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CEBU BUSINESS WEEK

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SMORGASBORD

LOURDES SHRINE OBSERVES HEALTH PROTOCOLS

By: **ELIAS O. BAQUERO**

THE Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) Executive Committee (Execom) of the Archdiocesan Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes (Lourdes Shrine) met physically last October 11, 2020, presided by yours truly as president.

Under church's rule, Lourdes Shrine Rector, Fr. Randolph "Randy" Figuracion, SDB, is really the PPC head.

The others in attendance were PPC Vice Chair Mila C. Perez, PPC Auditor Jeffrey Palomar, PPC Secretary Marilou Piner, Social Communications Chair Leovy Mollaneda, Area 1 Coordinator Tiburcio Subingsubing, Worship Committee Chair Emen Tundag, BEC Coordinator Fred Tundag, Maria Corazon Ramos of Youth Committee, PPC Office Secretary Rhoda Odivilas and Bobby Haines of the Parish Security Group (PSG).

Fr. Randy welcomed all PPC Execom members to the first physical meeting since last March 2020 when the government-imposed lockdowns because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our rector thanked God that all of us were safe and avoided Covid-19. He said that while we experienced bad and good things, we

should focus on good things, count God's blessings, and forget the bad happenings.

Fr. Randy said that if you are discouraged, you will lose hope, and may face more problems. We should focus on God's goodness and mercy.

We met physically even if we are few, not necessary that all are present because others may join online. It was important to make plans for our parishioners. Hence, the meeting was called to energize us, to feel our responsibility, and to go back to planning.

First in the agenda was Fr. Randy's update on our church. Lourdes Shrine did not stop the daily holy masses during lockdowns. It continued online with three masses daily: 6:30 am; 12:00 noon and 6:00 pm. Funeral masses continued and these online activities were held Monday to Saturday. We had the 11:00 am adoration, 8:00 am mass and 8:00 pm Rosary. Masses were seen and followed by about 50,000 people.

We are now back to physical masses. Our capacity is 1,500 but we do not adopt the 50 percent or 750 but 500 so we can follow social distancing and health

protocol. We are model in terms of health protocol.

We do temperature scanning. We have a Quick Response (QR) Code prepared by youth leaders who did it during the National Youth Day (NYD). Lourdes Shrine is the only church having it. Our church is spacious, but we insist that all people wear mask and observe social distancing.

While the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) only allows 15 to 65 years old to go out of their homes, the church policy is to welcome anybody of all ages.

Also, the charitable works of Lourdes Shrine continue. There is the 555 Challenge where poor people are given five kilos of rice, five canned goods and five other products. Those who have blessings from God may share it to the church, which, in turn, give it to the needy, like people who lost jobs or livelihood. The donors may give money for the church to buy rice and canned goods.

Since March 2020, Lourdes Shrine received 1,011 sacks donated by good Samaritans and repacked by PPC members. A total of 10,152 packs were given from March to September 2020.

The feeding program also continues. A chapel-based feeding since March 2020, Monday to Friday with 100 packed meals per day for children.

The online activity was first installed at the Salesian Chapel. Now, the church installed live streaming systems worth P160,000 at strategic areas for good views and sounds, including camera, computer, and application.

We have a good sound system since February 2020 worth P4.4 million and paid in installment. We paid P1 million last April 2020 from second collection and P2 million borrowed from Pro-

vincial House. The balance of P1.4 million will be paid until June 2021. We are optimistic that we can pay the balance because the people always help.

Since March, the Lourdes Shrine followers have reached 27,499. In Cebu, Basilica del Sto. Niño Shrine is the biggest with 160,000 followers, followed by Cebu Metropolitan Cathedral with 70,000. Lourdes Shrine is third.

In the physical mass, there were only 800 attendees last September 20; 1,208 last Sept. 27; and 1,404 last Oct. 4. It increases every Sunday. But protocol is important.

