



mission

magazine

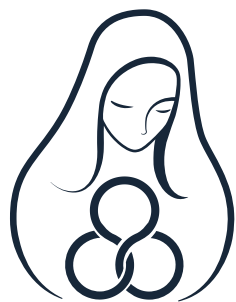
SUMMER 2019



SERVING IN THE VINEYARD:
Fr. Tristan Abbott, SOLT

BECOMING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES
IN BELIZE: Rachel De Ocampo

POVERTY OF LOVE:
Fr. Samuel Medley, SOLT



SOCIETY of OUR LADY

of the Most Holy Trinity

A message from the **GENERAL PRIEST SERVANT**



Instruments of Grace

One word that we may hear quite frequently among people of faith is 'grace.' The word is used in a variety of ways such as: "I could feel God's grace," "I received this particular grace," and the famous "grace before meals," to name just a few. In fact, the various uses point to slightly different meanings and highlight that 'grace' is a very rich multifaceted notion.

The first dimension of grace is favor (CCC #1996). Quite simply, grace is to look upon someone with favor, or to look upon someone benevolently, with love. So to start with, grace refers to the fact that unworthy as we may be, God looks upon us with favor – He looks upon us with love. I suppose

this is what is intended in the expression: "I could feel God's grace."

The second dimension of grace is connected to the first, namely, when you look upon someone with favor, you are inclined to bestow gifts upon them. For something to be a gift, it must be freely given (otherwise it would be an exchange), hence, the English word 'gratis,' meaning free, is rooted in the Latin word for grace, gratia. Grace then also refers to God freely bestowing His gifts upon us. The greatest gift or grace God has given us is really Himself – He became one of us in the Incarnation, saved us from our sins, raised our dignity by calling us His children, and invites us to share eternal communion with Him. While our salvation is definitely the greatest gift, if we probe deeper into

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***Disciples of Jesus through Mary living in Marian-Trinitarian communion,
serving on Ecclesial Family Teams in areas of deepest apostolic need***

our life from a perspective of faith, we also realize that everything we have and every person we meet is really a gift from God! Combining the first and second dimension together, we can now see that grace is God's gaze of favor and love toward us that leads Him to shower us with His gifts.

Finally, we arrive at the third dimension of grace which is a continuation from the previous two, namely, when we receive a free, unmerited gift from one who looks upon us with favor, the appropriate response is gratitude. Not surprisingly, once again we see that 'gratia' is the root of the word 'gratitude.' Grace before meals is one expression of gratitude for the food we eat. Extending beyond that, our gratitude toward God's many gifts of love leads us to respond with praise and adoration, but also with love for others so that we too would become instruments of His grace. In other words, having experienced God's grace, we desire to share that gift of love with others.

The founder of SOLT, Fr. James Flanagan, always encouraged us to live in what he called "the order of gift." His intention was that we be people filled

with faith who recognize the free unmerited gift of God's love in our life, who recognize every relationship and experience as being a gift from God, who respond with hearts filled with gratitude, and, who stand joyfully ready to share God's love with all those we meet. As I read the stories in this issue of the Mission Magazine, it reminded me of this teaching of our founder – freely we have received God's grace, and freely we strive to share it with others.

Reflecting on grace and the order of gift, prompts me to share one last thought: All of the people whom we serve in our missions are a gift to us, and each of you is a gift to us. We in SOLT are deeply grateful for the ways that we have experienced God's love and are hopeful that through our missions and ministries that we too are instruments of God's grace and saving love.

FR. PETER MARSALEK, SOLT

Fr. Peter is currently serving as the General Priest Servant of SOLT. He resides in Corpus Christi, TX.



Left: Sr. Stella Maris and Sr. Alison Marie visit the mission in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico.

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After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.” (Luke 5:4)

Where SOLT Serves...

AMERICAN REGION

BELIZE

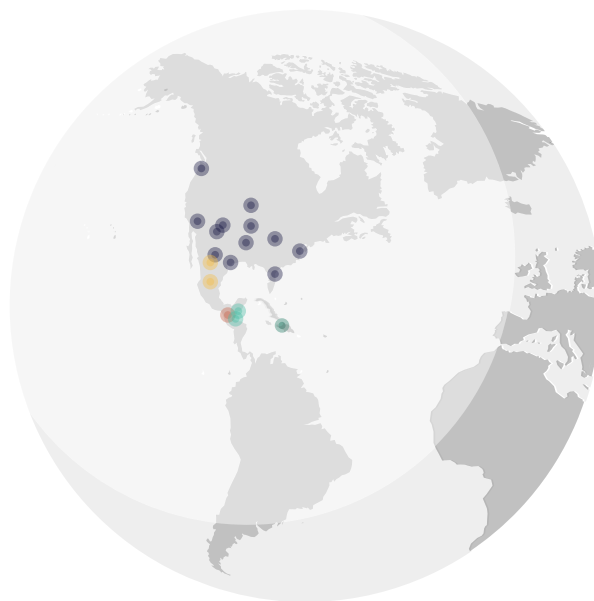
BELIZE CITY-
BELMOPAN

GUATEMALA

APOSTOLIC VICARIATE
OF EL PETEN

MEXICO

NUEVO LAREDO
QUERETARO



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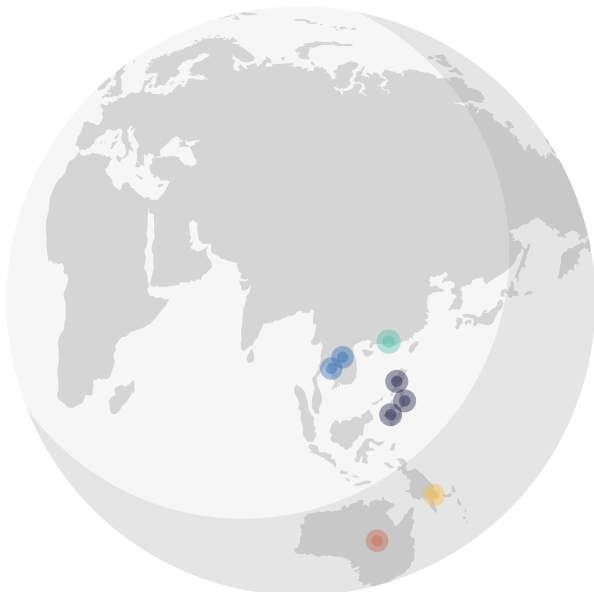
BROKEN BAY

PAPUA, NEW GUINEA

MT. HAGEN

THAILAND

RATCHABURI
CHANTABURI



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CACERES
LEGAZPI
SORSOOGON
DAET
NOVALICHES
LIBMANAN
SAN JOSE IN
NUEVA ECIJA



Serving in the Vineyard



Above: Fr. Tristan Abbott is installed as pastor of Our Lady of Refuge in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico.

“Fr. Tony is not here, he lives in

Belize now.” I am trying to make the situation as clear as possible while being as succinct as possible given that I have shared this information more times that I can count.

Fr. Tony Anderson, after 18 years as the pastor at Our Lady of Refuge, has been transferred to our SOLT mission in Benque Viejo, Belize. The parishioners miss Fr. Tony and constantly ask if I have any news about him. The short answer is typically “no.” Now that I am pastor in Fr. Tony’s place and I am more busy than at any other time in my life, my communication has become limited to the strictly essential and necessary. Unless you consider as news that fact that Fr. Tony still remembers where he hid the pickup keys, the address of the local tailor, or what happens to kids who have not made their First Communion before their Confirmation day, I can’t give you much of an update on our old párroco.

Fr. Tony, by God’s grace, has bequeathed us an extremely dynamic parish, and enthusiastic and faithful

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Our Lord is calling me to grow and to let go of things. He is calling me to trust more and to be patient, to “be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).



Above: Fr. Tristan and Sr. Angelina teaching a catechism class

parishioners ably support Fr. Patrick Prazjner and me. Since February we have put on at least eight evangelization retreats, all coordinated by the faithful. We have hosted the confirmation Mass at which Bishop Enrique Sanchez Martinez confirmed 250 of our youth. All the planning for the Mass, the practices, confessions, cleaning, and decorating of the church, was organized by the catechists with the need of very little help from me. Our head catechist for confirmation was even able to tell me exactly what Fr. Tony would say and with what emphasis at every point during the confirmation practice! We are truly blessed to have such dedicated parishioners.

At the moment we have five seminarians staying at the parish, four from the diocese, one who is a parishioner at Our Lady of Refuge. Br. Xavier Ebertowski, one of our SOLT seminarians, is also braving the summer heat with us. The five of them eat like a small herd of browsing hippopotami but then burn off all the calories visiting the eight youth groups, the 30 or so small communities (small groups which meet in the neighborhoods), and the four “movements” that are present here. I also have them digging a few trenches for electrical conduits just to be sure about those calories.

Sometimes I feel worn out or stressed by the constant activity, and at other times I am amazed by the grace that God gives me to keep working and serving. Seeing the parishioners and SOLT Sisters serve with such generosity inspires me to keep giving, especially when I know that many parishioners have just spent twelve hours working on a factory floor, sometimes without AC, in temperatures that this year have been exceeding 110 degrees. On top of that, they also have to deal with the deteriorating security situation in the city, even to the point of having their parish activities cased and photographed by members of the reigning Cartel del Noreste.

My service in the vineyard of the Lord here in Nuevo Laredo is certainly demanding. Our Lord is calling me to grow and to let go of things. He is calling me to trust more and to be patient, to “be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

Below: Procession in honor of the installation of the new pastor



FR. TRISTAN ABBOTT, SOLT

Fr. Tristan was born in England and grew up in the Cayman Islands. He was ordained a priest in 2015.

BELIZE



When I attended the SOLT assembly

in July 2017, Fr. Eduardo Montemayor, SOLT, gave a mission report on Becoming Missionary Disciples (BMD). He compared it to some of the Israelites' encounters with God: they travelled up the mountain to worship God, then came back down the mountain and into the valley to share their experience. After the mission reports, Sr. Mary Peter excitedly approached Fr. Scott Giuliani and said, "We need to bring this program to Divine Mercy!" Fr. Scott agreed wholeheartedly.,

Fast forward just over a year, we received the approval of Belize's Bishop Lawrence Nicasio to offer the program. Utilizing the recruiting skills of a few faithful parishioners, we managed to attain the help of about sixty volunteers to facilitate our first REVIVE course. REVIVE was organized not only for the SOLT parish, Divine Mercy, but for all five parishes in Belize City. The course

was held at the Holy Redeemer Cathedral Parish Hall every week for eight weeks. Furthermore, an additional REVIVE course was held for San Pedro Church on the island of Ambergris Caye. The response was absolutely overwhelming for our country, which is sparingly populated. Approximately 250 participants in Belize City, and 225 in San Pedro Town were 'REVIVED.' We climbed our way up that mountain every week, and at the retreat, we worshipped. At the end of REVIVE, a promise was made that we would have the opportunity to become equipped to make a journey down the mountain on our way to the valley. That journey down the mountain is known as the Disciple course, and it begins during Lent.



Above: Participants at DISICPLE in Belize City.

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I had the opportunity to build graced friendships with more than just those at my own table.

DISCIPLE saw many of the REVIVE participants return, some even as volunteers. We had the hall filled with over two hundred participants week after week, and this time, for a burst of teenage exuberance in the room, we included a youth group table. Our equipment came in the form of teachings in the Marian-Trinitarian spirituality. What stood out the most for me was that I am a child of God the Father, and just like Our Lady, He has a great plan for me. Moreover, He loves me just as much as He loves His only begotten Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. These are revelations I am still trying to wrap my head around.

The format of each DISCIPLE evening was the sharing of a nice simple meal, followed by an inspiring and informative talk, and group discussion at each table. Since we were assigned to the same table each week, it enabled us to develop graced friendships, in true SOLT fashion.

I have been on the decoration and hospitality team for both the REVIVE and DISCIPLE courses. It has been my pleasure to not only help setup the venue for our guests, but to warmly welcome them when they arrive, and wish them a blessed week as we bid farewell at the end of each evening. In this way, I had the opportunity to build graced friendships with more than just those at my own table.

Our last few sessions were about discerning our spiritual gifts and seeing where they should lead us on MISSION. Bishop Larry Nicasio was a guest speaker, so we had the chance to probe his mind and heart to see where his deepest apostolic needs are for our diocese. Perhaps we will be bringing Jesus to the well-known gang-trodden areas of the city. Perhaps we will see restoration in our land. We are now well on our way down to the valley, searching for souls to serve and take with us back up the mountain. This is an exploratory journey for the time being, one done with some fear and trembling.

Clockwise (from the left): The Becoming Missionary Disciples Program is divided into three parts; Divine Mercy Parish overlooking Belize City; Participants receive a Bible at the DISCIPLE retreat; Bishop Larry Nicasio speaking at the final session of DISCIPLE in June; the Youth Table at DISCIPLE; Musicians lead the participants in praise and worship during REVIVE.



RACHEL DE OCAMPO

Rachel and Jason homeschool their four children. They have been parishioners of Divine Mercy Church for 16 years and desire to be saints!

Poverty of Love:

“There’s a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God.”

The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love. The poverty in the West is a different kind of poverty -- it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality. There’s a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God.

-St Mother Teresa of Calcutta

“The favorite part of my retreat wasn’t a moment, a talk, or any kind of grace or inspiration I had, it was just being in a peaceful place, and getting the best night’s sleep I have had in years. I just feel close to God when I am here,” said the woman with tears in her eyes and profound joy on her face. She was sharing what we call a ‘glory story,’ or some way that God had touched her on retreat - something we invite the retreatants to share when it is over so that others can benefit from graces they have received.

She came to the campus of Our Lady of Corpus Christi Retreat Center (OLCC) looking for the same thing that thousands do each year: “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding” (Phil 4:7), the peace of knowing that she is loved by God.

Most of the people who come on our retreats drive up in nice cars, have fancy smartphones, and live in comfortable houses. They are far from materially poor. However, quite a few talk about a very deep and dark loneliness of not knowing that they are loved and loveable, worthy of divine friendship with God. This is the most common thing

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*...no matter what their background,
how much education they have, or
how professional their career may
be. They are starving for
the love of God!*

we hear from people, no matter what their background, how much education they have, or how professional their career may be. They are starving for the love of God!

Can God ever forgive me? Does he listen to me when I pray? Will I be saved? Have I failed my family in not being good enough? Will I ever find anyone who will really love me? These are all questions that besiege a heart that needs to know divine love.

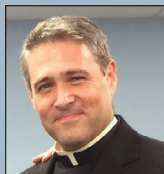
The goal of our retreat ministry is to facilitate what Fr. James Flanagan, SOLT Founder, called, “a living encounter with Jesus Christ,” an encounter with the only One who can truly show them how much they are deeply, mightily, and tenderly loved unconditionally by God.

Each retreatant has the opportunity to spend time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament to meditate on Sacred Scripture, to attend daily Mass, and to make a good confession. These are the most common places that retreatants mention they encountered the love of God.

We are so deeply grateful for the gift of retreat ministry. Please pray that many more souls may be touched at Our Lady of Corpus Christi. For more information, visit ourladyofcorpuschristi.org



Clockwise (from the left): The grounds at OLCC, including a rosary walk, are beautifully arranged and ideal for time spent in prayer; the chapel is available for retreatants to spend time with Our Lord in Eucharistic Adoration; the stations of the cross invite participants into a closer walk with Christ.



FR SAMUEL MEDLEY, SOLT

Fr. Sam is originally from Minnesota. He has been serving as Director of Our Lady of Corpus Christi since 2016.



Above: Traditionally dressed dancers participate in the procession to celebrate the installation of a new pastor in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico.



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On the front cover: Mass for SOLT sisters entering Novitiate in Melchor, Guatemala.

Right: Participants enjoy the last session of DISCIPLE in Belize City.



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