



Squirettes of Mary Immaculate

SQUIRETTES OF MARY IMMACULATE HOLDS 19TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION

By Sis. Lorie Manalansan, International Secretary and Region V Representative

The first face-to-face Squirettes of Mary Immaculate Biennial Convention since the pandemic was held last July 20 to 22, 2024. In 2022, a similar event was held virtually via Zoom. Thus, the excitement of the SMIs and their Tita DMIs could not be contained and the convention delegates, numbering some 500, trekked to D'Leonor Inland Resort & Adventure Park in Buhangin, Davao City. The resort was the same venue as the pre-pandemic biennial convention in 2015.

Day 1

The event was held in the newly-constructed Convention Hall. The opening program started with the Enthronement and Consecration of the Blessed Mother's image carried by SMI National President Sq. Elaisa Marie Honculada and DMI International Regent Sis. Annie Ty. Other DMII International Officers and SMI National Officers carried flowers and candles for the Blessed Mother's altar. This was followed by the traditional singing of the Philippine National Anthem, Pledge of Allegiance and the SMI Hymn. SMI National Secretary Sq. Venus Soriano then presented the SMI delegates from Regions 3 to 14.

In her welcome remarks, SMI President Sq. Elaisa Marie perked up the crowd by calling each of the regions to respond

with a cheer, followed by loudly shouting out the SMI Motto – To Know, To Love, To Serve. Responding to the delegates' deafening response, she went on to tell them how her life has been shaped by the SMI Motto, turning her into the young leader that she is today.

The only daughter of Region XII Representative Sis. Susan Honculada, Sq. Elaisa has two elder brothers. She is a gift that her mother fervently asked Mama Mary to have after two sons, thus she has come TO KNOW her all throughout her young life seeing her mom's dedication to her. Knowing Mama Mary and her virtues, the young speaker learned TO LOVE unconditionally "In Selflessness and Service, In Forgiveness and Understanding, In Faithfulness and Obedience, In Intercession and Prayer". A Squirette since the age of 9, the leadership skills she developed propelled her to her position of SMI President giving her the opportunity TO SERVE wholeheartedly.

She also said that the SMI's development programs and activities have given Squirettes the opportunity not only to serve but to eventually grow and mature as responsible citizens in our country. In ending, she paid tribute to her mom who is her model and guide and who has stood by her throughout her young life.

International Regent Sis. Annie Ty in her inspirational message called on the SMIs to practice synodality and along



A group picture of SMI convention delegates

with their Tita DMIs, profess deep faith and devotion to the Blessed Mother and practice her virtues of humility, simplicity, charity and obedience. She also exhorted them to implement the sisterhood agreement “Sister Ko, Tutulungan Ko”.

Past International Regent Sis. Ruby Macario who also served earlier as International Chairperson for Youth Welfare/SMI recalled the number of transformations that the SMI organization had undergone through the years such as the changes in the design of the girls’ uniform, Squirettes who blossomed into fine young ladies who have made their mark in their chosen fields and the evolving themes of SMI conferences but always ending with “with Mary, thru Mary, for Mary”. Sis. Ruby never misses to end her talk with appropriate songs and for the SMIs, she led them in singing “When I Grow Up to be a Lady” (hinting that they are all princesses in the eyes of the Lord), “I Have a Dream” (telling SMIs to dream big and work hard) and “Smile” (urging them to remain childlike and beautiful).

The next speaker was Sq. Justine Calderon who was former president of her circlette and later served as SMI national officer – as National Treasurer and Vice-President for Luzon. Sq. Justine related how she started as a shy 12-year-old who blossomed and be the best version of herself with her experience and lessons learned from being an SMI first in her home circlette, the Immaculate Conception of Karangalan Cirllette then on to her being a national officer. The love and care showered by Tita DMIs also helped a lot in her growth and development.

Sq. Justine is a flight attendant of American Airlines for seven years now. She is based in the US. She said there may have been challenges every now and then during her flights but with God’s and Mama Mary’s care, she has yet to experience serious flight emergencies.



IR Sis. Annie Ty and SMI National President Sq. Elaisa Marie Honculada carry the image of the Blessed Mother during the enthronement ceremony.

The Gala Night

A 3-hour break followed for the delegates to prepare for the Gala Night with the theme “Nature in One with Spirituality: Women in Action for Environmental Protection and Conservation”. Everyone came in whimsical garden attire making the night very colorful with SMIs and DMIs wearing beautiful floral flowing gowns.

Main features of the gala night program were a regional contest for the best nature-themed dance presentation and a search for Star of the Night. Region XI was adjudged winner of the dance presentation by the Board of Judges composed of Past IR Sis. Ruby Macario, Past SMI International Chairperson Sis. Biannah Villanueva and Prof. Ron Mark Elarcosa.

The Star of the Night was won by Sq. Pristell Gail Retiro of the Sto. Nino de Kalibo Cirllette. The Board of Judges for the search was composed of IR Sis. Annie Ty, International Vice-Regent for Luzon Sis. Merinnisa Ligaya and International Secretary Sis. Lorie Manalansan.

Day 2

A Human Rosary at 7 am started Day 2 of the Convention followed by a Zumba session. Then it was time for high energy activities by the Squirettes where each of the participating region gave their cheer, a “yell”. A team-building activity on the resort’s open grounds came next, facilitated by Past SMI President and now DMI Sis. Ma. Caroline Soliven-Elarcosa who was also keynote speaker.

The DMI chaperones also had their separate team-building activity led by SMI Luzon Area Coordinator Sis. Monica Bularan. Just like their younger counterparts, they had a productive session with games capped by a discussion on challenges they face in growing the SMIs and keeping the circlettes in their respective circles intact.

After returning to the main hall, the Squirettes held the election of their incoming National Officers for 2026-2027. Elected were the following:

National President - Mary Joy Ancheta, Theresian Cirllette of Region VI

National Vice President for Luzon - Mara Ella Tayag, San Lorenzo Ruiz Cirllette, Region VI



Sis. Ma. Caroline Soliven-Elarcosa, keynote speaker



The International Officers and Board, convention guests



The SMI National Officers with SMI Int'l Chairperson Sis. Evelyn Alcantara and SMI Area Coordinators



An interpretative dance entry during Gala Night



A group of Squirettes awaits their turn to perform.

National Vice President for Visayas - Pristell Gail Retiro, Sto. Nino de Kalibo Circlette, Region IX

National Vice-President for Mindanao - Mariz Evelyn Lim, Help of Christians Circlette, Region XII

National Secretary - Venus Mahal Soriano, Immaculate Conception of Karangalan Circlette, Region V

National Treasurer - Princess Romero, Mary Immaculate, Levitown Circlette, Region V

National Chancellor - Elaisa Marie Honculada, Queen of Divine Grace Circlette, Region XII

A Eucharistic celebration was held after the elections presided by International Chaplain Rev. Fr. Jerome Cruz. The incoming SMI National Officers took their Oath of Office and were later blessed by Fr. Jerome.

Fellowship Night

The Fellowship Night had for its theme "A Night to Remember: Good to Know You Before Good Night". It was a pajama party and everybody came in their nice and comfortable

jammies. A "let your hair hang loose" night, activities such as the Open Night Mic gave willing Squirettes the chance to "perform" impromptu song or dance numbers. Winners of the regional dance contest were announced and awarded their prizes.

The evening ended at midnight on a happy note. International Chairperson for Youth Welfare/SMI Sis. Evelyn Alcantara, in her closing remarks, thanked the convention organizers and the SMI National Officers led by Sq. Elaisa Marie citing their creativity, passion and dedication to serve Mama Mary. She also said that the Squirettes of Mary Immaculate is truly a venue to develop leadership skills, talents and commitment while exercising a deep sense of dedication and spirituality.

In her talk, Sis. Evelyn mentioned how she stood in the sidelines watching ideas come to life during the Zoom meetings which sometimes ended late at night. She allowed them to shine on their own and express their ideas, giving her inputs only to give direction and when needed. And she was right in doing so as shown by the success of their biennial convention. She also mentioned that her daughter, Sq. Jara continues to support the SMI in her own way despite her absence. (She now works in the US.) It is proof, she said, that once the SMI roots have been planted, they never forget to look back and be grateful.



Star of the Night Sq. Pristell Gail Retiro of Region IX (5th from left)

Convention Closing

On the third and last day of the convention, the Squirettes began with the Human Rosary and Zumba session. The convention ended with a recessional and retirement of colors. The participants headed for home with a heart full of happy memories and new learnings. They bade good-bye to new-found friends with the promise to see them again in the next SMI Biennial Convention.



Winners of the dance presentation from Region XI with Region XI Representative Sis. Thelma Lim



Enjoying a group game in the resort grounds



A team of Squirettes during their team-building activity



The incoming SMI National Officers with Fr. Jerome Cruz and IR Sis. Annie Ty