

# RUNNER

rebuilding lives . rekindling hope . restoring dignity

***“Set me free from my prison,  
that I may praise Your name.”***

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**Psalm 142:7**





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# RUNNER

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# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Starting with this issue, we have decided to name our newsletter as “Runner.” This is in reference to what a “runner” is in the context of the inmates in the New Bilibid Prisons. A runner is a messenger. He is responsible to deliver messages to other inmates. He informs them if they have a visitor. He tells them if they have a letter or package so they can claim it. He notifies them if they have a “calling” or an appointment like for example, an interview for parole. The messenger is a bearer of news so to speak.

With this and the succeeding issues of “Runner,” we would like our newsletter to be the bearer of news from the prison: updates from the different PJPS programs and activities, sharing from beneficiaries, reflections of those who had spent time conversing with the inmates, and thoughts of those who had been released from prison, among others. Through our newsletters, we would like to spread the news from our end.

In my almost nine years in the prison ministry, I can attest to the reality of so many people being blessed in the ministry. Through our issues of “Runner,” we would like to share the good news of how blessings abound within the prison walls and through our ministry. Through this, we hope that people are not only updated on the goings-on in PJPS but also to inspire people to be involved or continue to be involved.

My experience of being in full time prison ministry has blessed me in my vocation and my person. Allow me to share the words of St. Therese of Lisieux in “Her Last Conversations.” She wrote, “Everything is a grace, everything is the direct effect of our father's love - difficulties, contradictions, humiliations, all the soul's miseries, her burdens, her needs - everything, because through them, she learns humility, realizes her weakness. Everything is a grace because everything is God's gift. Whatever be the character of life or its unexpected events - to the heart that loves, all is well.”

May our God bless us all as we continue to be instruments of His love and mercy to the lost, the last and the least.

*Fr. Eli Rowdy Y. Lumbo, SJ*





## I AM SPECIAL

by Jesusa Ramos

With more than 120 PJPS scholars, parents, volunteers and staff in attendance at Itaas Elementary School, the regular Formation Session of the Scholarship Program for the year began in celebrating the Year of the Youth with the theme Filipino Youth in Mission: Beloved, Gifted, and Empowered.

The session introduced the scholars and parents to this year's celebration of the Year of the Youth through engaging the participants into activities highlighting their being beloved, gifted, and empowered; that they are called into mission, and to be witnesses of God's love in our world.

It was the first time that all the levels of scholars and the parents were merged for the formation session. They were provided with fun opportunity to interact with different age group, and despite of this, they successfully carried out their group task. Through the tableau game, participants' creativeness was utilised, and topped with physical effort the activity has created joyful atmosphere. . More so it was apt for the PJPS scholarship volunteers and PJPS staff get to know one another. It was also an opportune time for the PJPS scholarship-volunteers, and staff to get to know each other.

The school supplies drive initiated by Mr. Henry Palmones, Jr. generated more than the needed school supplies and bags for the PJPS scholars, thus they were shared with the students inside the New Bilibid Prison as well.





## REIGNITING IGNATIAN VOLUNTEERISM

*by Michelle Vincoy*

“What more can we do as volunteers?” These were the words of Ms. Jeraldine Ching that challenged the thirty (30) PJPS volunteers during the first PJPS Volunteers’ Formation Session for this year. It happened last June 30, 2019, at St. Joseph Chapel at South Green Heights Village, Muntinlupa City. It was a day packed with talks and sharing facilitated by Ms. Ching and Mr. Miguel Luis Vergara. Ms. Ching encouraged the volunteers to look deeper into their traits and how these traits can be improved to better serve the community. Ignatian spirituality calls it “magis”—what more can we do. Aside from reflecting on the call and virtues of the volunteers, both facilitators also shared some highlights in the life and teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Integrated into the talks were small group sharing of the volunteers. In the sharing, the call to serve of the volunteers were deepened and they were deeply moved to respond to the call to love and service. After the sumptuous lunch, Ms. Ching presented the whole year module drafted by the parents’ team “at-a-glance” to be used by the volunteers for scholars’ and their parents’ formation sessions. The modules were patterned after the theme of the Year of the Youth which is Beloved, Gifted, and Empowered. Ms. Ching also facilitated the preparation of Module for August per level. After which each of the group presented their unique and creative module for August.





Capping the whole day activity was the celebration of the Eucharist presided by Rev. Fr. Firmo “JunG” Bargayo, SJ. The readings of the Mass captured all the reflections of the day. In the gospel, Jesus taught that in following Him, one should not bother oneself with concerns of family, work, etc. but trustfully and faithfully follow His lead.

In his homily, Fr. Jun-G emphasized to all the volunteers what it means to be “free”—to exercise our freedom in following the Lord. He further said, quoting the Spiritual Exercises, “we should not prefer neither health nor sickness, riches nor poverty, honor nor dishonor, long life nor a short life. . . . Our one desire and choice should lead us more to Jesus”. How can this be? Fr. JunG said that Ignatius of Loyola teaches that we have to be careful with our attachments to our desires—our desire for health, long life, honor, wealth for it can also prevent us from that which we were made for: to love, serve, and praise God. This may seem like a bizarre—who wouldn’t desire to be healthy? Who wouldn’t want a long life? But Ignatius is asking us to examine our desires more deeply and ask the important question, why? Desiring health so that we can be proud of how healthy we are is very different from desiring health so that we can serve God and others better. If our desires hinder us from loving God and serving our neighbor, then we need to let them go. The homily shared by Fr. JunG deeply challenged the volunteers to let go of their inordinate desires and attachments so that they could be more available to respond to the call to service.



To end the day, immediately after the Mass, the volunteers gathered around the image of St. Joseph for a photo opportunity and enjoyed the simple snacks.





## COOL AND NOT SO COOL

*by Eya Pangilinana*

July 7, 2019 — 20 alumni scholars from different batches gathered to reconnect and attend the first PJPS Alumni Recollection facilitated by Fr. Jun-G Bargayo Jr., SJ. Also present in the event were Fr. Eli Rowdy Y. Lumbo, SJ, Precy Miranda, Gwen Llano, and Jason Inlayo. The gathering started with a Sunday mass followed by the recollection proper. Fr. Jun-G instructed us, participants, to share with the group what's "Cool" and "Not Cool" in our lives.

As an alumna, I am used to sharing my ups and downs with my co-scholars and volunteers during the monthly formation. Being in the same situation with the rest of the group, I always felt like the circle we formed in the PJPS office was my safe place to lay my baggage down and be vulnerable without fear of being judged, criticized or rejected. With them, I didn't have to filter what I said or be mindful of what I shared. I was my true self.

More than the financial assistance, we loved to be with these people who understood us on a deeper level. We looked forward to the activities, sharing, and learnings given by our Ates and Kuyas, as well as the bond we made with our fellow scholars who had become our truest friends even after we graduated. During the recollection, I saw familiar faces of previous co-scholars and new faces of those who recently graduated. I found myself looking back to the days when we were still students: confused and unsure about our future, striving and trying our best to plan our goals which were mostly for our families.

But more than anything, I remembered how PJPS was always there, guiding us and making sure that we were walking in the right path. When we formed a circle at the PJPS Multipurpose Hall that Sunday, I heard, once again, stories of struggles and battles

won. I heard stories of failure and success. We wept with each other as we narrated our sufferings, and we laughed at each other's good and happy memories. I couldn't help but feel proud of being a part of the PJPS family. I was surrounded by people who have endured a lot in their lives at a very young age, but these people have overcome life's worst hardships. Most of us were still facing difficult situations, but you will see the positivity and hope radiating from their faces despite the tears.

I can truly say that PJPS played a big role in getting us to where we are today. In each of the participant's stories, you will hear the learnings and advice they cherished through the years. Everyone expressed their gratefulness for being a part of a community who accepted them and cared for them like family. Indeed, PJPS gave hope not just to our incarcerated fathers, but also to us and our families.

I believe each of us is a "wounded soul." Some might be still in the process of healing, but a big part of ourselves are healed, nonetheless. And PJPS was a constant presence in the process of our healing.

We, the Alumni, are the living proof of how PJPS rebuild lives and rekindle hope.

Many students rarely have opportunities such as this and so being part of the PJPS Scholarship Program is one of the greatest opportunity I had. The program itself helped me in so many ways not only in my academic and personal goals but especially in terms of spiritual and emotional support. Attending monthly sessions positively influenced my character deeply, especially the stories that I hear from my fellow scholars. The volunteer's undivided attention and commitment to the foundation also inspires me to do better for myself and for my family. This program has positively transformed me as a student, as an individual and reinforced my sense of purpose in peace work and education, and my belief that we all have a responsibility and a daily role to play in building safer, more just, progressive, and humane communities. Therefore, I am grateful to the PJPSFI Scholarship Program for demonstrating a strong social presence and support for the community here in NBP Muntinlupa

*Don Miranda*

## WITNESSING GOD'S LOVE

*by Emilio Divinagracia*

Ako po si Emilio C. Divinagracia, taga-Sta. Maria, Bulacan. Nakulong ako sa kasong *Qualified Theft* sa *Baguio City Jail* noong April 20, 2012. Pagkalipas po ng tatlong taon, nasentensyahan po ako ng dalawa hanggang labindalawang taon at isang araw noong April 2015. At noong ika-25 ng Mayo 2015 nilipat na po ako sa *National Bilibid Prison* (NBP) sa *Reception and Diagnostic Center* (RDC). Naging estudyante ako sa *college* unit at tumutulong ako sa simbahan. Tumagal po ako ng isang taon at siyam na buwan sa NBP at sa mga panahon pong iyon ang *Philippine Jesuit Prison Service* (PJPS) ang nagsisilbi ko pong pamilya na gumabay at umalalay sa akin, hanggang sa makalaya ako bilang *Parolee* noong ika-30 ng Enero 2017.

Nang makalaya na po ako, umuwi po ako sa Bulacan sa aking pamilya at sinubukan ko pong mag-*apply* ng trabaho. Sa loob po ng dalawang buwan wala pong tumanggap sa akin sa lahat ng inaplayan kong trabaho. Sa awa ng Diyos, sa pangyayaring iyon napunta po ako sa PJPS. Naging kasambahay, pahinante at *volunteer* sa mga *activities* sa loob ng dalawang taon. Nito lang pong Hunyo 2019, ako ay naging ganap na empleyado ng PJPS bilang isang *bookkeeper*. Napakalaki po ng tulong ng PJPS sa aking buhay. Kaya taos puso ang aking pasasamalat sa PJPS lalo na po sa Panginoong Diyos dahil siya po ang nagbigay ng mga taong ito sa akin. Kaya ngayong ika-27 Hulyo 2019 sa ika-25 Anibersaryo ng PJPS malugod po akong nagpapasalamat sapagkat kung hindi dahil sa inyo wala po ako ngayon sa aking narating.



# PROGRAM UPDATES

## Scholarship Program



Formation session for the scholars and the parents was scheduled from 3 Sundays to 1 Sunday a month.

For S/Y 2019-2020, there are 89 PJPS scholars: 79 coming from Metro Manila; 10 from Davao Penal Colony:

### Metro Manila

College	28
High School	23
Elementary	28

### Davao Penal Colony

Senior HS	2
Junior HS	2
Elementary	6

Last June 9, 2019, during the combined formation session of the scholars and their parents, 79 donated school bags and supplies were distributed. Thanks to Living Bread Prayer Community of RFM

## Advocacy Program



June 8. PJPS participated in the 6th New Evangelization Conference held at PICC Forum. It gathered more than 3, 000 people, mostly youth. PJPS and many other organizations promoted its various advocacies and services. More than 300 signed-up in PJPS booth and a lot have expressed to take part in our mission

June 11 & 13. PJPS participated in DLSU SIGLO, a celebration of Vision-Mission Week. The two day fair aimed to raised awareness among students to various advocacies they can engage in the future. PJPS and other COSCA partners are given the opportunity to promote their advocacies and programs.

June 20. Representatives from different organizations who are advocates of human rights gathered at CBCP to commemorate the 13th Anniversary of the abolition of Death Penalty. It was followed by a meeting discussing on the possible strategies in lobbying to the legislators and other updates of the organizations.

June 24. Fr. Jun-G Bargayo, SJ attended the FLAG "Tending Life" Forum in Cebu.

### Immersion/Exposures:

#### June

- 7 - DLSU MBA Students
- 15 - Gideo Sarreal Family & Friends
- 19 - Vicariates of St. Rita de Cascia and St. Anthony de Padua
- 20 - Arrupe Month of Jesuit Scholastics
- 21 & 22 - AdMU Punla Immersion Program

#### July

- 9-12 - St. Aloysius College and St. Ignatius College Riverview
- 10 - Notre Dame of Greater Manila Batch 1
- 18-21 - Order of the Servants of Mary Immersion
- 21 - Ten Outstanding Students of the Philippines (NCR Community)
- 24 - Notre Dame of Greater Manila Batch 2

## Socio-Pastoral Program

### Social

**Oplan Dalaw in Minimum Security Compound c/o Friday Group.** This is aimed especially for PDL who are "visitorless" for a long time.

**RIPE (Reintegration Program for Ex-PDLs)**, in collaboration with Ayala Foundation MCX, PJPS and Second Chances Foundation, assistance program for released inmates to find employment. The Second Chances Project successfully employed a second chance taker in the person of Aldritz Carreon. He was former student/inmate in Medium Security Compound. He is currently employed as sales coordinator in DTI NCR One Town One Product (OTOP) Hub in Makati City.

Finished construction of the dorm cell in the Minimum Security Compound in coordination with OIC Palisoc.

Donated and installed new water motor pumps for the Maximum, Medium, and RDC Security Compounds.

### Medical

Medical assistance of medicines in Medium Compound.

Last July 5, there was a Dental Mission in the Medium Security Compound, there were eight volunteer-dentists and was able to cater more than 70 patients.

### Pastoral

Fr. Eli and Fr. Firmo were appointed as part time chaplains by DG Nicanor Faeldon.

The Quarterly Volunteers Formation last June 30, 2019 was facilitated by Ms. Jeraldine Ching and Mr. Miguel Vergara. Focused on Deepening Ignatian Spirituality.

Regular Formation for the PJPS staff was conducted on July 10. The film "Ignacio" was shown and this was followed by a deepening session.

## CONTACT US



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