



NEWSLETTER
November 27, 2022

Why We Create False Gods

BECAUSE we like being in control.

We're allergic to uncertainty. If things don't go our way, we throw a tantrum. Whether we're 3 or 23 or 53.

Think of a toddler named Princess. She is totally adorable *until* you remove Mommy from her sight for 12 seconds. That's when she turns into a dark monster from the underworld. Because in her little mind, Mama is not separate person—Mama is part of her identity. If you remove Mama, Princess does not exist.

But in due time, Princess grows up and outgrows Mama. But in reality, she just replaces Mama with something else, depending on the various seasons of her life: A *barkada*, a boyfriend, a dream job, even a Louis Vuitton bag.

Here's the truth: *Uncertainty makes us create gods we think we can control.* But sooner or later, these false gods will fail us.

But when we hit rock bottom, our hearts run back to the real God that we know we can never control. Today, this uncontrollable God is inviting you to surrender your life to Him.

Have a life-changing Feast today!

May your dreams come true,

Bo Sanchez





SPECIAL REPORT PART 1

WE like to boast that *The Feast Family* issues are, ahem, all great. But this issue is Greater Than most of our issues because it is about the recent FEAST CONFERENCE held at the SMX Convention Center, Pasay City, November 18-20, 2022.

The Feast Family covered FEASTCON 2022 which centered on the theme *Greater Than*.

So, okay, it's really not a boast that this issue is about being *Greater Than*— the theme we borrowed for our three-part *Special Report* on FEASTCON 2022.

We start our *Special Report* from the end— the last day of the Conference, the *Grand Feast* which started with the Holy Mass presided by His Excellency, Most Reverend Honesto Ongtioco, Bishop of Cubao. See *Flashback*, page 3.

The Special Plenary Talk of Bro. Bo Sanchez follows on page 13.

And for a great taste of our succeeding reports, our Mercy Ministries section features the talk of Fr. Patrick Falguera, Ateneo de Manila University Chaplain of Professional Schools. He kindly graced our Feast Conference as a plenary speaker, sharing his realizations as he figured in a diving accident and went through a near-death experience, page 27.

The FEASTCON theme, *Greater Than*, is based on the promise of our Lord Jesus in John 1:50: *Jesus asked him, do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.*

Fr. Patrick's story and the entire Feast Conference affirm that to this day, Jesus relentlessly fulfills His promise.

All Glory to God,

Randy Borromeo
Media Ministry
Executive Director





FLASHBACK!
NOVEMBER 20, 2022

GRAND FEAST HOLY MASS



THE SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE



Presiding:
His Excellency
MOST REV. HONESTO F. ONGTIOCO, D.D.
Bishop of Cubao



Concelebrants:
FR. PAOLO ASPRER FR. BOB McCONAGHY
reading the Gospel

BISHOP HONESTO F. ONGTIOCO
on the Gospel: Luke 23:35-43

Excerpts...

Good morning, Everyone! It's a joy to be with you today— after missing you for two years.

I came to remind you that God is close to us even at the height of the Pandemic. He is never a distant God. It is we who distance ourselves from Him.

So, we thank God for this opportunity of gathering us once again to enjoy His Presence, especially as we celebrate the Eucharist.

I'd like to share with you two things: First, about the importance of The Feast; and Second, the message of the Solemnity we are celebrating today as we close the Liturgical year. Every year we close the Liturgical year with the Feast of Christ the King, the vision of God where everything will be under Christ. So, now, not everything is under Christ.

I'd like to thank Bro. Bo for inviting me once again. I'd like to acknowledge the presence, of course, of Fr. Bob and Fr. Paolo.

Earlier, when I arrived, the staff of The Feast was very, as usual, accommodating. I was in Radio Veritas for the six o'clock Mass, then I came straight to this place, excited about this gathering.

So, when I entered, there was a room reserved for us and the staff.

They were very warm in welcoming me. *Sabi nila*, "Magkape po muna kayo.— Have coffee first."

Sabi ko— I said, "Thank you."

Siguro hindi ninyo alam ang paboritong kape ko.—You probably don't know my favorite coffee. They were offering me brewed coffee, and there was also 3-in-1. Hindi yan ang paboritong kape ko. Alam ba ninyo ang paboritong kape ko?—Those are not my favorite coffee. You know my favorite coffee?

Kape-ling kayo!—Being with you!

And thank you for coming! We are being reminded that we need *kape* every day. Pero baka sabihin ninyo, "Bishop, nininerbyos po ako. Sabi ng doktor ko, bawal sa akin ang kape."—But you might say coffee makes you jittery. Your doctor prohibits you from having coffee.

Ibang klaseng kape ang sinasabi ko sa inyo. But this is a different K-A-P-E: **Special KAPE: K-*ausapin***—Talk; **A-*ng P-anginoon***—with God; **E-*very day!***



Two Messages

We have to talk to the Lord. He's always waiting for us. Maybe sometimes you question Him. That's part of our humanity, our mortality.

So, as I said, I want to share two things:

First, about The Feast. So, we are here after two years of break and yet during the break, there was online, pero iba po yung ganitong gathering, 'di ba?

So, we come, my dear brothers and sisters, to refresh our faith. Since the height of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID) Pandemic, more than 1,000 days ago, some or many people got used to participating in the Eucharist through YouTube or Facebook online streaming— and people got used to that.

Now, we are calling you all to come back to church. The *live* streaming was a temporary remedy to prevent the spread of the virus and to protect each other. So, we were allowed to celebrate the Mass in the church and then on our part, we could project it and reach out to you through *live* streaming. And yet, it's different when it's like this, you know, when we are gathered as God's people.

For instance, when the Word was proclaimed: Did you not feel God talking to you personally— kahit na marami tayo— even we're many?

God was speaking to you personally. Ramdam natin ang pagmamahal ng Diyos sa mga ganitong pagpupulong.— We feel God's love in this gathering.

Reading I: 2 Samuel 5:1-3

¹ All the tribes of Israel then came to David at Hebron and said, 'Look, we are your own flesh and bone.'² In days past when Saul was our king, it was you who led Israel on its campaigns, and to you it was that Yahweh promised, "You are to shepherd my people Israel and be leader of Israel."³ So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a pact with them in Yahweh's presence at Hebron, and they anointed David as king of Israel.



Greater Things

So, it's time to renew our faith.

A lot of people, they focus on the small virus that has captivated the world—COVID-19 and we forget that if we focus on God, we can see greater things because God is in complete control of our life. It's not COVID! Yet, we have allowed COVID to control us. We got into depression, we got into loneliness, we got into sickness— everything. Forgetting sometimes that there's Someone greater than what we have in our midst. It is God.



So, we thank God for gathering us today, and as we look forward to another Feast next year— as it was already mentioned to you— projected Greater Than.

Fr. Bob has been here for 25 years. I'm sure, when he stepped for the first time on Philippine soil, he didn't expect the greater things he would experience. But now, you talk to him, he has many things to share with you about the greater things, blessings, that he has received.

When I was ordained a priest 50 years ago, I didn't know I would see greater things... We were four who got ordained: one passed away last December; one had a stroke about 10 years ago so, he has been retired; another one is retired for the past two years. So, ako na lang po ang nasa service.— I'm the only one in service. I thank God for *that*. I'm already 74. When I got ordained 50 years ago, I was the youngest priest in the Archdiocese of San Fernando Pampanga. I was only 24— now I'm 74. Next year, I will be celebrating my Silver Jubilee as a Bishop. So, I hope to be with you, my dear friends. I'll be 75, ready to retire.

Parang late na Bro. Bo— Seems already late. Yung mga nasa army, at 56 they retire, those in government service—60, 65. Pero kami, maybe we don't retire from the priesthood. —But perhaps priests don't retire from priesthood. *So, when we say retire, we just change tires for more energy, more zeal, more enthusiasm in carrying out your life. So, please pray for me, that I will always serve the Lord with joy, great enthusiasm, and courage.*

Another miracle: Bro Bo. I was talking to Ate Chelle Crisanto (sister of Bro. Bo) how he (Bro. Bo) was infected with COVID. And I'm sure he just kept praying. You know, that's important— to pray— as Pope Francis reminded us several times—pray.

Thank you for coming to pray, because when man does not pray, he's more prone to do evil, to do what is ungodly and unChristian, and yet when we pray, we surrender ourselves to God. You will see greater things than you expect.

We thank God for Bro. Bo— he is fully alive. A great miracle!

What's Important Now

So, as I said, we come to refresh our faith: the importance of receiving the Sacraments, the importance of reading the Word of God, and reflecting on it to refresh our faith. Because people got so used to just watching online. *Kung minsan, while they are watching, kumakain pa*— eating—instead of focusing on what is real.

So, my dear friends, if you want to win— do you want to win? Of course, you want to win in many ways— competitions in life, businesses— just make sure what you want to win.

WIN—W-hat's I-mportant N-ow.

What's important to you now? Is it money? Is it popularity? Uh-uh.

Learn from the richest man from Singapore. Have you read *Forbes* magazine? The richest man in Singapore has valued at 12.1 billion dollars, Philip Nunn, with his brother Robert. And you know what he said?

He said, "I've been looking for something in my life and finally I came to realize, all of us are broken and there's a missing part in our life."

And you know whom he discovered? It is Jesus. Once he discovered Jesus, all his wealth was just secondary.

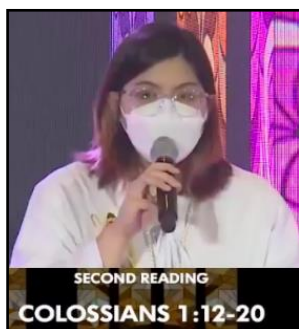
He said, "I want people to enjoy the peace and the joy of knowing God in life."

He is a rich man who was, at first, after money. But later on, there was a conversion—putting not money, putting not material wealth first— but God first.



Reading II: *Colossians 1:12-20*

¹² giving thanks with joy to the Father who has made you able to share the lot of God's holy people and with them to inherit the light.¹³ Because that is what he has done. It is he who has rescued us from the ruling force of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son that he loves,¹⁴ and in him we enjoy our freedom, the forgiveness of sin.¹⁵ He is the image of the unseen God, the first-born of all creation,¹⁶ for in him were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and everything invisible, thrones, ruling forces, sovereignties, powers – all things were created through him and for him.



Refresh, Reconnect, Reboot

So, your presence would indicate that you put God always Number One in your life. Thank you!

So, first, it's time to **refresh our faith**.

Second, our gathering is a time to **reconnect**— so, it's nice to see old friends sharing their faith stories; to see what happened; and that God has always been there for us...

So, we try to reconnect. It is a joy to reconnect with you this morning, to reconnect with one another, with the Community.

And then also, third, it's time to **reboot**.

Sometimes, we get weakened by crises, problems. So, sometimes we need to be rebooted in the Spirit so that what we do glorifies God. And I know countless things that our Feasts are doing—reaching out to the poor even during the Pandemic. Still, we reach out through the different charitable works that we have started before the Pandemic.

Thank you, Bro. Bo, and all the members of The Feast. Continue what you have been doing to glorify God.

So, we thank God for The Feast! So, it's time to refresh, appreciate our faith. To reconnect with God and with one another. And to reboot our desire to reach out to people.

So, about the Feast of Christ the King. Kahit na wala po tayong hari here in the Philippines— even though we don't have a king here, I'm sure you have your own ideas about what a king is. The normal sense of a king is one who has a particular territory— and some kings, their reign is marked by violence or by subversion, coercion, forcing people.

But Jesus as our King, as our universal King, has a different kind of Kingship.

Here is the Master, Lord of the universe—who kneels down before His apostles to wash their feet.

And so as followers of Christ, we wash each other's feet.

This is what it means to share the Kingship of Christ... by imitating His humility and selfless service... By praying together, worshiping with each other, and above all, listening to each other.

May Christ be always close in our hearts— reigning over our homes, and the world.

Viva Cristo Rey! —Long live Christ the King!



Worship!

EXHORTATION

KIM PAGUIO: Good morning, brothers and sisters and welcome to the third and final day of our Conference! Earlier this morning, Bishop said we celebrate Christ the King Sunday! You know what I believe, that the finest offering that we can give our Almighty, true, and great King is the gift of our Worship this morning. Are you ready to worship Him today? Are you ready to give your all to God? Yes? So, I invite you to worship Him with your all as we pray, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Come on, let every heart be lifted up to the King! Let every song! Let every soul! Let every brokenness! Let every dream! Let every plan be lifted up to His One, True, Great name!”



ISSA RODRIGUEZ: Hebrews 11:1 says, “Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we don’t see.” But I also know that confidence and hope, and assurance we don’t always have. Sometimes, we feel like our prayers are left unheard or things aren’t going our way. But I also know that those things won’t change the fact that our God is a faithful God, that He is working and moving—even in the silence, even in the in-betweens, even in the uncertainty.

So, whether you’re here today with so much hope and so much confidence in God or you’re here still with questions, or fears, or doubts, we’re going to sing, we’re going to worship, and we’re going to declare His faithfulness, no matter the circumstance we’re in.

So, we come in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Father, you are a faithful God. You love us so much that You meet us right here where we are. But You also love us too much to leave us here. So, we come into Your Presence and to the greater things that You have planned for us.

We trust You, God.

Father, move into this place. Make Your Presence so concrete that we feel it.

MIKE VINAS: Friends, before we go on out here today, may we just take a moment to soak in all of this? May I just invite you to look around you? Look at this room. Look at this place. Look at what God has done in your life in the last three days.

Praise God! I just want you to take a mental, spiritual snapshot of this moment, and just be grateful, because if there's one thing that the Pandemic showed us, it's that hindi tayo parating ganito kaya magpasalamat tayo.— We are not always like this. So, let us be grateful for this moment!



If you're grateful today, may I just invite you to lift up your hands, if it is comfortable with you, as I lead you in prayer:

Lord Jesus, we just thank You for the last three days of this conference. We thank You, Lord, for all that You have revealed to us, and we thank you in advance for how all that You have revealed will come to pass in our life. And we thank You as well that we get to be part of all of this. That we get to be part of a spiritual family—a movement in which we can grow in our faith and a movement where we can continue the Kingdom. Thank You, Lord! Nagpapasalamat po kami na nandito kami ngayon. We are grateful we are here. In Jesus' Name. Amen.





**This is the day
that the Lord has made**



**Let us be glad
and rejoice in His name**



**Blessed is He
who comes in His name**



**Praise the Heavens
for He is good**



Oh Come resound



We're gonna take refuge



**In the Hand of the Lord
And trust in His Holy Name**



You don't have to hesitate



Not even death can stop Him now



Come rejoice



For His love is here to stay

Special Talk



God is in your life.



BO SANCHEZ:

Today, I receive all of God's love for me.
Today, I open myself to the unbounded, limitless,
overflowing abundance of God's Universe.
Today, I open myself to God's Blessings,
healing and miracles.

Today, I open myself to God's Word so that
I become more like Jesus everyday.
Today, I proclaim that
I'm God's Beloved,
I'm God's Servant,
I'm God's powerful champion,
And because I am blessed,
I am blessing the world,
In Jesus Name,
Amen.

Give the Lord a big hand and love Him today.
Everybody say: *God is in my life.*

I want you to
encourage somebody
beside you.

God is in your life.



Tell that person:

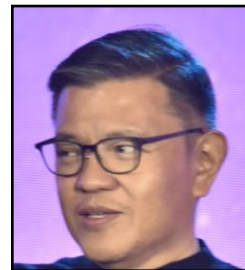
So good. So good. There's something I need
to tell you.

You know, when Bishop was talking— Bishop was amazing, right? He's just 74 years old. May we just give him another big hand? Whoo! Thank God for the Bishop. He really *is* our spiritual adviser in The Feast, in the whole Community. He really is. And what a blessing.

You know, I've noticed that when speakers, especially the priests who would come, the bishops, they think, the way they talk, it's like, "Bro. Bo and The Feast, Bro. Bo and the Feast."

They do not know that two and a half years ago, I stepped down. And for the past two and a half years I did not attend any Elders' Meeting and Regional Builders' Meeting— except one, they wanted to consult me. But for two and a half years, none— no District Builders' Meeting. None.

I just want to recognize and honor the leaders who allowed me to step down, and who accepted the burden of leadership. And we need to thank them:



Feast leaders, *from left*: Arun Gogna, who took over Mega Manila;
Alvin Barcelona, who took over all the provinces of the Philippines.
Vic Español, who too over the world— the International Feasts.
Randy Borrromeo, who took over our Media Ministries.
Hermie Morelos, who oversees our Mercy Ministries.

And to all the other Feast Builders, District Builders— you know who you are— Thank you so much.

Honoring Longtime Servants

Again, *God is in your life.*

He really is. He really is *in your life*.
Greater than— there is no one who is
greater than God.

God is in your life. And therefore, greater things
have already been happening in your life—you just
do not know.

There's another bunch of people I want to
recognize in this place. And those people who have
served the Lord for many, many decades.

I was talking to Dante Alignay
yesterday — 76 years old— someone
who was a full-time staffer in the Light
of Jesus when he was so much younger.
I don't know where you are, Dante, I
n this crowd, but wherever you are,
I just want to recognize you. I want to thank God for you.

May all those who are seniors stand up? I just want to recognize all
of you. Just looking at you, serving the Lord, I just want you to know:

God is in your life.



If God is in your ordinary life,
the **greatest miracles** are
happening already in you.



You know, my mother-in-law is here, she is 81 years old. Do you know that she
is someone who would go to PGH (Philippine General Hospital) visit the cancer
patients, and all the sick there, every single week? She would go there and she
would minister to them. When the Coronavirus Disease (COVID) Pandemic came,
they told her she should not do it anymore.

But that's the kind of people we have here.

Amazing!

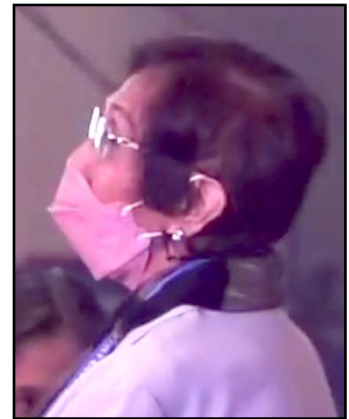
There is another woman here— her name is Tita Nising, and she is 93 years old. She is over there, in that wheelchair— oh no, she’s standing up, right there. Tita Nising, when she was younger, she would take *Kerygma* magazines, and then she would go from one place to another and distribute them.

Her children would say, “Mommy, ibinibenta mo ba?— Are you selling them?”

She would say, “Yes.”

But actually, she was giving them away. She was doing it for years.

I can go on and on mentioning your names. I see some of you. And I know who you are, and what you do. I just want to thank you. I want to honor you. You’re amazing.



If there’s somebody standing beside you, tell that person: “You’re amazing.” You know, Fr. Kali Llamado, Jesuit, one of our speakers, he came out to me, he wanted a selfie...and he said, “Bro. Bo, nung bata ako, binabasa kita.—When I was young, I was reading you.”

Now, he is already a priest, went through long Jesuit training...

I’m so old already.

Fr. Kali’s Facebook post:



My Village

God is in your life. God is *in* your ordinary life.

I bike every day. When I cannot bike, I walk around the village.

I have a small village— three streets, 40-50 families, very simple, wonderful people. My wife and I, when we moved into that village 20 years ago, we did not even have running water.

So, I would walk around that village, and when I arrived home, I looked like a Christmas tree. Because I was carrying a bag of mangoes, I'm carrying another bag of eggplants. Because at the time, when I was walking, and then my neighbors would see me, they would call me, "Bro.Bo! Bro. Bo!"

And they would give me fruits from their fruit trees.

There was this guy with a straw hat, who handed me a bag of eggplants.

I was so embarrassed saying, "No, no, no."

Then he showed me his plants, the produce of his garden, and said, "Ang dami-dami. Kunin mo na.— So, plenty, get them."

By the way, I just saw Randy (Borromeo). (In SVRTV) they call me Kuya.

One time, Randy and I entered a restaurant and the waiter said, "Tatang, dito kayo.— Grandpa, sit here."

And then, when it was time to pay the bill, the waiter said, "May discount card po kayo? — Do you have a discount card?"

And Randy said, "Ano ang akala mo, senior ako?— Do you think I am a senior?"

The waiter said, "Oo. —Yes, Sir."

True story. That has nothing to do with the talk. :)



Picture of the Kingdom

The reason I told you the story of my village...

You know, my father-in-law passed away last week. We had a five-day wake, and my neighbors were there— we're like a little family. You know, simple, wonderful people. I'm telling you, I'm walking around and I get blessed with fruits and vegetables.

It's a picture of the Kingdom. It's a picture of Heaven on Earth. Why?

Three reasons:

No.1: We are a village. This (Feast) is a village. Your Light Group is a village. Your Feast Light is a village. Your Ministry is a village.

No. 2: We have to plant our gardens. Every single one of us has to plant our gardens and we have to be the very best gardener we can ever be. I'll tell you why:

No.3: We're supposed to share our harvest with our neighbors. This is the purpose you want to plant your garden very well.

Because you want to say, "Ang dami-dami, kinin mo na ito."

Sheila shared yesterday — panel, Alvin was interviewing, remember? Her husband passed away— kidney failure. And she said once upon a time, she was, First Stage: WW— Walang-Wala— empty. But she was able to put up a business, she worked hard, God blessed her, she became, Second Stage: LL—ma-Luwag-Luwag—comfortable. You want that?

There's a Third Stage: It's called DD— ma-Dami-Dami.— More abundance, harvest. But the reason you want that is not for yourself.

It's to call out a neighbor and say, "Kuya, Ate, kinin mo na ito. Ang dami-dami!"

That's the purpose of the Kingdom. For the various talks, the Feast Team uses the same Bible story, and each speaker peels off a layer and focuses his message on that layer.

So, we're going to start with John 1:47:

Because you see, today, Nazareth, has one million tourists every year. It's a sprawling, huge city. But back in the time of Jesus, it was not even on the map. And may I say this: God is a God who likes small. God is a God who likes the underdog.



John 1:45-46 NLT, emphasis mine

Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth." ⁴⁶ "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

God Favors the Underdog

You know, the book of *Genesis*, for example, is a book of brothers— so many brothers there. But in a culture where the eldest has all the power, all the inheritance, all the properties, what God does is He chooses the youngest or the younger brother. He chooses the underdog.

Look at the list of siblings:

Cain and Abel— who does God favor?

Cain. Haran and Abraham— who does God favor?

Abraham. Ishmael and Isaac— who does God

favor? Isaac. Esau and Jacob— who does God

favor? Jacob. Aaron and Moses— who does God

favor? Moses was not the eldest. It was Aaron.

And God chooses Moses. Why does God do that?

David had seven other brothers. And yet, what does God do? He gets the youngest. God favors the underdog. God chooses Nazareth— doesn't go to Jerusalem.

Do you feel like the underdog today? Do you feel small? Do you feel insignificant? Do you feel that you have no gifts? Do you feel that you are a nobody?

You know the problem with our world today is that you think nothing is happening in your life and everything is happening for your neighbor.

You look at your neighbor and you say, "How cool is my neighbor, her dress is beautiful, she has a beautiful life."

We look at their IG (Instagram) and their OOTD (Outfit Of The Day). We look at the way they travel: "Oh, they are in Thailand. Oh, they are in Japan. Oh, they're in Hong Kong. Then me, I am in Binondo..."

Then they take pictures of their food and you say, "How cool that person is."

And we think that we're small. We think we're nothing. We think we're Nazareth. We think we're the underdog.

But may I say this: The reason you think that person is cool is that person is not posting about her frustrations, about her pains, about her trauma, about the way she's having conflicts with her mother-in-law, about her struggles with her son. She is not posting them.

But when she posts about her trips, her travels, her food, you say, "Sana all."



- Cain-Abel
- Haran-Abraham
- Ishmael-Isaac
- Esau-Jacob
- Aaron-Moses
- 7 Brother-David



Guess what: she's not posting about her tears.
 Every human being is broken. Every human being is carrying pain. Every human being is an underdog. Every human being is suffering.

And God, He favors you.
 He favors you.
 Everybody say,
 "God is in my life."

God favors you.

And in the same way that Jesus came out of Nazareth, God's goodness will come out of your life. I want you

to believe in that.

We continue John 1:46-47:

John 1:46-47 NLT
Come and see for yourself," Philip replied. As they approached, Jesus said, "Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity.

You know what I love about this?
 When Nathaniel said, "Can anything good come from Nazareth"—it was an insult. It was like Nathaniel wanted to argue with Philip.

And then Philip just said, "Come and see."

Many times, when we confront people who want to argue with us, we should not argue.

We should just say, "Come and see."

Don't go into a debate with people who want to debate—I mean, most of the time, I think you should not debate. Sometimes, you do. But most of the time, you don't.

Stop arguing and show God living your ordinary life

You just say, "Come and see the God who is in my life."

And allow God to show Himself. How? By the way you love your neighbor.

Jesus does this. When He saw Nathaniel, He said Nathaniel is a man of integrity.

It was a reference actually to Jacob. Because Jacob's name means *deceiver*.

And He was now telling him, "You're not a deceiver. You're a person of integrity. Jacob will be referenced later on in the story.

And that's what you need to do. You need to stop arguing and instead show God in your ordinary life—that God is there.

What Jesus Said

John 1:47 NIV

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him,
"Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."



Let's read John 1:47

I love what Jesus said. Because, you know, if you read on, Jesus said, "I saw you under the fig tree—before Philip came."

Here's my question: Could it be possible that Jesus also heard Nathaniel's insult? I think so. I think Jesus knew that Nathaniel insulted Nazareth and insulted Jesus. I believe in that. But did Jesus mention it?

Did Jesus say, "Nathaniel, come here. I saw you under the fig tree and I heard what you said about Me and My kababayans— town mates. And it hurt. I feel offended. Really deep here (in my heart). How dare you?"

Jesus did not say that. You know what Jesus did?

He told Nathaniel, "Good man. Man of integrity."

Whoo! Shouldn't we do that? When you do not look at the weakness of the person, you do not look at the failure of the person— you look at the goodness, you search for what's good about this guy: "Yeah, he insulted me. Yeah, I feel offended. But what's good? Oh, there's goodness in this person."

And then you say that.

You know what happened? Nathaniel, he changed.

You know why Jesus is like that? He's uninsultable. That's the Jesus we follow. And I think more and more, we need to be that kind of a person— that cannot be insulted. That no matter what people will say, we know who we are.

And we say, "This person is insulting me because he is broken. Because there's a problem in his life. He's burdened."

And we're not insulted. We cannot be insulted. We're uninsultable.

This is what God does: When He looks at our mess, when He looks at our brokenness, He sees goodness. He does not even look at our sins. He looks at the goodness that is already in us.

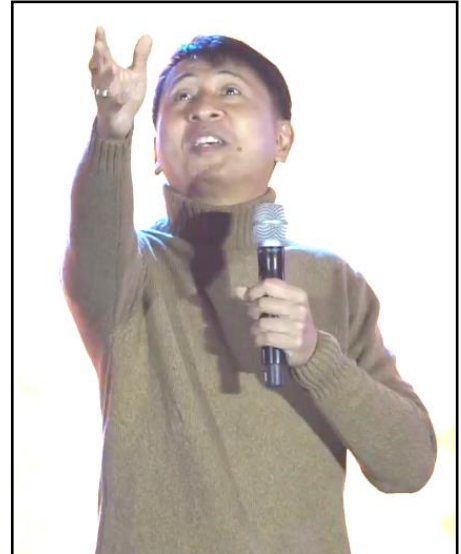
Jesus was uninsultable.

From Insult to Worship

This is what happens: Nathaniel changes. A few moments ago, he insulted Jesus. A few moments later, he said, “You are the Son of God.”

From insult to worship. He changed. Why did he change? Because Jesus loved him. Only love changes people.

You want to help people change? That’s the lesson:



How To Help Your Loved Ones Change 101

I repeat: God does not focus on your sins. He focuses on your goodness. Only love changes people. Amen.

Let me move on... John 1:50 says:

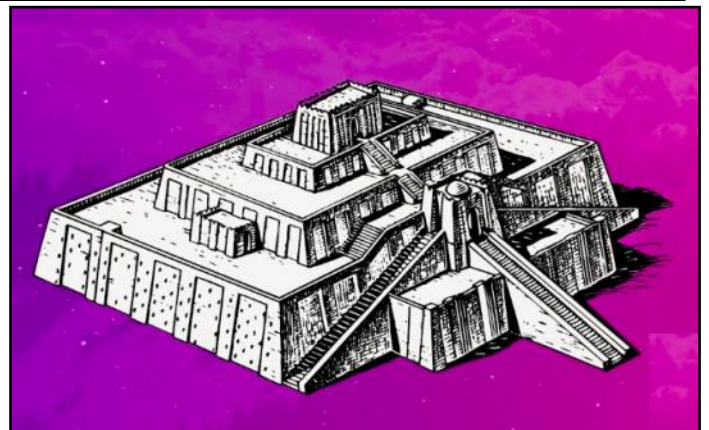
This is a reference to the book of *Genesis*, Chapter 28, when Jacob, their ancestor, also experienced this:

Genesis 28:12 NLT, emphasis mine

As he slept, he dreamed of a **stairway** that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway.

v.50-51 NLT, emphasis mine

Jesus asked him, “Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? **You will see greater things than this.**”⁵¹ Then he said, “I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the **stairway** between heaven and earth.”



This stairway is the Ziggurat. The Ziggurat is a stairway, a tower. Does that ring a bell?

Book of *Genesis*, Tower of Babel. The Tower of Babel was a Ziggurat. And it was supposed to be the place where the heavens were connected to the earth. Where the gods would come down. Genesis 28:12 was the link to this verse in the book of *John*, Chapter 1.

This verse in the book of *John*, Chapter 1, is a reference to the Ziggurat. But the Gospel of John is saying something powerful: That Jesus is the Ziggurat.

Miracles of Love

You see, the Babylonians built the tower so that man could reach God. But Jesus is the very stairway — the new Tower. He is the Ziggurat.

It is not for us to go up to God. It is for God to come down to us— so that He would live in us. Why? So that God will be in our life.

Then 13 chapters after the Gospel of John, Chapter 1, you see in John, Chapter 14, Jesus is saying the same thing about greater things.

He says:

John 14:12 NLT, emphasis mine

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even **greater things** than these, because I am going to the Father.”

My dear friends, does this mean more miracles? Does this mean, you know, more resurrections of the dead? You know, Jesus raised up dead people. And there are some people in this world, some religious people, who think that

should happen— that we should also be able to do that. I tend to disagree. I think Jesus was talking about something else. Because the chapter later talks about the Holy Spirit and He says the reason you can do greater things is that the Holy Spirit is in your life. He was talking, I believe, about the prayer that He taught us: *Our Father who art in Heaven, holy be Your Name, Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven* — The Ziggurat, the Tower, the Stairway— that Heaven touches Earth.

How does that happen? You go back to John, Chapter 1— you go back to the story of Nazareth: Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?

And the answer is *Yes!*

What did Jesus do in Nazareth? What did Jesus do from the day He was one year old all the way until He was 30 years old? In the first 30 years of His life, He led a quiet life in a small, itchy-bitsy town called Nazareth where there were only probably 30 or 40 families— just like the village I’m loving in right now— unknown, simple people.

For the first 30 years of His ordinary life, the only miracles Jesus performed in Nazareth were miracles of love.

Did Jesus perform miracles? No. Did Jesus raise people from the dead? Did Jesus heal people? No.



Ode to Ordinary Life

What did Jesus do? I really believe this: Jesus only performed in Nazareth, in the first 30 years of His life, the miracle of love. He washed dishes, helping Mama Mary. He swept the floor. When Joseph would come home, He would massage the shoulder of His dad. He would help in the family business.

For 30 years, Heaven touched Earth through the miracles of love. And God was in that ordinary life. To tell us right now this is an ode to ordinary life, this is an ode to the simple village that you and I are in right now— our Light Groups, our Feasts, our Feast Lights. Where when somebody is sick, you call up. When somebody is in need of comfort you're there. When somebody needs a shoulder to cry on, you make yourself available.

And these are miracles of love. This is where Heaven touches down Earth. This is where the Kingdom of God comes down.

And you might say, "Bro. Bo, how so ordinary."

No. That's how God is in your life. And that is how we say, Come and see: Miracles are happening. And then you look for the lame who should be walking and the blind who should be seeing, and the dead who should be raised up, and you don't see any of those.

But this is what you see: you see the miracles of love in ordinary people who plant their gardens, and plant their gardens so well, that they say, "Kuya, kunin mo na ito. Ang dami-dami."

That is what Heaven is. Jesus did two things so well in Nazareth: He loved God and He loved others.

**Your ordinary life
is beautiful to God.**

That is what we need to do.
Your ordinary life is beautiful to God.
Your ordinary life— you as a husband,
you as a wife. It's there that miracles
are happening.

I've been married for 24 years, going 25. And every day, I am just so blessed that there's this woman beside me who made a decision to love a very difficult husband, who has a difficult mission. But she's there. She's there every day.

Can everybody say, "Love in the little things?"

Because that's where the miracles are happening. Those are the greater things that are happening. And they are all about love.



Jesus did two things well in Nazareth:

**He loved God.
And He loved His neighbor.**

Big Things...Little Things

I do big things. Last month, I was in Europe. We had a Feast gathering there of the leaders of Europe— our leaders from Italy, Belgium, the UK, Ireland, and Spain. We gathered in Milan. It was wonderful.

And then after that, I led a pilgrimage to Fatima, Lourdes, Paris.

Then I went home, doing my “big” things. I went biking again around the village. My parents-in-law live five minutes away.

I passed by and saw my father-in-law. He was doing what he usually does— 7 a.m., he was sweeping the sidewalk, removing the dead leaves. He had a lifelong battle against falling leaves— for some reason. He really did not like them. He was sweeping and sweeping.

I remember, one other morning, I went there and I saw my father-in-law with a long pole removing a dried leaf that was hanging from the wire.

I said, “Okay, I’ll help you.”

We could not do it. So, he convinced me to get the ladder inside the house and we put it in the middle of the road. He was going to climb up. You know, he was 84 years old.

And I said, “No, Daddy. I’ll do it.”

He held the ladder and then I went up. I was trying to reach for the leaf, and I could not. I had to use a stick again, trying to remove it.

And in my mind, I was saying, “What are we doing? Is this dangerous? Is this illegal?”

In the middle of the road, I was trying to remove a leaf, and I was like, “Why is this so important to him?”

You know— a leaf, so little. We’re able to do it, by the way. And he was happy. And we returned the ladder and he thanked me.

One month later, he passes away, goes to Heaven. And I believe, this is what happened. I believe he appeared before God, and God asked him the three-word question that He will ask everybody: Did you love?

And I bet, my father-in-law, he’s very self-effacing, he probably said this: “I don’t know. I don’t know. I just did the little things.”



Time To Do the Little Things

Every day, at 84, after cleaning the sidewalk, my father-in-law would have breakfast with his sweetheart, he would have lunch with his sweetheart, and he would have dinner with his sweetheart. And he would make himself available to all his grandchildren,

He did the little things. And I bet he probably said to God, “God, I don’t know if I loved, but I did the little things.”

And I bet God smiled at him and said, “In love, there’s no such thing as little. Love transforms what is small, into something so big and beautiful. God takes the Nazareth and expands it. God takes the underdog and He just lifts you up.

My dear friends, now is the time to do the little things. When you’re washing dishes, when you’re taking care of your elderly mom, when you’re tutoring your kid and he doesn’t get that I plus 5 equals 6, he just can’t take it.

When you’re doing all those little things, Heaven touches down on Earth. Do you understand that? You are building the Kingdom of God in your ordinary life. When you love God and love others, greater things are happening there in your life.

So, may I invite you to stand and make a decision with me that you will plant your gardens well. You be the best person you can be. Please, grow your gardens. Please make it abundant. Till the soil, water the gardens. So that you can share and be a blessing to others.

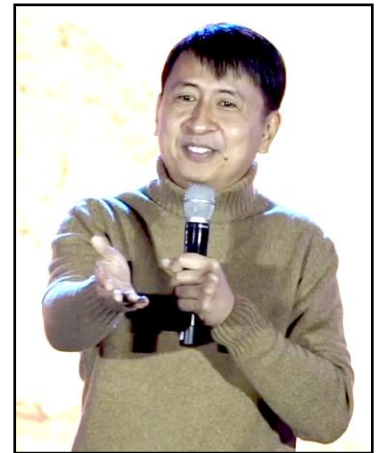
In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Put your hands over your chest, and Everybody, say:

Jesus, thank You for being in my life. I don’t have to do anything. I don’t have to pray more. I don’t have to obey you more. I don’t have to serve more for you to be in my life. I don’t even have to remove my sin—for you to be in my life.

You are already in my life because unless You are in my life, I cannot remove my sin. Unless You are in my life, I cannot pray more. I cannot obey more.

Thank You that You dwell in my broken life. Thank You. Thank You that You live in my mess. And Jesus, I’m going to trust You more—that Your love will transform me day by day.

I give You my ordinary life. I surrender to You. I am the underdog. I am the hidden Nazareth—small. But You will lift me up and I believe greater things have been happening in my life already. And they will continue. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.





MERCY MINISTRIES



On the Verge of Death

Plenary Talk

By FR. PATICK FALGUERA, SJ

“LABAN LANG, FATHER.”

These were the words said to me by a kindhearted nurse when I finally gained consciousness inside the hyperbaric oxygen therapy chamber (increasing air pressure two to three times than normal air pressure, providing oxygen that helps fight bacteria).

To be honest, I didn't really know where I was and what had happened to me.

To spare you the details, I would like to refer you to a very riveting account by Dr. Donny Alfonso, currently the Dean of Ateneo School of Medicine and Public Health. His narrative begins in this manner.

“Dear friends, can you imagine in your mind, a 53-year-old male patient who 3 days ago was GCS3—near dead—in the ICU, intubated and hooked to the ventilator with several contraptions of IVF including a feeding nasogastric tube bringing the Holy Rosary allowed with his nurses and resident doctors. This was Fr. Pat, 8:10 PM last night during my last rounds with my HPV fellow.”

Rereading these words by Dr. Donny Alfonso which he wrote three days (after I figured in a diving accident), I'm still in awe and wonder, reviewing the events which have unfolded in my life since then during the past couple of months.

Because logic tells me that I should not be here before you giving this talk. My mere presence before you defies what is rational and scientific, especially in the medical community.



New Perspective

But with awe and wonder comes a new perspective on life. And newness as echoed by the Jesuit poet Gerald Manley Hopkins: “There lives the dearest freshness deep down things.”

With awe and wonder comes a humbling viewpoint of renewed hope and meaning which our Lord has gifted me with through the intercession of our Blessed Mother.

For the past couple of months now, I have been presiding over Thanksgiving Masses with family, friends, parishioners, and co-workers in the various churches and institutions I have been missioned to previously— the parishes of San Jose Manggagawa and Our Lady of Immaculate Concepcion in Marikina, the Ateneo professional schools of Medicine, public health government and law. I have been sharing with them my reflections on life and death, meaning and nothingness.

My dear friends in the Lord, allow me to use this lens as well to humbly share with you the miraculous narrative of God’s love, of God’s mercy, which He has continuously unfolded in my life since my brush with death about 20 weeks ago.

Sa totoo lang po— in truth, I have not yet fully recovered physically, psycho emotionally. Kaya patuloy niyo parin po akong ipagdasal para tuloy tuloy na din po ang aking full recovery.— So, please continue praying for my recovery.

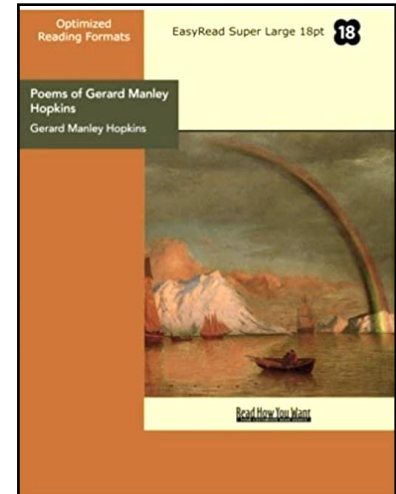
First Theme: Life and Death

You see, almost 20 weeks ago, I was on the verge of death— or even probably experienced it, to some extent. I really don’t know. And to be frank about it, it seems not to matter anymore. *Pero habang tumatagal po, habang binabasa ko yung kwento ni Dr. Alfonso, talagang nakakamangha at talagang kayo mismo kikalabutan kung basahin niyo ito.* But as I continue to read Dr. Alfonso’s story, I am, yes, in awe, feeling goosebumps— and you would too.

But what is important is what our early Church father, St. Irenaeus, proclaimed, “I am now fully alive...” Breathing, glorifying, worshipping God with you at this FEASTCON..

If not for the heaviness of my upper left-hand arm, there seems to be no reminder of what happened to me.

Sabi nga ng mga nakakakilala saakin, as those who know me—I see friends among you, say: “Fr. Pat, parang walang nangyari.— Seems like nothing untoward happened to you.”



Diagnosis: No Chance of Survival

I was diagnosed GCS3, the lowest possible number of life on the Glasgow Coma Scale (score in hospital admission, suggesting no chance of survival).

At first, I didn't really know what this medical term meant. But for those of you who are doctors, nurses, those of you who are medically well versed, you'd probably look at me with awe and wonder as you realize that mine was a GCS3 case.

Because when I started googling and researching what GCS3 meant or implied, I became anxious. I became scared. Slim single percentage of survival, worst outcome is death, best anticipated outcome is being in a vegetative state. Yung tipong gulay na inaalagaan nalang.—like vegetable that needs to be nurtured.

And mind you, not to belittle what happened to me, I have to admit that to encounter or to experience death was both a terrifying and exciting experience for me.

As (Benedictine monk) Dom Aelred Watkin shares in his beautiful reflection, “The resurrection is now.”

In the Liturgy of the Earth's Universalis app, death has many forms—the death of experience, the death of love, the death of the world, the death of others, and finally—our own death. I probably experienced all these and much more—I don't know.

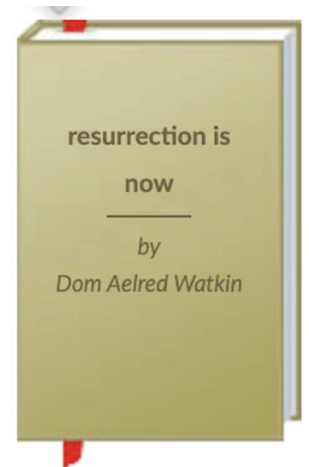
It is thus a miracle. I really believe that—that I survived and was brought back to life.

Brother Jesuits and our Lay Mission partner friends have asked me in jest: “*Nakita mo ba si Jesus? Did you see Jesus?*” “*Did you experience light?*” “*Did you have an out-of-body experience?*” “*Did your life flash before you?*”

During that time, you were supposed to be in the lowest state of possible, almost death, coma. I hate to disappoint soothsayers and séances, but I experienced none of these. *Wala po talaga.*

But what I can share with you is this: Perhaps, what is really miraculous—rather than my survival and speaking to you at this moment—is my miracle of *total* recovery. Like one, some of you are looking at this FEASTCON—to recover mentally, physically, psycho emotionally, financially. Yes. I'm functionally, I hope, well enough to be able to drive a motorcycle someday. *Mahilig po ako sa motorsiklo*—I love driving motorcycles.

I may be able to encounter you again someday and convey my personal deep gratitude. But then again, I would be lying if I say that until now, the thought of my near-death experience, does not scare or trouble me. Because as Pope Francis shared in his books and encyclicals, “Reality is greater than ideas.”



Reality: Death Is Terrifying

I tell you, looking back at what happened to me, the reality of death is quite a terrifying experience.

Nakakatakot po talaga. You have to say your prayers. You have your regrets and reflect on all the what-could-have-beens in your life.

But it is also true that *that* moment of death is quite liberating, a freeing experience as well— for it has given me back *meaning*.

Intuitively, what I experienced is the insight that at the moment of death, everything finally makes sense. Every event, every person finally takes on meaning. You see, I do not really have a memory of what happened to me from the moment of my accident until the time I suddenly became aware of my surroundings days later, until I regained consciousness after almost 55 hours since my diving accident.

I remember my hyperbaric doctor, Dr. Arnel Bartolome— mahilig po kami pareho magmotersiklo— we both love driving motorcycles— telling me that decompression treatment should be done ideally 6-8 hours after a diving accident. Beyond that is a slow, even nil chance of survival. His own record was 12 hours.

Kaya dasal po ng dasal lahat po ng medical team nila.— That's why the medical team prayed and prayed for me— Because mine was 55 hours— with my brain being deprived of oxygen at some point during that long wait. Kaya hindi ko po alam ang nangyari sa akin na nakikilala ko yung mga kaibigan ko, nakikilala ko kayo.— So, even as I did not know what happened, I still recognized my friends, I still recognize you. It's a miracle.

I would not be giving this talk to you this evening because at that Lazarus moment, I realized that every person, every event: both the joyful and sad; the tragic and the ecstatic moments, leading to my accident played a significant role in helping shape and save my life.

I am living proof that God's miracles continue to bless each and every one of us. I have to admit though that there are still events in my life, in our world, unfolding—that I find hard to understand and find meaning. The presence of untold evil, the presence of unspeakable suffering— for example, the existence of poverty, of hardship, of corruption, of greed in people, systems.

But I also realize that *that* moment of death in my life came with an invitation to trust—which brings me to the second theme—meaning and nothingness.



Meaning and Nothingness

...I was being flown by ambulance chopper. A perilous journey as the helicopter had to fly only for a thousand feet to prevent atmospheric pressure from further damaging my brain. I was convulsing all the time.

So, indeed there is so much more to be grateful for: I really like that grateful pause (FEASTCON Gratitude Break), for being alive, for all of us here.

But what scares me is I find myself forgetting. I find myself not appreciating life. But I console myself that perhaps, it is about human nature that we easily forget.

Now more than ever, I've also realized that human nature is not God's nature—because the saints and all our loved ones, those who have gone ahead of us, they have made possible a different narrative. Sa totoo lang po, naniniwala ako—in truth, I believe that all our narratives here are interconnected.

I've humbly realized that God never forgets. God remembers each and every one of us. God remembered, remembers, and will continue to remember us.

God will meet us where we are rather than where we should be... In all these, I have to admit that life remains a mystery.

In view of life and death, of meaning and nothingness, I would like to believe that a person's search for meaning is his or her own search for God. In short, the journey towards the absolute.

And my dear friends, if there is one thing certain, if there is one thing absolute—which both atheists, agnostics, believers, and non-believers are on common ground and which is undebatable in this life—it is the certainty that all of us will die someday...

I realize that what will bridge life and death is love. What will bridge meaning and nothingness is mercy. For truly, as I have personally experienced, the deepest name of God is Love. And truly, I can attest that *mercy* is indeed God's most profound nature.





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.

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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.

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FAMILY ONLINE NEWSMAGAZINE

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Go and make disciples of all men.

— Matthew 28:19