



# **BULLETIN 2019**

**(An Annual Report on ISA Programs and Activities)**

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# Institute of Spirituality in Asia

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Friends, Benefactors and Sponsors of ISA,

Warm greetings from the Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA)!

It has become our tradition to prepare with a Yearend Bulletin and thus keep the affinity with our students, alumni, sponsors, benefactors, partners, collaborators, friends and members of the ISA Family both locally and internationally.

With this Yearend Bulletin, we offer you a short description of our public lectures, seminar-workshops, spirituality fora, summer courses, research, publications, outreach and external linkages programs, meetings of the International Academic Advisory Board (IAAB) and of the Board of Trustees (BOT) and many other activities.

Year 2019 was a very productive and meaningful year for ISA as we continue to effect personal, communal and societal changes through our different programs on spirituality. More than ever, we remain very much convinced of the vision of ISA as a research-based and academic institute. We will strive to live by this vision as we pursue programs guided by these two distinct characteristics of our institute.

The seminar-workshop on Management and Evaluation which I attended in Bangkok together with the other members of the Inter-Institute Collaboration (IIC) last November 25-30 2019 was very timely and helpful as we formulate our own theory of change and systematize our programs and services.

The good Lord continues to shower His blessings by continuously providing us people of spiritual insights and wisdom. We can only say that you have been a big part of our success. And so, we thank you and all other people who, in one way or another, have become part of the ISA Family in the realization of our vision, mission and goals!

Similarly, I am grateful to the inspiring support of the ISA Board of Trustees, the International Academic Advisory Board (IAAB), the Prior Provincial and Council (PPC) of the Order of Carmelites, my fellow co-administrators and our staff. I also send my sincerest thanks to our generous donors, sponsors, friends and supporters whom we can always rely on for assistance.

We look ahead to the year 2020 with renewed spirit, vigor and enthusiasm. We can do so because we are confident of your being one with us in our pursuit of a meaningful, timely and relevant spirituality responsive to the needs of our times.

We wish you all a merry Christmas and a grace-filled New Year. God bless us all!

Sincerely yours,

**Fr. Rico Palaca Ponce, O. Carm.**

Executive Director



January 2019

## Fr. Ponce Visits ISA's Main Benefactor in the Netherlands (January 15, 2019)

On January 13, 2019, Fr. Rico Ponce, O.Carm., the executive director of the Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA), left for the Netherlands primarily to visit the Sisters of Julie Postel and to personally thank and update them on the activities of ISA for 2018.

On January 15 Fr. Ponce met with Sr. Annelies Roelof, superior general, Sr. Esther van Tijn, councilor and Mr. Kees Swaanen, financial adviser of Julie Postel. He gave copies of the 2018 yearly Bulletin of ISA, three of its latest publications and a list of its program of activities for 2019.



The Sisters of Julie Postel were very delighted by his visit and promised to continue their financial support to ISA.

Fr. Ponce maximized his stay in the Netherlands by also visiting the Carmelite communities in Boxmeer, Nijmegen and Zenderen. On January 23, 2019 he proceeded to Rome for the meeting of the *Comitato Centrale* of the *Institutum Carmelitanum*. Earlier, he had been assigned to collect articles for the 2018 issue of *Carmelus* on the theme "Inculturation of Carmelite Spirituality."





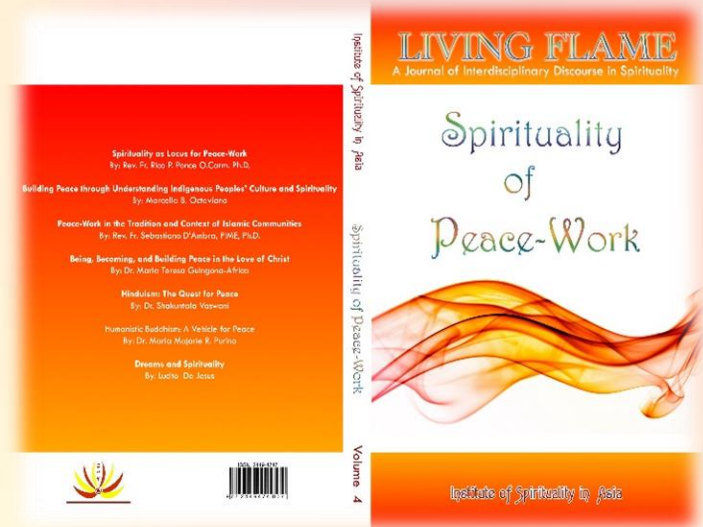
February 2019

## ISA Launches Volume 4 of Journal: Joins International Peace Week (February 2, 2019)

The Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) has launched Volume 4 of *Living Flame*, a journal on interdisciplinary discourse in spirituality.

Entitled "Spirituality of Peace-Work", Volume 4 contains the papers read at ISA's Summer Course on Asian Spiritualities in 2018, and of Mr. Lucito de Jesus, speaker at the Seminar-Workshop on September 10, 2017 on the topic "Dreams and Spirituality."

Five of the seven authors spoke during the launch held at the Teresa of Avila Building on February 2, 2019 (Saturday). They and sixty participants were welcomed by Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm., ISA's Academic, Research and Publication Director, who spoke on the 3Rs of a good journal - rigor, relevance and fostering relationships to spirituality.



### *The Overview*

ISA Executive Director Fr. Rico Ponce, O. Carm, Ph.D./S.Th.D., co-editor of Volume 4 and author of its lead article "Spirituality as Locus for Peace-Work," wrote that looking more closely at certain spiritual traditions will show peace-work at the heart of their teachings.

Fr. Ponce urged, "We must speak up and make a stand in favor of the victims of injustice. Genuine peace that is based on justice will be achieved with our solidarity with the oppressed and also with the will of God. As Thomas Merton prayed at the US House of Representatives on Holy Wednesday 1962: 'Almighty and merciful God, ... in your will is our peace.'"



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## *The Indigenous Filipinos*



Also at the launch was Prof. Marcela Octaviano of Notre Dame University of Marbel, author of the paper "Building Peace through Understanding Indigenous Peoples' Culture and Spirituality".

A T'boli-Bilaan from South Cotabato in Mindanao, she has worked in community development in her home province and in two other provinces of Mindanao, areas wracked by secessionist conflicts in which indigenous peoples remain caught.

## *The Catholicism*

The next speaker was Maria Teresa Guingona-Africa, Ph.D., who teaches *Muslim-Christian Dialogue for Nation-Building and Conflict for Peace among Religions* at the Ateneo de Manila University and who co-founded in 2001 The Peacemakers' Circle Foundation, Inc. (TPCFI).

At the launch Dr. Africa explained the title of her paper ("Being, Becoming and Building Peace in the Love of Christ") by pointing out, "By virtue of being followers of Christ, we Christians are compelled to reach out to find new ways of being and becoming Christ-like in our ways of loving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves."



Dr. Africa has been involved in peace-work for twenty years, starting in 1998 when she saw a T-shirt with the image of a globe surrounded by symbols of the different religions of the world.



## *The Hinduism*



Still another speaker at the launch was Shakuntala Vaswani, Ph.D., co-founder and officer-in-charge of TPCFI and trustee and later president of the Hindu Temple Bharati Women's Association and of the Indian Ladies Circle.

Dr. Vaswani noted that Gandhi's *ahimsa* (passive and nonviolent resistance movement) had inspired Dr. Martin Luther

King, Jr. to lead the civil rights movement in America, and Nelson Mandela to lead the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

## *Dreams*

The last speaker was Lucito de Jesus, regarded as the country's foremost dream expert and awarded by his alma mater, Trinity University, for embodying Trinitarian education as a "Person for Others" and for achieving distinction in advocating dream interpretation on print and broadcast. For his undergraduate degree, he majored in mass communication.



Mr. de Jesus has hosted a radio program on dreams and has written for major newspapers, magazines and the electronic media. He has published two books on dreams and a number of modules on aikido, which he practices and teaches.

Mr. de Jesus has an M.A. Guidance and Counseling for his graduate degree at De La Salle University. For eleven years he gave workshops to seminarians of the Society of the Divine Word on such topics as basic psychology, psychiatry, Jungian issues, sexuality and psychoanalysis through dreams.

During launch he said, "Dreams are free and always available. In Biblical times, God used them to speak to characters like Jacob who dreamed of angels going up and down God's ladder. Angels are always a symbol in dreams. The number 7 is also important and is used repetitively."



For his part Fr. Ponce said, "This launch is ISA's humble contribution to the World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW) declared by the United Nations in 2010 and by President Benigno Aquino III in 2012."

### *The Closing*

To end the afternoon, Fr. Sheldon Tabile offered tokens of appreciation to the speakers, who received a round of peace claps led by Dr. Carmen Alviar of ISA.

To much applause they then unveiled the latest volume of *Living Flame* and autographed copies for members of the audience who took advantage of the reduced launch price.

Everyone sang the much-beloved "Let There Be Peace on Earth" to mark ISA's celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW). (by Perla Choudhury)



## **ISA Joins Breakfast Meeting with Cardinal Tagle (February 4, 2019)**

The Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) joined the breakfast meeting hosted by Cardinal Antonio Tagle on February 4, 2019 at the Arzobispado de Manila Building in Intramuros, Manila. It was the celebrations of the World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW) every first week of February.

ISA was represented by Fr. Rico P. Ponce, O. Carm. Executive Director, together with Dr. Marissa C. Alcantara, Assistant director for Academics and Carmen R. Alviar, Ph.D., coordinator for External Relations and Linkages.



Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, graced the event, together with other foreign dignitaries as well as leaders of different religious beliefs and faith traditions.

In his remarks Cardinal Tagle emphasized that eating together is a good venue to share messages of peace, to strengthen friendships and to deepen camaraderie. He also lamented how this Filipino tradition is disappearing as the family gets affected by social media.



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The occasion served as the venue for the Cardinal to receive a copy of the recently launched “**Spirituality of Peace-Work**” which was ISA’s primary contribution to Interfaith Harmony Week 2019.

Fr. Ponce stressed that this year’s theme of “*Celebrating Truth, Sincerity and Forgiveness*” is reflected in this publication, Volume 4 of ISA's *Living*

*Flame: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Discourse in Spirituality.*

At the breakfast meeting, ISA was joined by other members of Uni-Harmony Partners Manila whose primary aim is to spread the message of interfaith harmony, dialogue and cooperation. Members include Catholics, Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, Muslims and members of Protestant Churches. (by: Dr. Carmen Alviar)

## **ISA Board of Trustees (BOT) Semi-Annual Meeting**

The ISA Board of Trustees (BOT) had its first meeting for 2019 last February 16 morning while the second one was held the day after the annual Spirituality Forum, August 3 afternoon. The Prior Provincial of the Order of Carmelites, Philippine Province, chairs the BOT.

Members includes: Sr. Flor Pauline Duran, Carm.O.L., Fr. Albertus Herwanta, O.Carm. (Indonesia), Fr. Alan Reiger, OCD, Prof. Eduardo Calasanz, ndv and two honorary members: Most Rev. Rolando Tria Tirona, OCD, D.D. and Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, D.D.







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## ISA Contributes to a Benefit Concert (February 8, 2019)



The Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) co-organized a pre-Valentine concert with Anawim Mission, a non-profit and ecumenical organization which aims to reinforce the mission of God for the liberation of the poor through emancipatory social projects.

ISA helped conceptualize, source talents, produce and pre-sell *ANAWIM-MISYON SA MGA MAHIHIRAP PRE-VALENTINE CONCERT* which was held at the gymnasium of Saint Paul University Quezon City (SPUQC) on February 8, 2019.

ISA also arranged for Order of Carmelites-Pilipinas seminarians Bro. Christian Marave, O.Carm. to act as floor director and Bro. Jade Gerona, O.Carm. to be the stage manager.

ISA Executive Director Fr. Rico Ponce, O. Carm., a co-convenor of Anawim Misyon, contributed a message to the souvenir programme of the concert, together with his co-convenor Pastor Nestor Ravilas and Archbishop Antonio J. Ledesma, a member of the Council of Leaders of Anawim Misyon.

The concert featured *pro bono* singers Mara Marasigan, Bro. Rolando Mamites, Danny Fabella, Paul Galang and Christine Carlos as well as the following groups: Lumad Bakwet School, St. Joseph Formation House Seminarians, Tubaw, Reds Pangkat Sining, Adieuluna and the SPUQC Chorale.





The performers sang of the lives, struggles, aspirations and victories of the urban poor, the peasants and the indigenous peoples of the Philippines.

Complemented by video presentations the concert portrayed Filipino culture through costumes, dances and musical instruments of the performers.

The concert conveyed an appeal to the Philippine government and to break-away groups to resume peace talks. It also projected environmentalism through a stage design using paintings and scrap materials as backdrop. *(by: Dr. Carmen Alviar)*

## **ISA Holds Public Lecture on Spirituality, Peace and Development (February 23, 2019)**



In the morning of February 23, 2019 the Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) held a public lecture entitled “Am I My Brother’s Keeper: Spirituality of the Gospel of Peace and Development in the Thoughts of Benedict XVI.”

ISA invited Fernando Cruzat Comia, also known as Br. Paolo Totus Tuus Maria, Oblate Apostles of the Two Hearts (OATH). He is Dean of Studies at Mater Redemptoris Collegium (MRC), and Ph.D. student in Development Studies in Education and Development at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB).



In his talk Bro. Paolo interrelated the thoughts of Pope-Emeritus Benedict XVI (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger) on man, spirituality, religion, peace, and development and used the Biblical verse, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” as his guide. He explained that just as there was sibling rivalry between Cain and Abel, there are also dynamics between Catholic Social Teaching, on the one hand, and peace and development efforts, on the other.



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According to Bro. Paolo, the primary question of his talk was “What are Benedict XVI’s views on religion and spirituality being essential elements of human development?” To respond to this main query, he added, firstly in “Who Am I?” the theological anthropology of Pope Benedict XVI.

The Pope-Emeritus believes that a true and authentic development hinges on the centrality of the human person created by God in his own image and likeness. He holds as an overarching doctrine that man is an image of God (*imago Dei*) and bears within himself the inalienable dignity reflecting the relational dynamics of the Triune God, one God in three persons.



For this public lecture, ISA hosted a team of professors and students from the University of Vienna Department of Theological Ethics who were in the country as part of the 25<sup>th</sup> year of Sandiwaan, a partnership between the Catholic University of Vienna and the Inter-Congregational Theological Center (ICTC).

This particular public lecture closed with a certificate of appreciation for Bro. Paolo from ISA and with a token bottle of schnapps from the University of Vienna team. (by: *Perla Choudhury*)

## **ISA Holds Public Lecture on Spirituality of *Babad* (Immersion)**

In the afternoon of February 23, 2019 the Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) hosted the latest of its Public Lecture series by inviting Fr. Dave Dean Capucao, Ph.D., S.Th.D. to speak on the topic “Spirituality of *Babad* (Immersion)” with the sub-theme “A way of doing religious and intercultural dialogue in the Philippines and in Asia.”



Fr. Capucao is rector of Saint Joseph Formation House (SJFH) of the Prelature of Infanta; research coordinator of the Saint Vincent School of Theology; professor at the Ateneo de Manila University; and a co-founder of the Center for Empirical Studies in Theology, Spirituality and Religion (CESSTREL) with Fr. Rico P. Ponce, O.



Carm., Executive Director of ISA. He has Ph.D.s from the Radboud Universiteit-Nijmegen and from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.

By way of context. Fr. Capucao recalled that in the 1970s the word *babad* (Filipino word for soaked, absorbed) became part of the jargon of activist and progressive Church members in the Philippines. *Babad* then came to refer to immersion in the concrete life situations of the basic sectors, the community, the urban and rural poor, and the workers holding pickets.

He also stated that immersion demands a spirituality of Harmony, a spirituality of Search, a spirituality of Oneness, and a spirituality of Transformation. Here, one may relate the learnings from the Agtas (indigenous peoples covered by the Prelature of Infanta) by Fr. Capucao's bishop, the late Julio Labayen, OCD.



The public lecture ended with a plaque of appreciation for Fr. Capucao from ISA and a bottle of schapps from the immersionists from Vienna. (by: *Perla Choudhury*)

**March 2019**

## **ISA Holds First Lecture in Honor of Blessed Titus Brandsma (March 16, 2019)**



On March 16, 2019 the Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) held the first of four lectures in honor of Blessed Titus Brandsma, Patron of the Philippine Province of the Order of Carmelites.

ISA Executive Director Fr. Rico Ponce, O.Carm. welcomed the fifty friends and representatives of the various branches of the Carmelite family to the Multi-Purpose Hall of the Teresa of Avila Building, New Manila.



He said, “It is our hope that this lecture series will give us information as well as direct our minds to Jesus, whom Titus Brandsma strove to follow and we as Carmelites strive to follow.”

Fr. Ponce was also the first lecturer (topic: *Hagiography of Titus Brandsma*) in the series of talks on the spirituality of Blessed Titus, a Dutch priest, educator, journalist, modern mystic and prophet for our times.



According to Fr. Ponce, Titus’ heroic acts of suffering were followed by forgiveness because his faith and trust in God were firmly rooted in prayer. He also noted how Titus’ joyful countenance is a study in humankind’s sharing the Cross of Christ: “For all Christians, he exemplifies a life of union with God combined harmoniously with involvement based on deep religious roots.

“He also led a life of identifying with the poor and the little ones; being deeply respectful of different cultures; encouraging all that promotes the growth of the human person; and working selflessly and zealously for Christian unity.”

The afternoon ended with a prayer for the canonization of Blessed Titus.

## **ISA Co-hosts Lecture Series with Parish Run by the Carmelites (March 23, 2019)**

On March 23, 2019 the Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) opened its lecture series “Spirituality in the Year of the Youth” at the Sagrada Familia Parish near Batasan Hills, Quezon City.

ISA Assistant Academic Dean Dr. Marissa Alcantara, a.O.Carm. welcomed the youth as well as adult parishioners and members of various ministries to the start





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of “In Love with the WORD OF GOD: Young People and the Scriptures”. Meanwhile, Dr. Carmen Alviar, ISA Coordinator for External Linkages, introduced Fr. Cris Pine, OFM (Biblicum, Roma), speaker-facilitator for the topic *Introduction to the Word of God*.



Fr. Pine started with the geography of the Holy Land and pointed out that the Bible is the product of long years of dreams, sufferings, living lessons, loss of power and drawing close to God. He, further explained the process called redaction whereby an evangelist would add events absent from those written by the others.

Dr. Alviar, the emcee, thanked Fr. Pine “for making time to be with us on this orientation” and then called on Fr. Perfecto Adeva, Jr. O.Carm, the Administration and Finance Director of ISA, to give the token of appreciation to the speaker. (by: Perla Choudhury)

**April 2019**

## ISA Supports ANAWIM MISYON 1st Year Anniversary Celebration (April 5, 2019)



After a year, ANAWIM-MISYON *sa mga Mahihirap* (formerly known as ANAWIM MISSION) is very much alive. The Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) supported this first year anniversary which was celebrated on April 5, 2019 at Romano Hall, Baclaran Church. The event was highlighted by a forum focusing on national situation that severely affected the Anawim, those who wallow in poverty.



The speaker Rosario Bella J. Guzman, Executive Director and Head of Research Department of IBON Foundation, Inc. presented various statistics and local and national laws in relation to what is happening in the Philippines. The poor

become poorer while the rich become richer. There were two reactors namely: Bishop Broderick Pabillo, D.D. Auxillary Bishop of Manila and Prof. Lizette Tapia Racquel of Union Theological Seminary. Both affirmed the presentation of Ms. Guzman.

The forum was followed by a general assembly. Fr. Rico Ponce, (ISA) co-convenor of Anawim Mission presented the memorable dates that highlighted the various events organized by the Anawim Mission from 2018 to 2019. Joy Kialkial (ISA) ANAWIM-Misyon treasurer gave the financial report.

Archbp. Deogracias Iniguez graced the occasion, a sign of support to the group. He is the Chairman of the ANAWIM Misyon Council of Leaders.

The celebration ended with the closing remarks of Atty. Jojo Lacanilao, member of the Council of Leaders and Legal Adviser. Ms. Ofelia Cantor of the National Church of Christ in the Philippines led a solidarity circle was led by Ms. Ofelia Cantor and closed with a prayer and song “Pananagutan”(Responsibility). *(by: Dr. Carmen Alviar)*

## **2019 Summer Course: Carmelite, Benedictine and Islamic Spiritualities**

**(April 22-26, 2019)**

The Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) focused on the theme “Schools of Spirituality” for its 13<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Week Summer Course on Spirituality held on April 22-26, 2019 at the ISA Multi-purpose Room, Teresa of Avila Building in New Manila, Quezon City.

ISA Executive Director Fr. Rico Ponce opened the course on, significantly, the day after Easter and said: “We organized this course and continue to do it in relation to people of other faiths.”



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ISA welcomed as many as 26 participants including a lay minister, a Protestant pastor, a chaplain of a Catholic university in Mindanao, the heads of campus ministries in two major private universities and in one state university in Metro Manila, nuns and priests from Indonesia and East Timor, and the seven Carmelite novices now in formation.

Lectures on Islamic spirituality were held in the morning of Days 1-5. Those on Benedictine as well as Carmelite spirituality were set in the afternoons of Days 2-3 and Days 4-5, respectively.

In the afternoon of Day 1, Fr. Marlon Lacal, O.Carm., Provincial Councilor of the Philippine Province of Blessed Titus Brandsma, traced the origins and growth of a school of spirituality.

Sr. Christine Pinto, OSB, president of St. Scholastica's College, opened her talk with a video documentary on how Nursia, the birthplace of St. Benedict (480-547), is still rebuilding the basilica, the monastery he had established and other landmarks after the 2016 earthquake. The speaker on Carmelite spirituality, Sr. Ma. Elena Tolentino, O.Carm. entered the Carmelite Monastery of the Holy Family in 1982. She had her Simple Profession in 1984 and her Solemn Profession in 1989.







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ISA set the talks on Islamic spirituality in the five mornings of its Summer Course and invited Fr. Eliseo Mercado, Jr., OMI, , member of its International Academic Advisory Board (IAAB). The lecturer studied Theology and Missiology at the Gregorian University in Rome. He went for Islamic Studies at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI) in Rome and at the Oriental Institute in Cairo, Egypt. At present, he is professor at the Notre

Dame University (NDU) Graduate School in Cotabato City, Mindanao, the region where Islam missionaries first came to pre-Spanish Philippines. *(By Perla Choudhury)*

**May 2019**

## ISA Shares Missionary Life of a Filipino Carmelite

**(May 25, 2019)**

On May 25, 2019 the Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) facilitated the sharing by one of its officials who was once a missionary in Papua New Guinea (PNG). ISA Executive Director Fr. Rico Ponce, O. Carm. welcomed a sizable audience of regular as well as new attendees, to the Public Lecture on “Spirituality of Mission: Experienced and Lived.”



With his BS Commerce degree from the University of San Jose Recoletos in Cebu City, Fr. Perfecto Ll. Adeva, Jr., O.Carm. fits well his position as ISA Director for Administration and Finance. But he was also among the first Carmelites of the Philippine Province to go to its PNG Mission under the patronage of St. Therese of Lisieux. At various times Fr. Adeva was Formator in-charge of the Postulancy Program; Superintendent of Carmel Schools; member of the Commission on Independence; Assistant Formator; and President of Mount Carmel College of Escalante.

In 2004, he was elected back to the Council for one term. During this period, he volunteered for the PNG Mission. At the 2017 Provincial Chapter of the Philippine Province, he was elected First Councilor and appointed as Provincial Bursar.



He said at the lecture, “Missionary work is only an extension of the basic reality that one is a beloved of the Father. The best gift I have ever received in my whole life was to experience God’s gift of life and love. To spread the love of the Father by sharing the story of Jesus is for me the foundation of mission. `To tell the world of His love, that he sent His Only Son.’”

He has also learned that mission is mainly about the story of the Father and the Son continuously revealed to the people through the Holy Spirit inspiring the missionary church of today in the search for God and building God’s kingdom in the here and now. *(By Perla Choudhury)*

**June 2019**

## **Student Friars Talk about Titus Brandsma as Journalist**

**(June 8, 2019)**

The Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) invited the younger generation of Carmelites in the Philippines to speak at its monthly Public Lecture of June 8, 2019. Br. Lester Hallig, O. Carm. and Br. Ritche Salgado, O. Carm. facilitated the session on “The Vocation of a Journalist: Titus Brandsma, Christian Faith and Press Freedom.”



Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O. Carm., ISA’s research director and Fellow, Titus Brandsma Institute in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, welcomed the 50-plus participants to the Multi-purpose Hall of ISA.

At the Public Lecture, the speakers explored how Blessed Titus (1881-1942) was formed in the course of being a novice, a new priest, a doctoral student in Rome and then as a scholar, academician, mystic and journalist.



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They also focused on his writings, expressed thoughts, details and reflections on his journalistic vocation, which, they said, was seamlessly integrated with his spirituality.

A licensed Physical Therapist, Br. Ritche Salgado is a professed brother of the Order of Carmelites in the Philippines and is a non-canonical member of the Provincial Council. In 2003 he started writing for media outfits like *Cebu Daily News*, *The Freeman* and *Bulatlat*

In 2011 he was chosen by the College of Mass Communication of the University of the Philippines-Diliman to be part of the 15<sup>th</sup> Graciano Lopez Jaena Fellowship grants. In 2018 he was sent to the Netherlands and Germany to attend the International Course for Carmelite Student Friars and get to know Blessed Titus better.



For his part Br. Hallig worked for 25 years with the Manila-based *Philippine Star*. He was editor-in-chief of the nationally-circulated lifestyle magazine *The Fortnightly* and the political *SpyBiz Magazine*. He was also communications consultant to the Bank of the Philippine Islands as well as to hotels, restaurants and public relations agencies. He has an AB Journalism degree (cum laude) from

the University of Santo Tomas and units in MFA in Creative Writing from De La Salle University. (By Perla Choudhury)

## **ISA Holds 2nd Parish-based Talk on Youth and the Bible (June 22, 2019)**

On Saturday, June 22, 2019 the Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) continued its lecture series “Spirituality in the Year of the Youth” at the Sagrada Familia Parish run by the Carmelites, in the Diocese of Novaliches. Fr. Arnel Glodobe, O.Carm. welcomed the youth and adult parishioners to the lectures with the theme *In Love with the WORD OF GOD: Young People and the Scriptures*, noting “Our parish is lucky to have this activity with ISA and with our guest speaker this morning.



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The speaker was Fr. Cris Pine, OFM. He specialized in Bible Studies at the Biblicum in Rome as well as in education and on Christian management. He teaches at his congregation's Our Lady of the Angels Seminary and at Maryhill School of Theology, Adamson University and Saint Vincent School of Theology. The last two are run by the Congregation of the Missions (Vincentian Fathers).



Fr. Pine pointed out the importance of the Bible as literature, saying, "The Bible is *kuwento na may kuwenta* - a story which has worth. The parables mattered during the time of Jesus as a way of reaching people through simple stories. Today, the Bible can apply to our situation as farmers or as residents of Sitio Veterans without land titles." He urged parishioners of Sagrada Familia to look for a pattern in the way the Bible is written.

Fr. Pine presented a framework on how the people who produced the Bible had lived. For this, he discussed the theocratic, monarchical, prophetic, sapiential, accommodational and the apocalyptic models.

According to Fr. Pine, there are 39 books in the Old Testament and seven books which are not accepted by the Jews, having been written in Greek, but are accepted by Catholics. These controversial books are the deuterocanonical books of Tobit, Judith, 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach and Baruch (and additions to the Books of Esther and of Daniel).





“These 46 books can be plotted against the six models we have just discussed,” he explained. As for the New Testament, its 27 books can be classified into three stages, said Fr. Pine.

The first stage is the first 30 years of the life of Jesus. The second is the Apostolic tradition of the forty years after he had ascended to heaven but his words and deeds were still being proclaimed by witnesses, making oral tradition a part of the New Testament.



ISA Executive Director Fr. Rico Ponce, O. Carm. thanked Fr. Glodobe for inviting ISA into the parish. He also thanked the parishioners for coming despite their week-end tasks. (by: Perla Choudhury)

**July 2019**

## **ISA and ANAWIM-MISYON Hold Exposure Trip in Urban Poor Area**

On July 13, 2019, the Institute of Spirituality in Asia together with the *ANAWIM-MISYON sa mga Mahihirap*, an ecumenical group that advocates for and supports the struggle of the poor for their rights and welfare, held an exposure- visit to the urban poor in the BASECO Compound in Tondo, Manila.

The Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) is a founding member of ANAWIN-MISYON.



The primary objective of the event was to unite the participants in understanding the life and pains of the residents of BASECO as they face eviction because of the Build, Build, Build program of the government.



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The event started with a liturgy at the Sto. Nino de Baseco Parish. After the prayers, as co-convenor of Anawim-Misyon, Fr. Rico Ponce, O.Carm. then presented the concept behind it. Kevin Rivera (representing Fr. Dionito Cabillas of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, a co-founder of Anawim) then led discussions on the situation in BASECO Compound.

Emy Feliciano and Rose Malayo narrated stories of their experiences in the compound and of the living condition there. The participants then had an ocular trek with *Kuya* (elder brother) Alex, BASECO community leader.

The exposure ended with a reflection-sharing. Kevin, a participant, pointed out, “...ang ginawang immersion ng Anawim-Misyon sa BASECO ay nagbigay ng misyon sa mahihirap. Bahagi ng pagiging Kristiyano ang pakikinig hindi lamang sa salita ng Diyos bagkus maging sa kalagayan ng mga mahihirap.” (Translation: The immersion gave us a sense of mission for the poor. It conveyed to us that part of being a Christian is listening to the Word of God as well as to the lives of the poor.) (by: Dr. Carmen Alviar)

**August 2019**

## ISA Welcomes Youth, Mentors to 19th Spirituality Forum

**(July 31-August 2, 2019)**



The Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) held its 19<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Forum on July 31-August 2, 2019 at the Mother Anne de Tilly Hall of St. Paul University, Quezon City.

ISA continued the theme of last year’s forum (“Listening to the Youth, Discerning the Spirit: Spiritual Processes of the Youth in an Unknown World”) by focusing on “Love, Power and Grace: Conversations on Spirituality with the Young People” this year.



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Fr. Artemio Jusayan, O.Carm., Prior Provincial of the Philippine Carmelite Province, Blessed Titus Brandsma and Chair of the Board of Trustees of ISA, said, “Rooted in the love of God, young people are blessed not because of gadgets, likers/followers in social media, travel, money and fame but more importantly because of the love of God, which completes and fulfills them. To become aware of this is to be in the love of God. To be in the love of God is to beat with God’s heart, or in the words of the young, to be WOKE – to spring into life out of determination because the Love, Power and Grace of God is REAL.”



A teaser-video presentation followed, as well as a welcome presentation for the 120 participants on Day 1 by Los Cantantes de Manila: the song *Batong Buhay* (Living Stone) and *Umawit ng may Kagalakan* (Sing with Joy).

In his introduction to the 19<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Forum, ISA’s Academic/Research and Publications Director Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm., said that ISA had retained the design

of the Forum last year in a bid “to provide a space for real talk, real conversation.”

First, speakers in the five sessions shared their views, experiences and reflections on their various engagements and contexts. A conversation among the speakers followed, facilitated by a key conversationist who surfaced the spiritual dynamics and processes in their talks and who invited meaningful feedback from the participants through a backchannel (e.g., ISA’s Facebook account or Edmodo).

The speakers then reacted to the questions, clarifications, impressions and insights of the participants, after which the key conversationist made a synthesis of the session and ended it.

Serving as conversationists were Ms. Ma. Angela Ureta, aO.Carm, media strategist and consultant as well as former executive producer at ABS-CBN News and Public Affairs, Fr. Jess Briccio Alesna, O.Carm., Formator, Order of Carmelites Student Friary, and Fr. Tabile.



## Day 1 Sessions

The morning session on July 31 amplified the Forum theme of **“Love, Power and Grace: Opening Conversation with the Young People on Spirituality”** by asking the speakers to share their varied but rich experiences, their relational processes, their initiation into and awareness of the dynamics of their relationships, and their perceptions how love, power and grace work in their lives, affecting and perhaps transforming them.

The first speaker was Via Antonio Ruiz, theater and television/film actress, singer, dancer, commercial model/influencer, program host, educator, Theater Arts major, graduate student in psychology, and servant-leader of Inspire Church Metro together with her husband, a pastor.

The second speaker was Mela Franco Habijan, a transgender woman who headed the lesbians, gays, bi-sexuals and transgender (LGBT) organization of the Jesuit-run Ateneo de Manila University, where she graduated *cum laude*, major in Communication Arts.

The third speaker was Fr. Roseller Atilano, Jr, SJ, head of the Campus Ministry of the high school department of the Ateneo de Manila University. He entered the Society of Jesus in 2006 and was ordained in 2017. He was assigned as Director of Jesuit Music Ministry (JMM) of the Jesuit Communications (JESCOM) from 2015 to 2017 and as Assistant Chaplain of New Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa from 2017 till 2018.



For the afternoon session of Day 1, the theme was **“Loving, Serving and Growing Signposts for the Young People”**, ISA asked young people who have travelled the path of the path of loving, serving and growing to share with potential walkers on their path their insights gained along the way.





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The first speaker was Toto Sorioso, sound engineer at Jesuit Communications (JESCOM), which he described as an apostolate of spreading God's good news through multimedia and his learning site on how to record radio plays, voice-overs, choral performances, theatre audio and other productions. He is also a singer, recording artist, guitar player and

multi-awarded songwriter.

The second speaker was Joan Sheela "Josh" Odan Naliw, lawyer and advocate and defender of indigenous peoples' rights, and the Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) to the Sangguniang Bayan of her town of Mayoyao, Ifugao in Northern Philippines. Naliw is a criminologist, former prison guard and presently a part-time educator at the Ifugao State University College of Criminal Justice and in review centers for the Criminology Licensure Examination. She is also the youth minister of the Our Lady of the Assumption Mission Parish.

The third speaker for the afternoon was Fredyl Hernandez, senior artist-teacher member of the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) on theatre for development. He also lectures at the School of Design and Arts, De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, serves as consultant for Theater Arts of the Department of Education (DepEd) and is finishing his MA degree at the University of the Philippines, his alma mater for his AB Political Science degree.

## Day 2 Sessions



The morning of Day 2 carried the theme *"When God Embraces Us: Stories of Healing and Grace among Young People"*. Speakers were asked to share life-changing experiences on how God's love provides healing and grace to a so-called 'desert experience'.



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The first speaker was Fr. Gilbert Billena, O.Carm, community organizer, pastoral worker and parish priest of San Isidro Labrador in Bagong Silangan, an urban poor area. Together with the Quezon City government and the Philippine National Police, he started the *Balik Loob* recovery program for drug dependents, now the pilot model for the Diocese of Novaliches.



The other speaker was Dr. Randy Misael Sebastian Dellosa, a life coach, psychotherapist, clinical psychologist and psychiatrist. He is also a wellness physician, acupuncturist, quigong instructor, facilitator of mindfulness retreats as well as an ordained Daoist priest and monk. He shared insights about the spirituality of Generation Z, based on his personal and clinical experiences with the youth who see him without their parents and who are often already suicidal.

Both speakers shared the stage with colleagues who served as resource persons. Fr. Billena, with two former drug dependents and Dr. Dellosa, with psychiatrist Ms. Agnes Agbayani.



The speakers in the afternoon of Day 2 discussed the theme ***“With Power Comes Great Responsibility: Reflections on Character, Authority and Accountability”*** and shared how they were walked through this path and how they walk others, especially the young, through it.

The first speaker was Karla Sofia Llamas, an English Literature major at the University of the Philippines-Diliman with a cognate in Political Science focusing on International Relations. She is an active member-delegate of the Model United Nations Organization of the university, Just four months before the 19<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Forum, she represented the Republic of South Sudan at the prestigious New York Model United Nations conference in the UN Environmental Assembly.

She sponsored a resolution on marine plastic litter and microplastics, was recognized for her collaboration with African nations, and received an honorable mention award. Back home, she has led the empowerment of the youth of Sorsogon City through funded training in athletics.

The second speaker, Jude Liao, attended the Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment Post-Synod International Youth Forum in Rome (June 2019). He is the youth minister and coordinator of the



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Diocese of Cubao and is also with the Youth Coordinating Council of the National Capital Region. He teaches at Xavier School, where he works with the Jesuits in their Basic Education Commission and in their Chinese -Filipino Apostolate.



The last speaker of Day 2 was writer, alternative educator, NU 107 and Jam 88.3 radio program host and civic-cultural worker Gang Badoy Capati. She is best known for founding RockEd Philippine, a creative collective with music and arts volunteers for programs and performances outside the classroom guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. She is also an advocate for the Mindanao Peace Games, which was discussed in last year's Spirituality Forum. In 2010 Ms. Capati received both The Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service

(TOWNS) and the Ten Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) awards.

## Day 3 Sessions

Organizers adopted the theme of the Year of the Youth - ***“Young People as Beloved, Empowered and Gifted”*** –for the last session of the 19<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Forum. They invited speakers who would respond to such questions as “What does it mean to be beloved, empowered and gifted?” and “What is the source of these?” and “What these happen to their lives, what happens to the young?”

The speakers included Christian Marx Rivero, the partner of last year's speaker, Mark Conrad Ravanzo, in founding the much-awarded I Am Making a Difference (I Am MAD) youth organization..

A licensed teacher, he works at the Legislative Liaison Office of the Central Office of the Department of Education (DepEd). Its primary mandate is to recommend , coordinate, supervise and execute the legislative initiatives and the priority reforms of the DepEd with the two Houses of Congress. In his talk he presented some findings of a survey on millenials and Generation Z.

Another speaker was Br. Aikee Esmeli, fsc, a member of the Christian Brothers of La Salle for the past 11 years. He has worked with students, teachers and administrators in their schools in Lipa, Batangas; Bagac, Bataan; Green Hills, Metro Manila and Kagoshima, Japan in the fields of spiritual formation, youth accompaniment, educational management and community development. He is currently part of the Formation Staff of the Scholasticate in the House of Studies of De La Salle University.

The last speaker was Charm Mercado, Child Life Assistant Coordinator of Kythe Foundation for children with cancer and other chronic illnesses. As a survivor and as a staff member of Kythe, he inspires children by being their *Kuya* (elder brother). In 2008 at age 13 Mr. Mercado was diagnosed with bone cancer; in the course of treatment, he met Ma. Eliza 'Nina' Sumpaico-Jose, a volunteer of Kythe Foundation and a speaker at the Forum. “



## The Sharing

The 19<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Forum ended with an afternoon with the International Academic Advisory Board (IAAB) of ISA, whose members shared their reflections on the experiences, thoughts and points raised by the speakers, the key conversationists and the participants.



And as always, Fr. Eliseo Mercado, Jr., OMI, Ph.D. updated the participants on Islam, including the significance of *Eid-ul Adha* (Feast or Festival of the Sacrifice) as the Philippines prepared to mark this public holiday 10 days after the 19<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Forum.



In his talk proper Fr. Mercado focused on the morning of Day 2 and its theme “When God Embraces Us: Stories of Healing and Graces among Young People.” He stressed that loneliness, pains, woundedness, poverty, despair and deaths are not dead ends because, as in the parable of the snake and the monk who is called to help and save lives, Fr. Billena had heard the anguish and the cry – and felt the fear - of mothers and widows of victims of the anti-drugs war of the Duterte

administration.

Fr. Mercado ended by sharing a second parable, this time on the young monk and the old monk. His lesson: Wrestling with God is way far more difficult than wrestling with the devil. It is not something to be understood but something that is revealed to us through our experiences. Just as Fr. Mercado had focused on Day 2, another IAAB member, Dr. Anne Marie Bos, O.Carm, focused on Day 1, especially the morning where Ms. Via Ruiz showed how she struggled to become a good daughter and later on, a good mother.

Dr. Bos also praised Ms. Mela Habijan for being strong, intelligent, confident and aware inwardly that she is a woman, and recalled how Fr. Atilano spoke of life and poverty after his father had died early. Based on these three stories, Dr. Bos offered three reflections on the theme of Love Power and Grace and on Blessed Titus Brandsma in the Philippine context.

First, we have to find God in all things and in all of creation, and honor God in every human being.





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Blessed Titus found God in all the colors of the rainbow.

Second, as Ms. Habijan had said, we will not always get what we want. She shared her experience of escaping responsibility and then coming back to reality. Titus Brandsma said that nothing is ever more beautiful than reality and asked us not to live in an elusive world but instead to look at reality and see God in it.

Third, on power: firstly, Titus Brandsma wrote that power is an illusion because things may seem strong but are actually weak. Therefore, we must show power in our own goodness.

In his sharing entitled *La Miracles de la Racontre*. (The Miracles of the Encounter) Dr. Alfredo Co endorsed the structure of the 19<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Forum in terms of the aims of each session but left it to his co-IAAB members to analyze their contents.



A fourth IAAB member, Fr. Daniel Franklin Pilario, CM, offered his insights in the form of slides entitled **Keywords:** rebellion and exploration; pains and questions; love and commitment. From the stories of the speakers he drew stories illustrating these words, and then flashed quotations on the youth in Pope Francis' *Christus Vivit*.

The last IAAB member, Sr. Ma. Anicia Co, RVM, shared her thoughts on the 19<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Forum through the acronyms ICA (Inspiration, Creative and Authentic) and ACI (Affirmation, Challenges and Invitations). (by: *Perla Aragon-Choudhury*)

## **Book Launching: Lecture Series XVIII (August 1, 2019)**

ISA launched a newly published book, Lecture Series XVIII on the second day of the 19<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Forum. ISA invited Fr. Yohanis Masneno, SVD, one of the authors of papers presented at the 18<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Forum on August 1-3, 2018, to speak for his sixteen co-authors of *Conversations 1.0: Listening to the Youth, Discerning the Spirit*. Fr. Masneno was joined by Anne-Marie Bos, O.Carm. in unveiling the book launched.



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The authors of the book are **Mark Conrad Ravanzo** (co-founder/chief executive volunteer of I am MAD (Making a Difference)), **Dingdong Dantes** (a Filipino actor, commercial model and the founding chairman of the Yes Pinoy Foundation ), **Fr. Art Borja, SJ** (clinical psychologist, spiritual director and chaplain of Xavier School, Greenhills), **Maria Caterina Cristina Lopa** (associate lawyer, Siguion Reyna, Montecillo and Ongsiako Law Office and Managing Director of Girls Got Game Philippines),

**Sabrina Ongkiko** (science teacher/teacher-librarian of Culiati Elementary School, Quezon City), **Noli Ayo** (athletic director of Ateneo de Davao University and Founder of Mindanao Peace Games), **Rene “Revo” Saguisag, Jr.** (guest youth representative commissioner of University Athletics Association of the Philippines and Basketball/Volleyball Coach of Assumption College, High School Department), **Christian Esguerra** (journalist and news anchor, ABS-CBN Corp. and assistant professor of the University of Sto. Tomas), **Ma. Angela Ureta, aO.Carm.** (communication and strategic planning consultant and former executive producer of ABS-CBN News and Current Affairs), **Maria Regina Tjiumena** (deputy coordinator, National Youth Catholic Charismatic Renewal Ministry, Shekinah Jakarta, Indonesia), **Fr. Yohanis Masneno, SVD** (executive secretary of Jacob’s Well Spiritual Center and spiritual director of Transformative Sumur Yakub Indo-Leste), **Bonnie Williams** (intern from Freeman Foundation and junior student of Philosophy and Religion, from Furman University) and the Members of the IAAB. (By *Perla Choudhury*)

## The Annual International Academic Advisory Board (IAAB) Meeting (August 3, 2019)

The International Academic Advisory Board (IAAB) annual meeting was held last August 3, 2019 in the morning, a day after the 18<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Forum. The IAAB is composed of religious and lay academicians. The members are: Rev. Fr. Eliseo “Jun” Mercado Jr., O.M.I., Ph.D., Rev. Fr. Franklin Daniel Pilario, CM, Ph.D., Sr. Ma. Anicia Co, RVM, Ph.D., Sr. Anne-Marie Bos, O.Carm., Ph.D. and Prof. Dr. Alfredo Co.





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## ISA joins Anawim Misyon in Partnership with Tahanan ng Pag-asa to Give Hope through Medical-Mission (August 17, 2019)

Together with the ecumenical group *Anawim Misyon para sa Mga Mahihirap*, the Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) helped in organizing a medical and dental mission in partnership with Tahanan ng Pag-asa on August 17, 2019 at Golezium Valley 8, Paranaque City.



The mission was supported by volunteer doctors, nurses, dentists and staff members of the Redemptorists at Baclaran Shrine, Midpoint Medical Clinic, Our Lady of Angels Seminary and Rotary Community Corps, Dental Team.

This activity served a total of 170 indigents, 152 for medical consultation and 18 for dental check-ups and tooth extraction.

The prescribed medicines were provided free, since the residents could not afford to buy them. They expressed thanks for the presence of doctors and dentists who, they said, gave them hope for their physical condition.

Anawim Misyon advocates for and supports the struggle of the poor for their rights and welfare. (by: *Dr. Carmen Alviar*)





**September 2019**

## **ISA Pioneers in Theater-for-the-Scripture Workshop at Carmelite Parish (September 28, 2019)**



On Saturday, September 28, 2019 the Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) hosted a lecture-workshop on “Creative Communication of the Word of God” at the Sagrada Familia Parish Church in Quezon City.

Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm., ISA Director for Academics/Research and Publications, welcomed the 50 participants ranging from the youth group to the officers and members of mandated organizations and ministries. He pointed out, “We know that one of the problems of the youth today is depression, and we also know that this is a field d where the Scripture can help. We believe it is important to study the Bible so that we can convey it creatively and help parishioners to understand it.”



ISA invited Mr. Fredyl Hernandez, theater artist-educator, cultural worker and facilitator for community and youth groups, to be the speaker-resource person-module writer at the activity. Mr. Hernandez is a senior artist-teacher of the Philippine Educational Theater Association

(PETA), a recipient of the Titus Brandsma Media Freedom Award of the Philippine Carmelite Province of Blessed Titus Brandsma.





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Mr. Hernandez recalled that this was his third time to speak at ISA activities. The first was at the Mt. Carmel College in Agusan del Sur during the presidency of Fr. Tabile there, and the second was at the 19<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Forum held earlier this year in August with “Love, Power and Grace: Conversations on spirituality with the young people” as theme.

Outside of ISA, his most recent engagement was the Community Youth Theater component of the *Rehearsing Democracy and Resiliency Human Rights Education and Advocacy Using the Arts* partnership of PETA with the Diocese of Kalookan.



Drawing on the Theater for Development Program of PETA for community and youth groups around the Philippines, Mr. Hernandez worked with the participants at Sagrada Familia Parish to conceptualize how to act out three pre-selected materials in his module for the session: The Lord’s Prayer, the Gospel the next day (Lazarus and the Rich Man) and a hymn praising the Creator with the following chorus:

*Itaas na ang mga mata  
Sa Panginoong lumikha  
Ng mga lupa at tala,  
Ng gabi at ng araw.  
Itaas na sa kanya  
Mga himig at kanta  
Tulat’s damdamin  
Lahat ay ialay sa kanya.*





Fr. Glodobe and ISA Administrative Officer Sr. Corazon Untal, Carm.O.L. then presented Mr. Hernandez a plaque of appreciation and a number of ISA publications, including *Song of the Babaylan: Living Voices, Medicines, Spiritualities of Philippine Ritualist-Oralist Healers* by Dr. Grace Nono, his co-graduate from the Philippine High School for the Arts.

The session was moderated by Dr. Carmen Alviar, retired professor from the University of Santo Tomas and ISA volunteer for external linkages. (by: Perla Choudhury)

**October 2019**

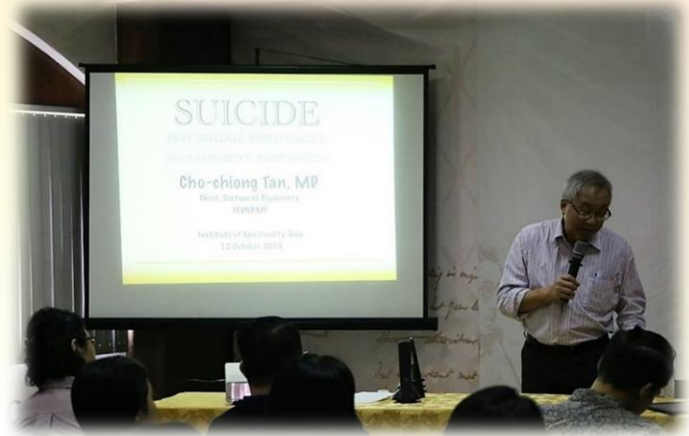
## **ISA Marks World Day for Mental Health with Talk on Suicide (October 12, 2019)**

The Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) commemorated World Day for Mental Health (October 10) with a public lecture on “Suicide, Psychology, Spirituality, Management and Prevention” on October 12, 2019.

ISA hosted more than 70 participants at the all-day talk of Dr. Tan Cho-Chiong held at the Multi-Purpose Hall of the Teresa of Avila Building, New Manila, Quezon City.

Dr. Tan is an associate professor at the Institute of Medicine, Far Eastern University, Dr. Nicanor Reyes Medical Foundation, Manila. He also heads the Psychiatry Section of the university hospital’s Department of Medicine.

Dr. Tan was a Fellow in epileptology and electroencephalography at the Institute of Epilepsy in Japan, and at the Institute of Neurology, London, in neurology. A Buddhist, he graciously distributed to the participants a number of meditation books as well as “Music of Buddhism” CD.



Suicide could be the result of mental health problems such as depression, worldwide the most common mental health problem, which affected some 300 million, people in 2015. In his talk at ISA, Dr. Tan flashed pictures of celebrities who had taken their lives supposedly because of depression, including international chef Anthony Bourdain and New York-based fashion designer Kate Spade.



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In the Philippines the most recent celebrity to die by suicide appears to be Razorback drummer Brian Veloso on January 16, 2019. His death drew the following official statement from the Department of Health:

*“Depression is a serious health condition. In the Philippines, 3.3 million Filipinos suffer from depressive disorders with suicide rates in 2.5 males and 1.7 females per 100,000. We need to start talking about depression to end the stigma surrounding mental health because left unattended, it can lead to suicide. The WHO reported that 800, 000 persons die every year due to suicide. It is the second leading cause of death in 15 to 24 years old. To those in need of help, we have a 24-hour toll-free suicide prevention hotline. You can call (02) 804-4673 and 0917 -5584-673 or send SMS.to 2919 for Globe and TM subscribers.”*



Dr. Tan also cited a number of misconceptions such as Muslims, homosexuals and HIV-positive individuals being prone or predisposed to suicide. He lamented how the media can sometimes sensationalize or play up these up “when we still lack solid data on these matters.”

He also discussed risk factors, including family history (genetics) of mental health issues and substance abuse; violence; earlier attempts to commit suicide; feelings of hopelessness; seclusion or loneliness; lack of family or group support; conflict with the law; sleep deprivation; being prone to reckless behavior; and particularly for children, parental separation as well as disciplinary, social and school problems.



He added that good counseling could have also helped uncover related psychological problems. A worldwide phenomenon, suicide is also a public health concern, said Dr. Tan. On the part of the government, Congress passed the Mental Health Act in June 2018 with provisions for psychiatric and neurologic services and for integrated assistance in regional, provincial and other levels of hospitals.



Other provisions aim to improve mental health care facilities and to promote mental health education in schools and workplaces. Creative endeavors like painting, music, drama and dance, it has been established, can soothe and nourish the soul. So can groups with innovative methods like Pinoy laughing yoga, and the families themselves.

Aside from medical staff, families can also offer support and be alert to what Dr. Tan called suicidal ideation where a depressed kin can say or express on Facebook 'I wish I were dead!' or express such feelings on Facebook and inflict self-injury. Because of peer influence, sometimes a student can imitate classmates who hurt themselves in desperation over their own numbness. Here, Dr. Tan introduced another term: anhedonia, the inability to feel pleasure (Greek for *an*, "without" and *hedon*, "pleasure").

Dr. Tan reiterated how depression becomes a problem especially when it affects the youth, entails expenses and causes economic losses. For parents who will separate, he advocates good psychological preparation and counseling of their children.



In this connection, he said that marriage may hinder suicide because spouses tend to support each other during problems. In addition, with its stand against taking one's life, religion serves to deter suicide.

Dr. Tan also connected spirituality with a healthy lifestyle, whose elements include diet, exercise, support from the family and friends, relaxation, and professional help when needed. He discussed the need for a diet, which is sensible, locally-based and age-appropriate. He personally does not see the gym as a necessity, favoring the neighborhood park or its basketball court for jogging, staying up to date with friends "and also making new ones."

Crediting physical fitness as the foundation of a healthy lifestyle, Dr. Tan called mental fitness a part of protecting and safeguarding one's very own well-being. (by: Perla Choudhury)



## ISA Holds Public Lecture on Spirituality as Source of Empowerment (October 26, 2019)

On October 26, 2019 the Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) held a public lecture on how spirituality empowers educators and formators.

Fr. Rico Ponce, O.Carm., ISA's Executive Director, welcomed everyone to the venue, the Multi-purpose Hall at the Teresa of Avila Bldg, New Manila, Quezon City. Facilitator for the afternoon activity was Carmen R. Alviar, Ph.D., a teacher, librarian and researcher.

She holds a Master of Arts degree, major in Religious Education, from De La Salle University, Manila and a Doctor of Philosophy degree, major in Educational Management, from the University of Santo Tomas where she was associate professor and researcher until her retirement



In ISA's invitation to her talk, the resource person pointed out that a growing number of scholars see spirituality as a critical component in the effective performance of formators and educators. And in her lecture, Dr. Alviar helped the teachers, parents and facilitator-educators who came together with a spirituality formator and a medical

doctor to integrate spirituality in their work. She also held two workshops. The first encouraged the participants to reflect on their strength as creations of God. She said, "These strengths are necessary to overcome the struggles which everyone encounters in living in this world."

Another workshop invited the participants to share their experiences and to describe the world as they see it. The sharing took different creative forms such as dance, song and drama. The participants showed that today's world is characterized by distorted moral values, fake news, abuse of power, greed, destruction of families, love for luxuries and lastly, lack of respect for elders.



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“Your observations,” Dr. Alviar told the participants, “were stated a long time ago by the Greek philosopher Socrates in describing the world during his time. “She added, “We can derive the empowerment to overcome this situation only from our family members, true friends and colleagues, and most of all, from our relationship with God – in other words, from our spirituality.”

The public lecture closed with all participants receiving a gift from the Holy Spirit. It will be recalled from Catholic Catechism that there are seven such gifts: namely, wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.



One participant testified that his gift was a very urgent need – *counsel*. He said that he had to make a good decision on what he was undergoing at the very moment.

Another participant, the newly elected formator, was overwhelmed with the gift of *wisdom* since she believes that her new task will require the grace of God.

The ISA Administrative Officer Sr. Corazon Untal, Carm.O.L. offered Dr. Alviar a certificate and a token of appreciation. (by: Sr. Corazon Untal, Carm.O.L.)





**November 2019**

## **ISA Attends Management and Evaluation for Learning in Bangkok (November 26-29, 2019)**

As executive director of the Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA), Fr. Rico Ponce, O.Carm. participated in the seminar-workshop on “Management and Evaluation for Learning” held in Bangkok, Thailand last November 26-29, 2019.

It was a seminar-workshop facilitated in by a team of facilitators from MDF Training and Consultancy, who are experts in terms of managements and evaluations. Participants learned amongst others important topics like intervention logic, theory of changes, progress markers and other topics timely and relevant to the systematization of their institutions.

Attendees came from members of the Inter-Institute Collaboration (IIC). Of the 29 participants, 11 came from IIC and Porticus-Asia. Other participants were representatives of government organizations, non-government organizations and faith-based institutions coming from India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong, USA and the Philippines.





December 2019

## ISA joins Anawim Mission in Hosting Conversation with Displaced Indigenous People (December 6, 2019)

On the week opening the Year of *Interreligious Dialogue, Indigenous Peoples and Ecumenism* on Sunday, December 1, 2019, the Institute for Spirituality in Asia (ISA) co-hosted with Anawim Mission in hosting an interfaith meeting with members of cultural tribes from north to south of the Philippines.

As member of Anawim Mission, ISA helped in holding “Conversations with Indigenous Peoples” on Friday, December 6, 2019 at the Teresa de Avila Building, New Manila, Quezon City. The next day ISA joined the



open-air The World’s Big Sleep Out (WBSO), described as the biggest fundraising campaign in a generation to fight global homelessness.

ISA Executive Director Fr. Rico Ponce, O.Carm. welcomed speakers from the Manobo, Bilaan, Dumagat and Bontoc-Mountain Province tribes as well as members and friends of Anawim who work with indigenous peoples (IPs). He took note of the interfaith prayer in the form of an original composition sang by Pangkat Sining, two Redemptorist fathers who work with the Dumagats in Rizal Province.

### The Stories and life situation



Prof. Tito Loyola, co-moderator with Dr. Carmen Alviar and also with Anawim Mission, introduced the first speaker, Prof. Marcela Octaviano from the Notre Dame de Marbel University. She has an M.A. in Development Studies degree from the University of East Anglia, UK and is majoring in Applied Cosmic Anthropology doctoral program at the Asian Social Institute, Manila.





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At the forum, Prof. Octaviano chose to share the importance of ancestral domain: “If you take away our land, we indigenous peoples lose our culture and our biodiversity – our plants, harvests, nests and communion with nature. We are thinking not just of our world but also of our children, our seas and the stones. This is the source of our unity.” He is the executive director of GeoChris Foundation, Inc. and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Partners for First Peoples Foundation. She started her career at the Santa Cruz Mission Cultural Foundation in Zamboanga and was a community organizer in Palawan, Abra and South Cotabato. Born in South Cotabato, she is a Blaan-Tiboli.

The second speaker was from Northern Philippines (Bontoc) and her parents are from the Mountain Province which forms part of the Cordillera Administrative Region. Ms. Maureen Loste became an advocate after being introduced by the late Archbishop Francisco Claver, SJ to the Episcopal Commission on Tribal Filipinos (ECTF), Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines. She showed pictures, maps



and charts to concretize the stories of militarization, bombings of schools, evacuation of pupils to Metro Manila, red tagging of human rights defenders by state security forces, a return to martial law, economic zones and military reservations, and the effects of the government’s Build, Build, Build policy.

Ecology will suffer, and that was also the theme of the song that closed this part of the conversation: No trespassing sa Dumagat/*Hindi sa amin pero kami ang nagtanim* (We don’t own what we had planted).”



The next speakers were Dumagat themselves: Danny (no last name given) and Tata Rosendo, an elder of the tribe driven (napadpad) from their homes in Rizal and other parts of Southern Luzon to Bulacan Province in Central Luzon.

Gaspar Afable is an ex-seminarian who has stayed for three years with the Dumagats on the provinces of Rizal and Quezon in the Protect the Sierra Madre Mountain Movement.



# Institute of Spirituality in Asia



What else is the Church response to landlessness, land grabbing and firearms?

At the conversation, Liza Adamos-Corter of the United Methodist Church reported that UMC Philippines is joining the fight to protect (*huwag galawin*) Ka Angie, an urban poor leader in her eighties who is threatened with arrest.

On the part of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC), Pastor Butch Ongkiko reported on a project in social enterprise for Mindanao coffee just like the well-known Kalinga coffee of the Cordilleras.

For the Iglesia Independiente Filipina (IFI), Christy Mae Quimno spoke of a new initiative in the Year of Witness and Service for Human Dignity for the *aba, api* (lowly and oppressed), indigenous peoples, and the LGBT sector (lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders sector).  
(By Perla Choudhury)



## **ISA in Partnership with Sagrada Familia Parish Holds Last Event in 2019 on Scripture and the Youth for 2019: “Bibliodrama” (December 14, 2019)**

On December 14, 2019 on the feast of St. John of the Cross, the Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) held the last seminar in the series “In Love with the Word of God: Young People and the Scripture”.

ISA held the series as its first outreach with the Sagrada Familia Parish in Sitio Veterans, Bagong Silang, Quezon City which was entrusted to the Order of Carmelites-Pilipinas by Bishop Emeritus Antonio Tobias of the Diocese of Novaliches.





ISA External Affairs volunteer Dr. Carmen Alviar welcomed everyone and introduced the speaker, ISA Director for Academics/Research and Publications Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm.

## *The Session*



Fr. Tabile conducted a biblio-drama as a way of reaching out to the youth primarily, but also including other ministries and mandated organizations in the parish. He said, “Biblio-drama can capture the attention of the youth and orient them on Scripture. It can also strengthen their sense of religiosity and spirituality which can help ground them against thoughts of committing suicide, now increasing among them.” It gives the young the tradition of

reading as a new way of evangelization. The context of a Gospel reading is studied, acted out and then processed.

Fr. Tabile was building on the first two sessions of the series – orientations on Scripture by Fr. Chris Pine, OFM – and on the third one on interpreting the Lord’s Prayer, Lazarus and the Rich Man and lastly, a hymn of praise via song and dance ending in a tableau, as led by stage artist-development advocate Fredyl Hernandez.

This time, Fr. Tabile offered four Gospel readings chosen together with Br. John Jeemp Sabugero, O.Carm., student friar assigned to San Isidro Labrador Parishes under the custody of O.Carm.-Pilipinas.



Matthew 2:1-12 is about the Magi seeing and following a star to honor Baby Jesus and asking King Herod for directions.

Mark 2:13-17 is about Jesus preaching to the crowd, meeting Levi, son of Alphaeus and a tax collector and asking him, “Follow me”. When Jesus dined with him together with sinners, he was castigated by the Pharisees but he pointed out, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners.”



Luke 2:18-20 is about the shepherds who visited the Baby Jesus after being told by an angel of his birth. They spread the word “and all were amazed but Mary treasured up these things and pondered them in her heart.”

John 1: 48-50 is about Levi asking Jesus, how do you know me?” and Jesus answering, “I saw you under the fig tree.”

## *The Results*

ISA Officer-in-Charge of Communication Sheba Martinez, also a professor of Theology at Miriam College, helped group the 58 participants according to the readings. But finding themselves too many per group, the participants decided to break into two per reading.



The groups prepared their tableaux for half an hour of casting, improvising costumes, borrowing a silver-sequined star from the side altar, finding props for Herod’s crown and bough for the fig tree, and even learning its local name (*igos*) while searching from it in the church grounds. One by one they presented their output at the altar, and faced questions from Fr. Tabile.

He asked them, “How did you choose your characters? How did you feel when you were making your character move (*gumagalaw*)? What were you thinking of at that time? If you had entered into your character, you can answer these.”

Spatial relationships, it surfaced, also matter. When Fr. Tabile asked the woman who played Mary how she had felt being next to King Herod on his throne (as her group had decided to play on one stage the scenes of his court and of the stable), she said: “I was afraid of him and so, I really drew Baby Jesus to me.”

Fr. Tabile also asked, “What is your new insight on the text? Your new knowledge (*pagkakilala*) on the characters? Experiencing your character is important. Dramatization can help us explore and see what is needed within a situation as well as in life itself.” During the processing, one of the participants playing a Pharisee in Mark 2: 13-17 said that he had felt sad that there are really people who are judgmental (*mapanghugas*).





But another participant said, “I may be sinful but we are lucky that God loves us.”

Biblio-drama, asserted Fr. Tabile, is a very effective way to read the text. It can also have a direct effect on actors, as when a participant playing the role of a Magi in Matthew 2:1-12 said with tears in his eyes, “I have long been wanting to approach the Lord. I want to change my life (*Matagal na akong hindi lumalapit sa Diyos. Gusto kong magbagong-buhay*).”

Overall, the participants were happy that they had been assigned the roles they played. Blending stage and reality, a woman who had played Mary smiled and chirped, “I am happy I had given birth to Jesus”.

### *The Closing*



Fr. Tabile ended the morning with words of praise. “We tried to relate the Scripture to our lives by dramatizing it. We entered the text and answered questions on how we did it. I am happy that we have reached the Scripture together.” He added words of caution: “Remember, we will become engaged with the text only when we follow-up with a good processing. This is something we are grateful for from the Lord. If you want to appreciate the

Scripture even more, we at ISA can continue to help.”

In return, Bro. Ed Rodriguez, head of a parish ministry offered tokens to Fr. Tabile and said, “Thanks for the reach-out! Please do not tire of us, ISA. *Huwag kayong madadala, ha?*” (By Perla Choudhury)





# Institute of Spirituality in Asia

## Christmas Fellowship, (December 16, 2019)

The Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) ended the year with a Christmas fellowship. On December 16, 2019 at 9:00 o'clock in the morning, the ISA staff held its monthly meeting followed by a Eucharistic Mass. The executive director Fr. Rico Ponce, O.Carm. presided over the mass and he was concelebrated by Fr. Perfecto Adeva, O.Carm. the administration and finance director, who gave the homily.



Before the Mass ended, Fr. Ponce thanked everyone for all the hard work and for the success of all the activities of the institute in 2019. He wished everyone a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year.

Everyone shared the food prepared by Susan Quilang, ISA maintenance staff, and joined the short program which followed. Everyone enjoyed during the fellowship. *(By Joy Kialkial)*





## 2020 ISA List of Activities

### **January 16, 2020 (1:30-4:30 P.M.): (Session 1 on Spiritual Reading)**

Introduction to Spiritual Reading and the Interior Castle  
The First Mansion  
Description of the Castle  
The Human Soul

**Facilitators:** Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm. and Dr. Marissa Alcantara, aO.Carm.

**Venue:** ISA Conference Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Flr. Teresa of Avila Bldg., New Mla., Q.C.

### **February 8, 2020 (1:30 – 4:30 P.M.): LESSONS FROM DAMIETTA**

Towards a Spirituality of Inter-religious Dialogue and Peace

**Speaker:** Jesus Matias

**Venue:** ISA Multi-Purpose Hall, 4<sup>th</sup> Flr. Teresa of Avila Bldg., New Mla., Q.C.

### **February 20, 2020 (1:30-4:30 P.M.): (Session 2 on Spiritual Reading)**

The Second Mansion  
War

**Facilitators:** Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm. and Dr. Marissa Alcantara, aO.Carm.

**Venue:** ISA Conference Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Flr. Teresa of Avila Bldg., New Mla., Q.C.

### **March 20, 2020 (1:30-4:30 P.M.): (Session 3 on Spiritual Reading)**

The Third Mansion  
The Fear of God  
Aridity of Prayer

**Facilitators:** Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm. and Dr. Marissa Alcantara, aO.Carm.

**Venue:** ISA Conference Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Flr. Teresa of Avila Bldg., New Mla., Q.C.

### **April 17, 2020 (1:30-4:30 P.M.): (Session 4 on Spiritual Reading)**

The Fourth Mansion  
The Sweetness in Prayer  
Divine Consolations  
Prayer of Quiet

**Facilitators:** Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm. and Dr. Marissa Alcantara, aO.Carm.

**Venue:** ISA Conference Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Flr. Teresa of Avila Bldg., New Mla., Q.C.

### **April 26-30, 2020 (Whole Day): Spirituality Week/Summer Course 2019**

**Theme:** Carmelite Spirituality

### **May 15, 2020 (1:30-4:30 P.M.): (Session 5 on Spiritual Reading)**

The Fifth Mansion  
Prayer of Union  
Effects of Union  
Cause of Union

Spiritual Espousals



# Institute of Spirituality in Asia

**Facilitators:** Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm. and Dr. Marissa Alcantara, aO.Carm.

**Venue:** ISA Conference Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Flr. Teresa of Avila Bldg., New Mla., Q.C.

**June 19, 2020 (1:30-4:30 P.M.): (Session 6 on Spiritual Reading)**

The Sixth Mansion

Preparations for Spiritual Marriage

The Wound of Love

**Facilitators:** Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm. and Dr. Marissa Alcantara, aO.Carm.

**Venue:** ISA Conference Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Flr. Teresa of Avila Bldg., New Mla., Q.C.

**July 17, 2020 (1:30-4:30 P.M.): (Session 7 on Spiritual Reading)**

The Sixth Mansion

Locutions

Raptures

The Flight of the Spirit

Spiritual Jubilation

**Facilitators:** Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm. and Dr. Marissa Alcantara, aO.Carm.

**Venue:** ISA Conference Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Flr. Teresa of Avila Bldg., New Mla., Q.C.

**July 29-31, 2020 (1:30-4:30 P.M.): 20<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Forum**

“Love Seeking Faith: 500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines”

**Speakers:** Experts in Spirituality

**Venue:** St. Paul University Quezon City

**August 21, 2020 (1:30-4:30 P.M.): (Session 8 on Spiritual Reading)**

The Sixth Mansion

The Humanity of our Lord

Intellectual Visions

Imaginary Visions

The Dart of Love

**Facilitators:** Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm. and Dr. Marissa Alcantara, aO.Carm.

**Venue:** ISA Conference Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Flr. Teresa of Avila Bldg., New Mla., Q.C.

**September 18, 2020 (1:30-4:30 P.M.): (Session 9 on Spiritual Reading)**

The Seventh Mansion

God’s Presence Chamber

Spiritual Marriage

Its Effect

Martha and Mary

**Facilitators:** Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm. and Dr. Marissa Alcantara, aO.Carm.

**Venue:** ISA Conference Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Flr. Teresa of Avila Bldg., New Mla., Q.C.

**October 16, 2020 (1:30-4:30 P.M.): (Session 10 on Spiritual Reading)**

Synthesis of Reading and Reflections

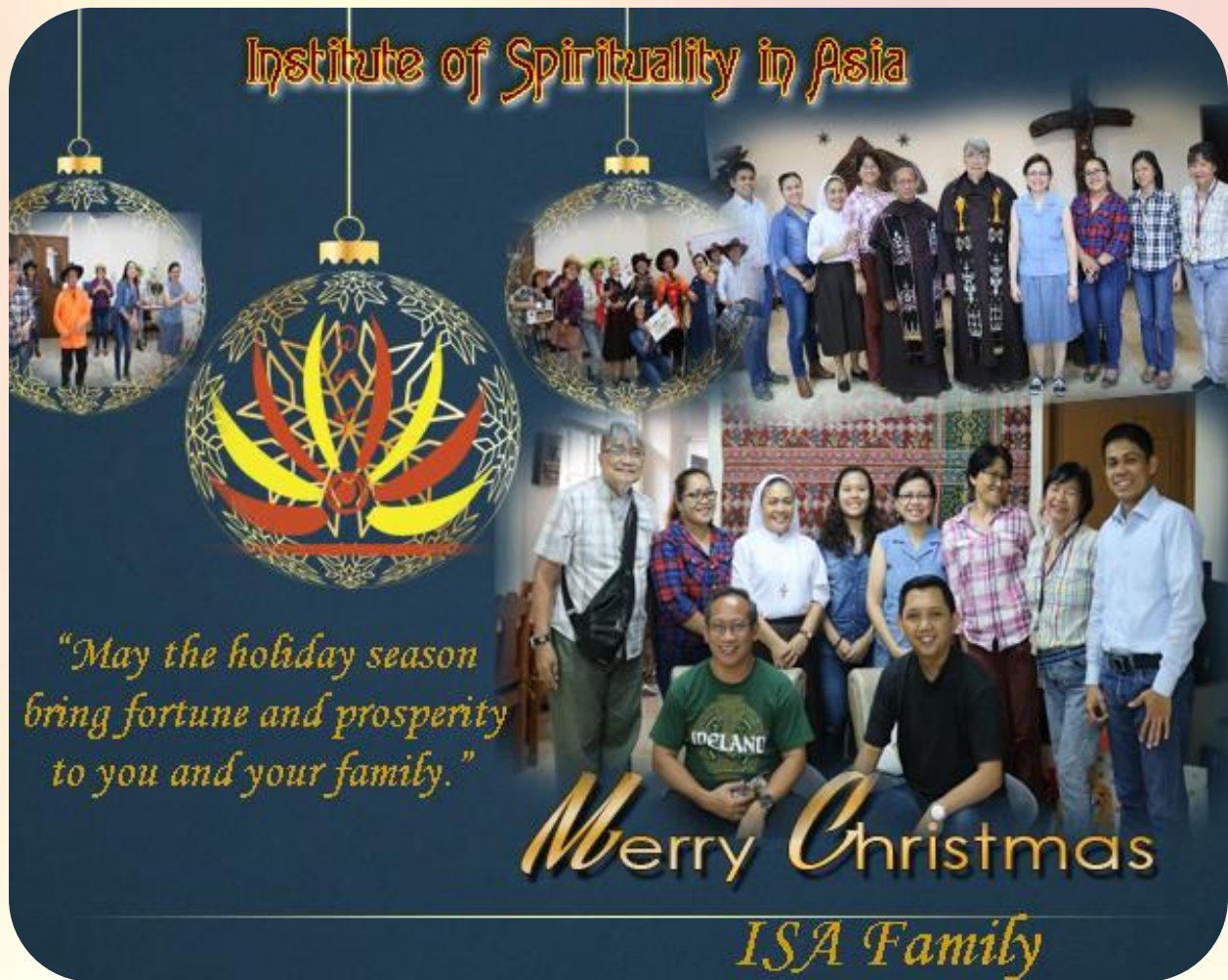
**Facilitators:** Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm. and Dr. Marissa Alcantara, aO.Carm.

**Venue:** ISA Conference Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Flr. Teresa of Avila Bldg., New Mla., Q.C.





# *Institute of Spirituality in Asia*



*"May the holiday season  
bring fortune and prosperity  
to you and your family."*

*Merry Christmas*

*ISA Family*