



NEWSLETTER
February 19, 2023

What Do These Ancient Laws Mean for Your Life Today?

ONE day, your drunk neighbor walks into your home with his muddy shoes and his untrained dog. He leaves ugly footprints everywhere and his dog goes to the middle of your expensive carpet and poops.

What do you do? Aside from cleaning your house, you must *prevent* this from happening again.

So, you call your neighbor and tell him, “You disrespected me and my house. If you want to enter my house again, you have to follow my House Rules: First, you cannot be drunk.

Second, you cannot bring in your muddy shoes.

Third, you need to toilet train your dog.”

In *Leviticus*, God also established some House Rules. These are *Purity Laws* from Leviticus 11-15. Some people think these laws are to keep people out. But it’s the exact opposite.

God sets up House Rules so people have a way of coming closer to Him.

Even if these ancient laws don’t apply now, what do they mean for us today?

We’ll unlock their spiritual treasures in our Feast.

Have a fascinating Feast today!



May your dreams come true

Bo Sanchez



LETTERS

One More Time: Have a Heart ❤️

YES, our title looks a lot like we're still in Valentine mode. Yes, *have a heart* is an idiom which means be merciful or be reasonable, the theme of this issue of *The Feast Family*.



Fr. Paolo Asprer, discussing the Gospel on February 12, 2023, points out that there's a difference between intelligence and wisdom. Intelligence is about using your head, while wisdom involves the head, the heart, *page 3*.

The Gospel actually is about laws we must obey—using our intelligence and wisdom. Just like the House Rules of the ancient Israelites – which we millennials might find strange if not weird. But they must still have some meaning for us today. That's in Talk 5 of our Feast series on *Closer*, based on the book of *Leviticus*, introduced by Bro. Bo Sanchez, *page 1*.



Bro. John Ben Rodriguez and Bro. Lep Sumera (*left*) also discuss laws and rules we learn from *Leviticus* meant not to separate us from God, but to be

closer to Him. For God is like oxygen which we can't live without, *page 15*.

That is why we honor God with our Love Offering, Bro. Audee Villaraza (*right*) affirms, *page 8*.

And for good measure, he presents one who has well experienced God's Love: Bro. Reann Dajao, *page 9*.

Yes, God has a heart. And that's what He calls us to do, Valentine or not, one more time: Have a heart.



All for God's Glory,

Randy Borromeo
Media Ministry
Executive Director





FLASHBACK! **FEBRUARY 12, 2023**

Holy Mass



SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

FR. PAOLO ASPRER

on the Gospel:

Matthew 5:20-22 A, 27-28, 33-34A, 37

Excerpts...

GOOD MORNING, Sisters and Brothers in Christ! A blessed Sunday to everyone.

It is said that the month of February is the month of hearts. It's the month of love because of Valentine's Day.

But even if it's not Valentine's Day, every day, we are called to a heart check. Kumusta ang inyong puso? Pakiramdaman nga, nandiyan pa ba ang inyong puso? —How is your heart? Feel it. Is it still there?

Matters of the heart are the heart of the matter. Perhaps, you have concerns regarding your physical heart-- it's good to see your cardiologist or doctor. If you have concerns regarding your friends, perhaps consult a counselor. If you have problems regarding your spiritual heart, it's good to approach the Sacrament of Confession or your spiritual director.

What Kind of Heart Do You Have?

There's a happy heart, contented heart, what else?

Meron 'yung pusong mammon, meron 'yung pusong lito, meron 'yung pusong tuliro, meron 'yung pusong bato. --There's a soft heart, a confused heart, a heart of stone.

What kind of heart do you have?

There's this millennial who told me, "Father, my heart is like a hollow block—hard but fragile.

What kind of heart do you have?

My dear friends in Christ, our Readings today invite us to examine our heart.

The Second Reading tells us God gives us the gift of wisdom. Wisdom is different from intelligence.

Intelligence—you use your head. But if you're a wise person, you use not only use your head. You use your head, your heart, your hands.

An intelligent person would always say everything is relative-- but a wise person would say everything is related.



Reading II: 1 Corinthians 2:6-10



Brothers and sisters:

⁶ We speak a wisdom to those who are mature, not a wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away.⁷ Rather, we speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory,⁸ and which none of the rulers of this age knew; for, if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

⁹ But as it is written: "What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him"¹⁰ this God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God.

Battle Ground Between Good and Evil Forces

An intelligent person would hear and understand what is being said. But a wise



person would understand and would listen to what is left unsaid. A person who is intelligent usually has a tendency to hold on to your arguments-- that's why the discussion would lead to disagreements. But a wise person would listen, would say, "Come on, let's talk. Let's dialogue."

For a wise person, instead of disagreements, the discussion would lead to settlements-- common ground.

The First Reading tells us that our heart is a battle ground between the good and the evil forces. Eventually, we'll make a choice which field of force we should side with.

Shall we side with light or darkness? Shall we go for forgiveness or bitterness? We have to make a choice.

Reading I: Sirach 15:15-20



¹⁵ If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you; if you trust in God, you too shall live;

¹⁶ he has set before you fire and water to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand.

¹⁷ Before man are life and death, good and evil, whichever he chooses shall be given him.

¹⁸ Immense is the wisdom of the Lord; he is mighty in power, and all-seeing. ¹⁹ The eyes of God are on those who fear him; he understands man's every deed.

²⁰ No one does he command to act unjustly, to none does he give license to sin.

Love or Hate?

Our Gospel Reading asks us, “Are you angry?”

It is often said that we hold two special kinds of persons in our heart: people we love; and people we hate.

Ano ho ang mas marami? --Who are more?

But is hate really the opposite of love? Hindi ba kung ikaw ay umiibig, kung ikaw ay nagmamahal kailangan mo ng galit? — Isn't it that when you are in love, you need to be angry? Ang mga magulang, nagagalit sa kanilang mga anak kung sila ay napapariwara—Parents get angry at children going astray. It's normal, it's human to be angry-- but until *when* and *what* kind of anger do we nurse?

I would like to believe that the opposite of love is not hate. The opposite of love is indifference. Wala ka nang pakialam dun sa tao. You no longer care about the person.

My dear friends, as we ponder upon our Readings today, there are guidelines we must keep in mind:

1. Be Grateful for the Gift of Heart

In the Scripture and by tradition, the heart speaks of more than its contents—emotions, passions, beliefs. The heart is more than its operations—choices, responses.

In the Bible, when you say *heart*, it is your very person, your very core.

It is through the heart that we encounter God. It is through the heart that we encounter our deepest self, our identity.

St. John Chrysostom said, “If you have found the way to your heart, you have found the way to Heaven.”

But we know that sometimes, the mind and the heart argue. The journey from the head to heart is a long, complicated journey.

When you have to make a decision, what do you use: head or heart-- or both?

Now, the philosophers would say, “The heart has its reason which reason knows nothing of.”

May mga bagay na nauunawaan lamang ng puso pero hindi mauunawan ng isip. – There are concepts the heart can understand -- but the mind doesn't. Kailangan bang mag-away 'yung dalawa? Hindi. Should the two be in conflict? No.

The head is a gateway to a person's heart.

So, we are grateful for the gift of heart.





2. Be Discerning

Scientists say that an earthworm has 5 hearts, an octopus has 2...

Spiritual directors say that we have 2 types of heart—the *pusila anima* and the *magna anima*.

The *pusila anima* is our insecure heart, our childish heart, our bitter heart, our envious heart.

Our *magna anima* is our true heart—our loving heart, our mature heart.

What kind of heart are we taking care of each day?

My dear friends, we live in a wounded world-- we live in a wounding world. No matter how well we protect

ourselves, we would still be wounded, we would still be hurt. No matter how much we protect people around us, there's always this tendency to hurt them. Because we're human, because we're sinful.

But the ultimate question is this: With all the wounds of the human heart, shall we allow hardness of heart or shall we allow the mellowness of heart?

Do you want to be bitter in your life?

If God created the human heart as capable of breaking, then the heart also has its inner power and inner grace to be healed, to be renewed. Man having a hard heart was not part of God's plan. A hardened heart is our choice-- it's our decision.

3. Open Your Heart

God is so powerful that He can grant us the grace of a new heart, a new spirit.

But there is one thing that He cannot do. And that is to open our close heart.

The key to opening your heart is with you. God cannot do it. That's how He respects and cares for our freedom.

My dear friends in Christ, three guidelines: Be grateful for our heart; Be discerning; and Open your heart.

If we have found the way to our heart, to opening our heart, then we have found the way to Heaven, to healing, to God's grace of new beginnings. Amen.

WELCOME HOME! 

AUDEE VILLARAZA:

Good Morning, Church! How many of you are happy you're in the Presence of God today? I'd like to greet all of you, Advanced Happy Valentine's Day!

Who are excited about February 14? Who are more excited About February 15—because it's Pay Day?



I want to welcome all the families here. Thank you so much for coming and joining us. If you are here with a loved one, if you are single and alone, you are welcome here. If you feel like you're hurt and broken, this is the place where it's okay not to be okay. We also welcome our online audience all over the world. And maybe you're going to be watching this sometime during the week. That's fine. I just want you to know that you are more than welcome to be here. And I believe that God has a specific, special message for you. So, stay tuned, be with us, join us, lean in on the Word of God. We're going to have such a wonderful time here today.

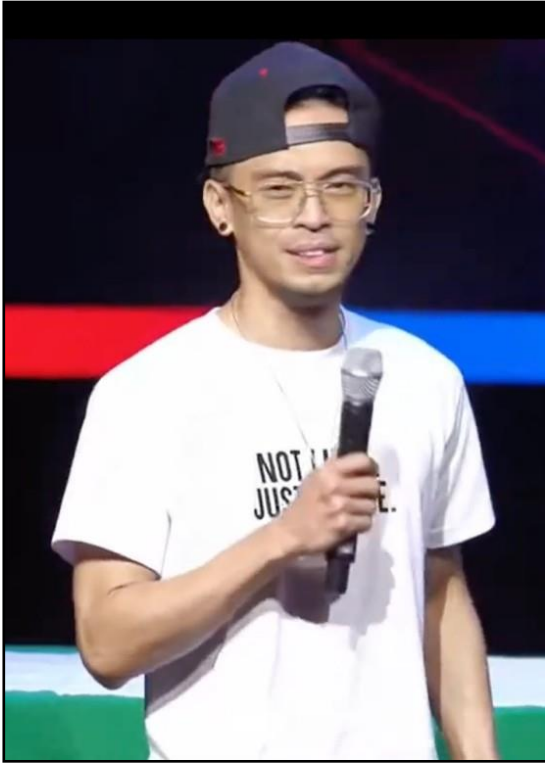
I want to give you two very important announcements. The first one is this: I just want to know who among you are joining us for the very first time ever. We welcome you to this beautiful place.

The other announcement: Next Sunday, we're going to have the first Grand Feast at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC).

We will have two more Grand Feasts for the entire year. We'll have another one in May and another one in August.

This Lenten season, we're going to have a Holy Week Retreat – Thursday, Friday, and then we will have an Easter Sunday Feast here in Aliw Theater.

I invited somebody to actually bless you with a testimonial: Bro. Reann Dajao...



A Miracle Healing

Good Morning to all! I am Reann Dajao,

A friend asked me, why my Facebook says I am in construction.

I told him, “Because I help build the Church. Like I am a construction worker.”

Today, I’m already 37 years old. My younger years didn’t have any direction. I had vices. I was

a manipulator and a sex addict.

I had done a lot I can boast of--but I can’t be proud of.

I started attending The Feast in 2015.

April 2018, I lost consciousness—I fell. In the hospital, I underwent CT scan (Computed tomography – a medical imaging technique to obtain detailed internal images of the body).

The doctors saw five blood clots in my brain. They couldn’t tell where it came from. There were four doctors. And one suggested that I try vessel angiogram (A diagnostic procedure using imaging to see how your blood flows through your blood vessels and detect where the blockages are.

Since that day, every morning, I prayed the Rosary. That’s what’s called nagdasal nang wala sa oras—prayed out of time. I found peace in the presence of Mama Mary.

Still, every morning, I woke up with a headache—painful but tolerable. Then one night, I felt terrible headache, I wanted to bang my head on the wall.

I prayed, “Lord, isn’t it You’re the one making miracles? Please give me one.”

The following morning, I woke up refreshed, no headache. And I was like, “Lord is this it?”

I underwent another CT scan. And after thoroughly examining my brain, the doctor, so puzzled, told me, “Reann, I’m done. I didn’t see any blood clot in your brain.”

So, I asked the Lord, “Lord, what did I do right, that you gave me this favor?”



Thank You, Feast!

Fast forward five months after, October 2019, two days before my birthday, my younger brother and I sat in front of the door of the ICU (Intensive Care Unit), where my mother had to be confined and we were waiting for her to be revived.

I talked to the Lord again, “Lord, I know You have a reason, You know everything, so I will no longer question You.”

A few minutes after that, Mama passed away. During the wake, it was already my birthday, so, my friends were coming to console with me, but they were like, “Is it okay to greet you Happy Birthday?”

I said, “It’s okay. You may even bring a cake.”

So, that was a wake, but there were four cakes. I was happy because aside from the usual biscuits and coffee served during wakes, my guests were eating cake.

That night, my Feast Family came with Dr. Didoy Lubaton who was the first to eventually make me cry. And with Fr. Mike La Guardia who celebrated the last Mass for my mother.

God’s embrace I felt so much that time.

Today, I serve at the Singles Ministry. I am also a lay minister. I am part of the Servants’ Care Ministry—and soon Couples Ministry.

Now, in front of you is someone I am proud of.

Thank you to The Feast because they are here--the people who loved me at the time I was not at all lovable. They are those who stayed with me at the time I deserved to be left alone.

Thank you to The Feast. All of what I am now is the result of their help and the help of God.

The one who before didn’t have any direction is now a construction worker of the Lord. Mine is deep gratitude.

LOVE OFFERING

BRO. AUDEE VILLARAZA:

Reann is not only a construction worker—he is now a builder, a builder of God’s Kingdom.

I invited him because of his story.

Maybe somebody here might be thinking, “Where does what I give in the Love Offering go? Does something worthy come out of it?”

Reann stands as a testimony that your giving is changing lives here at The Feast. And what I love about his presence here onstage is the fact that he just stands here and he’s declaring boldly: “It’s not Luck. Just Grace.”

The Grace of God is in this place.

Reann came to know the Lord during the lowest point in his life. Who among you here came to The Feast because you were heartbroken? Or you had a big debt, a big problem. I can resonate with you. And also, Reann. That’s our story. I was introduced to The Feast at the lowest point in my life – I was depressed, I was heartbroken. I was bankrupt.

But you know what? I also met a friend—his name is Gerry. Gerry met the Lord at the highest point of his life. He had a good business. He had no problem. But he met the Lord through a retreat – a friend invited him. And since then, he’s been loving the Lord and giving to His ministries.

What is my point? There are three ways that you can meet the Lord.

1. You can meet the Lord on your way down—just like Reann and I did.
2. You can also meet the Lord on your way up. When your life is beautiful, it’s possible you can meet the Lord.
3. If you don’t meet the Lord on your way down, and if you don’t meet Him on your way up, you will definitely meet Him on your way out—at the end of your life.

My point is this: Meet the Lord now. In your lifetime, know Him. Before you get to your next life, get to encounter the Lord right now. Just like what happened to Reann, to your story.

We want to thank you, especially those online who have never set foot at The Feast. Thank you for your generous giving because it produces miracles upon miracles in this place.



Blessing


Reann and I would like to pray for you as you lift your Offering:



*Father in Heaven we join our hearts
in praying for each person raising their hand
but more so raising their heart
and raising a banner to build a Kingdom that
is so sincere and so humble, building a
Kingdom like no other here on Earth.
A Kingdom designed for broken people like
us—so we come to know that there
is a love like no other. Thank You, Jesus, that
You will use these offerings to bring more
people into the Light and into Your house*

Everybody, say this:

Dear Jesus, use my offering to bless others mightily. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

WAYS TO GIVE	Light of Jesus Family Mega Manila, Inc. 003970143807	BDO
WAYS TO GIVE	The Builder of the Light of Jesus Family Mega Manila Feast Bay Area, Inc. 000-4000-24846	UnionBank
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Worship!

EXHORTATIONS



AMARO ESTONANTO:

Good morning, Feast!
May I invite everyone to sing praises to God.
Come on, hands up like this!



RAPHAEL BUSTAMANTE: Hallelujah! Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus!

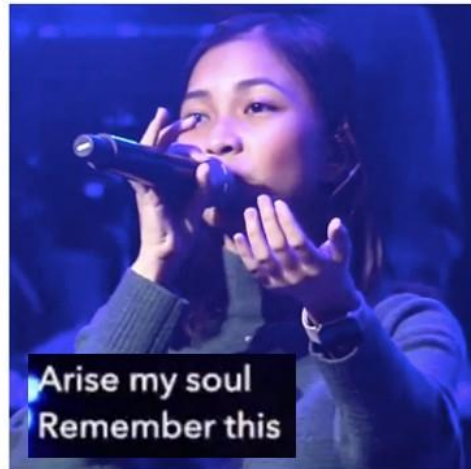
Are you excited to be here today? One of the best gifts during Sundays is we get to worship God...

You know, during Worship, we have two amazing opportunities. No. 1: We get to remember who God is in our life... No. 2: We get to respond to His love.

So, right now, we want to invite everyone to come into the posture of Worship. Sing and lift up some prayers. If you're not yet comfortable, you may just put your hand on your chest, put your palm in a receiving position. If you're comfortable, maybe raising up your hand.

But right now, take this time to remember who God is and who we are: We are His people. Take this opportunity to respond to God's love and as we make the beautiful Sign of the Cross, make this song our prayer today. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.





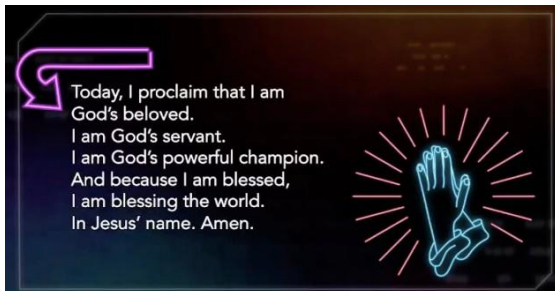
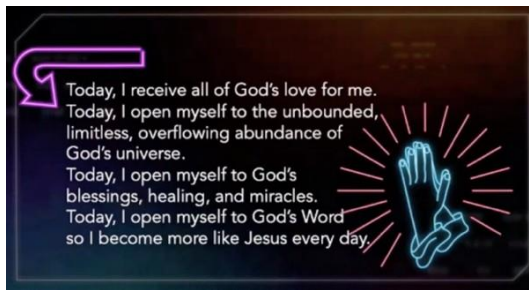
Talk

Talk 4



BRO. JOHN BEN RODRIGUEZ:

I invite you to lift up your hands and say our favorite prayer here in The Feast:



We're still in our series, *CLOSER*. And in this series, we're talking about the book of *Leviticus*.

Just a quick review: *Leviticus* is one of the important books because it's at the center of the *Torah*. *Torah* was

the Bible of the Israelites back then. It had only five books. Those five books were *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*.

The core message of the series is *God wants us to be closer to Him*.

Don't you feel happy when your loved one is close to you?

What I love about this is that what we're doing here at The Feast is that we're really breaking down this book of the Bible. Aren't you happy that we're having a deeper understanding of the Old Testament? Even I, I admit I could not really understand the Old Testament. I could relate better with the New Testament. But now that we're doing this, I'm slowly realizing and seeing that the God that Jesus was talking about is actually the God that is there in this earlier book.



TRUTH
Without God in our life, we die.

The big message of the talk today is this: *God is our oxygen.*

Oxygen is so abundant that most of us neglect its importance. Some of us don't even worry about it anymore because it's already there. I know some of you worry more about mobile data – “Why is it so slow?” “Why can't I connect?”

But oxygen—hardly. Many of you won't worry about it. But I want to proclaim this truth today: *God is our oxygen.*

And if God is like oxygen, without oxygen, without God, we die. Do you feel alive being here at The Feast? Yes. It's because God is here.

In today's talk, we are going to explore that idea. Because it's a reality for some people and I know some of you will relate to this.

Isn't it that sometimes, you're like, “Lord, I know Your love is always here. But why is there some moments I don't feel Your love?”

We will address that in the talk today. Because here is what we also believe in: There is no lack in the supply of oxygen.

You can have all you want. It's like Eat-All-You-Can—like buffet.

But sometimes, there is a lack in your capacity to absorb the oxygen.

How do I know that?

*There is no lack in the supply of oxygen.
 But sometimes, there is a lack
 in the capacity to absorb oxygen.*



Rituals to ‘Absorb’ God

Several years back, I had a really bad cough—I was coughing for two weeks, and every time I coughed, I felt pain in my side, I could not sleep, until I had fever. My wife brought me to the hospital. I was diagnosed with pneumonia and I was confined for five days.

On the very first day-- I would not forget-- the doctor, aside from giving me antibiotics, scheduled nebulization every six hours. After the first nebulization, I could already breathe normally.

When I was a kid, I had asthma, so I knew about nebulization. But I never really understood how it worked.

So, I asked my doctor, “Doc, what’s inside the nebulizer? Why is it effective?”

The doctor said, “Ah, that’s a broncho dilator. What it does is it opens up your bronchial tubes, so that when you inhale, you get to absorb more oxygen. That’s the reason you’re breathing well.”

Why am I sharing this? Because it’s like that – you need dilators so that you can absorb more the Presence and the Love of God. Do you want that?

Then we’ll do that today. And the surprising lesson that we can learn from *Leviticus* is this: That one dilator or one way for you to absorb God more is through rituals.

Husbands, or boyfriends, can you look at your partner? Do you know why she is beautiful? It’s because of rituals. She has a nighttime skin care ritual. She has morning time SPF (Sun Protection Factor) skin care ritual. She has night cream, day cream.

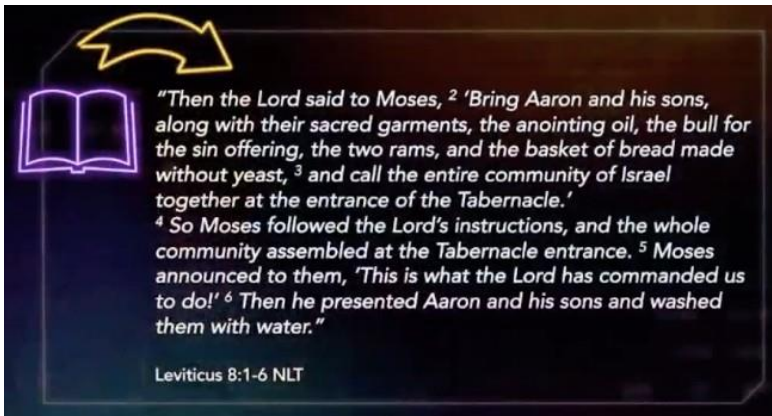
As for me, I’m okay with ice cream only.:)



Rituals Are Important

Even in The Feast, we have elaborate rituals. Do you know that even before you took a seat there this morning, Prayer Ministry servants had already been praying over every seat: “Lord take away the bad spirit, the spirit of distraction.”

So, notice, you’re not sleepy here. You’re always listening to the preacher. Because these rituals have been used for you to even further experience the Presence of God. And today we will talk about that in *Leviticus* – the ritual of the ordination of their priests. Let’s read Leviticus 8: 1-6:



What happened here?

During their time, their Levitical priests were very similar with our priests today.

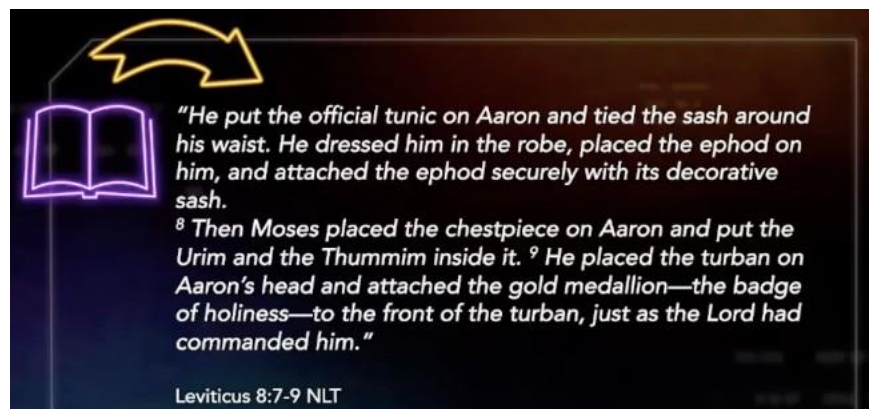
The ordination of our priests is a beautiful ceremony. It lasted for hours.

The Levitical priests would take seven days to be ordained.

Before we continue reading, I want you to put this in this context: Are you familiar with wedding day video SDE—Same Day Edit? There’s scene where the camera pans on the outfit of the groom, the wedding ring.... Then the next scene: His parents help him dress up for the ceremony.

The ritual of the ordination of the Levitical priest was a bit like that.

Let’s continue reading
Leviticus 8:7-9:



Outfit of the Ancient Priest



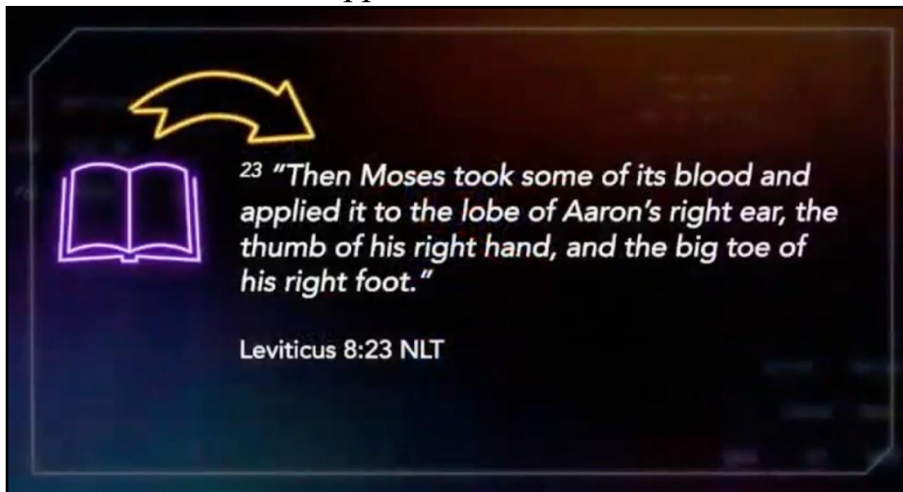
Imagine how elaborate the priest's garment. Here's a picture illustrating how intricate the high priest's garment was.

Urim and *Thummim* were like two stones that were symbolic—put on Aaron's chestpiece.

We all like to dress up. We missed dressing up during the Coronavirus Decease Pandemic because we just worked from home and attended Zoom meetings with our co-employees. You put on office attire only as your top and just your house wear at the bottom.

When you attend a wedding, you dress up. It was like that during that time.

Here's what happened next—in Leviticus 8:23:



To them, blood is a symbol of anointing. It was an elaborate ritual. What happened next was nothing compared to the ordination ritual that happened.

But the ritual was important.



Rituals Are Powerful

So, I invite you to stand up and lift up your hands as we honor the Word of God-- because we will read what happened next.

*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet
and a light unto my path.*

Here's what happened next:

*"Then Moses and Aaron went into the Tabernacle, and when they came back out, they blessed the people again, and the glory of the Lord appeared to the whole community.
24 Fire blazed forth from the Lord's presence and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When the people saw this, they shouted with joy and fell face down on the ground...."*

Leviticus 9:23-24 NLT

After the elaborate ritual of anointing the new priests of Israel, when they ministered to the people, the Lord came down.

To them, the symbol of the Lord's Presence was the Offering being consumed.

Sometimes, we have a bad connotation about rituals. We know some people who do empty rituals. But today, I want us to go back to the true origin of rituals. They exemplify our faith. They exemplify our capability to be God's channel.

May I share a story—very quickly.

One ritual I learned to do – when I started to know God—was to pray before meals. Would you believe, I did not grow up praying before meals. So, I began the ritual when I met God in college. When I started working, I continued praying before meals.

But there was one time when this one colleague confronted me about it.

He told me, "What are you doing?"

I said, "I'm praying. For the food. I am happy having a meal."

He asked, "Who bought the food?"

I said, "Me."

He retorts, "So, the food came from you—not from the Lord."

I felt embarrassed. I was still new in the faith and I didn't know how to defend what I was doing. So, I was like, I will no longer do it.

"Sorry, Lord!"



A Simple Rite

So, what I did instead was this: When we bought food at the cafeteria, before I sat with my colleague, I already prayed as I walked toward our table...

Until God convicted me: “Why are you forsaking that beautiful ritual? It’s blessing your life.”

So, I continued praying—even as I worried he would taunt me and I’d feel embarrassed.

You know what, six months after, I just noticed, one time, when I prayed before having my meal, my colleague was also praying.

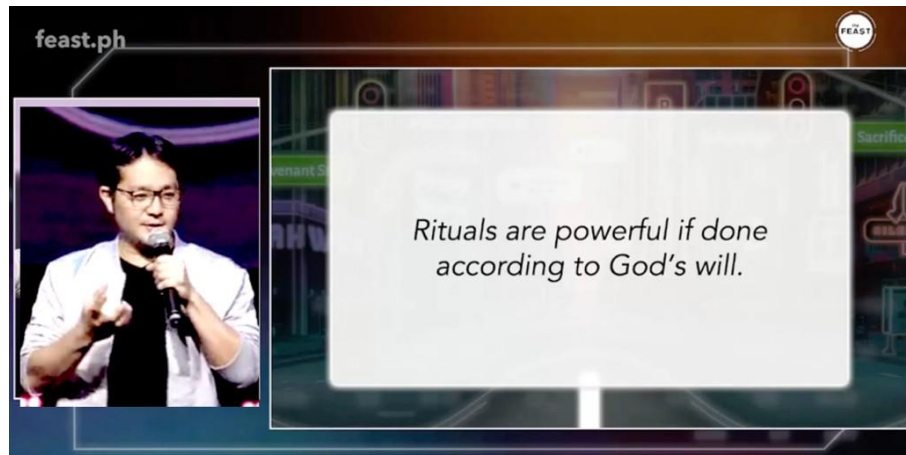
So, I was like, “Hala, ano ang nakain nito?—What had he eaten? What got into him?”

And fast forward... You know, he’s older than me. Time came when he was getting married. But before the wedding, he had not yet received the Sacrament of Confirmation—required before you go through the Sacrament of Marriage. He needed a ninong, godparent, for his Confirmation-- and he got me.

So, there we were, during the Confirmation rites—standing among seven- or eight- year-old boys, also going through the rites: my friend, 25 years old, a big guy, with me as his ninong.

I asked him, “Why did you get me as your ninong?”

He just told me, “Because in the simple way that you did, you showed Jesus to me.”



And that's why we're talking today about rituals. Rituals are powerful—if done according to God's will. Amen.

Put your hands on your heart, and let's pray:

Almighty Father, we thank You. Because our Catholic faith is blessed with beautiful rituals. Our prayer is that we will be able to live out the essence of those rituals. May they be not empty rituals, Lord, but rituals that will change our life and bless the people around us. This we ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Let's lift our hands to the Word of God and sing:



Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

Give the Lord a big and praise Him.

And to continue what will happen next in the story—there are more events—please welcome, Bro. Lep Sumera!

God Is Our Author

LEP SUMERA: Praise God!

I love the story shared by Bro. John Ben. Really blessed us. But like the K-Drama --Korean telemovie series—you thought it's already okay, happy ending, but not yet...

Let's continue reading *Leviticus*.

10 Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu put coals of fire in their incense burners and sprinkled incense over them. In this way, they disobeyed the LORD by burning before him the wrong kind of fire, different than he had commanded. ² So fire blazed forth from the LORD's presence and burned them up, and they died there before the LORD.³ Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD meant when he said, 'I will display my holiness through those who come near me. I will display my glory before all the people.'" And Aaron was silent.

What happened to the story? At the outset, it was already okay-- but there's a plot twist.

I did not prepare this message-- but maybe it's the Holy Spirit. I want you to know, my friend, that whatever your story – maybe you don't like it— but there's also a plot twist.

God is still the One writing your story. He is not yet done.

Now, some of us might think, "I thought God is good. I thought God is love. I thought God is merciful. Why is He cruel in this story? For just a simple mistake of the two sons of Aaron, He punished these people.

My beloved friends, this is why here in The Feast, we exhort everybody not to read the Bible literally. We need to know the context. We need to borrow the eyeglasses of the authors so that we can understand the story.

You see, this story is an ancient story. And ancient stories are profoundly symbolic. The image of Nadab and Abihu in the Tabernacle was actually a picture of Adam and Eve in the Garden. There's a link—a hyperlink—connecting this story to the *Genesis* story.

Remember the story of Adam and Eve? They were the original priests. They were the first, the original representatives of God. But we know what happened. They played God, right? They took matters into their own hands. They did not obey God. They did not trust God.

And that was also what happened to Nadab and Abihu.



Nadab and Abihu in the Tabernacle were pictures of Adam and Eve in the Garden.

Why the Harsh Punishment

Some of us might think—with what we just read—what the brothers did was simple. Why the harsh punishment?

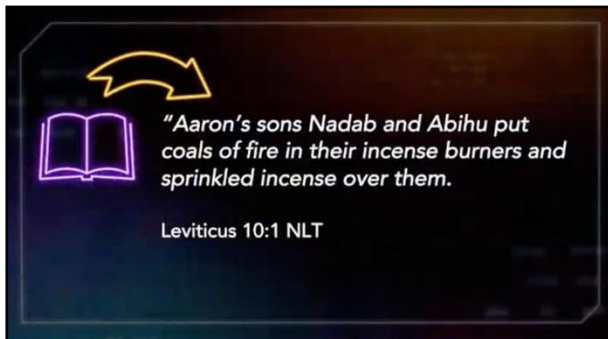
But the thing is, it's a big deal. It's a big deal what they did. It was not just a small liturgical mistake. How do we know that?

Three reasons: They entered the veil (of the Tabernacle) ; they used a strange fire; and they ate the fruit.

Let's look at these verses one by one.



Leviticus 10:1:



You see, friends, when we talk about *incense burners*, they were like sensors—they were like marks that showed that no human was allowed to enter this Tabernacle. Only the high priest could enter this place. And when? Only once a year. Because this place was the Holy of Holies.

Foul No. 1: They went *in* there, even though they were not allowed to be there.

Next, Verse 2:



Remember in our previous talks, we said that God was dwelling in the Mount Sinai and He invited the Israelites to go up the mountain. But the Israelites did not obey. Why?

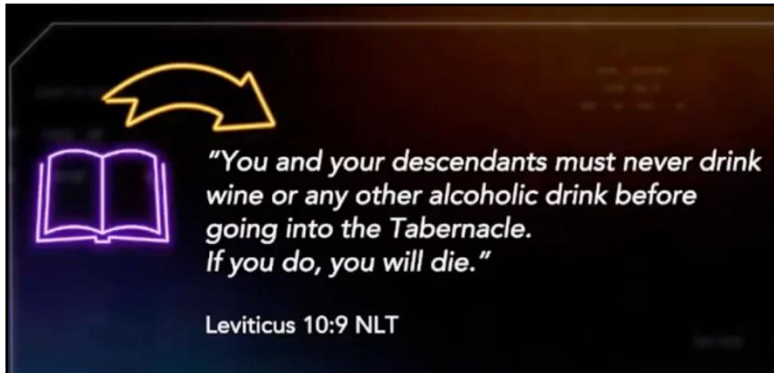
They were afraid. They were afraid because when they looked up the Mount Sinai, they saw a fiery mountain.

Because, you see, fire was a symbol of God's Presence. And their action of using a different fire instead of what God was commanding them, it was like saying, "I don't need that God."

They were putting matters into their own hands. They were not obeying God. Foul No. 2: "I know a lot more, Lord. This is what I want, Lord."

The Sin of Nadab and Abihu

Let's move on... Verse 9:



Single people make some noise. You know what? When somebody would ask “Single people, raise your hands,” Shout out. For all you know, your OTL (One True Love) is here. ”

Question: Guys, do you know someone who, after drinking a lot, gets drunk, no longer knows what he's doing?

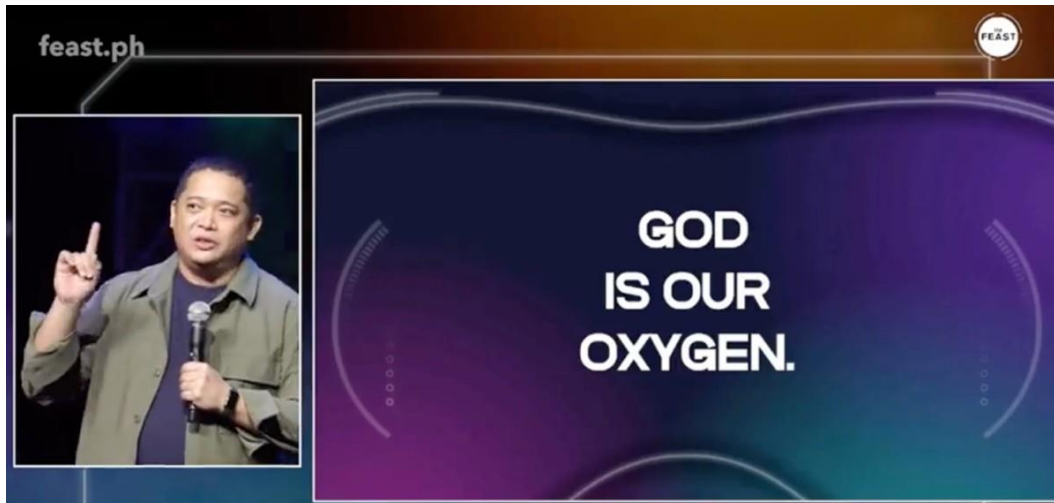
Do you know people who don't know what they said or what they did after they got drunk? Too much alcohol.

I have a friend who drinks a lot. And after drinking, she becomes an expert in English speaking. “Yyya know whaat? I therefore coonclude...” And sometimes, she also gets emotional and expert in speaking in English: “Hu-hu-hu, I thought hhee lovesssh me... Why?... Why?... Why?” She's drunk.

Take note: Nadab and Abihu were drunk during their sacred work. It makes all sense, right?—Why they went over the Holy of Holies. This is why they used a strange fire. Because they were drunk. They drunk wine. And we all know that wine is made from grapes.

The thing is, in the same way that Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, Nadab and Abihu also ate fruit (grapes in the form of wine).

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So, at this point, I want to defend God—that God is not cruel.

Question: How many of you would agree with me that oxygen is good and dangerous?

Let's have an activity: Everybody, breathe in, breathe out. One more time: breathe in, hold, breathe out. Last time: breathe in, hold, breathe out.

Oxygen is good, right? Because if you have it, you live. You are alive. And it's dangerous when you say *No* to oxygen. You die.

You can't say, "Oxygen killed me." No way. You can't say that. It's your choice to refuse oxygen.

And here, our message is *God is our oxygen*.

Now, you're wondering why there are certain moments in your life when you feel that you're dead. Maybe because you refuse to be with God, to be closer to Him.

So, when you think about it, it's not God who killed Nadab and Abihu. No. They brought death upon themselves.

Often, we blame the Devil – that the Devil causes us to sin. But the thing is, sometimes, it's not the Devil. It's another *D*—letter *D*: and that's your Decision. It's your wrong Decision that causes you to sin.

I have made a lot of wrong decisions-- that have caused me to sin, that have caused me to fall, that have caused me to run away from God.

Let's pray:

Lord, Guide me in all my decisions. Help me to make decisions that will not detach me from Your Presence and from Your Love. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Two Important Questions

Sometimes, we think God is a stuffed toy: “Lord, I need you to comfort me. Lord, I’m afraid, I need You be with me. Lord, embrace me because I need You!”

Whenever we need Him, we run to Him, we even embrace Him like we embrace a stuffed toy.

But Question: When you’re happy, do you remember God? When you’re happy, you just leave Him: “Lord, You’re not my option today. Stay where You are. Lord, I’m happy with what I have right now. Stay there.”

Friends, God is not a stuffed toy. God is an oxygen. You can’t live without God.

At this point, let us answer two important questions.

¹
“Why Rituals? Isn’t Jesus Enough?”

Actually, Bro. John Ben already said something beautiful about this. You see, *Leviticus* says God ordained the priests to do

the rituals. So, the priest and the rituals—they go together. When you look at it, our beloved Catholic priests—they continue to do that. They lead us to Mass, to Confirmation, to Rosary, to Weddings... That is why we get criticized.

Others are saying, “You have too many rituals.”

But the thing is, they can’t save you. Because only Jesus can do that. And that is true. I believe in that. Although we have many rituals, only Jesus can save us.

But for me, it depends on your definition of *rituals*. Because here in The Feast, our definition of *rituals* is they are simply a *language*. And this is important to us — most especially in relationships. For February 14, Valentine’s Day, we are preparing something for our One True Love, for our family, for our beloved. And that is a part of our rituals.

One more specific example. My wife Sally and I, we have a ritual that before I leave for work, I kiss her, and I say, “Bye, Mommy. I’m leaving. I love you.”

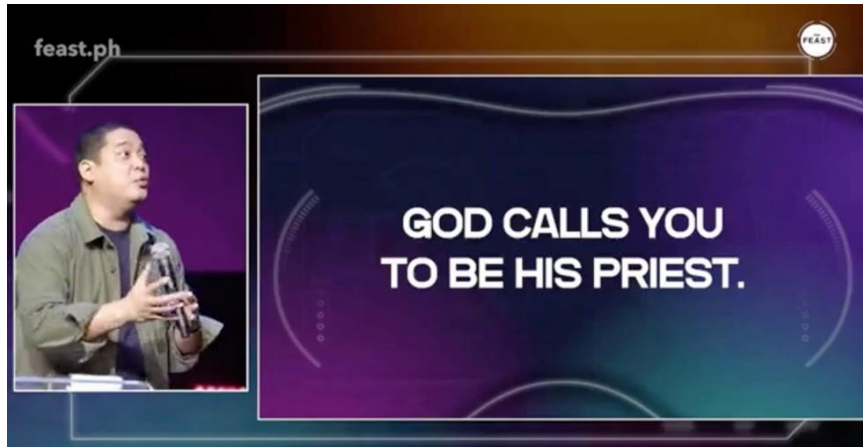
Whether she’s sleeping or not, I do that. One day, we had an argument. I was irritated. I didn’t want to give in. So, that day, when I had to leave for work, I chose not to say bye to her. I chose not to kiss her, not to say, “Bye, Mommy. I’m leaving. I love you.”

On my way to work, I received a message from my wife: “Okay lang ba tayoy?—Are we okay?”

I got scared. You know, from that day on, even if we’re having an argument, I make it a point that even if I’m angry, I say bye to her. Because that’s our ritual.

Yes, we can do empty rituals but the problem isn’t the ritual—but the person doing the ritual.





Bridges

In our previous talks, we said for us to be holy, we need to hang out, we need to be with Jesus. And the thing is, rituals don't have to be walls. Rituals are designed to be doors. They are designed to be doors—doors that would lead us to Jesus, doors that would lead us to be *closer* to Jesus. They are not walls.

At the same time, priests don't have to be barriers. They are designed to be bridges. And as we talk about priests, here's Question No. 2:

2
 "Why Have Priests Anyway?"

A special message of *Leviticus* is about priesthood.

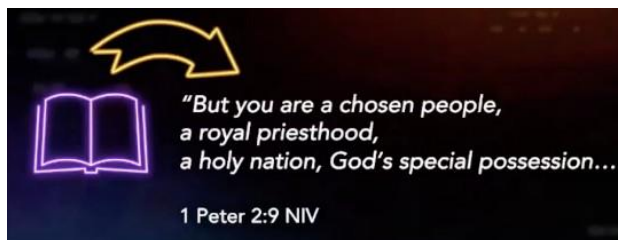
God had a plan—right at the beginning, in *Genesis*:

PLAN A
 All humans—men and women—are called to be priests.

But we all know what happened. Man failed God. So, God had a Plan B:

PLAN B
 He had to choose representatives among the representatives.

That's why we had Abraham, Noah, Moses, and we have priests. But God has not given up on Plan A. As we read in 1 Peter 2:9:



Here, God is reminding you and me that He is calling us to be His priests.

No, I am not talking about you wearing a stola, a sutana. No. But I mean, you and me to be His representatives in this broken world.

I encourage you, as we worship today, say *Yes* to His call. Say *Yes to Jesus*.

Under the Water...

As we respond to this call, we need a role model. We need an example. If we are to become priests, we need a High Priest. We need a High Priest who will not fail us. And He is none other than Jesus.

So, we follow Jesus. We follow the heart of Jesus. We pursue being closer to our High Priest.

Are you familiar with this? It's a snorkel:

There was a time we went to Siquijor. I was so happy to see the corals, the fishes underwater because I was wearing a snorkel. Because underwater, I could breathe. This is the purpose of the snorkel. Underwater you can breathe. You can explore, you can do a lot.

But question: Are you going to last underwater with just this snorkel? No.

Now, I want to ask you this personal question: How many of you right now, you feel that you're under the water of problems, under that ocean of sufferings that seem like with no end? You're under that water that seems so difficult to get out of. Can you relate?

And yes, you have your spiritual snorkel. And you've been trying and trying to breathe, to breathe. And you notice that the spiritual snorkel is not enough. Because it's only temporary. That's why you can't bear your trials—because you're settling for a snorkel.



Take Off the Snorkel

This is the message of God today: Don't settle for the snorkel. Because there's a true Life Source whose name is Jesus. He is your Life Support. He is our oxygen.

Take it off. Take off your spiritual snorkel. You don't need it

God is telling us today: I am here. You don't need that because I am here.

Everybody breathe in. Breathe in God's Love. Breathe out. One more time: Breathe in. Breathe in God's Mercy. Breathe out.



God is our oxygen. And we can't live without God.
Let's worship our King.



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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, The Feast Family is a unique online, non-physical, borderless, international community of friends who support each other's personal growth.

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Go and make disciples of all men.

— Matthew 28:19

