



NEWSLETTER
May 22, 2022



Do You See Yourself in Jonah?

JONAH is not your black-and-white, cut-out cardboard character.

He is so complex, a mixed bag of good and bad. He is fueled by impure motives, relating to God with passive-aggressive obedience.

But aren't we all complex?

Aren't we all a mixed bag?

This is why Jonah is so real and relatable.

But the *Book of Jonah* not just spotlights the flawed character of Jonah but the mind-blowing character of God as well.

I pray that through our exploration of *Jonah*, you'll get to know God more—and end up loving Him more.

May your dreams come true,

Bo Sanchez



Challenge: Love Again

LAST Sunday's Gospel focused on the new commandment our Lord Jesus gave His disciples: *"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you should love one another."* (John 13:34).



The first commandment is to love God above all. We can be okay with that because God is God and yes, we should love Him above everything, everyone else. But Jesus adds a second, a new commandment: love your neighbor. That can be more difficult than loving God. Because, well, we have neighbors who are not lovable.

In his homily at The Feast last Sunday, Fr. Steve Tynan said the challenge is to love. Fr. Steve pointed out there is always suffering in this world. But we find meaning in our suffering because we have a goal beyond the here and the now. And that's the challenge to us to love one another. Read on *page 3*.



Our founder, Bro. Bo Sanchez, posed another challenge: love *again*. He was referring to the bitter conflicts during the national elections separating even close relatives from one another. Yes, loved ones have become loved *once* because of differences in political preferences. But can you love loved once *again*?

Bro. Bo and Feast Builder and Preacher Bro. Audee Villaraza presented some answers through the example of Jonah, the prophet we've been studying about, *pages 12-34*.

And, for good measure, find some more answers in our *Mercy Ministries* series on Grace To Be Born, especially the *Blessings* story of Sis. Anna Marie Alianza, *pages 35-38*.

Challenge accepted?



Glory to God!

Randy Borromeo
Media Ministry
Executive Director

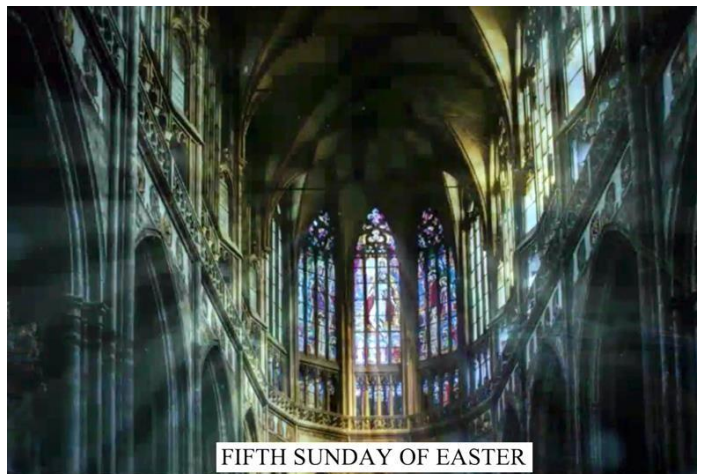




FLASHBACK!

MAY 15, 2022

Holy Mass



FR. STEVE TYNAN

on the Gospel: John 13:31-33A, 34-35

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

Excerpts...

Father God, we thank You for bringing us here this morning and we pray that You will continue to speak to our hearts, speak to our lives that You will show us the path You have for our lives. Grant us the grace to follow, grant us the grace to open our hearts to the power of your Spirit. We make this prayer in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Grant me the words to speak that what I say will come from You, from Your Spirit and not just from me. Amen.

So, Jesus calls us to love one another. He calls us His disciples to demonstrate our love for one another. We all know that love is an incredible blessing. We all know that love is so important to our self-esteem. Love is important to accepting who we are. Love is important-- it's the basis, in a sense, of all our relationships. And yet we know also that love hurts. Love hurts.

There Will Always Be Suffering

In the first reading, we hear about the early missionary journeys of Paul and Barnabas-- or actually at the stage it was Barnabas and Paul-- and one of the lines there always strikes me.

He says that there will always suffering.

There will always be suffering, and what we have to do as individuals is determine : Is the suffering worth it? Is our love greater than the suffering that will come with it?

We can be incredibly practical. We can make a chart and have a cost-benefit analysis of the pros and the cons of this decision or this program or whatever it might be. But deep down, what I believe the Lord calls us to do is exactly that — dig deeper, look deeper, and find within yourselves the strength to love again, the strength to keep going, the strength to carry on and persevere through to the end.

If you happen to read the life of the mystics of the Church—even, you know, the great saints of the Church-- I think you'll find each one has an experience of deep suffering, an experience of deep hurt -- whether it's from a love life that's gone wrong, or a battle in a war that's been lost, or one became a prisoner of war somewhere, or was wrongly imprisoned. Whatever it might be, there is an experience of deep suffering.

Is that suffering good? Per se, no. Suffering is not a good thing. Can God use that suffering? Sure. And He does every time.



Reading I: Acts 14:21-27

²¹ They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, ²² strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said. ²³ Paul and Barnabas appointed elders ^[a] for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. ²⁴ After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, ²⁵ and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to

Attalia.²⁶ From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. ²⁷ On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

Redemptive Suffering

St. Paul reminds us in Colossians 1:24 that our sufferings complete the sufferings of Christ .

And the only way I can make sense of that text is that when we join our sufferings with the sufferings of our Christ, of our Savior, then our sufferings too become redemptive. They take on redemptive value in an intercessory sense.

In offering our suffering for the sake of the Gospel, or the conversion of that person, or the change of that system, then we begin to find meaning in our suffering -- and meaning in our toil , and meaning in the trials and tribulations of li fe. Because we have a goal beyond the here and the now. We have a goal beyond the experience of sufferings here and now.

That’s the challenge of love. Yes, we can talk about the love of a husband and a wife, and the love of parents for their children, or children for their sibling or their parents, or whoever, but there’s also this type of love that demands that we lay down our life to follow what God wants us to do-- and not necessarily for myself per se, but for the good of others.



Reading II: Revelation 21: 1-5a

21 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with

them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death^[b] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

⁵He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”



Choosing the Path of Love

Saint Damien of Molokai was a priest. He went to minister to the lepers in Molokai. And then after a number of years of ministering to the lepers --he turned out and came out to celebrate Mass, or talk to them-- he himself had caught leprosy.

And he said to the lepers, "I am now one of you."

He was called to lay down his life in the service —the service of people who had been rejected by society. He willingly gave his life, knowing the pitfalls of what he was doing, and yet he chose, he dug deeper. He looked further than the shallow areas --of our feelings, our immediate feelings -- and he found something deeper.

Think about your attachment to social media. Think about your attachment to having to talk to your parents at least once a week, if not every day, and then think about the missionaries who left Europe in the 15th-16th hundreds, got on a ship-- probably half of them never made it to the destination. They died of sickness or the boat went down. They weren't as good as engineering then as today.

And they knew when they got on that boat, they would never see their families again. Now they could send a snail mail home on the next boat that went back from South America to Europe --but that would take six months, and then maybe it would take a few months to get it to the right city. And then maybe, just maybe, the parents would still be alive and they would write back.

And goodness knows, they dug deep, they found something beyond the normal, and they said to the Lord, "Yes, I will go. Yes, I will choose a path of suffering. I will choose a difficult way because I hear Your call. And I choose the path of love—love for You and love for the brother and sister around me. "



Saint Damien of Molokai
catholicworldreport.com

How We Love

We get very glib in the way we talk about love.

And, you know, you've got people now who have weighing scales and they have thermometers, and then they have timers, and you have to put the coffee in on the filter, and when the timer is up—even if you still have coffee there-- you can't use it anymore because the timer tells so.

My goodness, we go crazy because we love our coffee!

Do we love the Lord? Do we love our neighbor? Are we willing to put that time and energy and attention into loving our neighbor? Because the smallest of love for neighbor is more important than the greatest of love for our coffee, or ice cream, or whatever.

We glibly use the words *I love, I love, I love*. And so sometimes, I think we actually forget what *love* is.

One is what discipleship tells us: that is, love has incredible capacity to endure suffering.

If we truly love a person—a family, people-- if we truly love a goal that has been placed before us as seeking out the common good, if we truly embrace that love and the grace attached to that goal, then we look deep.

...Just when we think that the can is empty, we will find another compartment, and another one, and another one, and another one, that will increase our love. That will increase our capacity to love, that will enable us to love more, and enable our love to endure the suffering, the pitfalls, the difficulties, the troubles, the trials, the tribulation s-- through to the end.



Responsorial Psalm – Psalms 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13

R. (cf. 1) I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

⁸ The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness.

⁹ The LORD is good to all and compassionate toward all his works.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

¹⁰ Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD, and let your faithful ones bless you.

¹¹ Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

How God Loves

One of the prayers that I love most that we read in the Scriptures-- and is on the mouth of so many saints: “Lord, bring to completion the work you have begun in us.”

We sing songs with that, with the line in it , and again, that song, that sentiment, that line tells us that if we dig deeper, we are always going to be able to find a little more extra the capacity to endure , the strength to overcome.

That’s the depth of love that God wants you to experience in Him, who is our strength, our song, our salvation: Jesus Christ who left the glory of heaven — imagine what that would be like — and came to dwell in us.

He reached deep in the garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus reached deeper: “Father, take this from me... but Your will be done.”

He dug deeper: “Your will be done.”

He chastised the disciples because they fell asleep, they didn’t dig deeper. They gave in to their feelings, failed to grasp the essential urgency of the situation, because when we grasp the urgency of the situation, we have to dig deeper because we know it’s important and we know that we just have to find a way to do it, there must be a way.

God will show us the way. We might not see it now but it is there .

And so often my experience following God’s call is you see the next step but you don’t see the 25 steps after the next step that will eventually bring you to the goal.

So, brothers and sisters, when we hear Jesus call us to love Him and one another, let’s not just dismiss that call: “I’ve heard that before. I know what that means-- that’s, you know, I’m doing a reasonable job at doing that.”

Maybe you’re not, maybe I am, maybe I’m not. But what I do know is we can all do better-- not because we’re better than others, but because Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, will empower us when we go deeper still . When we reach deeper into the depths of our heart to find the strength to carry on . To find the grace to overcome, and to find the grace, the strength, and the power of the Spirit, to be faithful to the end. To achieve what we set out to achieve, not just through sheer hard work but by allowing the grace and the love of God to shine in and through our life-- by surrendering deeper and deeper each day.

In Jesus’ Name. Amen.



Worship!

EXHORTATIONS

CHAI SANTIAGO -GAMO: You know; we may come from different backgrounds. We may have different hopes and dreams, or even baggage. Some of us may be overwhelmed with gratitude but some of us are also desperate for a miracle.

Whatever it is that's in your heart right now, I want to invite you to surrender it before God and be in a posture of worship. And as we declare who God is through Worship today, let us all claim the breakthrough that we have all been praying for.

God is here. God is here. Let's just open our heart, give Him all that we've got. Give Jesus everything as we worship Him today.

God, You are here. You are here, Jesus. Thank You God!

JHONN JAVIER: Hallelujah! Thank You, Lord!

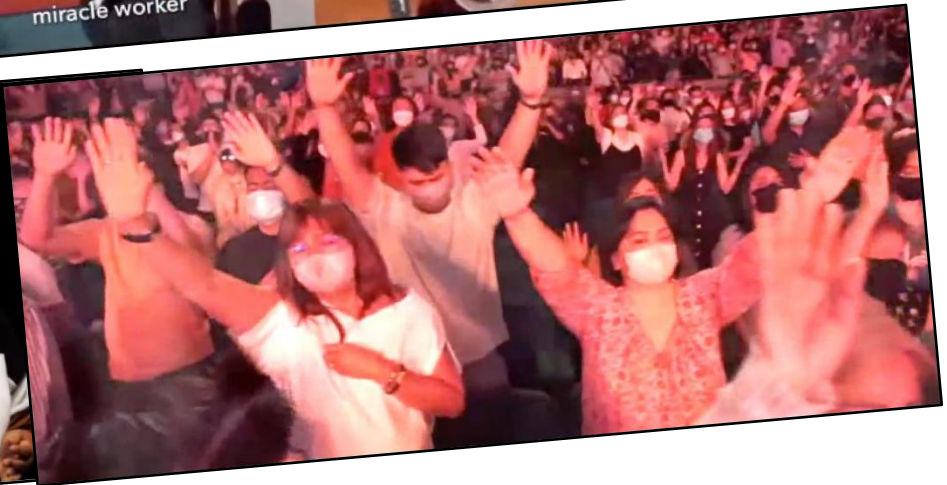
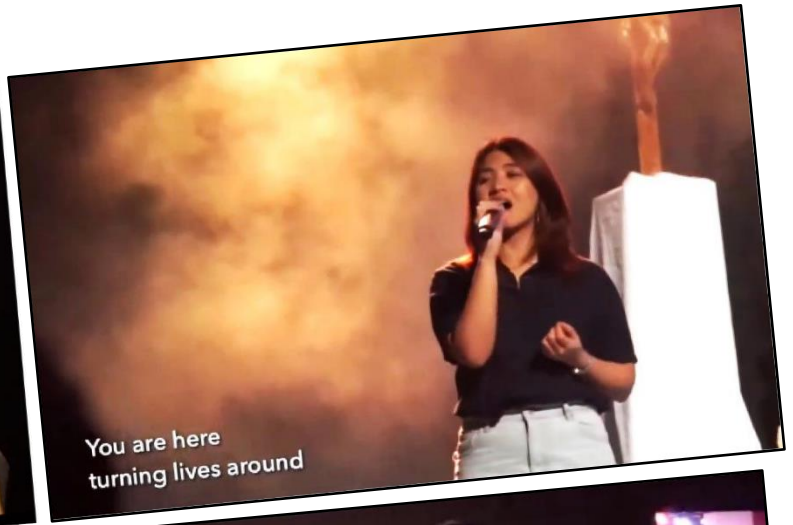
It says in the Word, "Glory to God in the highest and peace to His people on earth."

Who needs peace today? Who needs God's peace today? Let this be our prayer today.

Father in Heaven, we thank You for Your peace. We need You, God, today and forever.

We sing this song to You Lord as our prayer. In Jesus' Name."





Welcome!

Welcome to The Feast!
Welcome everybody. Welcome home.
Welcome to the family...

People of God, gathered in this place, again we honor you. We love you.
Thank you for being one with us...

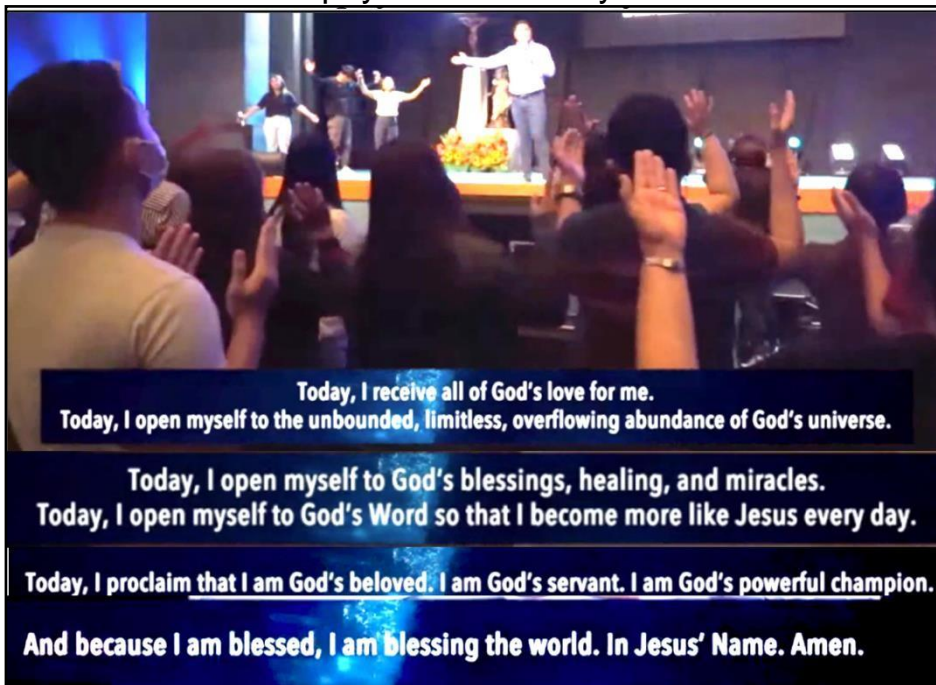
I encourage you to pray for openness, for strength to receive and hear, and listen. Most of the time we come here because we have prayers, intentions, dreams that we want fulfilled. I too have intentions.

But today, I want you to remember also and be encouraged that when you come before the Lord, try to come with nothing at all. Because His ways are better than our ways. His wisdom is beyond our understanding.

Today, try it. Try that when you come before the Lord, when you listen before the Lord, say: "I'm not thinking of anything. I'm not praying for anything. All I want is You. All I want is Your Spirit. I want Your energy. Your revival.

Come with nothing but yourself, offered unto the Lord.

Let us pay our Feast Prayer:



Put your hands to your heart, and have that moment with the Lord I trust you Lord. I listen to you, Lord. I want to be with You, Lord. In Jesus' Name we pray

Talk

Talk 3: *In the Belly of the Beast*



BO SANCHEZ: Welcome home.

Some of you are crying. Some of you are hurting. Some of you are grieving. Some of you are celebrating. Some of you are very happy.

But you belong here—both of you. This house welcomes everyone—no matter what color your shirt is. This house welcomes you. I want you to know that I have taken a stand. Every single election I take a stand.

People were asking me in the recent campaign. “Bro. Bo, why don’t you make a stand?”

I told them, I always take a stand in every election. I take a stand for the House that was built in 1980—the first quote-unquote “Feast”.

We did not call it Feast yet then. It was in the garage of my parents’ house. I was 14 years old in that very first Feast. I led the prayer meeting.

It is God’s call for me to stand for that spiritual home—that is now in 26 countries. Thousands of people call it their home.

I have no choice. In every election, I have to separate my personal choice from my public persona. Why? Because I’ve got children—many children. And I encourage them to wear a political color. To discern well. And even to campaign. And to go out into the street.

When my daughter who wears pink and my son who wears red tell me, “Tay, ‘Nay, sama ka—Dad, Mom, join us.”

I tell my son and my daughter—thousands of them: “Ako ‘yung Nanay. Kailangan may taong-bahay. Kasi darating ang araw, tapos na ang kampanya, tapos na ang eleksyon. At uuwi kayo—sugatan? Uuwi kayo – gutom? Uuwi kayo – pagod na pagod. ‘Yung iba masayang-masaya. Sino ang magpapakain? Kailangan may magluto.—I am your Mother. I have to stay home. Because the day you will come when the campaign, the election will be over.

You will come home—wounded, hungry, tired. Some of you are very happy. Who will serve food? Someone has to cook.”

My Stand

I stand by this House. It's a very difficult choice to stay non-partisan the whole time. Every single election.

I came to know Jesus when I was 12. I started serving when I was 13. We started the Community—this Feast—when I was 14 years old. I'm 55 now. Do the math. I'm an old man. I've experienced regime changes. I've experienced elections. I stand by the same House. This House is your safe place. And all those doors are open for anyone—no matter what color your shirt is.

Why? Nanay pa rin ako. I am still your Mother. You are still my child.

Yung mga sugatan, yung mga malungkot na malungkot, halika, yakapin kita.—Those who are wounded, who are very sad, come, I will embrace you to comfort you. I want to weep with you. I want to grieve with you. I really do. Because I love you. I feel what you feel. And I am praying for you. I really do.

Yung mga masaya, yung mga nag-ce-celebrate, kasi napagod sila sa mga rallies and their candidate won —Those who are happy because your candidate won, I want you to know I celebrate with you.

Why? Anak rin kita. You are also my children. And you know what? That's what democracy is. A person walks with two legs. Kailangan dalawa, e.—There should be two: Administration, Opposition. Hindi pwedeng isa lang. -- Can't be one only. So, both of you are needed to build this country. Both of you -- behind the pink shirt, behind the red shirt, behind the technicolored shirt, lahat tayo—all of us-- we're all children of God. We *all* are.

And so, I invite you to look at that person beside you as your brother and your sister in Christ. That person is made in His image. A God-carrier. Nasa sa loob ang Panginoon sa kanya. Respect that person. And treat that person as the house of God. No more name calling. No more demeaning. No more bullying. No more looking down at the other person. Kapatid mo 'yan. The person is your sibling. Ako ay isang nanay na lumuluhod sa harap ng aking mga anak. – I am a mother kneeling before my children. Please. Mahalin ninyo ang isa't isa. – Love one another. Bahay natin ito. This is our House.





Today, I want to preach the message: *There are blessings at the bottom.* Welcome to the *Book of Jonah*, Talk 3, titled *In the Belly of the Beast*. And we are in this chapter where Jonah gets swallowed up. May I invite you to pray. Put your hand on your chest: *Jesus, speak to me more, let your Word do its work. Lift me up. Refresh me. Renew me more. By the power of your Word. In Jesus' Name. Amen.* *There are blessings at the bottom.* This principle -- this truth—people have known for a long, long time.

In the 14th century, there was this Italian poet, Dante Alighieri who wrote *The Divine Comedy*, and this is what he said: “The path to Paradise begins in Hell.”

What does that mean? That many times, for someone to climb out of the pit, he must hit rock bottom. How many of you have experienced rock bottom?

What is rock bottom? That place where there are no alternatives. That place where your pride disappears.

That place where your stubbornness evaporates. That’s where your deafness is healed. And maybe for the very first time in a long time, you start listening



“The path to paradise begins in hell.”
Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*

My Rock Bottom

Last year, I hit rock bottom. The memory is so fresh it's as though it happened only yesterday. It was the 9th day of my battling COVID. There was an oxygen tube attached to my nose, an IV (intravenous device) stuck in my arm.

I remember, I suffered diarrhea—severe diarrhea that every drop of moisture in my body I felt had been drained out. Massive headache. My skull felt like it was inflamed. And as if those were not enough, I had 41 -degree fever ravaging my body. And then my stomach turned ballistic. I started vomit ing. Wala ng laman yung tiyan ko—My tummy was empty. And so, on that one night, I remember, I was lying down already on the floor of our living room. Could not take it anymore.

I was hugging the Little Twin Stars Tub of my wife. (*At right*, my Facebook post about it.)

And I was puking up all my acids there. At least I was puking up in style. Sinamahan ako ni Lala at ni Kiki. Yun ang pangalan nila. – The twins, Lala and Kiki, joined me. And so, as I was there just puking and puking, I thought I was going to die.

At that moment, I prayed, “Lord God, if this is how I’m going to die, take me. I prefer that You would let me live a little longer to enjoy my two sons and to be with my beautiful wife. But if you want me to go home, the answer is “Yes, I surrender.”

And at that moment, I realized something: All my achievements , all the things that I have, all my resources, all the money, lahat ng ginawa ko sa buhay ko – everything I did in my life... You know what? They were of equal value as the vomit in that tub. I know it sounds gross, but I realized nothing that I valued mattered anymore at that moment—when you know your life hung by a thread.

So, I said to God, “I surrender my kids to You, whom I will not see anymore. I surrender my wife to You. I surrender my loved ones to You. I surrender work to You. I surrender this, I surrender that...”

I surrendered everything. And then, I noticed there was this shift within me. And I felt I was in a different place. Yes, there was fever. Yes, there was mig raine. Yes, there was vomiting. Yes, there was diarrhea. Yes, all my symptoms were still there. But OMG, O my God, I was so happy. I was so at peace. Because I found my surrendered place.





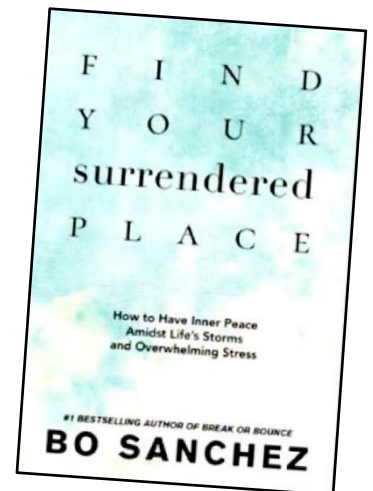
Blessings at the Bottom

It is true: there are blessings at the bottom. Because God – He spoke to me. And kept on speaking to me.

You see when you're at *that* moment, you're very attentive. And God spoke to me, and God spoke to me. And there are blessings at the bottom.

And the greatest blessing is the Blesser Himself. I found God at the bottom. I can't tell you everything He told me.

I wrote them in my book, *Find Your Surrendered Place*. Shameless plug.

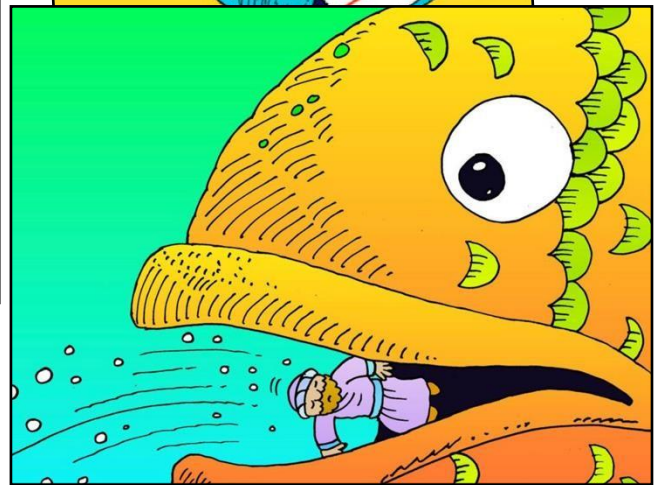


But just in case you think even for a moment that I am now an expert, and always in my surrendered place, that's not true. Every day I still struggle in trusting God and surrendering my life to Him. It's still a struggle. And I know I still have to struggle.

Why? Because I know if I do not do that, God is going to get my attention again, and He's going to allow me to hit rock bottom again and I'd want to avoid that. So, I'm trying my best to listen to Him.

But here's the point: I want to share with you today the story of Jonah. Because he hit bottom. And we're going to talk about that some more.

My dear friends, the Bible is a weird book. Accept it. This is it. You know it's filled with people who, I mean, think about it: you've got angels, you've got talking snakes, you've got people who rise from the dead, and then you've got sea monsters. Sea monsters!



Different Story

In the *Book of Jonah*, the story is that a great fish swallowed Jonah. And in the pop culture and in children's Bible books, the whale is a friendly whale. Some books,

<https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/rg-jonah/> give a name to the whale— Bob, Harry, Jules.

And so, Jonah has a three-day staycation inside the fish where he chats with God. But in reality, the original story is not very cute. Why? Because this is an ancient book.

You see, the Bible was written in a different time, different location, different culture, different language – and because of that, there's a lot of parts that are lost in translation. If you want to understand the Bible, you've got to understand that it was written in a different language, specifically Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek. It was written from a different culture, specifically ancient Israelite. And so, to understand the Bible, you've got to understand what the original author was trying to say.

Lost in Translation

And when you think about *lost in translation*

Teenagers, have you ever tried to explain a meme to your parents? Difficult, right? Oh, my God. Now, by the way, this is not my problem. Always up to date, you know. Just kidding. :)

Many years ago, my boys were still tiny. I went to my wife and I said, “You know, it’s so bad. They’re so rude in their language now.

“Oh, what’s that?” she asked.

“*Lol*. They’re cursing each other.”

You know, my kids – bewildered look: “What do you mean, Dad?”

“*Lol*—you put a letter *u* there – and this cannot be.”

You know, my kids started laughing and they laughed for about a month. Because I didn’t get it. And those were only 30 years between my kids and me.



Holy Spirit Inspired

So many words get lost in translation. Imagine, 2000 to 3000 years. So, we need to recapture what were lost. And that’s basically what I’m sharing with you today. When we read the Bible, we got to go back to those ancient times. How did they write this?

Last week, I told you, the author wrote this as a satire. What is a satire? A satire uses irony, humor, and exaggeration—to tell people this is stupidity. That’s what a satire is. So, if somebody reads the Bible, reads *Jonah*, and says every detail here is history, you don’t get it. You’re not respecting the author.

This is how the Holy Spirit inspired the author to write it. The Holy Spirit inspired him to write it as a satire. If you do not respect that, you’re not respecting the Holy Spirit who inspired him.

Which brings me now to the second part of that message. And I’m going to be calling on Audee Villaraza to do the more difficult part of explaining our talk.

AUDEE VILLARAZA:

THERE ARE BLESSINGS AT THE BOTTOM.



To continue what Bro. Bo had been preaching, I think it's so important for us to do this: We need to understand the context of how the author wrote the *Book of Jonah*.

Like, what was happening in his life?

We always say this whenever we read the Bible: Know the *point of view*. Like, what was the worldview back then?

How did they see the world?

And it's very important because, you know, we can all certainly agree that how we view the world today is so much different from how they viewed the world centuries ago. Now we can travel the world. Now we've got YouTube. We've got the Internet. We've got news all over—local and international. We've even got fake news. So, how we see the world today is so much different from how they saw the world back then.

Let me give you an example. Whenever you see stormy waters or choppy waters out in the ocean, what's the first thing that you think of? There is a typhoon. Or, you know, it's monsoon season—especially here in the country. We're used to that. It's mid-year here in the Philippines, and so we know that there's something that's coming.

But back then, to them, whenever there would be stormy waters, you know the first thing they would think of? *Pre-Creation*. That day that God created the world. That was their reference point.



It says here:

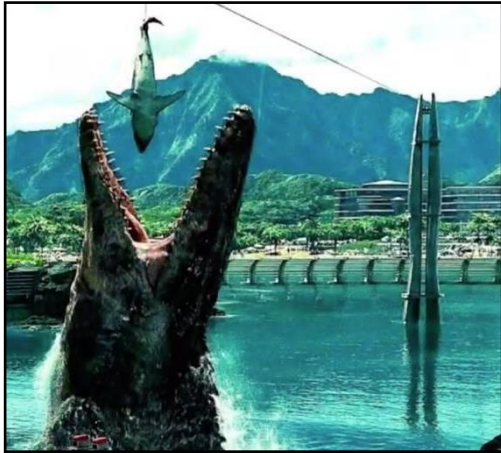
Nothing = Chaotic Waters

During ancient times, whenever the people would think of stormy waters, they think it's *Pre-Creation*. There was nothing. There was darkness. So, to the author who was writing this, *nothing* signified *chaotic waters*. And to them, *chaotic waters* was something that they feared. Why? Because they did not know what was underneath the water. Unlike now, we can scuba-dive, we see documentaries. They did not know, so they feared water. To them, *water* represented *death*.

But there is another reference point: Again, the story of Creation:

GENESIS 1:20-21 NLT Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind."
 GENESIS 1:20-21 NLT 21 So God created *great sea creatures* and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

When I was reading this, I was like, "Hold on...Great sea creatures? And they're good?"



Sea Monsters

Whenever I think of those words, *great sea creatures*, I think of the horrors in the *Jurassic World* movie. You remember that? That great, great creature?



When I think of *great sea creatures*, I think of the Megalodon—you know, that pre historic shark that can eat a whole boat.



I think of the Kraken (giant octopus-like monster) in the movie *Pirates of the Carribbean*.

Yes, it might be a mythological figure, but guess what: they're *not good*—at least for the preservation of human life.

Quick lesson: Your definition of *good* is not the same as God's definition of *good*.

So, sometimes, when you see a person that you don't like, that person is bad, God might think otherwise.

Because God might say, "I might use that person."

So, it's so important for us, my friends, to always seek the truth from God's perspective—not from our limited, weak, worldly perspective.



Jonah Prays

By this time, Jonah ends up in the belly of this great big fish. And while he was inside, here's what Jonah does: He started praying.

JONAH 2:2-4 NLT The mighty waters engulfed me; I was buried beneath your wild and stormy waves. ⁴ Then I said, 'O LORD, you have driven me from your presence. He said, "I cried out to the LORD in my great trouble, and he answered me. I called to you from the land of the dead, and LORD, you heard me! ³ You threw me into the ocean depths, and I sank down to the heart of the sea.

You know, the first time we preached this, we said that Jonah was fighting with the Ninevites.

Now we're finding out that Jonah was not actually fighting with the Ninevites. He was fighting with God Himself.

This is Jonah saying, "You *threw me*. You have *driven me* from Your Presence. You *threw me into the ocean depths*."

But then all of a sudden Jonah says this:



JONAH 2:4-6 NLT ⁴ Yet I will look once more toward your holy Temple. ⁵ "I sank beneath the waves and the waters closed over me. Seaweed wrapped itself around my head

As he was sinking down into that watery grave, Jonah was still looking up at the Holy Temple of God which is the highest point on dry ground.

And then, he said, in Verse 5: "*I sank beneath the waves and the waters closed over me...*"

I wonder how many people feel like that right now. You feel as though the waves are crashing over your life and you're being buried in this watery grave...

And then Jonah said, "*Seaweed wrapped itself around my head.*"

He's like human sushi.

A Beautiful Prayer

JONAH	2:4-6	NLT	⁶ I sank down to the very roots of the mountains. I was imprisoned in the earth, whose gates lock shut forever. But you, O LORD my God, snatched me from the jaws of death!
JONAH	2:7-9	NLT	⁷ As my life was slipping away, I remembered the LORD. And my earnest prayer went out to you in your holy Temple. ⁸ Those who worship false gods turn their backs on all God's mercies.
JONAH	2:7-9	NLT	⁹ But I will offer sacrifices to you with songs of praise, and I will fulfill all my vows. For my salvation comes from the LORD alone."



Let me give you very quickly the context of this prayer. It's a beautiful prayer. But I want you to know that this is not an original prayer by Jonah. It's actually plagiarized. The author was plagiarizing.

This is the beauty about the wisdom of the Bible. When you read the Bible, don't just read it from the surface level. But do your research. You know, study.

Because here, the author was pointing out something.

Remember that this is a time of the ancient Jews. The Hebrews—they knew their Bible. They had it memorized. They understood it. They took it to heart. And so, if you are the reader of this particular passage of the Bible, you know: "This prayer sounds awfully familiar. I've heard this before."

You know what he was pointing out to? He was linking it to the book of *Psalms*. A time when David was also fighting and running away from God.

And so, if you are the reader of this text, you are like, "Oh, my goodness, Jonah is like David."

This is how brilliant the author is.

New Life, New Beginnings

One thing that I need to say: I love how the author inserted that prayer. Because one thing that it tells me is this:

Imagine Jonah was inside the belly of this great big fish. It was complete darkness. No light. No reading material... And yet he knew that prayer. Why? Because it was here in his heart. He was close to God.

That's why he knew the prayer.

Here's the message: If you can get close to God this year, my friend, if you can get close to God's Word, and really have his Word in your heart, I'm telling you, you can be in the darkest of places, and still find light and hope amidst all that darkness that you are in.

But one thing I need to point out: We already know that Jonah went down to Joppa because he wanted to run away from the Lord. And then he went down to the boat to sleep. And now, we see that Jonah goes down once more in the depths of the ocean.

I want you to know this: In the Bible, the number 3 has a significance. Actually, in the Bible, every number has a significance.

This is the third time that Jonah has gone down. He went down to Joppa. He went down to the boat. Now, he's down in this watery grave.

Now, the number 3 signifies *new life, new beginnings*. Who among you needs *new life, new beginnings*? That's also me. I'm preaching to myself. I want you to hear this message because this is so important.

Jonah went down three times. Now, it says that on the third time, he went down into the belly of the whale.

Now, I tried to imagine it myself: This is the lowest point that Jonah can ever get. Can you imagine anything lower than this: you are a human sushi?

Just like those Filipino jokes-- where one guy is boasting what his grandfather can do, and another guy boasts his grandpa can do better:

Guy 1: Ang lolo ko kumain ng isang daang sushi. – My grandpa ate 100 sushis.

Guy 2: Wala'yan sa lolo ko. Ang lolo ko ginagawang sushi.—That's nothing with my grandpa. My grandpa is made into sushi. 😊



Jonah's Decision

Imagine: This is the rock bottom for Jonah—all because of Jonah's decision. Not because of God. Remember that it was Jonah who chose to disobey God. He chose to run away from God. He chose to go down to the boat and then sleep.

And remember, Jonah was the one who said, "Throw me into the water."

Some of the things that you go through in life that are horrible...

Guess what:

Sometimes, it's not on God. It's on you. Because of the decisions that you make.

We need to stop blaming God for some of the things that happen in our life because sometimes, it's really on us.

But one thing that shocked me is that while all this was happening to Jonah, you would think: he was in the belly of this great big fish, and yet did Jonah repent? Did Jonah have a little remorse?

Some of you might say, "Yes, Bro. Audee—because he said to God, 'I will make sacrifices to You. I will make a vow to You.'"

Yes, that sounds like it. It sounds like a repentance. But in reality, if you read forward – and we're going to talk about it in the next few Sundays-- Jonah doesn't even repent—because his words were beautiful, but his actions did not align with his words.

I truly believe this: that the best way, and the greatest way to show repentance, is not through your lips, but through your life. When you show people that you are willing to change, that's true repentance. Because if you see that the person is not really changing, just keeps saying "Sorry," that's not really repentance. That's just lip service.



A Second Chance

Jonah did not repent. And yet, it says in Verse 10:



The Lord ordered the fish to spit Jonah out onto the beach.

I'm thinking, God gave Jonah a second chance? I've been wrestling with this question all week...

Because when I was reading this, I was like, "Lord, are You sure You gave Jonah a second chance? You know that he disobeyed You. You know that he ran away from You. You know that he didn't even ask forgiveness from You. Is this how You operate, Lord? Is this a pattern by which how you operate? For instance, if I don't ask for forgiveness, you'll still give me a second chance?"

That's what we're thinking about, right? And I kept on questioning God, "God is this the way you operate?"

And then it hit me—like a freight train it hit me...

You know, in my 40 plus years of existence in this world, I had done so many things in this life that I'm not proud of. I had lied to people. I'd cheated people. Believe it or not, I'd even stolen from people. I'd backstabbed people. I'd run out of friends. I'd done some very vile things that will make you think twice about being my friend—back then.

But you know what? God continued to love me. God continued to be there for me. And you know what happened? Through that love, that unconditional love—it healed me. And I became a better person—little by little.

Jonah's Rock-Bottom Moment

When you encounter the true love of God in your life, you will not have any other choice but to change. Because when you keep receiving that love, when you encounter the powerful love of Jesus in your life, it convicts you to want to change. That's the kind of love that God can give us.

And so, yes, God will continue to give you a second chance until maybe this is the chance you will accept His love and completely change for the better.

Thinking of Jonah... Jonah must have been afraid of being in the belly of that great big fish.

But you know, Jonah wasn't afraid of the fish. He wasn't. You know what he was afraid of? He said it. Jonah said it in Verse 4:



Jonah was more afraid being separated from his God.

And you know, my friends, this is what I call a rock-bottom moment.

A rock-bottom moment is when you feel you've been abandoned by everybody, including God. When you feel like nobody's there with you anymore—that's a rock-bottom moment.

Peter's Rock-Bottom Moment

I remember that there was somebody in the New Testament who also had a rock-bottom moment. His name is Peter. Ah, Peter—Peter who denied Jesus three times—even though he said that he was going to be there for Jesus when Jesus needs him the most. That was the failure of Peter as a disciple. But yet what happened after? Jesus came to Peter on that shore that beautiful morning.

And get this: That was the third time. Number 3.

That was the third time that Jesus showed Himself to his apostles.

Peter was about to experience new life and new beginnings.

And so, Peter, he was fishing on a boat one day. And Jesus had already risen from the dead. But He showed Himself already three times. That morning -- Peter hadn't even asked forgiveness yet—Jesus came to Peter:

“Peter, do you love Me... Do you love Me...Do you love Me? Then feed My lambs.”

This went on three times. You know what Jesus was doing?

This is my theory: For each time Peter denied Jesus—three times-- Jesus had forgiveness for Peter three times.

He said, “Peter, I trust you. Now, feed my lambs. Peter, I'll give you another chance. Now feed my lambs.”

My goodness. This is the God that we worship, my friends. A God who will continue to give you chance, after chance, after chance.





Our Rock-Bottom Moment

Here's one thing: Before Peter could fulfill the prophecy and the command that he would become the rock by which Jesus would build His Church upon, he needed to go through a rock-bottom moment.

And so did Jonah. Before Jonah could fulfill the command of God, he needed to first go through a rock-bottom moment.

Now I don't know who this message is for. You might have gone through a rock-bottom moment, or maybe you're still there right now -- and you know what I'm talking about.

What is the purpose of you being in a rock-bottom moment?

Here it is:

THERE ARE BLESSINGS AT THE BOTTOM.

Just like Peter who needed to go through a rock-bottom moment, and Jonah who needed to go through a rock-bottom moment, you and I need to go through a rock bottom. Why?

So that we would know that Rock—that God is the Rock at the bottom. That God is at the bottom. That there's a blessing at the bottom.

Why is there a blessing at the bottom?

Because the Blesser is at the bottom.

That's the purpose of a rock-bottom moment, my friend.

So that you would see: "My goodness, God is here with me!"

The Number 3

I want to close. I want to go back to that part where Jonah gets swallowed by this fish. It's in Verse 17. It says:

**Now the Lord had arranged
For a great fish to swallow Jonah.
And Jonah was inside the fish
for three days and three nights.**

We're talking about three days and three nights. It's important in the Bible. Number 3: It signifies new life, new beginnings.

For instance, the first day that God created the world, what did He create? He created light in the darkness.

And then the second day, God created the sky and the heavens.

But on Day 3, God created something amazing. He created the seas and then

He created dry land—two places by which life could be sustained. God's earliest gift to all of us is dry ground—because that's where you can sustain life.

And then three days later... 3 plus 3 equals 6. What did God create on the sixth day?

Adam and Eve.

He created new life. It was new beginning.

Number 3 signifies *new life, new beginnings*.



<https://www.google.com/search?q=free+images+of+adam+and+eve>

Time of Testing

There is another meaning of Number 3: *on the third day*.

The *third day* describes something a little different. You've got new life, new beginnings, but the *third day* represents a time of testing. How many of you are being tested right now? You're being tested in the water? God knows what you're going through.

So, it's a time of testing. For example, Abraham walked up to a mountain for three days. Why? God asked him to sacrifice his one and only son Isaac. Imagine the time of testing for Abraham: "My only son. God asks me to sacrifice my son."

I mean can you imagine the kind of journey that Abraham had to go through?



Another one who was tested: Noah. Noah who had to take his family into a boat (because God told him, there would be a big storm). And he witnessed the destruction of civilization. After 40 days and 40 nights, the rain finally stopped.

And Noah sent a dove out in the world to look for dry ground. You know how long it took for the bird to come back? Three days until the bird confirmed there was dry ground—a time of testing.

I'm glad that the bird came back. Otherwise, we won't have birds. Because there would be only one bird left.

Jonah. He was in the belly of the whale, of the fish—for three days and three nights. A time of testing.

Jesus' Rock-Bottom Moment

The most powerful example that we all know of is Jesus. Jesus who was in the belly of the earth, in the belly of the ground, for three days.

Actually, when you think about it, when you read Scripture, it's not *3 days*. It's not even 72 hours when the Crucifixion happened. But the writers, because the third day was so meaningful to all of them, they just, you know, maybe rounded it off to 3 days-- so that they would know this is pointing to something:

Three days represent a time of testing.

And I want to deliberately say this to everybody right now because I believe that we are all in a time of testing. I mean, there are some things that happen in your life. Maybe not this week. Maybe not this year. Maybe even last year. When maybe you suffered a loss: you lost a loved one; you lost a business; you lost an opportunity.

Maybe you made some plans that did not work. How many of you had plans which have not come to life yet?

Here's the brilliance of the message of Jonah: that while you are in a time of testing, something is happening.

We said that Number 3 signifies new life, new beginnings—and so, I'm about to declare new life, new beginnings in your life right now. I hope and pray that you receive this blessing.

Know that in a time of testing, God is actually moving. Because after the time of testing is done, that's when the blessing comes. There's a blessing after the testing.

But here's the real message: Your plans that you made this year, or maybe even last year... Maybe you invested your money in something and then you lost that money. Maybe you invested your time—in your love, in a relationship and you broke up. I don't know what it is. Maybe you voted for a candidate in this election and then your candidate lost. I don't know what kind of plans that you have.





Here's the good news: Just because your plans failed you, it doesn't mean God's purpose failed too. Because God still has a plan. And you know what? I'm choosing to trust God in this time of testing.

I'm choosing to trust God and to believe and declare that God can work all things for the good of those who love Him, and who are called according to His purpose. Because God can do it. God can turn what went wrong into what went right. God can do it. God can use even the most vile, evil person in this world and still make him work for the good of the Lord. Because God's got a plan.

There's a blessing after the storm. There's a blessing after the testing. There are blessings right at the bottom. If you can only see the power of God that transform our life... So, whatever it is that you're going through I want you to choose to trust God in the testing.

To choose to declare that He is a Way-maker. He makes ways whenever there is no way. He is a Promise-keeper. He will keep His promise until the end of our days. He is a Life-changer. You encounter Jesus and then your life changes. He is a Problem-solver. You can be in the middle of your storm, without any solution, and God swoops you up, gives you the answer.

He's a Way-maker and I hope you can declare that with me right now. Even we don't see the plans, we believe in the One who makes the plans.

Closing Prayer

BO SANCHEZ: Every Sunday is the most important election that you will ever-ever make. Every single Sunday, we ask people to vote for the candidate that all of us agree on. That there is only one Savior who can save us.

And that's why I invite you to vote for Jesus today. Do you believe that He is the King who died for you? Who gave His whole life to you? And who is calling you to Himself to surrender and sacrifice for Him?

If your answer is Yes, pray this prayer with me. Put your hand over your chest as a symbol that you pray with all your heart and mean every word, and say:

Jesus, You are my Savior. I open my heart to You. Come in. Be my King. Be my Lord. I will serve You for the rest of my life. Forgive me for all my sins. I receive Your eternal love. In Jesus' Name. Amen.





Mercy Ministries

GRACE TO BE BORN Part 2

The Best of May

LAST week, *The Feast Family* featured Grace To Be Born to celebrate its 13th Founding Anniversary this May -- May 8, 2022, to be exact.

We celebrated Grace To Be Born's Anniversary with reminiscences on its blessing shared by Grace's Executive Director Ester Palacio. *At right*, she presents to our founder, Bro. Bo Sanchez, the Saint John Paul II Award, a special grant of the Catholic New Evangelization Award --

“in recognition of Grace's active service in the promotion, celebration, and defense of family and life.”



May is a big month for Grace To Be Born. Back in 2009, one day at The Feast, our Light of Jesus Family faith gathering, Bro. Bo preached on the ill-effects of abortion. Touched by the talk, Bro. Rey Ortega (*left*), a devoted LOJ member, recommended to Bro. Bo to put up a foundation to take care of unwed pregnant women in crisis, so that they would not resort to abortion.

And, as God would have it, they were able to set up a meeting with key supporters on May 8, 2009—which happened to be the birthday of Bro. Bo's mother, Sis. Pilar Sanchez (*right*), a staunch supporter of Grace.

May happened to be also a big day for Bro. Rey-- his birthday happened to be on May 18. He is already with the Lord in Heaven, but surely, he is rejoicing that Grace continues to flourish to this day. Birthday Joy, Bro. Rey!



Challenge

Yes, Grace To Be Born has been blessed with kind supporters.

But the mission of Grace never gets done. A major challenge is hardly funds for its day-to-day operations and material needs.

Just recently, Grace To Be Born posted on its Facebook page a campaign for diapers for the babies:

ON paydays, we pay it forward. ❤️

Grace to Be Born, an orphanage and halfway home for pregnant women in crisis needs your help.

Right now, we are serving 28 babies in the shelter, plus 5 more on the way! The average expense for baby diapers alone sums up to Php 33,800 monthly. It means that we are spending around Php 1,200.00 on diapers for every baby each month.

Would you help us raise funds for the babies in Grace To Be Born? For only P1,200.00, you get to support 1 baby's 1 month diaper supply.

You may also send actual diapers! 🙏

Any way you wish to help is absolutely welcome!

To give, visit: <https://bit.ly/FMMDiaperDriveforGTBB>

To donate actual diapers, please message us for details.

Thank you in advance for your generosity.

[#PaydayPayItForward](#) [#Payitforward](#) [#CycleofGenerosity](#) [#MercyMinistries](#)

in behalf of our Grace mothers and babies, we deeply thank you!

For sure, God will return to you your generosity a hundredfold —as promised in Luke 6:38 NLT:

Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full —pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back. [a]

GRACE TO BE BORN
DIAPER DRIVE
Show your love for babies in need.
Every P1,200 donation can provide 1 month supply of diapers for 1 baby in Grace to be Born
feastmercyministries.com/give
Feast Mercy Ministries
Nonprofit Organization
Send message



Wonderful Grace



¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

--Psalm 139:14

PSALM 139:14 praises God as the psalmist expresses his appreciation of God's omnipresence, especially His Presence everywhere for everyone.

Grace To Be Born has put Psalm 139:14 on the wall of its nursery to serve as reminder, as inspiration to this young mother and other Grace beneficiaries that they are not alone in their crisis—for God is ever present for them.

God is present for Grace mothers and babies through the shelter's admin officers, health care personnel, social workers , and caregivers.

Like Anna Marie Alianza.
She shares:

I've been a social worker and caregiver here in Grace To Be Born. I've been here for two years now.

I started here as a volunteer. I took care and fed the babies. I also bathed them.

On the day of their check-up, I bring them to the hospital.



Moving On

The saddest part of this Ministry is when after she has given birth to her baby, a mother who can't fend for her child, has to leave the child to us--as she has to move on with her life.

On the other hand, we are also happy and feel so blessed because the babies are given a good life that their parents might not be able to provide.



I really feel that God is good all the time because even though many go through difficulties in life, there are still many who are ready to help the mothers here.

Thank you to all the donors and those who help the mothers here to overcome what they're going through.



FAMILY

Thank You!

The Feast Family, now organized as the **Feast Mercy Ministries**, is a spin-off ministry of the Light of Jesus Family founded by Bro . Bo Sanchez, earlier named as Kerygma Family, a unique online, non -physical, borderless, international community of friends who support each other's personal growth.

Partner beneficiaries of the Feast Mercy Ministries flourish because of your generous support.

Thank you for being with us. We pray that you find your daily source of inspiration from the resources that we send to you. We pray too that you may consider giving to The Feast Family. No gift is too small.

Thank you very much in advance for your gift. Our prayer is that God will continue to reward you as you give.

FOR EXISTING DONORS:

Thank you for the Love. Your monthly donation helps us continue extending support to our Light of Jesus spin-off organizations, including our partner beneficiaries. Your gift will sustain our operations and, we hope, help us reach out to the persons our Lord has called us to make disciples and give them renewed hope.

Be a Feast Family member. Write or call us. Now.

Email Address: jocelyn@kerygmfamily.com

Website: <https://kerygmfamily.com> Telephone Numbers: 8725-9999/

Fax 725-1230

Our Partner Beneficiaries

Email Address: mercyministries@feast.ph Website: www.feastmercyministries.com

Jeremiah 33 Foundation is a shelter for girls particularly victims of sexual abuse.



Grace To Be Born is a halfway home for pregnant women in crisis.



He Cares Mission provides shelter for street children.



Pag-asa ng Pamilya Foundation gives scholarships to poor students.



Jesus Christ Cares for Cancer provides financial assistance and pastoral care for indigent cancer patients.



The Light of Jesus Pastoral Care Center ministers to those who are emotionally and spiritually wounded.

H.A.I.L. MARY is acronym for Healthcare Assistance for Indigents and Lepers of Mary, adopting the Blessed Mother as the patroness of its mission to eradicate leprosy in Abra within 8–10 years.



The Light of Jesus Disaster Recovery Ministry provides evacuation assistance, relief goods, financial aid, and other needs of calamity victims.

The Light of Jesus Prison Ministry brings Jesus to the Correctional Institution for Women to give the women hope for a new life of dignity.



anawim
HOME OF GOD'S POOR

Anawim Lay Missions Foundation provides a home for poor elderly who have been abandoned by their family and have nowhere else to go.

CHOOSE HOW YOU WANT TO GIVE

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FAMILY ONLINE NEWSMAGAZINE

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Go and make disciples of all men.

— Matthew 28:19