

LAREC Pan-Asian Concert: A Showcase of Culture & Faith  
by John Michael Reyes, LMS Spiritual Life Coordinator, Director of Prayer & Worship

Blessed are you! Mapapalad kayo!

The joyous chorus of Fr. Ricky Manalo, CSP and Jesse Manibusan's piece, *Blessed Are You*, rang throughout the arena at a Saturday lunchtime concert during the annual Los Angeles Religious Education Congress (LAREC). Congress attendees were treated to an experience of light and color, sound and movement - and even a dragon dance - which united the four central concerns of *Encountering Christ in Harmony*: identity, generation, leadership, and culture of encounter and dialogue. The concert gave a glimpse into the musical and cultural heritage of various Pan Asian cultures as represented in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Diana Macalintal, Jesse Manibusan and Ricky Manalo, CSP (along with Rufino Zaragoza, OFM) led us in a sung pilgrimage to various locations of Pan Asian descent: Indonesia, China, Vietnam, Korea, Philippines and Guam. From start to finish, the three of them skillfully and prayerfully wove personal stories that made the document come to life. For example, before introducing the Indonesian community who sang an Indonesian Marian hymn, Diana shared the importance of Marian devotions for the API community. She connected this with her experiences of growing up with her grandmother - her Lola - whose Marian devotion left an imprint of faith on her life. Diana shares, "For many reasons, Asians and Pacific Islander Catholics can often feel like the 'unseen' minority in the United States Church. The lunchtime concert not only highlighted the U.S. bishops' document but also gave Asian and Pacific Islander Catholics and their coworkers in the vineyard an opportunity to take pride in the heritage Asians and Pacific Islander have received from their unique experience of Catholic culture and the rich legacy they have to offer to the Church."

As a Filipino-American, I felt proud - "at home" - within the hustle and bustle of Congress because of this concert. I am grateful to OCP, the USCCB and especially Congress organizers Paulette Smith and Sr. Rosalia Meza, VDMF for allowing the Pan Asian community to hold space and collaborate in the work of evangelization and encounter. I realize now that this experience was one of grace: I was able to share in the experience with my mother, a native of the Philippines, who was attending Congress for the first time. For both of us, this was an experience of praying and surrendering to an encounter with the Holy Spirit whose diversity of gifts and talents were shown during that Congress weekend.

To close out the concert, all those present were invited to pray the closing prayer found at the end of the pastoral document to which the acclamation "blessed are you" was sung as an affirmation and commissioning. It was the perfect end to a joyous display of musicianship and artistry of Pan Asian culture.

Blessed be God, indeed!



*Picture (from left to right): Fr. Ricky Manalo, Dianne Macalintal and Jesse Manibusan with the Qing Wei Lion & Dragon Dance Cultural Troupe*



*Picture: The emcees, artists, musicians, performers and coordinators who shared their diverse gifts at the Pan Asian Concert*