

Evangelizing through Digital Art

Digital artists found a silver lining in the pandemic lockdowns, using their time and talents for evangelization online.

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Among the various coping mechanisms brought about by lifestyle changes during the pandemic lockdowns, I discovered a growing number turning to digital art as stress reliever. Moreover, digital artists have found a silver

lining in this, using their talents to serve the mission of evangelization.

As a chef, educator and mentor, I have always tried to find ways to incorporate art into my pursuits. In recent times, I have taken a liking for digital art. As part of growing and improving in this craft I follow the works of good digital artists online and try out new designs and techniques. In this endeavor I discovered creative souls dedicated to imbuing the digital world with Christian spirit.

Three artists caught my attention. They go by the names: *Carissimae Dei*, *Fiat Mihi*, and *Salve Regina*. I like their pages because they are well-curated, regularly maintained and visually aesthetic. Behind them are Claudine Macalisang (26), Carlo Cudal (18), and Paul Albert Paloma (17). I was surprised to find out how young these artists and admins were.

Their pages are image-intensive, with colorful vector illustrations of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, and popular saints, among them St Josemaría.

The artworks are attractive, for which they invest time and talent. Mostly they are inspirational pieces, infographics, and feast day cards, which people like to share online. Many go viral.

“I make infographics with a minimalist touch. They are pleasing to the eyes and peaceful. That's what I want people to feel when they look at my art,” Claudine, the artist behind Carissimae Dei, explained. “Serenity. That a simple artwork, made with love for God, makes people experience peace,” she continued.

To widen her evangelizing presence, Claudine has offered free sticker packs of her artworks in messaging apps like Viber and Telegram. “Those

prayers, reflections, or quotations from saints can be a great reminder for online users to pause a while and meditate,” Claudine said.

The months of the pandemic offered artists the unexpected chance to discover the capability of their art to express the beauty of the faith and to touch minds and hearts. It was April of 2020 when Carlo Cudal, then a senior high school student, started his *Fiat Mihi* page dedicated to Mary, both in Facebook and Instagram. In May, Claudine launched her *Carissimae Dei* page. These two pages served as inspiration for Paul Albert Paloma to launch his *Salve Regina* page later in 2020.

The stay-at-home periods have spurred the growth of other social media accounts with Catholic content.

The three artists I mentioned above center their messages on prayer,

sacrament life, and study. Their personal relationship with God and special devotion to the Blessed Mother feed the content and feel of their artwork.

Carlo said that asking guidance from God and the Blessed Virgin is always his first step in creating designs, and it's what sustains his efforts.

“It's not easy to stay committed,” Carlo says, “but when I go to pray, I ask myself: ‘Why again am I doing this? For whom?’ Then it will hit me: for His greater glory, all for Him.”

Claudine is a young professional Filipina working in Bangkok (Thailand). She says that it is a life of prayer that sustains her work. “After praying, ideas come rushing. Maybe that's His way of telling me ‘Continue, do not fear. I am with you,’” she reflected.

While their works have inspired many, at the background Claudine and Carlo were themselves struggling with personal issues during the pandemic. Doing art proved therapeutic for them. Indeed, in art, one can find comfort and consolation especially in trying times.

Paul Paloma is a senior high school student in Davao and the sole administrator of the *Salve Regina* page. He turns to creating digital art to relieve stress brought about by online classes and course work. “It gets difficult when schoolwork comes in droves, but I remind myself of my mission and I am motivated to continue,” he shared.

On a more practical note, Paul said that “having one’s priorities in place (i.e., studies first) and using time management techniques help a lot to keep things balanced.”

He has advice for those who sense a calling to use their art for evangelization: “Doing this work can at times be difficult, but one must carry on. Pray to God so that you may stay motivated... and you will persevere.”

Carlo for his part shared: “In this kind of apostolate, you are never alone. God is always with you... plus the Blessed Mother’s intercession.”

Contemplating their art: modern and minimalist, yet not lacking in Christian doctrine and spirituality, gives me hope that today’s youth are indeed living Pope Francis’ challenge to “encounter people, where they are and as they are” (World Communications Day 2021). These young Filipinos in the digital world “testify joyfully that Jesus is alive” (World Youth Day 2021).

In 2021, Claudine, along with other like-minded creatives, formed the

Likhatolika Creative Community. Quickly it gained 2000 followers composed of artists, designers, content creators, Church-based social media personnel, page moderators, and those wanting to learn digital communication skills. The network provides a venue for creatives to share resources and mentor each other.

Seeing the growing number of artists and groups using online platforms for evangelization, I cannot but agree with the theme of the recently concluded celebration of the 500 years of Christianity in the country, that Filipinos are #GiftedtoGive.

These dynamic initiatives have highlighted in me the significance of St. Josemaria's message in the first point of The Way: "Don't let your life be barren. Be useful. Make yourself felt. Shine forth with the torch of your faith and your love."

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