

Holy Week Newsletter

April 2025



In the Philippines, the sisters and our young people participated in a spiritual retreat – a youth camp – organized by a Belgian charismatic community on an island. Once a year, they gather the 150 youths they support to offer them a time of spiritual nourishment.

They invited us to spend the Holy Days with them.

Everyone returned on Easter Sunday with joyful hearts, blessed by the spiritual experiences God had given us.

The inner journey of encountering the Risen Lord continues in these days. Our young people are receiving the promise of peace.

Yesterday I spoke with some young girls from the School of Life program.

As we meditated on the meaning of the three promises of peace from the Risen One – "Peace be with you" – one of them shared:

"This Easter, I received the peace to forgive my parents and entrust everything to God."

She has been with ACAY for two years, and knowing her, I can truly measure what a deep grace this is for her.

Another young girl expressed her joy and amazement as she looked back on her one-year journey in the School of Life:

"Mother, I am so amazed at how much I've matured, how God let me grow, how I've learned to deal with my emotions, to get along with others without fear or childishness, like I used to."

We can truly witness God at work in the hearts and lives of our youth. This reflection gives us great courage to endure the ups and downs of the mission.

The Risen Lord is faithful. He is leading these young people to rise again, to take heart, and to face both their inner world and society – with the inner knowledge that they are not alone: God is there. He leads me.

May God richly bless each one of you.

Sr. Sophie de Jésus





ACAY Holy week journey



In Talim Island with the Tibériade Community Foundation

We are setting off

We board a boat bound for Talim Island, where a youth camp is held each summer. Established 27 years ago by a brother from the Tiberiade Community, based in Belgium, the camp is now supported by a local community that welcomes us with great warmth. From the moment we arrive, we become fully aware of the privilege we have to be here. Faith and hope, deeply rooted in this village, are already palpable in the atmosphere that surrounds us.



“My first Christian Camp experience”

I really appreciated the teaching sessions. I learned a lot from biblical figures like Martha—her story resonates with my own life. *"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life... Do you believe this?' She replied, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah.'"* The atmosphere felt like one big Christian family. It was my first time being part of such a gathering and a youth camp. I was ready to face the other young people and to share my thoughts and my life.
– Princess, 18 years old, School of Life Beneficiary



Teachings & Sharings

The days follow a set structure of prayers, shared meals, and teachings, during which the Missionary Sisters of Mary and the Brothers of the Tiberiade Community share their reflections on the day's readings with the young people. This is followed by "sharings," or discussion circles, in which the youth engage with spiritual questions and life experiences.

Maundy Thursday

The highlight on Maundy Thursday is the washing of the feet of the twelve disciples, who are randomly selected from the group of young believers. During the subsequent so-called "Supper," something bitter, something sweet, and something salty are served, following Filipino tradition. Throughout the entire night, an adoration takes place. Each participant of the camp keeps watch for one hour, accompanying Jesus in thought and prayer during His suffering.



Good Friday

On Good Friday, everyone sets out together on a hike to the top of a nearby small mountain. Some are not very motivated at first, but after spending the night in tents at the summit and watching the sunrise the next morning—accompanied by prayers and songs—their eyes light up, and everyone agrees that the effort was absolutely worth it.



Easter

We celebrate the Easter Vigil in the church of the nearby village. All the churchgoers, young and old, are dressed in white, and the joy of Easter is almost tangible. After the Holy Mass, the people walk in procession through the village, singing loudly and joyfully about the Resurrection of the Lord. Back in the community, everyone dances the so-called "Israel dance" with great enthusiasm. The next morning, after a festive Holy Mass, we begin our journey home—tired but happy.





Pilgrims of hope!

“Hope for me means growing”

"My first Holy Week was full of surprises. I didn't even know about the different celebrations before. After the Easter Vigil, we walked in a procession through the village, dressed in white, singing 'Resucitó, Alleluia' to the sound of the guitar. What stayed with me most were the priest's words: 'Pag-asa (hope), for me, means growing.'"

– **Khailie, 17 years old, SOL Beneficiary**



“I experienced God’s presence during hiking”

"I experienced God's presence during the hike. I'm so proud of myself for making it to the top of the mountain. I'm also grateful for my team — we never forgot each other along the way."

– **Gina, 16 years old, SOL Beneficiary**



"I'm so grateful for the mission. I had the opportunity to share my testimony with the other youth at the camp — my first time in years opening up about my journey. Seeing how my story touched them, made me happy."

– **Rain, 18 years old, SOL Beneficiary**

