. Looking at the silver lining can give us hope and it can help us live through the darkness until the light comes out. And light will come out! As the Good Book says: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (Jn. 1:5) Let us see the light that shines in the darkness of this pandemic.

The COVID-19 phenomenon has brought about lockdowns and quarantines. Many people are immobilized physically. It has reduced the pace of our lives. So now we don’t have to run from one place to another or be lost in traffic. We can take time easily – and in our homes together with our loved ones. We can do things in the house which we had long wanted but had no time or energy for them. Some can cook once more; others can do some cleaning and washing. We can put our house and our rooms in order. One can do gardening. We can play and pray together again as a family or as neighbors. We can take time to tell stories to one another and watch TV or movies together. We can pick up the book that we had long wanted to read, or play a musical instrument. There are a lot of things that we can do without much cost.

Lent has originally been a 40-day retreat for the whole Christian people. COVID-19 is forcing us, as a people, to slow down a bit and take our retreat in

our homes. Let us heed the call of St. Anselm who lived more than a thousand years ago: “Insignificant man, escape from your everyday business for a short while, hide for a moment from your restless thoughts. Break off from your cares and troubles and be less concerned about your tasks and labors. Make a little time for God and rest a while in him.” Let us take time to think, to pray, to read the Bible. Let us consider how really insignificant our human existence is. With all our technological achievements, a virus can bring the whole world to a halt and erase billions of financial wealth and together with it our human hubris. And it affects all – rich and poor alike!

Perhaps this virus outbreak can be telling us: look, go back to basics – to your basic human relationships with your families and neighbors, to your basic needs, to your connection with God, the Power that you thought you can ignore but ultimately is the one you can hang on to. His love is everlasting. He is the Rock of our Salvation.

This contagion can also be pointing us to another direction – to one another. We need one another. We need the cooperation of all so that the infection will not spread. Let us not only be afraid that we get infected. Let us be careful that we do not cause the virus to spread to others, especially to our loved ones. While we are concerned about our own safety and our needs, let us also open our eyes to the needs of others, especially the most vulnerable ones – the elderly, the sick and the poor. The daily wage earners who will not have work for a whole month is also a great concern. Let us be generous to them. It would be ridiculous to pray that we be cared for by God when we do not care for others.

May these important messages of COVID-19 be paid attention to by all. Nothing is totally useless – not even this pandemic! There is always a silver lining!

- From a post in Social Media.

WHEN THE WORLD STOPPED TURNING

*By: Sis. Digna R. Banzon, Diocesan Regent,
Diocese of Balanga (Bataan)*



Every person has a story, every place, its message.

The year 2020 started as just another year. Nobody had any inkling as to what the New Year would bring.

News about the 2019 Corona Virus infection came so suddenly and without warning, and soon after, its growing into pandemic proportions.

Major cities and famous landmarks around the world grew silent and deserted – New York, the city that never sleeps, the romantic city that is Paris, Rome, the eternal city., and London with its royals led by their Queen kept apart in hidden rooms. Disneyland lost its magic, Mecca had no pilgrim to throw stones at the devil and the Great Wall of China where hordes of tourists trod its paths everyday fell silent, becoming just a lonely ancient fortress.

Indeed the developed world was forced to its knees. The virus became a great equalizer with no distinction of social class. Privileged positions and titles have lost their value – both the rich and the poor aimed only for one goal – to survive. One's money was utilized to buy only the basic needs such as food, medicines and sanitizers and yes, toilet paper!

The heroes of the day were the frontliners in hospitals and others in government and the private sector who manned the quarantines, distributed food to the adversely affected populations and such other basic services. Dreaded places like the hospitals and cemeteries became the most frequented ones as millions of people became infected with thousands succumbing to the virus.

This pandemic has put the world on an indefinite pause. Places of worship closed their doors and people stayed home and worshipped and prayed in the silence of their rooms.

The economy is in the throes of a recession and lives have been disrupted.

When this long night passes and a new day sets in, let us not forget the lessons we have learned from the experience. Let us live our life to the fullest, to be a blessing to others, and most of all, to establish a closer relationship with the Almighty Father, our Creator Who will never abandon us, sending the Holy Spirit to guide us.

The quarantine has taught me lessons: absence can strengthen our relationship with family and friends even with just videocalls, solitude can make one more spiritual and restlessness is a test of what more one can do, that otherwise she won't have the time to discover.

Yes, we will all be able to survive Covid-19 and together, HEAL AS ONE!



WE WILL SURVIVE WITH FAITH, HOPE, LOVE AND TRUST IN GOD



Sis. Mely De la Peña

*By Sis. Mely de la Peña,
Region IV Correspondent*

Shaken to the core, the world suddenly awoke to a nightmare never before encountered since the Spanish Flu of 1918 from its deep slumber of callousness and indifference turning a blind eye to its responsibility to God, man and the planet earth. GOD INTERVENED! And man took notice! A virus never before seen intrigued medical experts as it sent drug manufacturers racing against time to find cure for the mysterious disease. To no avail. And so we turn to God, the Divine Healer.

DMI sisters of the Diocese of Malolos shared their collective understanding, insights and perspectives on the dreaded corona virus disease or COVID 19 as it was named. As we waded into the onslaught of the disease, we begin to realize that the plague knows no bounds, race,

turn to page 16

We will survive... from page 15

background, without discriminating as to sex, age, rich or poor. Governments were reeling not only from the economic impact of the disease but to more serious repercussions of the plague on health, social and living conditions of their people. Businesses and industries stopped operations and many lost their jobs worldwide. Every human endeavor was on a standstill as we awaited with bated breath the number of Covid 19 cases being reported everyday locally and abroad.

Even before the Covid 19 was declared a global pandemic, our national government prescribed minimum health standard; i.e., wearing masks, taking body temperatures, frequent handwashing, social distancing and stay home protocols. Thanks to the timely response of the government to control the disease. Notwithstanding the safety measures introduced, Covid 19 cases continue to rise adding further stress to the already beleaguered national and local leaders and the private sector, not to mention the dwindling human resources in the medical field and the funding resources of the government.

In view of the further spread of the contagion, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) recommended to the President the imposition of stringent social distancing where mass gatherings were suspended, general and enhanced community quarantine was implemented where movement of people was limited, strict home quarantine in all households, transportation was suspended, provision for food and essential services was regulated coupled with the heightened presence of uniformed personnel assisted by local government officials and workers in each town and barangay, international and local travels were either canceled or moved to later dates and alternative working arrangements were implemented, among others. All these prohibitions to which the people are not accustomed to shocked surprised citizenry.

As we are confined in our homes, we begin to realize that perhaps God is reminding man of his transgressions. Everyone begins to reflect or contemplate on what God wants to convey to us. We take a step back and examine ourselves. We go soul-searching, questioning our thoughts, habits and motivations. We begin to seek not only physical, mental and emotional renewal, but spiritual renewal as well. We were strengthened in hope, faith, charity and trust in God.

As such, many positive changes came out of the pandemic. We came out stronger and better individuals. Family members were brought closer, spending more time with each other, the old habit of praying the rosary together was rekindled or revived and family meals provide an opportunity for family members to come together, strengthen ties and build better relationships. Differences were sorted out, healing old wounds. We appreciate and value life's simple joys taken for granted because of gratification offered by modern technology in communications and information and busy lifestyles. While on quarantine, we rediscover ourselves. We



Donations of PPEs to health workers by the Our Lady of Consolation & Cinture Circle in Paombong, Bulacan

go back to reading books, listening to music, communicating with family and friends and bonding with our children and grandchildren.

Compassion and generosity were rekindled. Care for the homeless and the sick and food for the hungry came in abundant supply not only to the indigents in depressed areas but to neighbors as well and those deprived of their source of livelihood. Schools, churches and even houses of private individuals were opened to the homeless and street dwellers. Charity, love, faith and hope were very alive. Because of the FB and TV live streaming of the Holy Mass in many parishes, a vibrant Catholic community participated in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Nothing kept us from doing our duties and devotion to God. Group prayers were held via the same media platforms. We became prayerful as we bring before God our supplications.

Planet Earth has started to heal as people stayed home during the pandemic. A drop in air pollution was noted. With fewer cars on the road and factories closed, the planet has been given a much-needed breather from carbon dioxide emissions. In a less toxic environment, animals begin to flourish.

Lest we forget, the Bayanihan spirit of the Filipinos was revived. Except for a few, people follow the government's issuances through the IATF to safeguard and protect the people's right to health. The cooperation in the national and barangay levels and among the people was very evident despite the few hitches, lapses and the government's limited resources.

The heroism exhibited by our doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers, uniformed personnel, volunteers and those in the skeletal workforce performing basic functions is truly exceptional. They all need our prayers and support in these trying times to inspire them even more in the performance of their sworn duties and responsibilities with utmost dedication and care.

They say that we cannot go back, at least not in the near future, to our old ways and habits, customs, traditions and to all things and activities we are accustomed or have become used to. We have to adapt to a "New Normal" as they call it. A

new beginning where everyone is invigorated, refreshed and rejuvenated in physical, emotional and spiritual state. With God's mercy and love, coupled with our unwavering faith and trust, we will emerge victorious, strong, healed and ready to face the scourge, courageous and unafraid whatever tomorrow will bring. As little David in the Sacred Scriptures who defeated Goliath despite his size and might, Covid 19, the work of the devil, is no match to our Protector and Refuge, Who is the Divine Healer.

In unison with the government, let our battle cry be: #Beat COVID19#WeHealAsOne!

FILLED WITH FAITH, HOPE, LOVE AND TRUST IN GOD,
WE WILL SURVIVE!



Distribution of relief goods by the San Jose Manggagawa Circle in Meycauayan, Bulacan.

oOo

MY SQUIRETTE RETURNED HOME SAFELY

*By: Sis. Biannah Villanueva, International
Chairperson for Youth Welfare*



*A*fter the President declared the lockdown of Metro Manila last March 15th, we got so worried,

not just because of the virus itself, but mainly because one member of our family, Abbie, the elder of two daughters is working in Cabuyao, Laguna and stranded in her apartment waiting for further instructions from the management of her company.

During those uncertain times, of Abbie living away and alone in her apartment, we felt helpless. Even as she is already 22 years old and has exhibited certain independence, the circumstances of the pandemic and all the news and social media posts as to how dire the situation is had made me and her father worried sick.

Those were the times one realizes the value of the family being together and that it was all that mattered. And the grace of prayer. We prayed the Rosary and heard online Masses daily. We prayed hard to Mama Mary to take care of our Abbie and to stay with her until she comes home.

At 8 o'clock in the morning of March 22, while we were at breakfast and preparing for the 9 am Mass,



Sis. Biannah Villanueva's family

my husband received an SMS: "Dad, please help with my things. I'm here downstairs." It was Abbie!

We breathed a sigh of relief. Finally, our family was complete and whatever happens, at least, we're together. We offered a prayer of gratitude to our Blessed Mother for bringing our Abbie, her Squirette, safely back home.



Abbie Villanueva: Home at last!

(Sis. Biannah Villanueva's daughter, Abbie, is a Squirette. - Ed.)

LOCKDOWN DAYS: EXTREMELY DIFFICULT AND FRUSTRATING

By: Sis. Helen de Leon, Past Pro-Life
International Chairperson



(Sis. Helen de Leon is a medical doctor and was Pro-Life International Chairperson from 2007 to 2014.)

*A*s a medical doctor, I find these pandemic and lockdown days extremely difficult and frustrating. Difficult because as frontliners, doctors sacrifice a lot for the health of patients, of family, of colleagues and of self. In the Hippocratic Oath, we swore to promote health and treat the sick regardless that the infectivity and virulence of the corona virus endanger our very own lives. On top of this, many health workers are mistreated, discriminated and even insulted. Nevertheless, we still have to fulfill our duties and go bravely to the frontline.

Personally, it is frustrating for me because I am RARING to offer my services, too, but unfortunately, because of age and pre-existing disease, I am considered more of a liability than an asset. Nevertheless, I consider this pandemic a storm that I entered from which I will come out as a stronger person – stronger in faith, stronger in hope, stronger in joy, stronger in the belief in the kindness and generosity of people and stronger in devotion to the Blessed Mother.

In the silence and serenity of the surroundings, my instinct of service was awakened. At my age, I always say that I am already in the pre-departure area and with a Diabetic Kidney, I used to say that I am ready to face my Creator anytime. I thought that I have run the race and finished the course.

problem, then I will pray incessantly. If my medical opinion can put an anxious mind at rest, then my line is always open to accommodate them. If a senior citizen needs prescription, then I will write one. If a little self-denial can put food on the table of a newsboy, then I will give up a luxury to provide him food. If a friend is worried or depressed, I will give time to console or just to listen. These will be my own little services of love.

I would like to share some quotes from “Positive Thoughts and Inspirations”. I hope that when this is over, we will have learned –

***“How fragile our lives are
How life can change in a dime.
How much we take for granted
How much we need each other
How resilient we can be
How positivity is contagious
How important our health is
How to save a little more
How to spend a little less
How to focus less on ourselves
that together we can overcome
anything”.***



Sis. Helen with a medical colleague when still active in her profession.

But learning of the stories of the doctors' and nurses' sacrifice to keep Covid patients alive, I realized the value of human life and then decided to stay alive a little bit longer yet. I believe that God still has plans for me when He wakes me up in the morning, that I can still be as useful in my own little way. If my prayer can help somebody's



Some DMII Board members with Sis. Helen when she was Pro-Life Committee International Chairperson.

LIFE IN QUARANTINE

By: *Sis. Linda Pacursa, Diocesan Regent,
Diocese of Paranaque*



It was on March 12, 2020 when our President announced the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) via TV. This was also the last day that I was in church attending the Deepening the Bible Study. After that, we didn't have Sunday masses in our parish. So sad! But at the back of my mind, I was asking myself: "Why should I feel sad?" The responsorial psalm on March 12 "Blessed are they who hope in the Lord" enlightened me to say a prayer and be hopeful.

March 15 was the first Sunday when the Mass went online, but we were very thankful that Fr. Gerry Mascarina, our parish priest and Fr. Allan, our guest priest who was assisting Fr. Gerry, went around the village and in the extended communities bringing the Blessed Sacrament to us. Every Sunday thereafter, we feel blessed by the two priests who bring the Blessed Sacrament to us and our receiving spiritual communion.

STAY HOME! What will I do during this time of crisis? How can I help our brothers and sisters who are in need? Who will assist me live my faith through ACTION?

Being a DMI, our Blessed Mother is always guiding us in Humility and Unity. True enough, we started in our family raising funds for relief goods such as rice, canned goods and noodles to be distributed to our mission areas in the developing communities. "Nothing is impossible with God", I told my family and friends. It is indeed amazing that homeowners in our street and eventually others in the village helped in the fund-raising. We called our group "Give Love Today". The beneficiaries of our relief goods were the poorest of the poor – tricycle drivers and *lavanderas* who have no work, senior citizens and some of our Squirettes who needed help.

For more than one month of the ECQ, I thank the Lord for giving me the opportunity to be Mary and Martha in my own little way, but with love. Being so

grateful to God, I joined the Prayer Warrior/Intercessory Team praying daily at 8 am, 12 noon, 3 pm and 6 pm. My DMI sisters in the Our Lady of the Pillar Circle held regular prayers daily at 3 pm. My family prayed the Rosary together at night.

The quarantine gave me the chance to cook our family meals three times a day. I took care of our plants and fixed things inside the house between my prayer time. During the crisis, we were deprived of celebrating three important family occasions that we used to celebrate outside of the house: wedding anniversary on April 9, my mother's first death anniversary on April 12 and my birthday on April 21. The family wasn't able to visit my mother's tomb to light candles because of the lockdown.

Despite the crisis, I took everything positively. While fixing things around the house, I chanced upon a small frame with the Word of God that says "Consider it pure joy . . . whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. (James 1:2-3)".



Sis. Linda does gardening work.

GANITO KAMI NOON, PA'NO KAYO NGAYON?

*By: Sis. Lorie Manalansan,
Region V Correspondent & Upliftment of Women
Workers Area Coordinator for Luzon*



One of my greatest blessings when I turned 60 and became “retireable” was the privilege the government has given Senior Citizens – the 20% discount on food, restaurants, medicines, service shops, travel fares, hotels the express lanes and exclusive washrooms at crowded public places; and the chance to see free movies. Translated, it is a life of leisure and a chance to catch up with long-lost friends, classmates and relatives found through social media. And we now have the luxury of time. Whatta life! And only in the Philippines!

Then all of a sudden . . . BOOM! Except for the 20% discount on food and medications, the rest of the perks were no longer accessible. Meeting of people from a distance can only be done through social media platforms.

Life in Quarantine. Unimaginable - of not going to the mall, to restaurants and the theater. Not being able to hug and kiss dearest friends and relatives and exchange pleasantries. It was like the proverbial Tower of Babel tumbling down on us.

And suddenly, we are not allowed out of the house lest we succumb to the Corona Virus 2019 which has become a pandemic of huge proportions worldwide. We are at the mercy of our kids and can only shop via a list we make and our doctor’s prescriptions. The DMI meetings and socials that keep us excited are no longer possible.

And while hoping it would end soon, the Enhanced Community Quarantine got extended.. And now lies the dagger of uncertainty of whether we would be able to get back the pre-Covid life we led . . . unless a vaccine is discovered.

Chat groups on social media became more active – with news updates, tips on how to keep protected; fake, unverified and sensationalized articles, video

watch parties of concerts, masses, novenas, rosaries, breaking news, snippets from TV shows/movies; requests for prayers asking to pray the Oratio Imperata, certain prayers that “needed” to be forwarded to so many people and so many more.

Out of these, lessons were learned on how to cope with our space limitations; on how during times like these, the only way to go is to keep praying; on how staying home has made the environment cleaner and more beautiful, in our alone-ness, there is God Who can always keep us company; and how in the stillness of everything, we realize that this is nothing new.

Pondering on life with our grandparents, they never went out unless celebrating milestones (50th and 60th wedding anniversaries); for medical check-ups and Sunday morning Masses. What they needed were purchased by their maids or by roving vendors who had vegetables and some meat on their carts. The day passed with them preparing meals, tending to their garden, talking with each other and an occasional TV time to watch their much-loved “Flor de Luna”. And I realized how much we have changed.

The Millennial times modified our behaviors so much that little time was spent with family, never mind if it means taking occasional out-of-town vacations with them; seeing the world (traveling) is a must with affordable budget plane fares; being self-focused and sharing our selfies and the fun things we do on Facebook or Instagram. YOLO was the keyword – You Only Live Once – so live it to the fullest. Enjoy life! Fulfillment was achieved in doing the millennial things.

Gone was the fulfillment generated by being able to serve our local or church community. Gone was the dream to have an inner peace or peace of mind. Gone was the desire to be mindful of others.

But thank God for this blessing disguised in a virus, we start to have more time to commune with God and nature, more chances of spending not only quality but quantity time with our immediate family and more

chances to appreciate the blessings which we have overlooked because of our busy schedules and blinded by material possessions.

And, adopting the title of a 70s movie, I can only imagine my grandparents saying: “*Ganito Kami Noon, Paano Kayo Ngayon?*” na nasanay sa mga millennial activities but now in quarantine. Truly we just need to change our perspective in viewing life. To know our purpose and realize that it is in serving God and others through the gifts that we are given do we possess a life well-lived. That an unspeakable joy can be generated when we put the welfare of others over ours. And to use our gifts in ways that will be pleasing to the Lord.

Sis. Lorie's grandparents, Dr. Nicolas Sevilla and Mrs. Emilia Hiyao-Sevilla during their 60th wedding anniversary.



COVID 19 SURVIVOR AKO

*By: Sis. Zeny Polong, Vice-Regent,
Our Lady of Lourdes Circle, NSOLL*



niya na maputla ako.

Pagdating ko sa bahay, gustung-gusto kong kumain at uminom ng Coke. Isang lagok pa lang ng Coke, inilabas ko na. Lyon pala dry na ang aking mukha at mga kamay. Tumawag ang kasama ko sa barangay. Gusto ko nang magpa-confine agad.

Dinala ako sa ospital nang ika-30 ng Marso, 2020 at na-admit ako ng alas-9 ng gabi sa Quezon City General Hospital. Wala akong kasamang miyembro ng aking pamilya. Nasa probinsiya sila. Si Barangay Captain Isaac Tab ang nagpahatid sa akin sa ospital.

Sa aircon room ako namalaging mag-isa ng dalawang araw. Then inilipat ako sa Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Sobrang init! Tatlo kami sa kuwarto. Halos maligo ako sa pawis!

Sabi ng doktor, tatlong linggo ang healing period ko. Nag-blood test ako, X-ray naman pagkatapos.. Wala akong panglasa kaya pinipilit ko lang ang pagkain. Tatlong beses akong na-swab

*B*ilang bahagi ng ating outreach activity, tumulong ako sa aming barangay na mag-repack ng mga relief goods. Last day na naming mag-repack at umuwi na ako sa bahay. Naglakad akong pauwi kasi wala naman akong nararamdaman. Nagkuwentuhan pa kami ng kapit-bahay ko. Napansin daw

test. Na-oxygen ako at dextrose. Nahirapan ako tuwing bibigyan ako ng anti-biotics kung kailang oras ng pagkain na kung minsan late na dumating. Takot at trauma ang nararamdaman ko tuwing naririnig ko ang sirena ng dumadating na ambulansya. Panay ang tanong ko sa doktor kung kailan ako makakalabas.

Isang araw, may dinala sa room namin na lalaking pasyente. Iniwan siya ng attendant. After thirty minutes, pumanaw na siya.

Hindi ako tumitigil ng pagdarasal kay Mama Mary na siya kong kinapitan para tulungan ako sa aking sakit. Si Sis. Norma, ang aming past regent, ang matiyagang nag-monitor sa akin sa araw-araw. Maraming salamat sa kaniya!

Nang bumuti na ang lagay ko, inilipat ako sa Recovery Room. Ilang araw pa, pinayagan na akong lumabas.. Laking pasasalamat ko sa get-well-soon lunch na inihandog sa akin noong ika-29 ng Abril 2020. Mag-isa lang ako sa elevator. Nang lumabas ako sa ground floor, sinalubong ako ng mga staff na may camera. Binigyan ako ng certificate of recognition as a Covid survivor at mga grocery. Sinundo ako ng Foton van at stay at home ako for one month. Pinadadalhan ako ni Kap (barangay captain) ng pagkain araw-araw at ni Shine Cheng, lingkod sa Lourdes

Matinding karanasan para sa akin ang pagkakasakit na iyon. Since birth, di ako naospital! Ngayon lang talaga!

Utang ko ang aking paggaling sa aking mga DMI sisters na kasama kong taimtim na nanalangin sa ginta ng aking darkest hours at sa hospital staff na nag-alaga sa akin. Maraming, maraming salamat sa inyong lahat! I love you all!

Talagang mahal tayo ni Mama Mary at hindi niya tayo pababayaan. Kapit lamang tayo sa kaniya at sa mahal niyang Anak, ang ating Panginoong Hesukristo.

MY DAUGHTER IS A FRONTLINER

By: *Sis. Evelyn Alcantara,*
Youth Welfare/SMI Coordinator for Luzon



*T*he past few months have been nothing but a whirlwind of emotions and heart-breaking news. The pandemic has caused so much panic, anxiety and distress to a lot of people. No one was spared from this illness which makes everyone even more scared. But I guess one of the most frightening feeling during these trying times is seeing my daughter who is a nurse battle against the deadly virus and be called our modern-day hero.

As a mother of a front liner, it scares me to death seeing her fight against an opponent which cannot be seen with the naked eye. I fear for her safety every time she wears her hospital uniform and courageously takes care of people she does not even know. My fear has brought sleepless nights thinking how I can support my daughter who I know is very scared as well, but still wakes up every morning to fulfill her sworn profession. I understand how tiring the work of a nurse is because I once worked as a staff nurse as well, but the situation today is a different story. My heart cries as my daughter tells me how her day was, how uncomfortable it is to wear their PPEs. And how hard it is to see people dying without their loved ones beside them. I am almost on the verge of telling her to quit her job and to stay home with us, but I see in her eyes the passion to help those people who are infected with the virus. Day and night, I recite the Holy Rosary to give my daughter the protection that she needs and the strength to continue to work.

One morning, I received a call from my daughter informing me that she needs to be quarantined because she has been showing symptoms of the disease. My heart sank because I know how deadly the virus can be and I fear for my daughter's health. I remained calm as she was telling us what to do and what needs to be prepared when she gets home for quarantine. I was filled with fear, uncertainty, and questions, but I know that as a mother, my daughter needs me to be

strong and be there for her. I did not stop praying the Holy Rosary. Instead, I prayed even more and began asking for novenas from my sisters in the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. My dear sisters in the DMI family have showered me and my daughters with prayers and words of encouragement that gave us healing and strength. And yes, faith in God brings upon us abundant blessings as my daughter received a negative swab test result of the Covid 19.

I am very grateful for the support that the DMI sisters have given me and my family most especially during our darkest hours. Thank you very much, dear sisters, for keeping my daughter in your prayers. May Mama Mary continue to use us as her model in our commitment to serve our God and country.



Sis. Evelyn Alcantara and her daughter, Jara.

FROM THE FRONTLINE

*By: Sq. Jara Alcantara, Immaculate Conception-
Karangalan Circlette, Diocese of Pasig*

On the 16th of March, 2020, I was informed that I and 15 of my co-workers will be deployed temporarily at the COVID Ward. It was the most dreadful and frightening news I have heard during my seven years of being a registered nurse. Before the Covid 19 pandemic broke out, I was assigned at the Pediatrics Ward, meaning to say that my specialization and training are all about pediatrics patients. I am a pediatrics nurse for almost six years now and all of a sudden I woke up learning that I will be assigned in a general ward focusing on Covid 19 patients. Yes, I did take an oath to take care of my patients regardless of age, gender, background, etc. but all of that comes with proper training and mastery. To cut short, I swallowed my fear, raised my head up high convincing myself every morning that this is what I signed up for. I made a binding promise to uphold my profession regardless of the circumstances that I may be facing.

The first few weeks of battling with the deadly and dreary virus, I wanted to give up being a nurse. I just wanted to quit and stay at home because of the fear that I may bring harm to my family unintentionally. I was crying day and night not because of how demanding and tiring the work is, but the anxiety I am feeling is unimaginable knowing that this pandemic will not end soon. My mom, who is also a registered nurse, was the one who told me that being a nurse is one of the most beautiful things in the world and not everyone gets to take care of people, especially those with illness. She made me realize that being a nurse is one of the most challenging jobs but everything is worth it. "Anak, kaya mo 'yan, ikaw pa ba. Hindi ka naman namin pababayaan, lalo na si Mama Mary. Dasal lang tayo." These words made me realize that I have been too busy complaining that I almost forgot that God made a beautiful plan for us and that in difficult times, Mama Mary embraces us even more. I always say to myself that my faith is stronger than my weaknesses. And during these trying times, we make ourselves stronger through praying the Holy Rosary every night, offering our fears and hoping that this, too, shall pass.

I was wrong thinking that I am tough, and never did it cross my mind that I will be tagged as a "Probable" case of Covid 19 or earlier known as PUI (person under investigation). I experienced symptoms of the disease one month after being exposed to Covid 19-positive patients. Believe it or not, it was the most terrifying experience of being a frontliner. I was placed on home quarantine, separated from the rest of my family and dogs for precautionary measures. I almost fell down on my knees not because of the fear that I maybe a positive case, but the possibility of infecting my loved ones. Apart from loading myself with vitamins and medicines for my symptoms, the prayer brigade which my mom asked from my Tita DMIs and my sisters in Squirettes of Mary Immaculate gave so much healing and peace. Being a Squirette taught me that in times

of hardship and uncertainty, the only weapon that can shield us from being broken and weak is through praying the Holy Rosary. I felt at peace and protected knowing that Mama Mary embraces me with her love. I guess the heavens were stormed with prayers because 14 days after my swab test, I tested negative for the virus. The joy I felt was indescribable.

But this is not the end. I have to once again battle against the invisible opponent because I have duties to fulfill. Every single day is uncertain and definitely challenging. I am not your hero of today. I am a nurse and it is my duty and responsibility to take care of other people even if it means putting our lives in danger. My only armor and weapon every single day are prayers. I am lucky to be surrounded by people who pray for me and constantly remind me that the Lord has plans to keep us protected and not harm us in any way.

It will never be easy, for us to go back to the way things were. The Lord has promised us salvation. I will continue to fulfill and uphold my oath even in the hardest of times for I know that the Lord embraces and shields me from the enemy.

And with this, I am forever grateful to my DMI and SMI family. Thank you for being my protectors and prayer warriors from hundreds of miles away. Thank you for storming the heavens with thousands of Hail Marys and novenas. Thank you for including me and all the frontliners in your prayers. May we all continue to pray for each other, most especially those affected by this pandemic.



Jara, all wrapped up in her PPE

A TIME TO CHANGE OUR PERSPECTIVE

*By: Sis. Cathy Pineda,
International Chairperson, Morality in Media*



Not so long ago, we used to put things in our hands, time in our hands. With the resources that God has given us, we did our best to plan for our own lives.

We struggled to earn our keep, going out of our homes, staying outside from early morning until late at night battling with heavy traffic all over the Metro. But always, we ask God for help for we act and do our best and God will do the rest.

God had given us means and had taken care of us as we toiled for material necessities. Things that are seemingly for this earth. So, I think God is saying to us now, you had your days, slow down and take care of

yourselves. I will do the rest from now on. I will direct your ways so you can savor time; I will clear the roads of traffic and value your families and loved ones.

At this time of the Covid 19 pandemic, we are given the chance to spend more time with our families, to rediscover each and everyone, to learn to talk to one another again. We are given the chance to connect face to face with them offline. At this time we may also allow some time to connect online with people outside our homes. And, rediscover ourselves, our hobbies and as important, our praying abilities.

We have been preoccupied with things that are for this earth, so this is the time to have a change of perspective. So we pray: God our Father, continue to direct us in our journey so we can look up to our new normal life soon.



TURNING TO GOD IN OUR HELPLESSNESS

*By: Sis. Ma. Angelica Estrella, Organist, Sto. Nino de
Kalibo Circle, Diocese of Kalibo*

I think all of us can agree that this pandemic has changed us in a way that nothing else in our lives ever did. I can't begin to talk of the horrors – the many lives lost, the struggle of those who fought against it and survived, the impact it has on the world's economy. One thing for sure, the world will never be the same after this, which people are now calling as the “new normal”.

But why has God allowed this to happen? For Christians all over, it has strengthened and united us all in prayer. It is showing us that without God, we are nothing. Someone once said: “It is the fool who believes there is no God.”

People are turning to God because we are helpless in the face of this virus and we need to believe there's a higher being out there that we can turn to. We are in a spiritual battle – it has always been so. Let our prayers be our breastplate and the Word of God be our sword. We are children of Easter morning and we shall overcome this with our prayers.



MUSINGS ON HAZY COVID DAYS

By: Sis. Mila A. Villanueva,
Past International Regent (2013-14)



Last March 13th, a Friday was an auspicious day for some and unnerving for others. The news that day caught my attention: "Due to the corona virus, certain areas in the country shall be LOCKED down starting March 15 to 31 to contain the spread of COVID 19, a disease that has the potency of MERS and SARS combined. The World Health Organization has declared this as a pandemic that has affected the whole world."

People were quarantined by area, according to the degree of virus infestation. Termed as ECQ (enhanced community quarantine) and GCQ (general community quarantine) with Modified added to relax restrictions imposed on both the ECQ and GCQ. The movements of Senior Citizens were restricted to supermarkets, local markets, banks, pharmacies and hospitals (only when extremely necessary). People have to follow health protocol: the wearing of masks, physical distancing and frequent washing of hands. Compliance to these quarantine rules is a MUST to help "flatten the curve".

The quarantine was supposed to be only fifteen days. Then it became 30, 45, 60, 90 and almost 120 days as of this writing!

In the deafening silence, reading, watching TV for the news and NETFLIX for movies and dramas were my forms of entertainment. However, the prolonged silence has started getting eerie! Words would reverberate in my mind! Flashes of movie scripts, some lines in the poems I've read and re-read, and appreciating the beauty of God's creations.

This inspired me to venture into poetry writing. Surprisingly, my creative juices started flowing freely as I start this journey. Like a dash of lightning, words came and popped up in my mind. Thanks to my Muse!

These poems are my thoughts, inspirations and hopes! I wish that these can lighten up your world . . . on these Covid days.



Sis. Mila with her husband, Mike during one of their foreign travels.

BEYOND MIKE

This poem was inspired by the song "What a Wonderful World". And with a bit of nostalgia while remembering my late husband Mike Villanueva on our 54th wedding anniversary had he lived till today.

A breath of fresh air is what I seek
To feel the wind gushing on my face
A glance, a smile from people sitting by
How lovely does thy day commence!

The sun at ten fills my body with
substance D3
Attains the lost strength of bones as age
catches thee.
At 70 the once flawless skin has turned
to wrinkles.
The lips, once supple, has thinned!
The knees have begun to ache and
wobble
Though desires to energize, the energy
thou hast none.

Now, we sit and listen!
Our heart engulfed in the melancholia.
Of the humming of the wind
Of the sputtering of the rains
Of the chorale of the birds in the sky . . .
Of the fluttering of the yellow butterfly
As if to say . . .
Enjoy your rebirth!
To dream of dreams that will be!
Oh, how wonderful it is
To be OLD!

LOCK DOWN

So many days had passed
The countdown has begun
First it was counting the days
Till April's end.

Then like an unfinished dream
Two more weeks, there is
May has barely started
Another two weeks were added.

Woe! Though it is how it is
To be old . . .
To wait in quiet stillness
To feel the deafening silence.

In my ears, it started to rumble
Like the thunder in the rain.
The joy of silence has turned
To a big endless BORE.

NOW, the lockdown has gotten
longer,

No plans can be made but
To look forward to meeting
Loved Ones
And Friends so sorely missed!

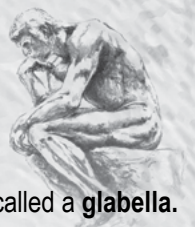
Why has Loneliness crept in so . . .
In my heart, form the tears inside!
Though, beginning to well
in my eyes
Should I let it go?



WORDS I DID NOT KNOW

The accompanying Viber post "Did You Know" received from my University of the Philippines alumni group had been my inspiration in penning the poem. "Words I Did Not Know".

DID YOU KNOW?



1. The space between your eyebrows is called a **glabella**.
2. The way it smells after the rain is called **petrichor**.
3. The plastic or metallic coating at the end of your shoelace is called an **aglet**.
4. The rumbling of a stomach is actually called a **wamble**.
5. The cry of a new-born baby is called a **vagitus**.
6. The prongs on a fork are called **tines**.
7. The sheen or light that you see when you close your eyes and press your hands on them is called **phosphenes**.
8. The tiny plastic table placed in the middle of a pizza box is called a **box tent**.
9. The day after tomorrow is called **overmorrow**.
10. Your tiny toe or finger is called **minimus**.
11. The wired cage that hold the cork in a bottle of champagne is called an **agraffe**.
12. The '**na na na** and **la la la**' which don't really have any meaning in the lyrics of any song are called **vocables**.
13. When you combine an exclamation mark with a question mark (like this ?!), it is referred to as an **interrobang**.
14. The space between your nostrils is called **collumela nasi**.
15. The armhole in clothes, where the sleeves are sewn, is called **armscye**.
16. The condition of finding it difficult to get out of bed in the morning is called **dysania**.
17. Illegible handwriting is called **griffonage**.
18. The dot over an i or a j is called **tittle**.
19. The utterly sick feeling you get after eating or drinking too much is called **crapulence**.
20. The metallic device used to measure your feet at the shoe store is called **Bannock device**.

HOW MANY OF THE ABOVE
DID YOU ALREADY KNOW?

WORDS I DID NOT KNOW

To pen a poem is chore.
To think and think until the **glabella** crinkles
Even so, I sat so long with not a word
Till the rain came to spread a whiff of its **petrichor**.

Still no words came, no thoughts formed
Time passed unnoticed!
My stomach started to **wamble**!
A feast of wine and brie, till the **crapulence** I felt!

Words flowed amongst the **phosphenes** in the wind
Thoughts just came to mind freely.
No worry,
This poem will be done **overmorrow**.



THE WORLD OF OPPOSITES

A placid world is a balanced world!
It is a world
Of storms and rainbows
Of laughter and tears
Of hurts and forgiveness
Of friends and foes.

Yet, in its contrariness
The rains always follow each rainbow
And laughter after each tear
Forgiveness after each hurt
And love to calm the hurt.

To embrace each victory
over each loss . . .
and To love and remember a
Life Well-Lived!

THE NEW NORMAL

People wondered!
People asked themselves!
With lifestyles changed
What will the new normal be?

People wear masks wherever they go
People used shoes for walking
Gone are the flipflops and fancy sandals
People washing hands as often as they can
Twenty seconds at least, before the soap is rinsed.

And ladies left their branded bags and wallets,
And watches and jewelries, too, in their closets!
The money they carry are in zip lock plastic bags instead.
Their defense are tiny bottles of alcohol,
Sprayed on most everything!

With their faces hardly seen,
Sprucing up is no longer the same!
No more lipsticks, as masks cover their lovely colored lips,
Just mascaras to highlight their curly lashes.

Social distancing had become the norm,
No less than one meter they say!
No shaking hands nor touching,
A simple nod, a bow, a sign of peace is all it takes!

Places of worship had been closed
People attend virtual masses instead!
Meetings, news reports, entertainment are virtual as well.
Oh, the marvels of communications!
Zoom, Viber, Messenger and Face Book
Connected the world as one!

New Heroes were born,
Frontliners they are called.
Doctors, nurses, hospital staff,
Together, they bravely faced and led the fight!
To neutralize this threatening disease.

Alas! Some of them have succumbed to this Foe!
We salute You! Our Heroes!

Policemen and Army, on the roads and highways,
Helping people toe the line.
Food, goods, vitamins, cash aids were given to all
To keep our bodies strong and healthy
For stamina to fight this Covid scourge!

STILL!
People wondered
And people asked:
Did we really flatten the curve?

AND ONLY GOD CAN DO

This long wait is a pause for realizations and visions.

It is God's way of saying:
"My Children, You've been so busy
and tired of resolving your troubles.
Be quiet now! I have given you rest.

To listen to My whispers in your minds and hearts
I have given you time!
To appreciate the myriad things I have created for you!

The beauty of the sunrise at dawn
The orange sun as it sets in the afternoons!
Thence, the bright bluish moon rising to light your way
The symmetry and color of the blooms,
wafting their perfume in the air.

The green grass and trees in the summers
Their colors change from greens to yellows and reds . . .

And trees shed their leaves
As nature prepares for the autumn to follow.

In the winters
The snowy flakes of ice cover the grounds,
mountains and forests
Transforming the landscape into a blanket of white!

HARK! Await the most glorious time of all!
There in a manger, the Child Jesus is born on Christmas Day!
Heralded by the choirs of Angels on high
And Kings from afar following the Star
Brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh!

So like the never ending seasons
Of spring, summer, autumn and winter
So will I always be with you!

Signed: GOD

Pandemic Supplicatory Prayer

Eternal Father, You made the whole World stop spinning for a while.

You silenced the noise that we all have created.

You made us bend our knees again and ask for a Miracle.

You closed Your Churches so we will realize how dark our World is without You in it.

You humbled the proud and powerful.

The economy is crashing, businesses are closing.

We were very proud, we thought that everything we have, everything we possess, was the result of our hard work.

We have forgotten that it was always Your grace and Mercy that made us who we are.

Running in circles looking for some cure to this disease, when in fact we need to humble ourselves and ask You for guidance and wisdom.

Maybe this virus is actually Your way of purifying us and cleansing our souls, bringing us back to YOU.

Today as these words travel the internet, may all who see them join their hearts and hands together in prayer! Asking for forgiveness and asking for healing and protection from this virus. . . . GOD just wipe it from the earth!

Father, You have been patiently waiting for us. We're sorry for ignoring Your voice and in our selfish ways, we've sometimes forgotten that YOU are GOD!

You only need to say the word and our souls shall be healed

We ask these things in Jesus' name!

AMEN.



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