

# SPYA MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2020

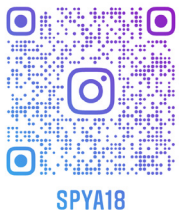
Issue 01

*How the Grace of God  
assisted my vocation*  
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*70 Years of God's  
Holy Spirit*  
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*The Beginning and Progress  
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## *Introducing the Young Adults of the St. Peters Apostle Mission Parish*



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St. Peters Young Adults



# SPYA MAGAZINE PURPOSE

The Saint Peter Apostle Young Adults (SPYA) magazine is to share the word of God to all the young adults and the wider community. The main purpose of creating the SPYA magazine is to draw young adults closer to God and, reflect and meditate on their relationship with God. We encourage for all young adults to share their stories, testimonies or experiences and share it to others through this magazine. We strongly support magazine ideas from the wider community to help and support young adults and their spiritual life.

The most crucial and valuable attributes that a good Catholic/Christian can acquire is through your feelings, emotions, thoughts and learning experience with God and His faithful community. Therefore, giving the young adults an opportunity to write is allowing them to express the spiritual language of the soul deep within.

We young people of faith strongly believe God is speaking to us every day and we are blessed to His love to the whole world.

*“And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”*

Micah 6:8



*from Greg and Lucas  
- Magazine Coordinators*

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# MESSAGE FROM FATHER VINCENT



I am delighted and pleased to see the initiative of the St Peter's Young Adults' (SPYA) group to publish a magazine and I extend my best wishes to them to fulfil their dream and to be fruitful. St Peter's parish is really blessed with the presence of various vibrant ministries. With gratitude, I lookback to the origin and growth of the SPYA group at St. Peter's. The origin of SPYA can be compared to the growth of a mustard seed in the Gospel parable. In a short span of time it has an amazing growth and has yielded lovely fruits in the community. Almighty God has done great things in our community through the ministry of SPYA.

SPYA members gather every week and spend some time for prayer, sharing and discussion which eventually led to finding

out their identity and respond to their call. Those meetings envisaged their dream to witness Christ in the community. And from this first step they continued to grow in their involvement with the Parish and Parish Community.

During the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SPYA members did not remain in their comfort zones. They managed to continue their weekly gatherings on zoom and supported each other in their struggles. Moreover, they extended their support to the people who were facing struggles during this unprecedented time. Also, I truly value the SPYA's readiness to take the leadership of 'Online Children's Liturgy' when I expressed this idea. value the p of 'Online Children's Liturgy' when I expressed this idea.

## Message to the community of Young Adults:

Dear Young friends, I do appreciate your role and presence which bring a lot of initiative and flavour of youthfulness in the parish community. Your call is to be prophets of this new age, messengers of God's love, drawing people to the Father and building a future of hope for all humanity. Hence, don't be afraid to say "yes" to Jesus, to find your joy in doing his will, giving yourself completely to the pursuit of holiness, and using all your talents in the service of others.

I conclude, by quoting Pope Francis on his Apostolic Exhortation CHRISTUS VIVIT to the Young People:

*"Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to world, and everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life."*

The very first words, then that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive.

With every blessing,

Father Vincent John CMI

Parish Priest.

by  
Father Vincent  
Parish Priest





Firstly, thank you, St. Peter's Young Adults group, for the privilege to write for your magazine.

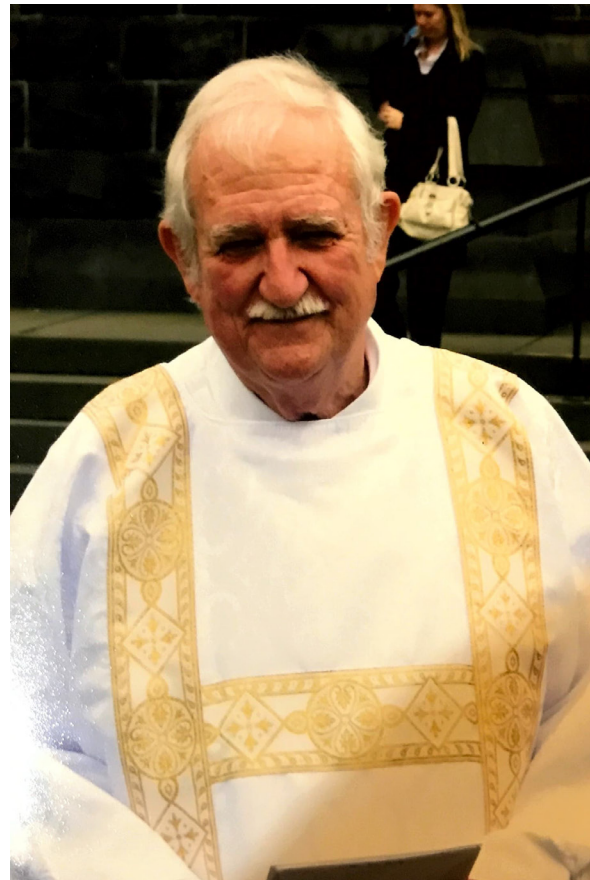
My Catholic faith has been instilled within me by my parents, grandparents and the good Catholic teachers at my previous schools. I am forever grateful to all these good and holy people who have been great examples to live out my Catholic faith.

To start, both sets of my grandparents were non-Catholic and born in England. My grandparents on my mother's side, Horace and Jetta Miles emigrated to South Africa around 1919 (shortly after World War 1). It was in South Africa that Horace (whom I never knew as he was killed during World War 2) decided to become a Catholic which influenced Jetta's decision to become a Catholic as well.

Horace and Jetta Miles had eleven children and my mother, Joan was the second child and the eldest daughter. My mother was always a very devout Catholic and a very practical woman while being a nursing sister. My father, John was born in England and was a non-Catholic but after marrying my mother Joan and having four children, he decided to become a Catholic. I was about seven years of age when my father was baptised and received into the Catholic Church.

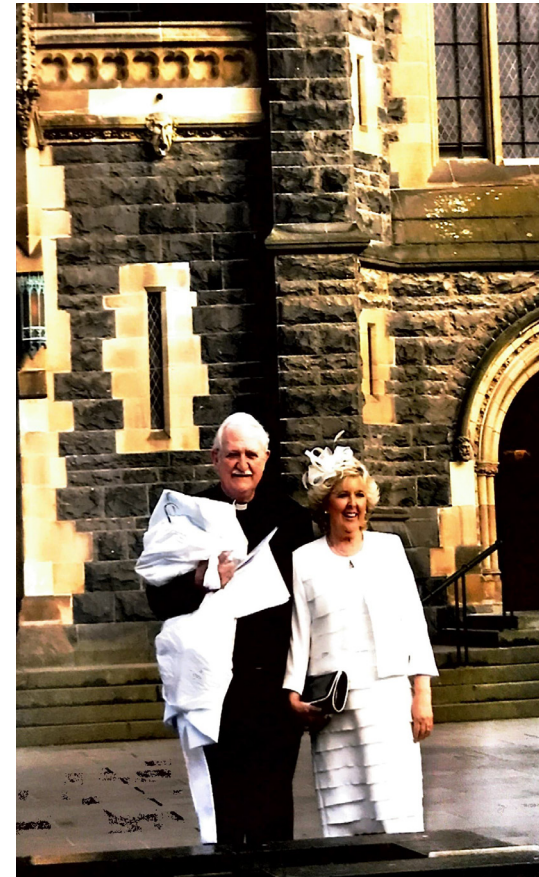
Our lives always were centred around the church life. From the age of seven, I was an altar boy, a cub, and a boy scout in Catholic troops. I attended Sunday Liturgy school for the preparation of the sacraments. Every day I would accompany my grandmother, Jetta to daily mass, hurry home to have breakfast and leave for school. Jetta was a very holy lady, and this wonderful woman of faith is the reason I strongly believe that I have been influenced to love and be entirely committed to my Catholic faith.

During high school, I was educated by the 'Marist Brothers' who have a great devotion to Our Blessed Lady Mary. So it is that I have always had a special place in my heart for Mary, our dear great Mother of God. I often turn to Mary and say a quick 'Hail Mary' in times of trouble, panic or stress. I always ask Mary to keep me close to her Divine Son, Jesus. After high school, I did my one-year National Service which was compulsory back then in South Africa. After National Service, there was military training every year which involved military camps and expeditions for around a month.



I saw two episodes of active military service in Angola, and eventually I reached the rank of a captain in an armoured car regiment, the 'Light Horse Regiment'.

I returned home after my initial National Service and returned back into the parish life. I joined a youth group at my parish Church called the 'Young Christian Workers' (Y.C.W.) It was great as we organised fun things for the youth of the parish, such as movie nights, ice-skating expeditions, picnics, dances and cheese and wine evenings in the parish. A careers evening for the matriculation classes were also organised at both our local convent school of 'The Holy Family' and for the 'Marist Brothers' students. This was one of the most wonderful times of my young life. I made great friends in the Y.C.W. and we had so much fun, whilst always giving time to pray.



It was at the Y.C.W. on a Wednesday evening in March 1971, that I met Kathleen who had recently emigrated to Johannesburg with her family. Kathleen is from an Irish family and was brought up in Coventry, England. Kathleen was steeped in her faith and was looking to join a group at the church. Kathleen's mother had seen the advertisement in the parish bulletin about a youth group in the parish, and said to Kathleen that she should try and see if she likes it. So Kathleen set out that Wednesday evening and loved the group. In February 1974, Kathleen and I were married in our parish church of St. Francis of Assisi.

It was in this group of young Catholic members, just like you at SPYA, that our faith grew, matured and was supported through other committed young Catholic people. Both Kathleen and I have always felt that the Holy Spirit was indeed within us in those years at Y.C.W. Looking back we certainly see the Holy Spirit moving in our lives and sometimes in the most mysterious ways. Kathleen and I both say that those years were among the happiest years of our lives. We are very thankful to Almighty God for bringing us together in the Y.C.W.

In the 1970's, South Africa was still under the apartheid era where the mixing of different races was prohibited. However, it was the wonderful Father Albert Danker (a priest of mixed race) who introduced the Y.C.W movement to South Africa. We certainly interacted with other young people of different races, although due to the present time, meetings were done without attracting any attention. One evening, Father Danker was visited by the South African police who asked him for evidence and the Y.C.W. handbook. Father Danker handed the police the Bible and they never visited again.



In 1978, our son, Ryan was born and we moved into a new house which included a different parish. When Ryan was four, he started pre-school at the local 'Holy Rosary Convent' and Kathleen began to serve at the tuck-shop once a week. I started to help coach Ryan's soccer team at the convent and joined the 'St. Vincent de Paul Society' at our local parish of St. Therese's. I was a reader and part of the collection counting at the Sunday morning mass. Those were wonderful years. We loved being immersed into the Catholic school community. Kathleen started going to a prayer group which was run by two Irish nuns and teachers, Sister Mary and Sister Eileen. The nuns focused on many spiritual lessons including the deeper meanings behind the parables and gospel stories. The nuns explained why we Catholics should pray constantly with little aspirations. Kathleen expressed how it was the most wonderful prayer group that she has ever attended, which was 38 years ago.

In 1987, after much debating and soul-searching, we emigrated to Australia and started our new life in Melbourne. After a couple of years we moved into the parish of 'St Peter Apostle' in Hoppers Crossing. I joined the 'St. Vincent de Paul Society' at St. Peter's and was a Regional President for several years. I was a member of the 'Knights of the Southern Cross', a reader at mass and a Eucharistic minister with Kathleen. Both Kathleen and I conducted the R.C.I.A. for a few years and were involved in the baptism preparation, until the time I started my studies for the Diaconate. Around this time, Ryan was attending the 'Westbourne Grammar' school in Werribee and in his last year, Ryan was chosen to be the school captain in 1995. It was a great blessing for us to see our Catholic boy being honoured as school captain at an Anglican school. The parish priest, Father Barry Tobin joined and celebrated Ryan's inauguration as school captain. Ryan went on to Deakin University to study the double degree of Bachelor of Laws and Commence, and has been a chartered accountant for the last 20 years. Ryan met his future wife, Anna while studying and were married in 2006. Two of our former parish priests, Father Tobin and Father Bourke concelebrated the nuptial mass at 'St. Mary MacKillop Catholic Church' in Keilor. Anna is from a very strong, Polish Catholic family so for us this was a great blessing that Ryan married a young Catholic lady. We see all this as great blessings from God and an answer to our prayers.

In 2006, I saw a notice in the parish bulletin inviting Catholic men to become a deacon. After discussions with my then Parish priest, Father Greg Bourke, I applied to join the diaconate programme and discovered to my surprise that there were about 200 men that had applied. After many months, I was advised that I was accepted into the diaconate programme. There were seven men chosen and I was blessed to be one of them. Part of the diaconate programme was to obtain a Bachelor of Theology at the Catholic Theological College. I was 58 years of age and had to start studying once again. It was difficult for me but so rewarding as I loved being a part of the college life. It was a great day in March 2014, when I graduated and Kathleen, Ryan and Father Greg Bourke were there with me. Looking back, we certainly see how the Holy Spirit was moving in our lives and involved in my faith journey to become a deacon.

On the 27th of October 2012, one of the greatest days of my life is when I was ordained a

deacon with the six other deacons. We were ordained at 'St. Patrick's Cathedral' by Archbishop Denis Hart. The Archbishop formally appointed me to be the deacon at my own parish, St. Peter Apostle. It has been a wonderful faith journey for me and Kathleen to. I love researching and preparing for the Sunday homilies, and reflecting on the parish bulletin.



Kathleen assists me with the typing and editing of the homilies. My other diaconal duties are baptism, marriage preparation, marriages and funerals. I was privileged to baptise my two grandchildren, Lucy and Maximilian, at 'Saint Therese's Catholic Church' in Essendon. I was also privileged to be the deacon assisting at my dear mother's requiem mass in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Looking back I know that my Catholic faith is central to my and Kathleen's life. Both Kathleen and I are so grateful to all the wonderful people in our lives that influenced and assisted us in developing our Catholic faith.

We love being Catholic. There is no other way to say that. That's it in a nutshell. We love being Catholic.

***‘Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach’.***

by  
Charles English  
Parish Deacon





leadership value:

# HUMILITY

Humility is a value and virtue that God is constantly teaching me in my Christian journey, especially as a youth leader. Based on my reflections, prayer life and experiences, I used to think humility was just about putting others before me and not showing my knowledge. I've come to understand that being humble means much more than this. Now, I understand humility as having more to do with understanding and acknowledging myself before God and before others.

Accepting that I have gifts, talents and even material things I can and should share for the good of those around me. It also reminds me that I am not perfect, I do make mistakes but just as God is patient and forgiving with us, I should also be patient and forgiving with myself and others. Among many things,

being humble has allowed me to take the first step in starting the SPYA group in the parish.

This included organising parish events and leading the youth in prayer and religious teachings. Without accepting the call to 'do something' and with minimal skills that I thought I had, I wouldn't have had the chance to witness the fruitfulness of the SPYA group and its members for which I praise God.

As I help build a new set of future youth leaders, God is constantly reminding me that

by  
**Angelique**  
Youth Group Leader



It was early 2018 and my daughter Rhea had come back home after staying at University. Having been heavily involved in Christian Union at La Trobe University, she wanted to start something for youth in our parish and approached me on how to go about it. I was forming to be a Deacon at the time and was also quite involved in the parish. The same year, the Australian Catholic Bishops had launched the Year of the Youth 2018 and so we approached a parishioner Angelique who was involved with junior youth in our parish and within a week we had 4 leaders (Josine and Angela being the others). That's when the SPYA group took off.

The ministry was formed for young adults of our parish to find a safe space to gather, learn and share about the faith, in which they help one another to face the challenges of life and to bring the joy of Christ into their hearts. My main aim for the group was to pray together and for each other while embracing the Good News of Christ, through word and mission, towards our community, especially those who are struggling to find mateship.

Young people are the future of not only our country but also are the future of the Church. Bringing them together in a safe and friendly environment would enable them to find themselves and in turn their purpose in life, thereby enabling them to grow individually and collectively through prayer, worship and mission. Young people are the heartbeat of our church and their involvements in various church activities brightens up the church.



Their enthusiasm and search for joy is much needed in our church, which is currently struggling to find its place in society.

My message to young people is simple "God loves you as you are, He wants to embrace you with His love and secure you in his embrace. He wants what's best for you".

Once you understand this and in turn embrace his love, your life will never be the same. Wish you all the best and may your ministry grow and reach everyone in our community and beyond. God Bless you all.

by  
**Royden D'Souza**  
Parish Deacon - St James





# MESSAGE FROM SPYA COORDINATOR

As I reflect on my journey over the last 12 months as the Youth Coordinator in our parish, I feel truly blessed to be associated with the SPYA group. They are not only energetic, passionate and committed but a group of like-minded individuals who are deeply rooted in Christ.

Many of our parishioners may know the SPYA's group from the various activities that they organise for our parish community, including youth mass or cultural activities like movie night, bingo etc. However, what many may not know is the incredible journey and commitment that has gone behind forming this group



It started with 4 passionate young adults coming together in 2018, with a vision to create a group that would provide a platform for young people to learn and grow within Christ and share back towards the community. Even though the uptake was slow in the early days, the young adults were patient in not losing sight of their goal.

. Their perseverance, hard work and prayers have formed this strong youth group who today shine in our parish. This is a commendable journey! And I must call out that even through COVID and the changing landscape, they have consistently stayed connected every week to pray, learn and cherish their sense of belonging.



I have not only seen this group grow from strength to strength over my time, but I have also had the opportunity to learn and be inspired. I have learnt that if you truly set your heart to something, you can achieve marvellous results. This is evident through the 'Children's Ministry' that the team runs every fortnight and the 'Praise and Worship' led by the group every Sunday before their meetings.



by  
**Sharon D'Silva**  
*Parish Youth  
Coordinator*

It has been an eye opener on how simple yet powerful, connections with our Almighty Father can fill you with awe. Most importantly, I have learnt the power of comradeship, friendship and being there for each other which this group does effortlessly. We are truly blessed as a parish to have this SPYA group and I thank Father Vincent for giving me this opportunity to be a part of it!





*SPYA wishes you a*

**Merry  
Christmas**

*and a Happy New Year!*



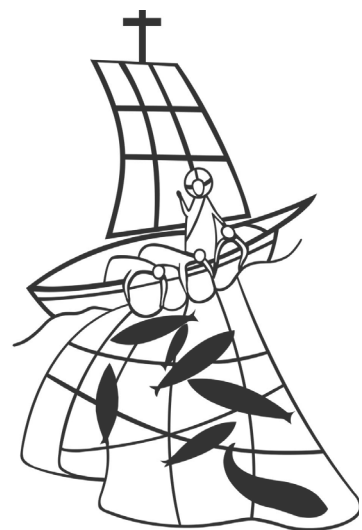


# St Peter Apostle YOUNG ADULTS GROUP

by  
Josine  
Youth Group Leader



The St. Peter Young Adults group envision a welcoming community where opportunities are created for young adults to encounter Christ, deepen their faith, and continually be transformed by the knowledge of God's Love. The 'Young Adults' promote these opportunities through prayer, involvement in the parish and community service, and provision of an open environment where these opportunities are consistently shared and experienced.



## OUR MISSION

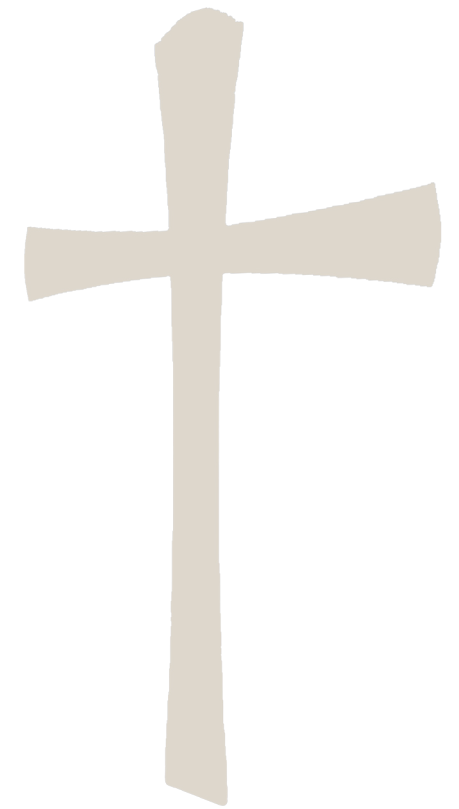
Open Conversation, Prayer and Service

We aim to inspire young adults to share the love of God to our neighbours, near and far, with joyful hearts. We are steadfast in seeking for the spirit of prayer and devotion and to promote the role of the church and the gospel in the lives of young people and to be instruments of God; building up the kingdom of God through service.

## OUR VALUES

Relationship with God, Community,  
Witness and Leadership

We welcome, include, and create genuine relationships with our peers and recognize our part in building a community of love and respect through authenticity. We take part in the sacraments and services that build our faith, show our beliefs and that help us to be faithful to the teachings of the Church. We are courageous in saying 'YES' to serving God and allow the Holy Spirit to enlighten us to lead others through our God-given gifts and talents; we come to receive and leave serving.



## OUR GOALS

Community, Formation and  
Sustainability

We aim to build a strong foundation centred on God by empowering the youth and young adults with confidence and persistence that will grow, be shared and be upheld into the future.





The very nature of a seed is that it must be buried and broken in order to sprout. Then, the seed has to undergo all sorts of nourishment, care and protection to allow it to grow. In fact, there are times we are tempted to stop watering or caring for the seed because the plant has not been able to grow the way we want and in some cases, we even abandon the seedling and plant a new seed altogether.

Similarly, the so-called 'Seed of Vocation', has been gifted and planted in every one of us by our loving God. Indeed, we are responsible for continuing to grow during happy and challenging times. The wisdom and plans of God have been installed in us even before we were in the womb, no wonder God's given vocation is so mysterious.

My testimony begins when I was in the seminary pursuing for the priesthood with all my heart and mind. I had such a strong feeling to serve God in a radical

way that I gave up connections with families, friends and material things. The formations in the seminary were strict and hard to follow but through the radical rules and demands of formations, I was well-formed and molded into a better person. I never thought of leaving the seminary, but after a long period of discernment, I made the decision to no longer continue my journey for priesthood.

Having left the seminary, I started to doubt and rationalise God's plan for my life. I regretted the years I spent back in the seminary as if they were a waste of time and questioned my purpose in life. After all the years of sacrifice, pain and personal transformations that I endured, What did I have to show for it? Who am I now? I was restlessly haunted by these words. I thought I failed in responding to God's call and assumed that the designated plan for me was deteriorating slowly.



*“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”*

2 Corinthians 12:9

These very powerful words changed the outlook on the situation I found myself in, knowing that His power is made perfect in my weakness. I never realized that God's plan would be to serve and love him just where I currently am, and before I knew it, I was asked to join the leadership in the 'Catholic Kachin Community' after arriving in Melbourne. Moreover, I have been blessed to be part of the SPYA group with whom I got to share what I had learnt and personally be able to nurture my faith once again.

The gift of vocation won't grow to its perfection if we only rely on our strength

and knowledge alone.

We need His Grace. Being in the constant thought pattern of 'who or what I am', will only make our hearts restless. Our thoughts and minds should be in the wonder of 'who God is' and 'what He is'. It's not 'what I can' but instead it's 'what He can'. For we are just clay, not a potter, so be ready to be molded.

The creator of the seed is not us, our task is to grow. Don't be afraid to be broken in order to grow, as the owner of the gift of life is God Himself. Seek the will of God every single day with love and serve with the vocation you are being called for.



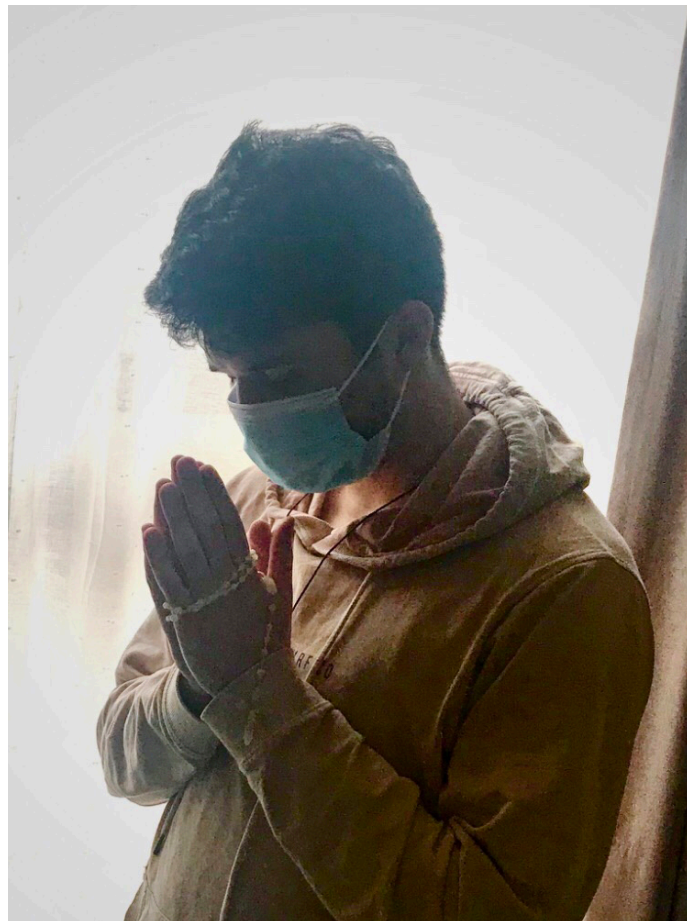
by  
Greg Hkawng  
SPYA member



# MY BELIEF ON SUFFERING AND COVID-19

During this difficult, unforgettable and emotional time period, the whole year of 2020 has been a roller coaster of events and it's fair to say that many people believe that it has been a waste of a year. Oddly enough, I think it's been an amazing year of my life.

It began in early July 2020, when I contracted the virus known as COVID-19. Time impacted me in a different way. For me, I knew that the Lord was always going to counsel me through it but once my sister and my dad contracted it, a sense of worry began to appear.



It was a difficult time for my whole family as my dad was an asthmatic and admitted to hospital twice because of the virus. Thank the Lord that on my dad's birthday, our whole family were cleared as testing negative.

It was a challenging experience for our family but I was glad I would soon be able to start uni again, or so I thought. A couple of weeks later after testing negative, my immune system had weakened and my body was suffering severely from multiple health problems, I was bed-ridden and began to feel that God was punishing me but thank the Lord again, after nearly two months, I was healthy.

This journey was physically difficult for myself and my family but spiritually, I was impacted the most by doubt and fear. In both sicknesses, I began to question God on why suffering

occurred to good people. It wasn't until I was bed-ridden, at my darkest moment, that I understood why. With the blessed works of mass and praise and worship, my faith grew stronger than before and the mighty hand of God provided me with wonderful social support.

The time period that we are going through is not easy for any of us. Through my experience and those of many others who are struggling differently, God is truly testing our faith and wanting us to seek His love through this difficult time in human history. During my time of suffering, I was recommended by a holy brother in the parish to read the book of Job. Truly, it is a book that has assisted me spiritually and I strongly recommend it to those who may feel that they are suffering during this time.

Don't be afraid of your suffering and don't let others affect your situation, instead look onto the glorious mercy that the Father Almighty is showing you and live it.

***“But those who suffer he delivers in their suffering; he speaks to them in their affliction”.***

**Job 36:15 (NIV)**

This is why I believe that the year 2020 is amazing to be lifted up by  
**Our Lord and Saviour.**



by  
**Lucas Nardella**  
*SPYA member*



# *“To sing, is to pray twice.”*

- St. Augustine

Music is one of the first reasons I joined SPYA and led me to my initial role to to help lead the youth choir. Music provided me with a way to truly pray from the heart and to experience the Holy Spirit in the purest way. Through this initial involvement, SPYA has become a massive part of my life and I have grown so much in my relationship with Christ and as an individual, simply because I said yes to singing for this group.



Music has also been a big part of SPYA. It has given us a reason to work together as a choir. We came together to sing for mass and that's how 'Youth Mass' came to be!

We use choir to regularly involve the youth of our parish them in our

prayers. We also empower each other as members and increase our self-confidence by using our God-given talents to glorify our Lord!

Through song and in the spirit of love, we have visited nursing homes and aged care homes during the Christmas period to sing carols. Seeing the eyes of the elderly light up with joy because of the music was such a beautiful experience; being able to connect and spend time with them had been such an amazing blessing.

We have even able to connect with our parish primary school for events where children could showcase their musical talent in two talent nights that were held. The excitement the children had to perform for our Lord was truly absolutely adorable and through music and faith we helped build up our parish and school community!

We have built a family here that sing and worship together. There is always a guitar around at every gathering and song requests are always welcome!

by  
**Angella**  
Youth Group Leader



## My Bible Quote of the Month

*“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

Galatians 2:20

To keep it simple,

Being a part of this youth group gave me the chance to experience God's true love. You know that longing deep feeling within you and that need to feel loved that we often desire to suppress. It's something we need to experience to feel a sense of fulfilment in our lives and I found His everlasting love here.

As one of the younger members in the group, I have such a diverse and unique group of amazing older brothers and sisters in Christ to look out for me, care for me, teach me, guide me and help me grow in my relationship with Jesus. This group opened me up to such great times, like hiking and snow trips, movie nights and retreats. It opened me up to even better, unforgettable moments,

like the surprise parties and gatherings, travelling together on Friday nights to amazing prayer meetings and being real about how tough life can really be. All this instilled in me an immense sense of unity and family in Christ, which inevitably allowed me to find God's love. Merely in reality, it's not until you open yourself up to experience His love that you yourself will truly want or accept it; and continuously desire to seek for it and share it with everyone every day after.



by  
**Raoul D'Souza**  
SPYA member

I'm so blessed and fortunate that it was His plan for me to encounter Him here and this is only the beginning of my discovery! What a joy it is to surrender to the one who loves me.





If you are interested in contributing to the SPYA magazine (including writing a testimony, an inspirational story or bible sharing), we would greatly appreciate it. Whether you're a parent, an elder or even a young adult, your contribution is encouraged as it fulfils the purpose of this magazine which is to inspire our young adults to build a closer relationship to our beloved God.

If you are interested please contact

**spyoungadults18@gmail.com**  
**or**  
**spyamagazine2020@hotmail.com**

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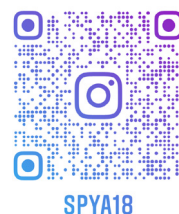
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*SPYA coordinator  
Sharon D'Silva*

*Created by  
Lucas Nardella and Greg Hkawng*

*Designed by  
Miraj Jayakody and Carissa Sarmiento*

*Edited by  
Angelique*



St. Peters  
Young Adults