



The MENORAH

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES



BUILDING THE HEART BUILDING THE CHURCH SPECIAL 29th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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EDITORIAL

A SANTUARY is a place where someone or something is protected and given shelter. It's a place where one can truly feel safe. Most of us desire to have our own sanctuary—a place where we can feel safe and protected. It is our own personal space where we can find refuge and solitude.

But a sanctuary, in a physical context, is a room or place inside a church, where services are held. Before us, God had already desired to build His sanctuary here on Earth. Exodus 25:8 says, "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." God desires His own sanctuary in which He can live and move and have His Being. He desires His own personal space through which He can extend Himself to all His creation and have His fellowship with them.

For 29 years now, it has been the Church's burden to build its own sanctuary, and the Church, together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has decided to make this a reality by the concentrated efforts of the Ministry Team in expanding the church's horizon's in exploring all possibilities this would make resources available to build such a sanctuary. As promise that He will appoint a place for His people to gather in worship of Him.

But, God is not only looking for a physical sanctuary but also for a people true to His image who can serve as His dwelling 'place'. Many people misunderstand what church really means. Although it's a word of many meanings, it can never refer to just a building/physical structure. The Christian church is neither a building nor a room; instead the Church is the body of believers united in Christ "called out" to respond to God's cause. We are "called out" from the world to be God's people, willing to stand up for our faith. No matter what design and furnishings a church may have, it can never be just a mere meeting hall for the Church of Christ.

It is God's wish to make our hearts His dwelling-place, His sanctuary, His temple. If the sanctuary that was built here on earth was heavenly patterned, then the dwelling-place of God in the temple of our hearts must, as well, be made after the heavenly pattern of the true and eternal Temple of God.

On our Church's 29th Anniversary, God has "called us out" to build our hearts for us to be able to build His Church. Let us rejoice that God does not dwell in His sanctuary alone, but in His Body, the Church.

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FOCIM is

Fire-proof!

The Reconstruction of FOCIM-QC and Life After the Fire

By Daniel Alberto G. Guinigundo



LAST JUNE 3, 2015, on a Wednesday morning, tragedy struck as fire razed the houses at South Zuzuarregui St., Old Balara, affecting more than 300 families including some members of FOCIM-QC, along with the old sanctuary donated by the So family. The fire was allegedly started by a marijuana session in one of the houses and began past 8:00 AM. The incident worsened, even reaching Task Force Bravo, which meant the deployment of over ten fire trucks to put out the fire. After about two hours, at 11:15 AM, the fire was declared put out by the MMDA. Aside from approximately ten people suffering minor injuries, the damage caused by the fire estimated at around P1.5 million, according to the Bureau of Fire Protection.

Lost Hope

Ptr. Shirley So, FOCIM-QC's pastor, and one of the victims of the fire, fortunately came to know about the fire early thanks to one member and also a neighbor, Sis. Rhodora "Dhors" Faune. Thankfully, she, along with her family and other members, were able to mitigate the seemingly hopeless situation: *"Nakatanggap kami ng tawag mula kay Sis. Dhors Faune na nasusunog na ang banda namin sa Zuzuarregui. Tumagal ito ng ilang oras na naging dahilan para maubos ang aming buong lugar na binubuo ng 320 families kasama ng 13 families na miyembro natin sa FOCIM-QC, maging ang pinagdarausan natin dati ng samba at gamit ng ating simbahan."*

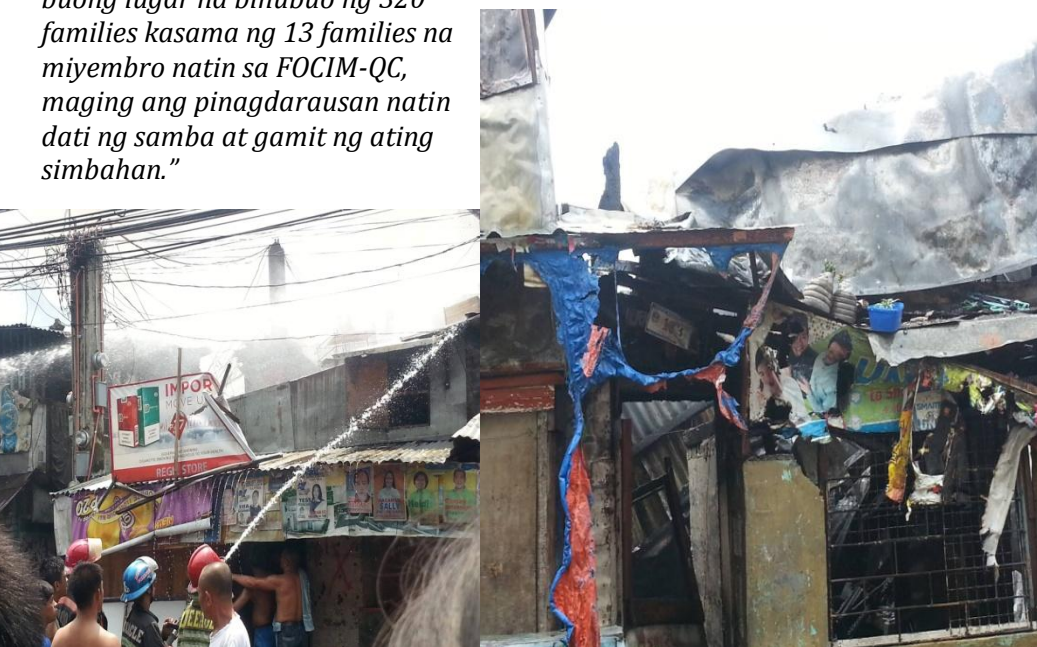
Along with the loss of their possessions came the realization that all hopes of restoration would be dim. Ptr. Shirley recalls the thoughts that ran through her mind as she was thinking not only about her family but also for the church members: *"Saan na kaya kami titira? Paano na kaya mga members namin? Maghihiwa-hiwalay na ba kami? Paano na kaya mga kapatid ko? Paano kaya kami makababangon?"*

FOCIM: A United Front

On the same day, the members of FOCIM came together to help the FOCIM-QC victims. The ministry team members, including Bro. Diwa and Sis. Apple Guinigundo, Bro. Bing and Sis. Sophie Guerrero, Sis. Hedy Leah Marcelo, Bro. Bodge and Sis. Roanna Santos, along with Bro. Elso and Sis. Vicky Cabangon, were able to bring food, clothing, bedding, and even medicine to the FOCIM families. With the Faune family's *carinderia* as a central drop-off point for food, clothing, and other donations, the members were given sufficient provisions to allow them to prioritize on the rebuilding of their homes.

Aside from money donations, every member and leader was involved in providing spiritual encouragement and comfort to the families of FOCIM-QC. On the same Sunday, June 7, 2015, Sis. Apple Guinigundo and Sis. Hedy Leah Marcelo headed a small focused group discussion along with the young people to handle any traumatic stress and to provide an avenue to share any feelings or to express any hurts. The leaders and members of FOCIM-Mandaluyong alike did not lack in providing the members of FOCIM-QC in lifting their spirits. For her part, Ptr. Hilda Lactao, a former pastor of FOCIM-QC herself, mentions,

"lagi kong ipinapaalala sa kanila ang salita ng Diyos sa 1 Corinthians 10:13. Tapat ang Diyos at hindi niya kayo susubukin nang higit sa inyong kaya. Kalakip ng pagsubok, ibibigay niya ang paraan para mapagtagumpayan ninyo iyon."



Likewise, the leaders of FOCIM-QC have done their share in giving much needed encouragement. May So, a member of the FOCIM-QC Worship Team and Children's Sunday School shares, *"as leader, una naming ginawa hinanap silang lahat, kinumusta, at isinama sa bahay nila Ate Badeth [another FOCIM-QC leader] para makapagpahinga at makakain. During that time, kasabay ng prayer, niyakap, ipinaliwanag, at ipinaramdam namin sa kanila na sa kabila ng lahat mabuti parin ang Panginoon sa aming lahat. Lahat ng blessings na galing sa church natin, we make sure na lahat sila mababahaginan at makakakain dapat sapat."*

A New Beginning

At present, measures have already been taken to help rebuild the lives and the homes of the members. At the helm of the efforts in raising funds is Sis. Apple Guinigundo, while Bro. Matthew Unite and Bro. Bing Guerrero, engineer and architect respectively, are in charge of the reconstruction of the members' homes as well as the new sanctuary.

Despite the destruction to the area, the clearing made room for better housing. According to Sis. May, *"Ngayon, nakikita namin na maganda ang plano ni Lord sa lugar namin; wala ng illegal na kuryente at tubig. Pati sa pagpapatayo ng bahay ipinagbawal na ang kahoy, kaya naman naging maayos at malinis ang lugar namin kumpara sa dati."*

For purposes of uniformity, Bro Bing reveals that the area that was gutted by the fire was subdivided into roughly 20 square meters per family with a 3 meter wide street, unlike the old, tight irregular alleys. As to the construction of the sanctuary, Bro. Matthew narrates that, *"the reconstruction of the FOCIM-QC Sanctuary started last July 2. By the grace of God, despite the heavy rains, we were still able to finish the concreting of the foundation. Currently, we are making preparations for the ground floor and expecting to finish it by next week."*

The whole reconstruction of the church will take at least one (1) month and two (2) weeks to two (2) months but let us all hope and pray that we can reopen its doors to our members earlier or before FOCIM's Anniversary."

The path towards full reconstruction was not an easy one. Bro. Bing recounts the challenges the team is currently facing: *"Immediate provisions for basic needs like food, clothing, and temporary shelter; financial budget wherein many responded for financial needs and in kind; manpower was not immediately available till after several days but architectural plans were already supplied; and lastly, the rainy season is hampering the construction and completion schedule."* Bro. Matthew highlights that the main concern of the project is the funding: *"the main challenge of the project is the budget. With limited budget, we need to get the cheapest supplier of materials and at the same time, build the church in the fastest and most economical way possible."*



The Latter Should Always be Greater than the Former

With all the concerted efforts from all fronts, much is expected from the newly-constructed housing and sanctuary of FOCIM-QC. As to the features planned for the new sanctuary, Bro. Bing gives an overview: *“Two units at the ground floor will be allocated for the FOCIM-QC church and another unit at the second floor for the Sunday School. The future church which is almost 40 square meters, will have a worship area, an altar with space for the music ministry, and a common toilet. The church will be painted depending on the budget as two other houses of our FOCIM members will also be constructed. Above the church will be an adequate space for each family wherein each unit will have the basic living room, dining room, kitchen, sleeping areas, and toilet.”*

Truly along with heavy challenges came an outpouring of blessings for the families affected by the fire. Aside from better housing, Ptr. Hilda also noticed an increase in the level of commitment from the members: *“mas naging committed sila sa Panginoon at mas nakita nila ang kahalagahan ng church sa buhay nila.”*

Incidentally, the problem of the church in looking for a new sanctuary was now given a solution. Now, the church members at Quezon City will have a newer and more comfortable place to worship in.

As stated by Bro. Matthew assures, *“the latter should always be greater than the former. With the guidance of God, I’m sure that the new sanctuary will be more spacious and better for the FOCIM-QC members to worship in and to fellowship.”*



UP CLOSE



By Ma. Lourdes N. Colinares

On Fire, Family and Faith in the Lord

“...Lalong tumindi ang pagmamahal at pagtitiwala ko sa Panginoon,” Sister May So, a victim of the Zuzuarregui fire, shared.

It was sudden and unexpected. Sis. May was at work when her neighbors told her that a fire hit her home at Zuzuarregui St., Old Balara, Quezon City, last June 3, 2015. Worried and panicked, she tried calling her family but at first, no one answered. Although the fire ravaged all her and her family’s possessions, thankfully, no one was injured.

Upon learning about what happened, her initial reaction was to cry out in prayer. *“Unang pumasok sa isip ko yung family ko. Lalo na’t marami akong pamangkin na mga bata,”* Sis. May said.

“Sobrang nag-pray ako sa Panginoon for safety ng lahat,” she shared, *“Nag-pray kaagad ako at tinanong ko ang Panginoon kung bakit yun kailangang mangyari sa amin.”*

According to her, the questions as to why it had to happen were quenched by the outpour of love she felt immediately thereafter. *“Dahil sa pagpaparamdam ng pagmamahal ng mga anak ng Diyos, na-realize ko na may magandang plano siya sa buhay namin at sa lugar namin,”* she said.

With a grateful spirit, she said that the support she felt from her brothers and sisters from FOCIM strengthened her, her family, and her neighbors through the whole ordeal.

“Malaking tulong ang nagampanan ng FOCIM sa aming situation especially sa spiritual aspect. Pinalakas nila ang aming tiwala at pananampalataya sa Panginoon. Maging sa mga paunang pangangailangan namin, nasuportahan nila kami.”

FOCIM has begun great efforts for rebuilding and restoration [See page 10, FOCIM is Fire-proof!: The Reconstruction of FOCIM-QC and Life After the Fire] and according to Sis. May,

“Hindi naming mag-isa hinarap ang pagsubok, bagkus naging katuwang namin ang FOCIM para muling bumangon.”

Though having lost so much, she has a positive outlook for the future as she emphasized on the importance of staying united as a family in order to move on faster and easier. *“Napakahalaga ang pag-tutulungan sa pamilya para mas madaling makabangon,”* she said.

An important lesson Sis. May learned from the fire is that the Lord is always there to help. *“Natutunan ko na hindi natin matatawaran kung ano ang kayang gawin ng Panginoon. Kahit anong pangyayari ang ma-experience natin, ang Panginoon ay laging nandyan para sumaklolo.”*

A Time to BELIEVE and Walk

By Mariela Reyes

*“God, your God,
will restore
everything you
lost; he'll have
compassion on
you; he'll come
back and pick up
the pieces from
all the places
where you were
scattered.”*

**Deuteronomy 30:3
MSG**

July 31 marked the 3rd Quarterly Prayer and Fasting. It was led by Sis. Hedy Leah “Didi” G. Marcelo. This time, other members aside from the Ministry Team led in prayer for different intentions (Sis. Karen Bello, Bro. Elso Cabangon, Bro. Milton Amayun and Sis. Mariela Reyes). Most of the prayers were centered on the rebuilding of the sanctuary at Quezon City; the church’s upcoming 29th anniversary; and the different emerging issues of the nation.

The church was not only filled with songs of praise but also with revelations from the Lord. Bro. Diwa Guinigundo discussed the ministry of the apostles in Acts 6 and 8. Sis. Didi Marcelo stressed the importance of praising and glorifying the Father. At the end, the Lord topped it all with one promise – restoration.

We are all undergoing different struggles and oppressions from the enemy - some are suffering from illness; some are striving hard to make ends meet; some are struggling to mend broken relationships etc. We all came to a point where we believe that trials keep on coming and there’s no way out. But the Lord is so good that He is giving us hope and strength by reminding us all of His thousands of promises. Praying helps us listen clearly to His voice and hear how to overcome our adversaries. We just have to believe it with all our hearts and take those steps with all our might when it is the time that the Lord says “Go”.

*“And after you have suffered a little while, the
God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal
glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm,
strengthen, and establish you.”*

1 Peter 5:10 ESV

L VE DONE RIGHT:

FOCIM Holds Seminar on Select Topics on

Love, Courtship and Marriage

ASSUMING the role as leaders of the spiritual family, the Ministry Team of FOCIM organized a seminar last May 24 at the Lampstand aimed at imparting knowledge, experience, and advice regarding pressing issues and timely topics related to love, courtship, and marriage guidance as our church elders assume the role of spiritual parents to the church's youth.

The church was full mostly of young people from the outreaches and homechurches, Bro. Elso Cabangon, one of the heads of the Couple's Ministry, opened the seminar with a video presentation highlighting the universal problem of teenage marriage and teenage pregnancy, with one out of three Filipino teenagers engaging in premarital sex and 24 infants born to teenage mothers every hour in the Philippines alone. Bro. Elso emphasized that the most effective way to address the problem is through education in the home based on the verse from Proverbs: *"Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it (Prov. 22:6)."*



The topics discussed in the seminar were nothing short of interesting, shocking, and relevant to the times. Sis. Apple Guinigundo, the head of the Word Ministry, gave the attendees the Biblical perspective on deviant behavior or the unnatural affection of homosexuality, highlighting that the Bible views homosexuality as a sin and a mockery of God's plan for man. She advised the people, especially the youth, to open their spiritual eyes to avoid being deceived. Dr. Jeni Pua, a dermatologist and a member of the Philippine Dermatologic Society, discussed the medical consequences of early and unsafe sexual practices, ranging from early pregnancy, lower level of education and outcome in life, and a number of debilitating diseases, such as cervical cancer, herpes, and HIV-AIDS. Dr. Jeni made it clear that the best cure against those consequences is prevention. More importantly, we should armor ourselves by being well-versed on the Word of God. Connected with the topic on health, Sis. Hedy Leah Marcelo, a former nurse and a member of the Ministry Team, provided the audience with a deeper understanding on the value of good hygiene. She expounded on the benefits of good hygiene as it prevents the spread of germs, provides a good first impression, and is vital to maintain good overall health. Finally, the closing topic centered on the church partaking of the divine nature discussed by Senior Pastor, Bro. Diwa Guinigundo. Bro. Diwa encouraged the church that as God's people, we are destined to overcome any issues regarding love, courtship, and marriage as we were created in God's image.

Aside from the interesting topics, several church members also gave life-giving testimonies on their stories of overcoming. Sis. Rosalie Faune, the Editor-in-chief of the Menorah and a member of the ushering ministry, focused on her trials, failure, and victory she experienced in her previous relationship, recalling that the only way she was able to cope with the pain was by finding comfort through God and family, stating that her greatest pain led her to her greatest calling. Sis. Roanna Santos, a member of the Ministry Team and the Worship Team head, testified that being pregnant at a young age, she encountered seemingly insurmountable difficulties. However, by God's grace, she overcame these mountains and was blessed with a godly husband and a good relationship with her in-laws. She also advised the youth to prioritize their studies, obtain a stable job, and become financially secure before even considering starting a family. Lastly, Dr. Milton Amayun gave the church proof that God's grace is sufficient for any marriage to endure through his own experiences with his wife, Raija. Despite their differences, what they shared were the most important in life—the love for the Lord, His Word, and His people. For their faithfulness, the Lord has blessed their union with two sons having the same dedication and commitment to God's plan for them. Furthermore, Dr. Milton shared a few tips for a sturdy marriage. The seminar closed with a few questions from the church regarding the topics and testimonies by the speakers.

Without a doubt, it was a very productive and fruitful afternoon for the members and guests of the church. Living up to its calling and role as a lampstand, FOCIM served as a guide to the attendees, especially the youth, who are the most exposed to such issues. With the seminar's success, much is expected from the Ministry Team as they plan to hold a second seminar regarding love, courtship, and marriage later this year.



Learning and Growing:

Holds Annual Vacation Bible School



WITH THE heat of summer comes the advent of school vacation—aside from being the best time to head to the beach, teachers and students alike take this time of respite as an opportunity to expand their learning.

Last May 23, Saturday, the FOCIM Children's Sunday School Ministry conducted a Summer Vacation Bible School ("VBS") in the morning and a teacher's conference in the afternoon at the Lampstand, Mandaluyong, with the goal of reaching out to the young children and parents while introducing Christ, His ministry and His mandate.

With the theme 'Space Quest', the VBS was attended by 68 students coming from Mandaluyong and Quezon City, all fully engaged during the praise and worship, Bible lesson, and crafts making. The attendees were conveniently grouped into three based on their ages: (1) The Beginner Class attended by 15 students, (2) The Intermediate Class, the largest, with 30 students, and the (3) Advanced Class composed of 23 students. At the end of the session, everybody was gathered to rehearse their song and dance number with the same theme.



Teachers were also given a chance to fellowship with their students while making them feel welcome. What's even more interesting with this year's VBS is the presence of the graduates of Sunday school, now part of the Generation for Christ Youth Ministry, who assisted during the Bible lesson, arts and crafts, and the special number practice alongside with the teachers.

FOCIM Children's Sunday School and Second Teachers' Seminar

By Hannah Cecilia S. Luching

In the afternoon, the second teachers' seminar and workshop was held in the afternoon with topics on classroom management and handling student behavior.

Eighteen teachers attended the said seminar from the main church and from Quezon City Church. A high school teacher from Jubilee Christian School and coincidentally, a Sunday School teacher, Ms. Frances Rea Gaza, was invited to give a talk and share her experience about teaching and at the same time handling different types of students, emphasizing on the role of the teacher in influencing the students in the classroom.

According to Gaza, "You have to reach a student before you can really teach him." Gaza also shared her knowledge of effective pro-active and corrective strategies for misbehaving students. Together with her interactive way of presenting her points, including allowing the teachers to speak and share mutual experiences as well as to role play how situations in the classroom should be handled, every attendee who was present in the event had a thing or two to learn from Gaza.

On the following day, the congregation of FOCIM was witness to the VBS graduation of all the attendees, including their special number. Awards such as "Best in Memory Verse", "Best in Artwork" and "Most Outstanding Student" were given to students who exhibited exceptional skills per class. Certificates were also given to all who attended the Vacation Bible School awarded by the FOCIM Senior Pastor, Bro. Diwa C. Guinigundo and by the Children's Sunday School Superintendent, Sis Ethel G. Arada.





FOCIM

Gears Towards the

29th

Anniversary

By Edward Matthew D. Unite

STARTING from the venue, to the songs to be sung during the praise and worship, to the message, and down to the special numbers, every part and minute detail of the program has covered, as FOCIM prepares for its 29th anniversary.



With strong prayer support, the Church was also able to book the G.T. Toyota Auditorium of the University of the Philippines, the event of the FOCIM Anniversary for two years now.

“He walks the talk, he is a family man, and he supports pastors and provincial and city churches alike. He also has the burden to unite the body of Christ.”



To ensure that all of the praise and worship songs complement the Message, the Worship Team aligned their song lineup with the anniversary theme. Also, weeks before, the leaders have already been continuously praying and brainstorming for old and new songs that will bring the best and the highest praise to God.

It also took a series of prayer and fasting for the Holy Spirit to be able to guide the Ministry Team in properly choosing a speaker. The chosen person to deliver the Word during the Anniversary celebration is Atty. Joe Villanueva, a Christian lawyer with his own firm and previously, one of the featured speakers in the Touching Heaven, Changing Earth conference. When asked about Atty. Joe's suitability as the speaker, Bro. Diwa Guinigundo, FOCIM's Senior Pastor answered: "He walks the talk, he is a righteous family man, and he supports pastors and provincial and city churches alike. Most important, also has the burden to unite the body of Christ."

With the goal of highlighting the different talents within FOCIM, Sis. Angelica Dionisio, who is in charge of the Gen-C special number, has already been setting up practices every weekend before the event because she wanted every youth member and even the young professionals to be involved and have time to practice. On what to expect for the youth special number, she answered: "There will be a lot of singing, dancing, acting and playing of instruments." Aside from the youth, the Children's Sunday School are also preparing a special number.

FOCIM's 29th anniversary with the theme "Building the Heart, Building the Church" will be held on August 29, 2015 at the GT Toyota Asian Cultural Center, UP Diliman at 3 p.m.

SPEAKER'S PROFILE

*...“EVEN
LAYWERS
CAN GO TO
HEAVEN –
IF THEY
REPENT.”*

ATTY. JOSE “JOE” P. VILLANUEVA

29th FOCIM Anniversary Speaker

Atty. Jose “Joe” Villanueva is a graduate of the Ateneo de Manila Law School and currently an active lawyer running his own Law Firm, J.P. Villanueva Land and Associates, located at the 8th Floor, Sagittarius Bldg., H.V. dela Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City. He works with a team of God-fearing lawyers.

Bro. Joe can preach and teach the Word of God. He has become a well sought after speaker for many different events and local conferences of many Christian organizations and churches. His teachings are driven to encourage and inspire all Christians to unite as One Body under the leadership of Jesus.

He is the founder and chairman of the Shekinah Christian Unity Foundation – a Ministry that aims to forge unity among Leaders of Christian Churches and Organizations regardless of denominations and/or affiliations.

Bro. Joe’s burden and passion is to reach out to all Filipinos and bring them to the knowledge of God.

He is the President of Christian Legal Society, an organization whose primary purpose is to reach all members of the legal profession for Christ with their theme “EVEN LAYWERS CAN GO TO HEAVEN – IF THEY REPENT.”

For this purpose, he has been in partnership with Rev. Fr., Archie Guiriba of Shalom charismatic International Ministry. He has a regular weekly radio program at Radio Veritas every Thursday at 8:00-9:00 p.m., entitled “Feasting on Gods Word”.

Every Holy week, Bro. Joe joins Fr. Archie Guiriba in proclaiming the Gospel throughout the nation by renting Araneta Coliseum for three (3) consecutive days and buying 15 hours of airtime television for live coverage.

He is also actively involved in the Prison Ministry, having been ministering at the National Penitentiary for more than 15 years, proclaiming that even the most hardened criminals can be changed and transformed by God.

According to him, no one is beyond the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He shares his ministry with his lovely wife Malou Villanueva – a gifted teacher and a dynamic preacher of the Word of God, with a doctorate degree on Strategic Studies on the Bible.

God has blessed them with three daughters namely Cherrie, a lawyer graduate of London University who is now working with NYK Group Europe Ltd. London, United Kingdom, as European VAT Manager; Trinie, a graduate of Business Management at Buckingham University, UK; And Hannah, a graduate of Business Law & Economics at the London University, UK.

Healing Waters

FOCIM Holds First Water Baptism for 2015



By Daniel Alberto G. Guinigundo

LAST MAY 9, 2015, fourteen FOCIM members from the Mandaluyong and the Quezon City homechurches made a public declaration of their faith through water baptism at the North Susana Executive Village Clubhouse.

After a short praise and worship, Senior Pastor Bro. Diwa C. Guinigundo, gave a brief exhortation, reminding the baptism candidates that the voluntary act of water baptism does not save—rather, it is a sign of dying unto sin and a public declaration that the old self has died and a new self is born. Sis. Apple G. Guinigundo added that the act of baptism would only be strengthened if the candidates dedicate time in doing their daily devotions.

Thereafter, each candidate was led to the pool to be immersed in water by Bro. Diwa. From Mandaluyong homechurches, Franco G. Capalongan, Dolores Z. Cerveza, Edwin Z. Cerveza, Rosalie C. Faune, Renato Q. Sarmiento, and Denz Marvelone P. Tan were baptized. From Quezon City, the candidates consisted of Eulalia A. Alvarez, Johnny T. Carlos, Jocelyn Gelogo, Gene Ross G. Hubilla, Henri Martin S. Luching, Araceli T. Pacquiao, Dolores S. Villar, and Bryan C. Faune. The candidates were then anointed for baptism by the Holy Spirit. The candidates receive the baptism certificates from the church. The candidates, along with the Ministry Team members and the leaders who witnessed the event, concluded the baptism ceremony with a simple breakfast fellowship.

Baptism is more than a ceremonial act; it is a conscious decision made by the individual. For Bro. Denz, he made his choice to be baptized *“dahil utos ito ni God.”* After having publicly declared the dying of their former selves, Sis. Rosalie recalls feeling *“refreshed, new, and anointed.”* Bro. Nico added, *“nagbago ang aking puso [after being baptized in water and anointed].”* As for Bro. Johnny, the act of baptism is but a start to his path towards spiritual maturity:

“kailangan ko gumawa ng devotion para hindi lagi mainit ang aking ulo.”





Touching the Heart of God

Gen-C Holds Victorious Installments

By John David C. Dionisio

THE SECOND quarter of 2015 spelled victory for the Generation for Christ Youth Ministry, or “Gen-C” as they held equally victorious and well-attended Vertical youth services in May and July respectively. Unlike the previous year, the Gen-C Leadership, headed by Sis. Karen Bello, decided to hold five (5) youth services this year, focusing on the five core purposes according to Rick Warren’s Purpose Driven Life, which is the main text used by Gen-C in its discipleship program under the Spiritual Growth Pillar: Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, and Mission.

Project Head for the second Vertical service on Fellowship and writer Bro. Neil Luching, believes that the central message of his project centered on the value of fellowship not only with friends but also with other unfamiliar fellow believers. On the other hand, the Project Head for the third Vertical service on Discipleship and writer John David Dionisio emphasizes that the main lesson of the night was “why discipleship is one of the [main] purpose[s] in living in this world.”

One of the more touching parts of both services was the testimony, where members of the Gen-C would share their life stories to serve as an inspiration to others. During Vertical 2, Sis. Danika Ija Bello shared about how God changed her life—from the hurts from the past to how she forgave, met the Lord, and eventually became a member of the FOCIM family. Bro. Nigel Delgado, on the other hand, focused on how God transformed him, rendering an original song, “Hari ng Buhay Ko.”





One Youth Service at a Time: of the Vertical Youth Service 2015

and Neil Christian S. Luching

Both projects had similar components, such as praise and worship led by the youth in the Worship Team; an inspirational message from the Spiritual Growth Counselors—for Vertical 2, it was Sis. Louver Jannel Arada, and for Vertical 3, Sis. Pamela Unite--; a special number by the FOCIM-QC Youth in Vertical 2 and Bro. Almark Del Puerto and Sis. Danika during Vertical 3. To emphasize on the importance of creating personal ties in discipling, Vertical 3 began with a short icebreaker where everyone had a chance to mingle and get to know one another.

The focus of the night was undoubtedly the delivery of the Word. Bro. Basilio “Val” Febrer of the Gising Kabataan Movement highlighted the importance of being part of the God’s family, and that being part of God’s family means getting involved. Bro. Diwa Guinigundo, the speaker for the third Vertical, and FOCIM’s own Senior Pastor, emphasized on the difference between mentoring and discipleship, as well as the key to the success of the early home churches to the growth in the numbers of the church.

As with all Vertical services, the night ended with an energy-filled victory song led by the Worship Team and simple food for fellowship. The sharing of the Word and the coming together of God’s young people truly touches the heart of God—one service at a time



Drop, Cover, Hold:

EARTH

QUAKE

By Ma. Lourdes N. Colinares

Preparedness Guide

The news about the risk brought about by the West Valley Fault to Metro Manila in event of a major earthquake has shaken up the country. It has awakened the urgency to inform the people on steps to survival in the event of such tragedy

As it is our constant prayer to the Lord to heal our land from any calamity that destroys life and property, we should at the same time, invest in our family's personal safety.

BEFORE AN EARTHQUAKE

The key to effective disaster prevention is planning and preparation.

To begin, you must know the earthquake hazards in your area. Before constructing a house or building, you must follow structural design and engineering practices. For houses or buildings already built, you must evaluate their structural soundness and strengthen or retrofit if necessary.

Things at home must also be adjusted for safety measures. Furniture or cabinets are strapped or bolted to the walls. Hanging objects such as ceiling fans and chandeliers must also be stable. When arranging items at home, breakable items, harmful chemicals, and flammable materials should be stored properly in the lowermost secured shelves.

You must likewise be familiar with exit routes. Knowing the location of fire extinguishers, first aid kits, alarms, and communication facilities in your neighborhood is very important.

At home, it is prudent to stock up on emergency supplies. These include: battery operated radio (and extra batteries), flashlights (and extra batteries), first aid kit, bottled water, two weeks food and medical supplies, blankets, cooking fuel, tools needed to turn off your gas, water and electric utilities.



DURING AN EARTHQUAKE

It may be easier said than done, but try to stay calm during an earthquake.

The goal is to protect yourself from falling objects and be located near the structural strong points of the room.

When inside a structurally sound building, stay inside. Duck under a sturdy desk or table and hold on to it, or protect your head with your arms. If possible, quickly open the door for exit.

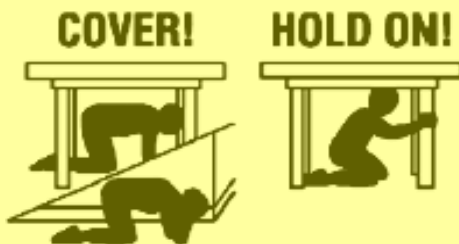
Stay away from glass windows, shelves, cabinets and other heavy objects. You must also beware of falling objects. Remember, be alert and keep your eyes open.

If you are cooking, turn off the stove and take cover.

If you are outside, you must move to an open area. Stay away from trees, power lines, posts, and concrete structures. Steep slopes that may be affected by landslides are also to be avoided.

For those who are near the shore when experiencing a strong earthquake, it is prudent to move to higher grounds to avoid tsunamis or storm surge.

If you are in a moving vehicle, stop and get out. Do not attempt to cross bridges, overpasses, or flyovers, which may have been damaged.



AFTER AN EARTHQUAKE

Be prepared for aftershocks. Once the shaking stops, take the fastest and safest way out of the building.

Do not use elevators. Do not enter damaged buildings.

Check for injuries and attend to injuries if needed. You should likewise help ensure the safety of people around you.

If you smell or hear a gas leak, get everyone outside and open windows and doors. If you can

do it safely, turn off the gas at the meter. Report the leak to the gas company and fire department. Do not use any electrical appliances because a tiny spark could ignite the gas.

If the power is out, unplug major appliances to prevent possible damage when the power is turned back on. If you see sparks, frayed wires, or smell hot insulation turn off electricity at the main fuse box or breaker. If you will have to step in water to turn off the electricity you should call a professional to turn it off for you.

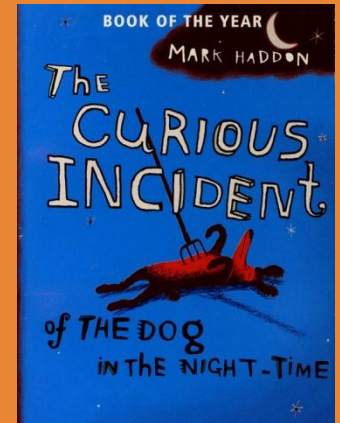
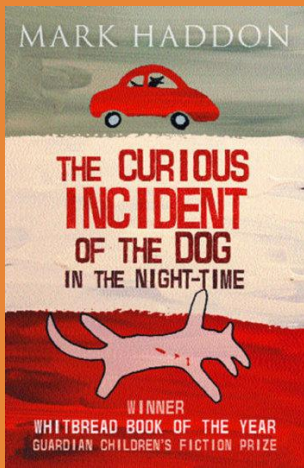
Get educated on earthquake safety and share this to others. Remember, awareness and preparedness will make a life-saving difference.

Sources:

1. Earthquake Preparedness Guide by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, Department of Science and Technology
2. Earthquake Safety Tips—How to Survive by www.geology.com

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

By Zachary N. Colinares



BOOK REVIEW



The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time is in its core, a mystery novel. The reader follows 15 year old Christopher Boone in his search for answers. Starting with the murder of his neighbour's dog, Christopher's journey takes unexpected twists and turns and quickly becomes much more than a simple investigation. These events cause Christopher's journey to become something much more complicated and much more personal. Needless to say, at this point this all seems standard, the main character faces challenges that help him grow and at the end he lives happily ever after. But as the title to this article states, this book is more than meets the eye. What sets this novel apart is not just the plot or the journey that the main character undertakes, but the difference lies within the main character itself.

Christopher is not like any other main character, this is because Christopher is suffering from Asperger's Syndrome and is therefore autistic. Asperger's Syndrome is an autism spectrum disorder which impairs children's development, specifically in social interaction and communication. As a result of his condition, Christopher sees and interacts with the world in a totally different way than we are accustomed to.

From the start we see Christopher's unique views on life, from his irrational dislike to specific things to his confusion towards feelings and emotion both of other people and of himself. Also, much like other children suffering from Asperger's he is a savant. He is especially gifted in the field of math, this then perfectly mirrors how he sees life because he sees life as absolutes.

He sees things as black and white, and segregates things from likes and dislikes, and if ever something crosses the line he is easily confused and angered as he is unable to understand or comprehend the situation. Reading this book, we are able to take a glimpse on just how difficult and different life is for someone with the same disability. What may seem simple and easy to us, such as riding a train or going from one place to another or even eating food, is altogether a trial for Christopher.

This is what makes "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time" an entirely different type of book. A major part of any novel is its narrator, as it is through the narrator's point of view we are witnessing the story from. By seeing the story progress through the eyes of Christopher we see what happens to him in an entirely new light. Christopher's inability to cope with things he does not understand tells us a lot on just how complex our everyday lives are, and that things are much more than what they seem.

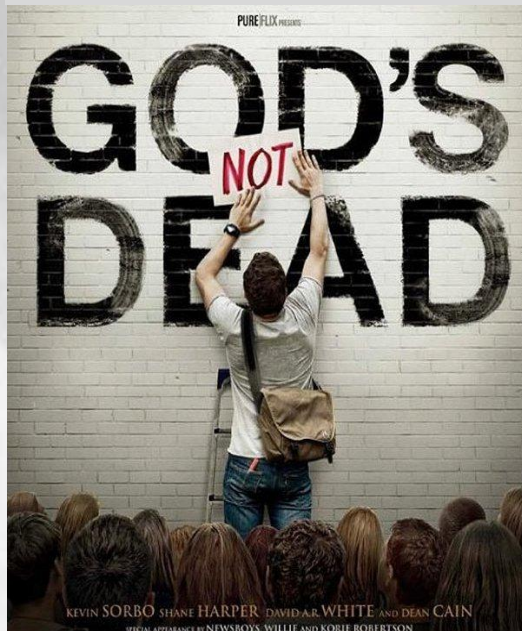
As the book continues and Christopher is continually exposed to the realities of the outside world, we see just how difficult life actually is, and that things are not merely black and white.

Mark Haddon has done an incredibly good job in being able to portray the life of a child with Asperger's Syndrome. And through his choice of narrator we see a new perspective on daily life and human interaction. The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time gives the reader a fresh perspective on life, and is a journey that is most certainly worth taking.

Photo Credits: Google.com



MOVIE REVIEW:



By Dan Abraham G. Guinigundo

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

(Matthew 5:11-12)

Science and religion have always been regarded as irreconcilable – antithetical even. In this day and age where liberalities are at an all-time high and groundbreaking discoveries in science are the norm, the polarization of beliefs has caused division and debate all over the world. With atheism suddenly gaining popularity, Christians are faced with persecution from all directions.

God's Not Dead is a 2014 film that depicts the struggles of modern-day Christians. The storyline features Josh Wheaton (Shane Harper), an evangelical Christian student who, as fate would have it, ends up enrolled in a philosophy class under Professor Jeffrey Radison (Kevin Sorbo, see *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*). Being a profound atheist, Professor Radison requires all his students to sign a declaration that “God is dead” in order to pass his course, which Josh refuses to do. His courage triggers mixed reactions from his peers, majority of which would rather deny God than fail an academic requirement. This act of defiance sparks a semester-long debate between the student and the teacher, culminating in a spirited confrontation where their beliefs are pitted against each other on the merits. At the conclusion of the series of debates, the students will then decide for themselves if they in fact believe that God is dead or if He is truly alive.

Understandably, the main personas are portrayed as extremes, each one clinging to their own philosophy and beliefs, which encourages empathy among any type of audience. The movie is generous when it comes to seeing the consequences of standing up for one’s faith and the unsettling journey that comes with it. Subplots are also carefully woven into the main storyline, which keeps the story from being monotonous.

While the film is undeniably Christian at its core, believers and non-believers alike would benefit from it, if only to witness the thought-provoking arguments and the onslaught of rhetorical questions strategically dispersed throughout the film’s 113 minutes.

In sum, *God's Not Dead* is educational as it is entertaining, without being too preachy in its presentation. During a time where belief in God is looked down upon for being “old-fashioned” or “closed-minded”, this movie is a welcome reminder that popular opinion, no matter how overwhelming, can never ripen into the truth. †

Outback worship

SESSIONS

ALBUM REVIEW



By: Nigel John C. Delgado



"Outback Worship Sessions is about taking our message further, sharing with as many as possible and empowering generations to win generations. We want to be intentional to reach not just one generation, but all generations."

-Bj Pridham (Worship Pastor, Planetshakers)

A follow-up release from their previous album "This Is Our Time", Planetshakers once again comes up with yet another album entitled "**Outback Worship Sessions**" early this year. Compared with their previous releases (see "Endless Praise" and "This Is Our Time"), Planetshakers delivers a totally different sound and exceeds all expectations that one might have – especially at a time when energetic praise is the latest trend.

The first track "**Like A Fire**" (From the "One" album) has been done so differently. The arrangement of the song, changing even the lead singer who was in the original version (**Joth Hunt**, Planetshakers' Music Director/Worship Leader). It will take you to a moment of worship where you will hunger more for the presence of God, most especially the bridge part, which contains the powerful phrase "*Come like a flood and saturate me now, You're all I want. Come like a wind and seep throughout this place, You're all we want.*" What follows is a new song "**Spirit Of God**", which was composed by Worship Pastor **Bj Pridham** from Planetshakers and co-written by Grammy Award-winning, four-time Gospel Music Association Dove Award-winning "Producer of the Year," **Ed Cash**. The track leads to an inclusive moment of singing with other believers and confessing the overwhelming power and glory of God. The song is very balanced – from the dynamics to the light approach of guitars to the swing chorus – and has been done so well that it deserves to be called a song that "*empowering generations to win generations*", borrowing the words of Pastor Bj Pridham. There are also two more new songs which was done by Bj Pridham and Ed Cash in this album, "**Father**" and "**My Soul Longs For Jesus**", which at first blush will make the listener nostalgic, the songs being reminiscent of an old song or hymn. The lyrics and arrangement of the song plays like a modern-day hymnal, which has been lacking in today's EDM-influenced and guitar-driven style of worship. Listeners both young and young at heart will be delighted to hear these tracks.

Putting some songs like "**Endless Praise**" and "**Made For Worship**" from their previous album *Endless Praise* really spikes the energy and creativity of this album.

The rendition of these hits from using heavy synths and spectacular drumbeats to the calming country guitar parts and powerful acoustic strumming was phenomenal, considering that the songs still manage to maintain the spirit of rejoicing and energy despite the simplicity of the production. In addition, they also added some tracks from their *This Is Our Time* album with a similar approach as the previous two songs mentioned. The song "**Nothing Is Impossible**" is also included in this compilation which is actually an extended version because of the beautiful, powerful, and yet simple *third* verse of the song. Also, listeners will like the way they slow down the tempo, which gives the audience a mixture of both a prayerful and a joyful song.

Another one of my favorite tracks in this album is the song "**Covered**", which is from *This Is Our Time* (a previously released album). The song takes you to an intimate moment of worship, as if transporting you to a big, quiet place and just surrounded by God's holy presence and covering. This is really a good song to listen to, especially in the morning and during quiet time. This track for sure will set the mood of your day with God. A song coming from the same album was likewise added, entitled "**Leave Me Astounded**". "**This Is The Day**" on the other hand presents a twist by giving the floor to a female worship leader while at the same time tastefully adding click tracks to give the song a punchier sound. The album ends with a reminder from the lyrics of the song "**This Is Our Time**", which says "*This will be the best time of our lives as we encounter Your love again...This is our time, this is our place, this is our moment to lift Your name.*" Ending the album with such a lively song exemplifies the non-stop worship and culture that Planetshakers are well known for.

My closing words for this review are simple: "**It has been nailed from heaven and now, delivering it to earth overflowing.**" The album perfectly embodies the title from because of how the songs have been arranged to describe the outback region in Australia. The simplicity and beautiful scenery in a place like the outback region is what inspires this album. No tricky production, no emphasis on technical aspects, but just a pure, organic sound – leading the mind, soul, and heart to connect with God.

From a Moment to a Movement

Live in Manila, A Review

By Daniel Alberto G. Guinigundo

HAVING had the rare opportunity to almost always catch the Gospel Music greats visit Manila—Hillsong, Israel Houghton, and even the legend himself, Don Moen—the level of anticipation that I had for the Planetshakers was nowhere near extraordinary. As with any Christian trooping into the Big Dome that August 14th, I was expecting to be hoarse and dripping with sweat from jumping to all of their high energy songs. Being a Worship Leader myself, I prepared myself to get tips and tricks on how to lead congregational worship; this was my chance to see them outside Youtube.

The Concert started late, probably with all the clamor for the high priced merchandise, usual Friday traffic, and the Band's technical issue. Together with most of the Worship Team Members, the Ushering Ministry, and the Menorah staff, we were seated right smack in the middle of Upper Box A, with a perfect view of the stage. The crowd was more than active—with just a blare of a familiar tune, everyone would end up screaming. As the lights dimmed, I think I could speak for every person in the arena that we were not expecting what would occur that night.

No other artist could put on a concert much like the Planetshakers. The synchronization of their lights to the screen and the sounds were near perfect; it was a treat for the senses. With the cool environment and fellow Christians by your side, there was no other place you would rather be and there was nothing you would rather do than worship. The whole two hours went by more quickly than it came—yes, we got our expected round of jumping and screaming to the tunes we loved best like “Turn it Up”, “Nothing is Impossible”, “Endless Praise”, and “Put Your Hands Up”; but it was safe to say that the night more than exceeded our expectations.

With all their level of technical skill and artistry, the Planetshakers, before anything else, changed our perspective on how we would be viewing the night. Worship Pastor Sam Evans could not have put it in better words—*“We are not here as the Planetshakers performing for you; we are here, together with you, in connecting our hearts with Jesus!”* From that point on, it wasn't just about the foreign artists—it was about the million Christians inside the arena giving glory to the One who deserves it all. That shift of focus and mindset all the more made me admire the Planetshakers—all the things they seemingly did “for show” was secondary to their main purpose which was **to lift up Jesus.**



Lastly, I just felt a genuine love for the Filipino people from the Planetshakers. More than just uttering generic Filipino words like *Mabuhay* (which they did, by the way), they remarked that the Philippines was a place where the “loudest, most passionate worshipers” come from. More than that, we were surprised to learn that they were recording that night! For the first time live, they sang one of their new songs, “Momentum”, before the end of their set-list. Naturally, it was received warmly by higher jumps, louder screams, overjoyed faces; everyone was just eager to worship! With their pure intention of connecting with the Pinoys, they chose one person from the audience, through an on-line contest, to play alongside them. Just imagining to be singing and playing with Worship Pastor Sam Evans and Songwriter and Producer Joth Hunt was more than enough.

The night closed with a feeling of euphoria—as the Planetshakers put it, everyone attending that night’s concert would be “sleeping better” tonight. But aside from that, the Planetshakers made sure that we would have an encounter; a moment with Him—a moment that could produce a momentum, which could then transform into a movement.



MANILA v. FOOD:

By Daniel Alberto G. Guinigundo

Foodie Trends to Watch Out for this 2015

UNDENIABLY, Manila has become the mecca for foodies, largely due to the proliferation of social media food photographers, globalism, and the inescapable truth that food is, and always will be, part of the culture and identity of us Pinoys.

Similar to fashion, culinary trends come and go. For the first half of 2015, *The Menorah* makes a list of all the foodie trends that you have to catch up on, whether it be for a quick discipleship session or a full-on, no holds barred weekend cheat meal; just goes to show that the palette of Filipinos have indeed expanded.

1. FOOD WITH A CONSCIENCE.

How dishes with the words 'organic', 'all-natural', and 'grass-fed' became more than a fad here in the country is still a question left unanswered, especially to a people who loves all things fried and greasy. Thanks to the restaurants that have popped up serving food tastier than your usual 2,500 calorie meal, you will all the more change your mind about vegan and healthy cuisine.

Top choices of *The Menorah* include Green Pastures (Shangri-la East Wing, and Eastwood Mall) by none other than famed chef, Robby Goco of Cyma, Earth Kitchen (White Plains), a collaboration between Melissa Yeung and Hizon's Catering, and Grace Park (One Rockwell) by Margarita Fores of Cibo.

Interestingly, these restaurants feature a rustic and farmhouse ambience; a foreshadowing of the dishes to come. Must tries include Green Pastures' Blue Ribbon Burger (Think: wagyu beef) and Milkeggshoney dessert (organic white honeycomb!), Earth Kitchen's Camote tops Ravioli, and Uni Negra Risotto, and Grace Park's Cioppino (a rich, tomato soup with fresh seafood fare), Muscovado beef belly, and the Eton Mess (a take on the British dessert composed of meringue, cream, raspberries, and blackberries).



Blue Ribbon Burger



Camote tops Ravioli



Eton Mess



Milkeggshoney Dessert



Uni Negra Risotto



Muscovado beef belly

2. INTERNATIONAL GIANTS.

With the successful opening of Michelin starred restaurant Tim Ho Wan and the American breakfast icon IHOP, it isn't surprising that a plethora of foreign chains have taken notice of our love for food. This year, several chains have sprung up, changing the epicurean landscape like never before. With almost a cult following, Dean and DeLuca has opened just this quarter at the Edades Tower in Rockwell, Makati. Serving up more than just dessert, the travel (and the traffic!) is made worth it by their Hokkaido Cheesecake, a pillowy cheesecake infused with cream and topped with a strawberry, Fleur de Sel, a salted dark chocolate layer cake, decadent in every bite, and their sourdough pizzas.



Sourdough Pizza



Laduree



Hokkaido Cheesecake



Halal Guys



Pink's Hotdogs

If you think that chewy, hot pizza crust is the best thing since sliced bread, this one is for you! For the more discriminating market, French patisserie king, Laduree, known for the invention of the *macaron* back in 1862, is set to open its doors in Rockwell late this 2015. For those no-fuss eaters, the much-anticipated New York based Halal Guys will open in the new wing of Megamall—just thinking of the heaping portions of their chicken and gyro platters have gotten our mouths watering. Pink's Hotdogs, a California chain, will open its first international outlet in our shores, serving up hotdogs with crazy toppings (rumor has it that the creators of Pink's will come up with a Pinoy version, topped with rice!).

3. RAMENATION.

From fast food to five-star dining, Japanese food have practically become a staple for Filipinos. One dish in particular, has all the foodies raving: the unassuming Ramen. With only three components to its name—toppings, the noodles, and the broth-- one steaming bowl is perfect for any rainy day. No wonder it has caused Filipinos to wait in crazy lines, longer than Tim Ho Wan. Definite must tries are Mitsuyado Sei-Men (Jupiter St., Makati) for their unique cheese dipping sauce (creamy cheese with noodles? It's a match made in heaven!) and their equally interesting ambience (its like eating in the middle of pre-war Japan!), International Ramen Giant, Ippudo Ramen (Megamall and Robinson's Ermita), and Ramen Nagi (Robinson's Ermita, SM Aura, SM North Edsa, UP Town Center) for their black king (squid ink ramen with a creamy, garlicky, and a slightly spicy broth!).



Ramen Nagi



Ippudo Ramen



Mitsuyado Sei-Men

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Woodrow Wilson C. Young
Writers/Contributors

Elsu U. Cabangon
April Eve G. Guinigundo
Consultants

Diwa C. Guinigundo
Head Consultant

2015 FOCIM Calendar of Activities

AUGUST

30 Thanksgiving Sunday

SEPTEMBER

4-6 Leadership Training and Team Building

12 ENLARGE: A Financial Literacy Summit

27 Leader's Devotion

OCTOBER

3 Gen-C Youth 4th Vertical Series

25 Leader's Devotion

30 Prayer and Fasting (Midnight Prayer)

- FOCIM QC Anniversary
- Gen-C Youth Bonfire

NOVEMBER

6-7 Leader's Camp

14 2nd Water Baptism

- Gen-C Youth 5th Vertical Series

DECEMBER

5 Brighter Hope Live

27 Thanksgiving Service



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