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Filipino Champions

Concert kicks off ‘House of Prayer Project’

Visiting nun helps raise funds for Verbum Dei apostolate center

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"For You I live, for them I give; For You I speak, for them I believe..."

Sr. Maev Louise Heaney of the Verbum Dei Missionaries during the fundraising concert For You, For Them: A Night of Inspiration and Music on January 31 at the Albertus Magnus Auditorium at the University of Sto. Tomas.

Sr. Maev was visiting us here in the Philippines for the first time to perform in our fund raising concert for a new apostolate center in Pasig, Metro Manila. The event was attended by over 250 people. She shared her opening song, "For You, For Them" as a composition that "goes to the heart of what being a missionary is all about—doing things for God and doing things for others." It was a fitting way to launch Verbum Dei’s "House of Prayer for All Nations" project. Verbum Dei is actually an international Catholic Community of committed missionaries and lay people dedicated to praying, living and sharing the Gospel of Christ to others. Since its arrival in the Philippines in 1997, it can now be found in Metro Manila, Tagaytay, Cebu and Cagayan de Oro.

To sustain and support this growth, Verbum Dei organized the need for a permanent apostolate center where youth, single and married couples can participate in prayer, theological formation, spiritual direction according to their diverse needs, towards becoming "missionary disciples for the world and the Church."

Crowning the site for this important center in Pasig is a splendidly bicolour flag, with the words "Sr. Maev Louise Heaney’s mission in the Philippines." In 1981, Sr. Maev, herself born in Dublin, Ireland and met the Verbum Dei Community in the university where she was studying. In 1984, she joined the community and this year she will celebrate 31 years as a missionary. She completed her Licentiate in theology at the Instituto Teológico San Pablo Apóstol, in Madrid, Spain before being assigned in England and Ireland with a pastoral work in university chaplaincy. She also undertook her Licentiate and Doctorate degrees at the Pontifical Gregoriana University, Rome in the area of Fundamental Theology and Theological Ethics. After her studies, she taught liturgy (Gregorian University, United States (Berkeley, California) and currently she is teaching theology at the Australian Catholic University in Brisbane.

One of her main interests is the role of music in evangelization. She inclines "I think we are quite aware of the importance of words in Christian faith—mission and theology—but the power of music is less understood, and therefore not always well-used. Going deeper she continues, "In Christian faith, the Word of God—someone—and something of that Someone we believe in can be communicated through words, but music is also a human form of expression and its expressions of Christ in ways words can’t. Music is a very powerful—it moves us. It teaches more than our minds and hearts, but our whole person—body, feelings, and understanding—for a faith that is rooted in an incarnated God, this is important."

The desire to fully grasp the role of music in the expression and transmission of faith drives her research at AU as well. "I am on a quest to understand how we make sense of music, and the role it plays in our faith life, in helping us encounter God and enriching our lives. God gave us the gift of music—it is one way we are called to enjoy, celebrate and develop. God also understands and accepts our music." And how about her experience of the Philippines? Well apart from the excitement of her first ride as a tourist, she said that the people here have so muchraw natural and all times unexpected potential. She added, "It is the Philippines—so tense, so ecstasy, so tenderness, so spirituality, so capacity for musical creativity—perhaps it is a culture that can help theology express itself to the world in such a way that God's love and mercy, through our songs, God listens and He answers. Thank you, Sr. Maev for a night of music that inspires, moves and transforms."

Sr. Maev closed the concert with a prayer: "We place into your hands this evening that plans that lie behind our coming and the vision and desires that You have that we cannot even begin to imagine." As the audience joined her in the slow song, the sense of hope and optimism was palpable. Verbum Dei’s "House of Prayer" project is on its way to reality.

For information on how to help the Verbum Dei apostolate center project, call Fr. James MCVey at 0918-360-7151, or other members of team at 0917-983374 and 0927-9070712, or email friends.of.verbum@humens.com.