



# BULLETIN 2020

(An Annual Report on ISA Programs and Activities)

3<sup>rd</sup> Flr., Teresa of Avila Bldg., #28 Acacia St., Brgy. Mariana, New Manila, 1112 Quezon City

Contact Nos.: (632) 7989-1016/0917-5621016; Email Add.: [spirit@isa.org.ph](mailto:spirit@isa.org.ph);

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

Greetings of Peace from the Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA)!

We had survived the year 2020. We had kept ourselves safe so we can continue serving you and our friends worldwide. The year 2020 may not be that satisfactory but it has given



us lessons and realizations about the fundamentals in life and what are the most important values and things that humanity should learn.

This Yearend Bulletin keeps us connected with our partners, students, alumni, benefactors, collaborators, friends and members of the ISA Family both locally and internationally. Our Bulletin features the main programs and activities of ISA' e.g. public lectures thru webinars, 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.

Though, some major activities were not conducted because of the quarantine and lockdown enacted by the government on not to hold public gatherings, ISA committedly acceded to the government's policies and explored other forms and platforms.

All the more, we remain steadfast to advance the vision and mission of ISA as a research and academic institute and as a publisher. We will strive to live by this vision as we pursue programs guided by these distinct characteristics of our institute.

We are very much grateful to the inspiring support of the ISA Board of Trustees, the ISA International Academic Advisory Board (IAAB), the Prior Provincial and Council (PPC) of the Order of Carmelites, the ISA co-administrators and staff. Also, our sincerest thanks to all our generous local and international partners, benefactors, friends and supporters whom we can always rely on for support and assistance. Likewise, the Lord has granted us good people with deep spiritual insights and wisdom that enriched ISA's vision and directions all these years. Thank you to all members of the ISA Family.

Looking forward to 2021 with courage, hope and enthusiasm. We are confident that we are in the right path in our pursuit for a meaningful and relevant Spirituality responsive to the needs of our times. We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Holy and Healthier New Year. May God bless us all!

Sincerely yours,

**Rev. Fr. Christian B. Buenafe, O. Carm.**

## Public Lectures and Seminar-Workshops

**“Theory of Change”**  
*(Face-to-Face: January 13, 2020)*



A workshop for the ISA staff on “**Theory of Change**” facilitated by Fr. Rico Ponce, O.Carm. was held last January 13, 2020 (whole day). The purpose of the workshop was to create ISA’s own theory of change as a requirement for the Inter-Institute Collaboration (IIC). The IIC is an organization composed of institutes funded by Porticus.

The ISA staff crafted the Intervention/Logical, Management and Evaluation Framework of the Institute of Spirituality in Asia at ISA Conference Room.



**“Lessons from Damietta: Towards a Spirituality of Inter-religious Dialogue and Peace”**  
*(Face-to-Face: February 8, 2020)*



This year's first public lecture of the Institute of Spirituality in Asia was on February 8, 2020 on **“Lessons from Damietta: Towards a Spirituality of Inter-religious Dialogue and Peace”** with **Bro. Jess Matias** as speaker. The lecture was held at ISA Multi-purpose Hall, New Manila, Quezon City. More than forty (40) participants attended the lecture.

Bro. Matias is a professed brother of the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO), and is a member of the St. Pio Fraternity at St. Francis Parish in Mandaluyong City.



## **“Spirituality of Creation”** *(Webinar: September 12, 2020)*



Due to the suspension of all face-to-face gatherings, all succeeding public lectures of the Institute of Spirituality in Asia were offered using online platform Zoom as part of efforts to deal with the fast-spreading coronavirus.

The first webinar was a **Prayer-Reflection on “Creation Spirituality”** in celebration for the Season of Creation held last September 12, 2020 with **Ms. Mylene de la Cruz-Saluta** as resource speaker. Currently, Ms. Saluta is the Executive Director of Fellowship for the Care of Creation Association Inc. (FCCAI). Formerly, she was National Coordinator of the Franciscan Movement for Justice and Peace, National Coordinator of the Philippine Jubilee 2000, National Project Coordinator for Foodfirst Information Action Network (FIAN), and Secretary General for *Pambansang Koalisyon ng mga Kababaihan sa Kanayunan* (PKKK).

More than 30 participants attended in this webinar.



**“Senior Citizens are Not Retiring. They are Refiring.”**  
(Webinar: October 2, 2020)

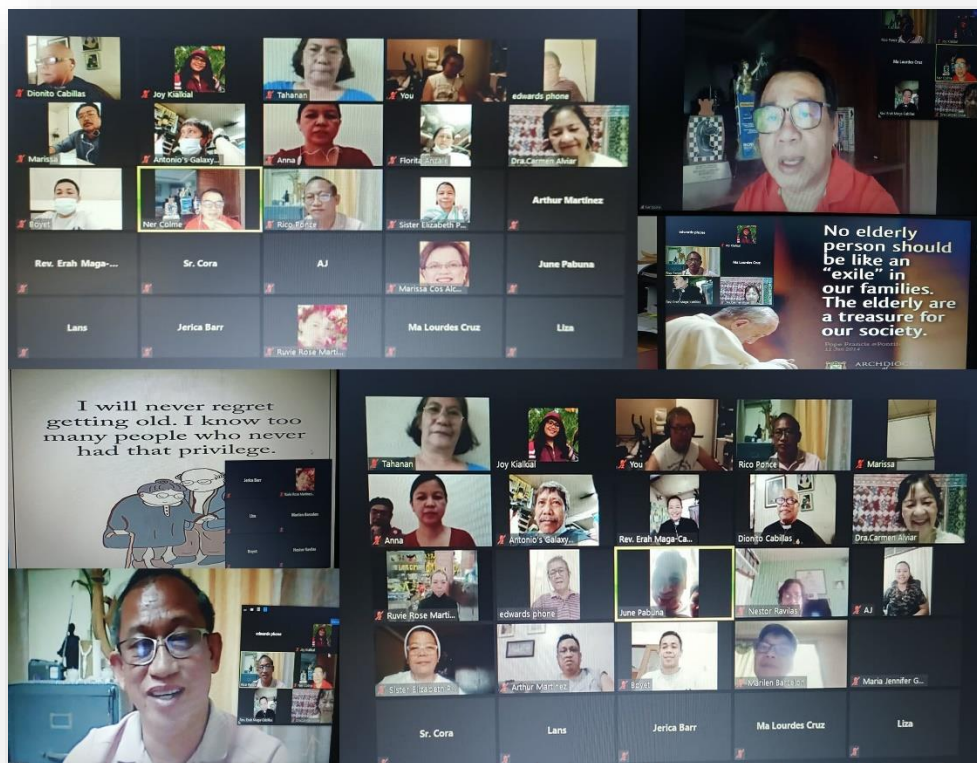


On October 2, 2020, ISA in partnership with Anawim Mission and *Tahanan ng Pag-asa, Inc.* organized a public lecture through webinar via zoom on “**Senior Citizens are Not Retiring. They are Refiring.**” Invited speakers were **Prof. Ed Deveza**, BOT Chair of *Tahanan ng Pag-asa* and **Atty. Neri Colmenares** of *Bayan Muna*.

Prof. Deveza presented the real situations of the elderly in the Philippines, in the community, in the family and how they survived. He shared some existing laws and the rights of the elderly. He also introduced the programs of *Tahanan ng Pag-asa* for the elderly.

Atty. Colmenares presented the *Bayan Muna* Bills such as: Social Pension to all elderly, 20% discount on all nutritional food, drinks and supplements, pension to all Brgy. Officials, increased penalties on delinquent employers, and second tranche of SSS pension increase.

Fr. Rico Ponce, O.Carm. the Prior Provincial of the Order of Carmelites and co-convenor of Anawim Mission and Fr. Dionisio Cabillas from Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) and an active member of Anawim Mission gave their respective reflections on the Care for the Elderly.

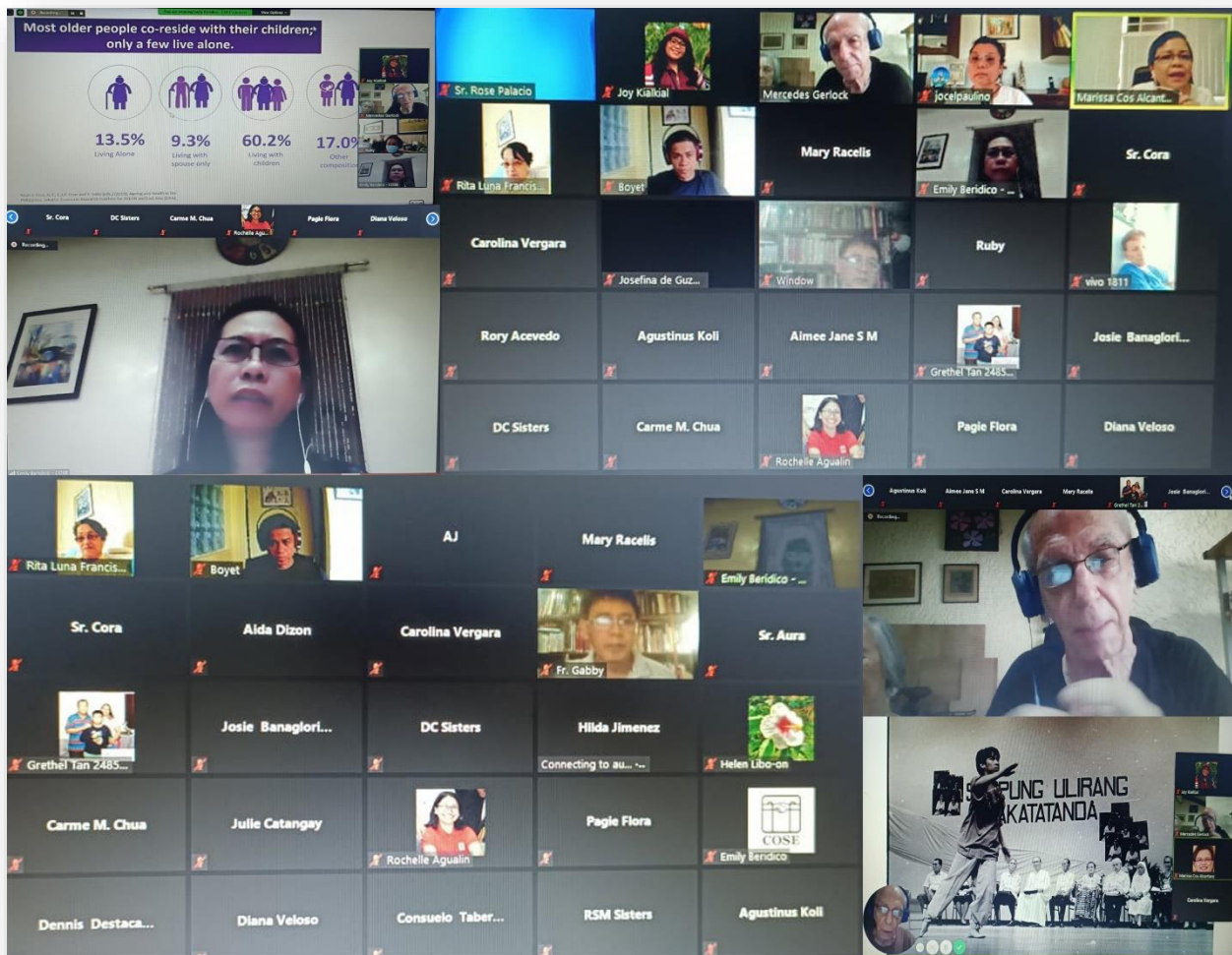


**“The Best is Yet to Be: Spirituality of the Elderly”**  
(Webinar: October 3, 2020)



In partnership with the Coalition of Services of the Elderly (COSE), ISA organized a webinar on **“The Best is yet to be: Spirituality of the Elderly”** with **Mr. Ed Gerlock**, founder of COSE and its executive director **Ms. Emily Beridico** as speakers.

Mr. Gerlock and Ms. Beridico shared about the programs of COSE such as the “Ten Most Outstanding Elderly Awards” which COSE has been doing for 29 years now. They also shared about COSE’s program on training elderly people to become community health workers. They presented the real situations of elderly people in the Philippines and shared their programs and activities for the care for elderly.

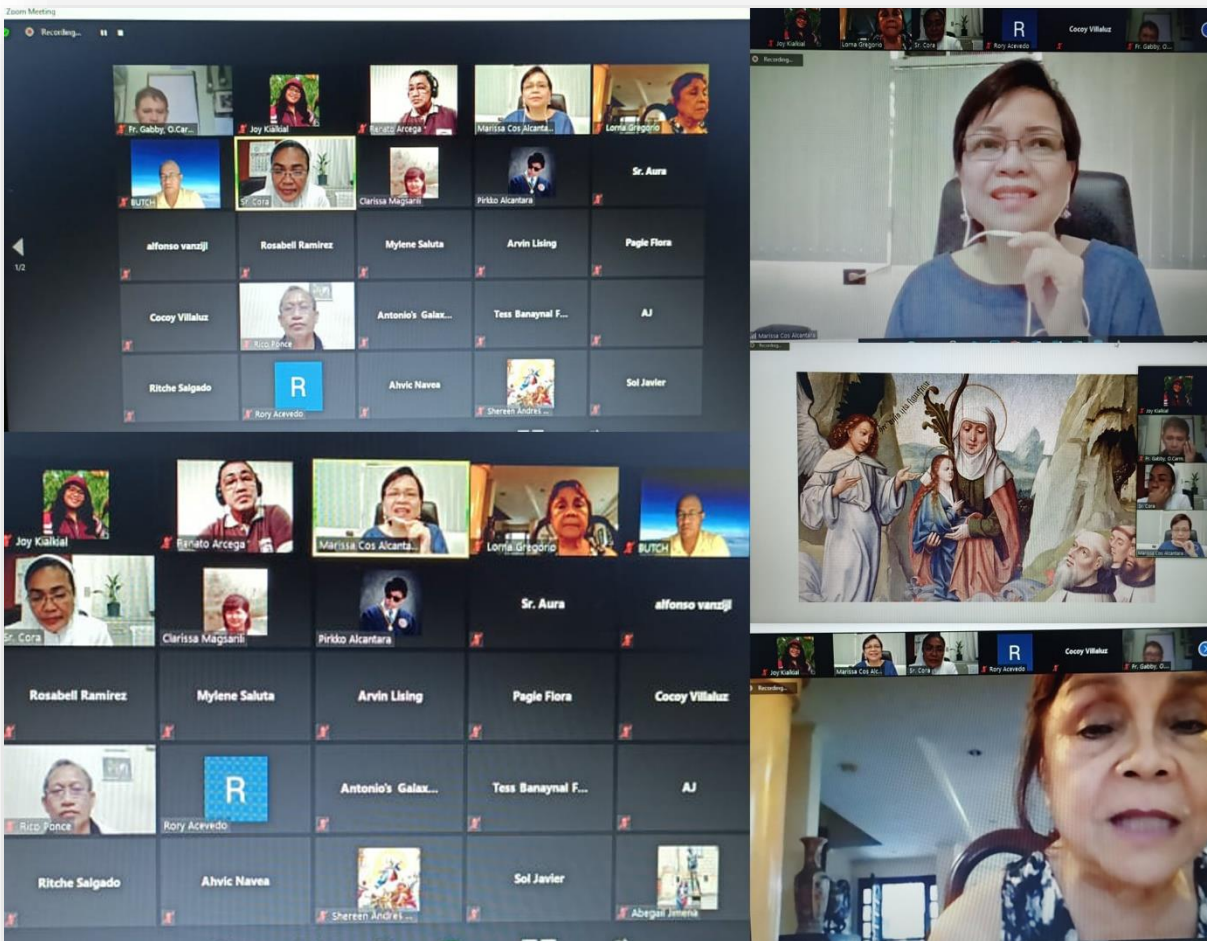


## **“A Marian Spirituality of Pilgrimage”** *(Webinar: October 10, 2020)*



**Dr. Marissa Cos Alcantara, aO.Carm.,** the ISA assistant director for Academic Program was the speaker for the webinar entitled **“A Marian Spirituality of Pilgrimage”** held on October 10, 2020. She is the owner and president of Pirkko & Troytours, Inc.

In her talk, she shared the people’s journey to sacred places who had explored, deepened, re-kindled their own faith. She also shared the role of Mary, the Mother of Jesus thru an organized Marian Pilgrimage where the pilgrims’ perceived effects of their Marian pilgrimage tours in terms of: motivation, tour program, and the values that had deepened a pilgrim’s spiritual life in meaning, transcendence, connecting and becoming. Finally, Dr. Alcantara shared that stories are best remembered by the pilgrims when they return home, and how did Mary accompany the pilgrims towards a deeper spirituality and their relationship to Jesus.



**“Approaches to Communication Spirituality in Community Life  
via Teresa of Avila's The Way of Perfection”  
(Webinar: October 24, 2020)**



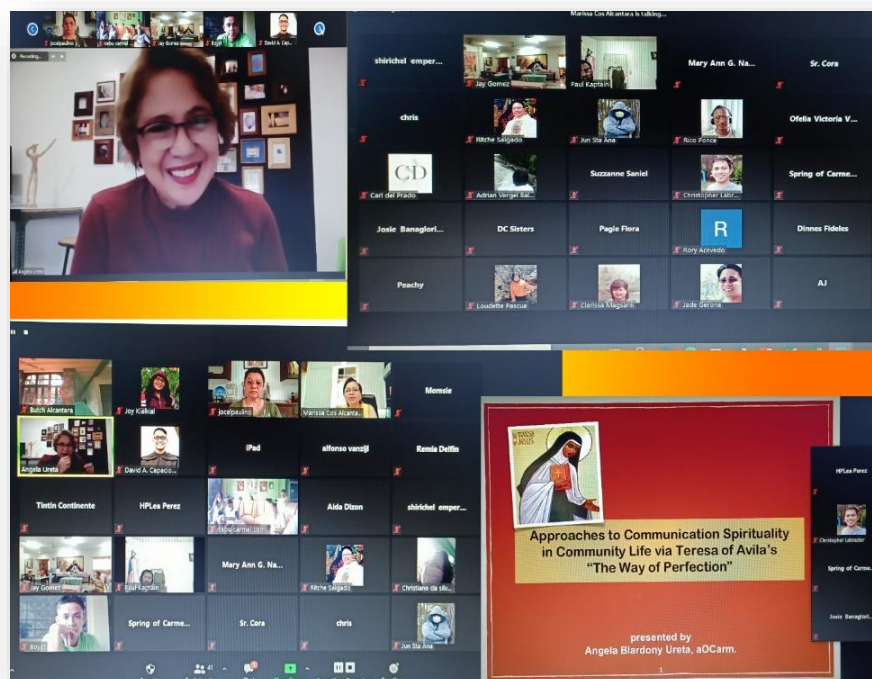


**Ms. Maria Angela Blardony Ureta, aO.Carm.** was the resource speaker for this webinar titled **“Approaches to Communication Spirituality in Community Life via Teresa of Avila's The Way of Perfection”**. Ms. Ureta is currently a Provincial Extended Councilor of the Order of Carmelites in the Philippines. She is also a media professional and a member of the Province’s Communications and Ongoing Formation Commissions. Ms. Ureta graduated with a degree in AB Communication Arts from De La Salle University in 1985 and received her MA in Theology major in Social-Pastoral Communication (cum laude) from the University of Santo Tomas Graduate School in 2017. She is also an independent book author and publisher, a freelance journalist, lecturer, and strategic communications consultant.

Ms. Ureta shared that the spiritual community is an essential life source for our continued growth, as this is where we derive nourishment and support. It is also here, among brothers and sisters, that we practice extensively as Christian communicators.

She also shared what St. Teresa emphasized in "The Way of Perfection," the three qualities that can be transformed into approaches of communication spirituality: detachment, love of neighbor, and humility.

In her talk she examined three communicative qualities that played in our daily experiences in community, as well as identified some barriers to life-giving communication, as aligned with St. Teresa's writings.



**“Doing Qualitative Research on Religion in the Philippines”**  
*(Webinar: November 14, 2020)*



ISA in partnership with Center for Empirical Studies in Spirituality, Theology and Religion-Asia (CESSTREL-Asia) organized a seminar-workshop (webinar via zoom) on **“Doing Qualitative Research on Religion in the Philippines”** with **Dr. Jayeel Cornelio** as resource facilitator. Dr. Cornelio is an associate professor/director of Development Studies Program of the Ateneo de Manila University.

During the workshop, Dr. Cornelio introduced the different concepts, principles, and methods relevant to conducting qualitative research to understand the religious life of people. Through activities during the workshop, the participants learned and applied different skills and concepts in formulating research questions, designed a sampling strategy, and prepared relevant tools. At the end of the seminar- workshop, the participants were able to come up with a research design relevant to the needs of their respective communities. Throughout the workshop, the resource speaker draw on his extensive work on young people’s religious identity, new trends about the prosperity gospel, the tensions between faith and sexuality, and the religious justifications for the popular support for the war on drugs.



**“Spirituality and Interreligious Dialogue”**  
*(Webinar: November 21, 2020)*



A member of the ISA's International Academic Advisory Board (IAAB) **Fr. Eliseo “Jun” Mercado, Jr., OMI** gave a public lecture on **“Spirituality and Interreligious Dialogue”** on November 21, 2020 afternoon via webinar (zoom).

Fr. Mercado is currently a professor of Notre Dame University- Graduate School and San Beda University-Graduate School of Laws.

Fr. Mercado begin his talk by pointing out that shaping the spiritual journey in the context of interreligious dialogue is the very theme of the 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines. He emphasized that the talk is perhaps part and parcel of the 500 years celebration because prior to the coming of Christianity in the Philippines it was the native religion. In this lecture, he captures the three perspective that he wants to point out on interreligious dialogue which is Islamic, the indigenous peoples, and Christianity.



## **“Christian Spirituality and Human Rights”** *(Webinar: December 5, 2020)*



On the occasion of the 72<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (DHR), ISA organized a public lecture via zoom on **“Christian Spirituality and Human Rights”** last December 5, 2020 with its executive director **Fr. Christian “Toots” Buenafe, O.Carm.** as resource speaker. Fr. Buenafe is also the Chair of Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), a mission partner of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP), Convener of the Philippine Province JPIC Commission, and a Commissioner of the International O.Carm. JPIC Commission.

Fr. Buenafe started his talk by acknowledging and honoring two Icons of human rights work in the Philippines and Asia—they are Sr. Mariani Dimaranan, SFIC and Sr. Crescencia Lucero, SFIC. He shared an overview of Christian Spirituality and Human Rights. Purposely, he focused on Christian Spirituality so his talk will focus on Christian faith. He also talked about Human Rights and the Gospel. He also shared some challenges and invitations for us today.

Aside from defining Christian Spirituality and Human Rights, he also presented elements of human rights (the Universality, Inalienability, and Interrelatedness and Interdependence) and categories of human rights (Civil and Political Rights, and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). Fr. Buenafe named some basic human rights; e.g. the right to life, right to liberty, right to be free from torture, right to free from other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, right to food, and right to peaceful assembly and petition for the government redress and grievances, right to sustainable environment, rights of women, rights of children, rights of the persons with disability, rights of the elderly, and rights of the Indigenous Peoples. He also shared the two parties of human right which are the rights holder and the duty bearer. He also said that we must respect the rights of everyone because only then that we can truly claim to be Christians. The gospel is not opposed to human rights, rather Jesus had taken sides with the poor, the outcasts and the victims.





The ISA executive director **Fr. Christian Buenafe, O.Carm.** facilitated an “**Advent Reflection in time of pandemic with the theme “Come Lord Jesus”** to more than 70 participants last December 7, 2020 via zoom.

In this advent reflection, Fr. Buenafe shared some of the most significant things during this time of pandemic: our family, health, true friends and beliefs. The prayer “Come, Lord Jesus” means not only for this time of advent but for our everyday life. He also presented the importance of our four (4) tasks for the season of advent: (1) to pray, (2) to wait, (3) to stay awake and keep vigil, and (4) to prepare the way... to make straight the crooked path.

Fr. Buenafe input some reminders about advent that the star of Bethlehem was of hope and peace. In this season of joyful waiting, we trust in God’s Mercy, for His Love lasts forever. We have to remember that the true essence of Christmas is Christ Himself.

He also reminded the participants on our responsibilities in doing the Spiritual Works of Mercy and the Corporal Works of Mercy. Fr. Buenafe gave some invitations and challenges for reflection on the Gospel of Luke 2: 1-20. He invited the participants to reflect on their lives, families and communities. He also shared some inspirational quotes from St. Teresa of Avila, St. Teresa of Calcutta and Pope Francis. Finally, he gave the guide questions for this advent reflection:

- 1) What do I pray? Why should I wait? What keeps me awake? What are the reasons of my observances of advent?
- 2) Am I really prepared to meet God and celebrate the remembrance of his birth?
- 3) What are my wishes and hope for this Christmas 2020 and the aspirations and plans for the coming year?



**“Spirit of Inclusion in the Story of the Man Born Blind in John 9: 1-7”**  
*(Webinar: December 12, 2020)*



The last webinar lecture for this year was on “**Spirit of Inclusion in the Story of the Man Born Blind in John 9:1-7**” with **Rev. Ritche Salgado, O.Carm.** as resource speaker on December 12, 2020. More than 40 participants attended in this webinar.

Rev. Salgado is the Director of the Center for Social and Pastoral Communication, Deputy Director of the Titus Blandsma Media Center, Program Coordinator of the Institute of Spirituality in Asia, and Member of the Executive Committee of the Community-Based Rehabilitation Special Interest Group of the Philippine Physical Therapy Association.

In his presentation, Rev. Salgado shared about the current situation of the persons with disability, persons with disability and Covid-19, the Church, persons with disability and Covid-19, and the scholarly studies of John 9:1-7.

He also shared some significant insights from his interviews made on persons with disability for his thesis. The interviews were done in late 2018 and early 2019, and some were from his recent conversations with persons with disability in Bagong Silangan, Quezon City where they are currently starting a CBR (Community Based Rehabilitation) program together with San Isidro Labrador Parish and the Local Government Unit of Barangay Bagong Silangan, Quezon City.



“Spiritual Reading on St. Teresa of Avila’s Interior Castle”



The **Spiritual Reading Group** is devoted to a closed reading of **St. Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle**. Ten sessions of reading and reflecting together, three hours has been allotted per session and provided with a guide which can be used for personal studies. **Fr. Sheldon Tabile, O.Carm.** was the guide/facilitator for these reading sessions.

Participants were initiated into a spiritual reading that specifically looks at the spiritual processes and relations in the text with its continuing process and relationship in our present lives. Each session started with a prayerful reading of the text or an excerpt for longer text. Then as a group, they discerned into the divine-human relation and processes that surface in the spiritual text. The guide roots the sharing and reflections to Scriptures and the rich tradition of spirituality and mysticism. The session continues with how each participant sees the text as an on-going life event in their varying perspectives and contexts. This communal reflection and sharing were provided for the opportunity of a group spiritual direction. The session ended with a communal prayer. At the completion of the program, a certificate of completion (30 hours) were given to the participants.

The reading session were designed for face-to-face sessions but because of the pandemic the second to tenth sessions were done via zoom. The face-to-face session was on February 15, 2020 and nine webinar sessions were done on Saturdays from July to September 2020.



**“Quick Response and Relief Program”**



## “Relief Operation for the Victims of Taal Volcano Eruption, Batangas”

On January 26, 2020, ISA were joined by Pirkko&Troytours, Inc., Carm.O.L. Sisters and members of PNP Pasig Internal Affairs Division and volunteers in its relief operation held in Padre Pio Shrine, Sto. Tomas, Batangas. The group were able to deliver relief goods enough for the victims of Taal Volcano eruption staying at Padre Pio Shrine, Sto. Tomas and Balete, Batangas. There were about 700 people at the Shrine, while others are in remote locked out areas of Balete. Having talked to some, we feel their sadness, fear and uncertainties. However, they were very grateful to receive valuable donations with smiles coming from their hearts!

The Mass at 10:30 A.M. in Padre Pio Shrine in the same day was offered to all of our dear donors and volunteers before heading back to Manila.



## “ISA in time of COVID-19: Serving Hot Meals”





# Institute of Spirituality in Asia

The Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) in this time of pandemic is operating with the stay-in personnel. Four ISA staff members were accommodated in the third and fourth floor of Teresa of Avila building where ISA is housed since at the beginning of lockdown up to the present. ISA is still operating its office regularly during lockdown but activities such as Spirituality Forum and summer course were reset.

During Sundays, the stay-in staff of ISA served simple hot breakfast (noodles/pansit with pandesal/bread, sopas/macaroni soup, arrozcaldo, champorado/chocolate sticky rice) to street people/families in the neighborhood specifically those who were staying along Rosario Drive and under Betty-Go LRT station, security guards, construction workers and stay-in gasoline boys with their families. Around 60-70 persons were served every Sunday.

ISA also is one with the Order of Carmelites in raising funds and responding to the people in need such as frontliners and O.Carm. communities and parishes around the Philippines in this time of COVID-19 helping the frontliners and communities.



**“Relief Operations for the Fire Victims, Bicutan”**



ISA together with CarmelCare and O.Carm. Student Friars organized a relief operation for the fire victims in North Daang Hari, Bicutan. A total of forty eight (48) families were given relief packs (rice, groceries and toiletries). ISA staff were assisted by Brgy. Captain Lorenzo Fortuno and DSWD (Brgy. based) in distributing relief packs.

Aside from relief goods, ISA also gave financial assistance to its staff, mission areas (O.Carm. Parishes, Payatas, Isabela, Bohol and Bataan) through its mission partner organizations during the lockdown.

Just recently, ISA also gave financial assistance to some families of staff and mission areas who were victims of typhoon Ulysses through O.Carm. Parishes and mission partners in their relief activities.

### *Fire Victims, Bicutan*



## “Christmas Fellowship” (December 17, 2020)



The Institute of Spirituality in Asia (ISA) ended the year with a Christmas fellowship. On December 17, 2020 at 9:00 o'clock in the morning, the ISA staff held its monthly meeting followed by a Eucharistic Mass. The executive director Fr. Christian Buenafe, O.Carm. presided over the mass.

Before the mass ended, Fr. Buenafe thanked everyone for all the hard work and for the success of all the activities of the institute in 2020. He wished everyone a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year. After the mass, everyone shared the food prepared for lunch and had their exchanged gifts. Everyone enjoyed during the fellowship.



## “2021 Initial List of Activities”



## **January 13 & 14, 2021, Annual Planning**

**Participants:** ISA Staff (face-to-face)

**Facilitator:** Fr. Christian Buenafe, O.Carm.  
ISA Executive Director

**Venue:** ISA Conference Room

## **January 16, 2021: “Planning and Execution of a Radio Show: Introduction to Radio Shows”**

**Participants:** Manila-based staff/Student Friars (face-to-face) and Escalante and Agusan/Escalante Staff (via zoom)

**Facilitator:** Mr. Raymund Villanueva  
Awardee, Titus Brandsma Awards Philippines

**Venue:** Webinar via Zoom

## **January 25-26, 2021: “Spirituality and Social Communication”**

**Participants:** ISA and O.Carm.-Manila Staff (face-to-face)

**Facilitators:** Fr. Christian Buenafe, O.Carm. and Rev. Ritche Salgado, O.Carm.

**Venue:** Titus Brandsma Center, 24 Acacia St., New Manila, Quezon City

## **February 2-3, 2021: “Protocols on Safeguarding Minors and Vulnerable Adults”**

**Participants:** ISA and O.Carm.-Manila Staff (face-to-face)

**Facilitators:** Fr. Christian Buenafe, O.Carm. (ISA Executive Director) and  
Fr. Rico Ponce, O.Carm. (Prior O.Carm.)

**Venue:** Titus Brandsma Center, 24 Acacia St., New Manila, Quezon City

## **April 17, 2021: “Planning and Execution of a Radio Show: Planning a Radio Show”**

**Participants:** Manila-based staff/Student Friars (face-to-face) and Escalante and Agusan/Escalante Staff (via zoom)

**Facilitator:** Mr. Raymund Villanueva  
Awardee, Titus Brandsma Awards Philippines

**Venue:** Webinar via Zoom

## **July 17, 2021: “Planning and Execution of a Radio Show: Executing a Radio Show”**

**Participants:** Manila-based staff/Student Friars (face-to-face) and Escalante and Agusan/Escalante Staff (via zoom)

**Facilitator:** Mr. Raymund Villanueva  
Awardee, Titus Brandsma Awards Philippines

**Venue:** Webinar via Zoom

## **October 16, 2021: “Planning and Execution of a Radio Show: Production and Planning”**

**Participants:** Manila-based staff/Student Friars (face-to-face) and Escalante and Agusan/Escalante Staff (via zoom)



**Facilitator:** Mr. Raymund Villanueva  
Awardee, Titus Brandsma Awards Philippines  
**Venue:** Webinar via Zoom

