



NEWSLETTER
June 25, 2023

IN the Catholic Church, we have a rich, deep, and long tradition of growing in discernment. The most well-known is the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. He developed it 400 years ago and it has stood the test of time.

One of the key purposes of the spiritual exercises is to discern what comes from God and what does not. Is this God's Will or your own will? Or worse, the will of the enemy?

This kind of thinking is very foreign among many modern people today. People just choose based on one question: "*What is best for me?*"

It's a fair question but it's very immature. A 3-year-old toddler already thinks this way. But the 3000-year-old book we're studying today invites us to ask a simple but more profound question when we make decisions: "*What does God want for my life?*"

As we close our series on *Numbers*, we dive deep into this question.

Have a mind-bending and soul-changing Feast today!



The Spiritual Practice of Discernment

May your dreams come true,

Bo Sanchez

**WELCOME to the last Talk
on *Wilderness*, our series
on the book of *Numbers*.
Talk 8: *Discern God's Heart*.**



What's *In* Your Mind? What's *On* Your Mind?

THOSE are two different idioms. Google the difference, and you'll find out *in* my mind means I just remembered something, and *on* my mind means I am thinking of something long term-- I'm so preoccupied by it.



In his homily in last Sunday's Feast, Fr. Mark Demanuele presented what should be *on* your mind: Why you are living. Why? Read on, *page 3*.



Our founder, Bro. Bo Sanchez, also presents what should be on our mind:

Discern God's Heart. That's the Feast Talk today, *page 1*.

Now, is something *in* your mind right now? Or has it been *on* your mind for quite a while? Curses? Blessings? Bro. John Ben Rodriguez and Bro. Audee Villaraza help us out with Talk 7 of our Feast Talk series, *Wilderness*, *pages 14 to 35*.



You know what's on God's mind all the time?



Rica Mae Nemiaga knows. She's one of the scholars of our Pag-asa ng Pamilya Foundation, our featured Mercy Ministry this June.

Rica knows what she enjoys now has been on God's mind even before she was born. How's that? Read on, *page 36*.

Something in your mind?
Or on your mind? Share!

All for God's Glory,

Randy Borromeo
Media Ministry
Executive Director





FLASHBACK! **JUNE 18, 2023**

Holy Mass



ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Homily

FR. MARK DEMANUELE

on the Gospel: Matthew 9:36-10:8

Excerpts:

My dear Brothers and Sisters, have you had your opportunity, or maybe sometimes you are a bit quiet and you ask yourself a question: “Why am I here?” “What is the purpose of my life?” “Why am I living?” “Why am I on Earth?”

I hope we have the opportunity to ask these questions every now and then—to reflect, meditate, upon our purpose.

To help us today in answering the questions, the Readings for today are truly important because the Readings give us the lessons why we are living.

Let’s go into these Readings.

God Chose Us

The First Reading I call *God chose me. He chose us.*

In the First Reading of today, God the Father speaks to Moses and tells him these beautiful words, “*I bore you on eagle wings and brought you here to myself.*”

My first purpose is that God chose me. He didn’t just give me birth and let me off like that-- as if I’m on the street doing nothing. I am chosen. God chose each one of us. God chose you, and He chose you because He trusted you and wanted something out of you.

Again, listen to what God says: “*You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.*”

In Baptism, if you remember, when the priest puts the holy oil on the forehead of the baby, he tells the baby, “You are a priest, a prophet, and a king.”

At that very moment, God is choosing the child to be His child.

And because He chose that person, He already gave that baby a purpose:

You are my priest, a holy nation...

In the Old Testament, He chose Israel. In the New Testament, He chose the Church to be a holy nation-- and we are part of that Church. So, God chose us.



First Reading

Exodus 19:2-6a

Reading I: Exodus 19:2-6a

² *After they made the journey from Rephidim and entered the wilderness of Sinai, they then pitched camp in the wilderness.*

While Israel was encamped there in front of the mountain,

³ *Moses went up to the mountain of God. Then the Lord called*

to him from the mountain, saying: This is what you will say to

the house of Jacob; tell the Israelites: ⁴ You have seen how I

treated the Egyptians and how I bore you up on eagles’ wings

and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now, if you obey me completely

and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured possession

among all peoples, though all the earth is mine. ^{6A} You will be to me
a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.

God Loves Us

We are loved!

Did you hear what Paul was saying?

He spoke today about how we are reconciled with the Father. That Jesus, His only Son, was sent from Heaven, so that He would die for me and for you, so we are reconciled.

We are loved.

God today is telling each one of us that we were born, yes, with original sin-- we were still under the possession of the Devil.

But God, in His love, in His mercy, He forgives my sin every time. He is still forgiving me, reconciling me to be part of this Holy Nation, of this Holy Church.

So, through reconciliation, through God's love, we are continually saying to God the Father, "Thank You because You loved me. You loved me so much that you did not spare Your Son-- so I am saved."

That's how much we are loved. Today, He's reminding us we are truly reconciled, united with God again.



Second Reading

Romans 5:6-11

Reading II: Romans 5:6-11

Brothers and sisters:

⁶ For Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly.⁷ Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die.

⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. ⁹ How much more then, since we are now justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath.¹⁰ Indeed, if, while we were enemies,

we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life.¹¹ Not only that, but we also boast of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

God Sends Us

We are being sent.

In the Gospel of today, the Lord is sharing with us, and He is saying to all of us, there's so much need of us to go out and share the Good News.

The priest, at the end of the Mass, is telling us: "Go and proclaim the Good News!"

And that is another purpose of my life. He is sending me and you today.

Thousands of years ago, He sent His apostles to the whole world to bring the Good News and reconcile His people with Him.

Today, He is still sending people. People who are like you and like me. We are not theologians. And we heard from the Gospel whom He chose-- we heard the names of the apostles. They were ordinary people. Fishermen, accountants, people who were in trade, people who were maybe doing some kind of a trade. He chose those people.

Today, He's choosing you.

You might say, "I'm not adequate, I am afraid, I doubt about that."

Don't be afraid. God is telling you today: "I will be with you and I will give you my power."

Wow! He is giving us His power.

You say, "But I don't do miracles."

He does miracles. Every time you forgive your brother and sister, you are doing a miracle. We are not able to do it on our own. Every time you have a daughter who is sick, you take her to the doctor, you make sure that she is being taken care of-- that is a miracle. Every time you look around you and share your possessions, your properties with the people who are in need-- it is a miracle.

We are selfish people but with God's love, we can do that. We do miracles, my Brothers and Sisters. And God is with us to inspire us to do it.

When He is sending us, He's asking us to pray, to look like Jesus—feel compassion for other people.

Each one of you can be the one to welcome someone back. Next Sunday, bring someone else with you.

We are called to be the one sent. Maybe not to Africa, not to other places.

But sent to my own environment and there, I am called to welcome, to accept, and to invite a brother or a sister back into His flock. Amen.





Okay, Fathers, come here onstage.

Now: Why did I bring them here? You know that Jesus dedicated a prayer to His Father. He used to pray directly to the Father. And when He gave us His prayer, the prayer *Our Father*, He is saying to us: “*I glorify the Father.*”

And today, on Father’s Day, we wish to thank Him for fatherhood. We wish to thank Him for giving us fathers. Because through them, a family is made.

So, my Brothers and Sisters, together, with all the fathers here, I ask you let us turn to God who is a magnificent, merciful Father, and together with Him, we pray in unity for our beloved fathers here on Earth as we sing together:



Our Father who art in heaven
hallowed be Thy Name

Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done
on Earth as it is in Heaven



Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses

As we forgive those
who trespass against us



HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!
Salamat po!



BRO. JOHN BEN RODRIGUEZ:

Good morning, Brothers and Sisters! Welcome home to the Feast Bay Area where you are loved!

May I ask who are the first-timers here? Kindly raise your hand.

Thank You, Lord!

If there are first-timers beside you, I want you to welcome them. Smile at them.

First-timers, later don't leave right away. We have a special gift for you.

We'd like to invite you here in front, we'd like to pray for you.

And those who are giving to God, I encourage you to always write down your prayer requests on your Love Offering envelope because we have a ministry that prays for every request that you write down. And if you have a prayer that has been answered, we want you to also write them down because we want to be blessed by the knowledge of how God has been blessing your life.



Love Offering

Since it's Father's Day, may I share a bit about my own Dad...

As far as I can remember, my Dad has never asked me for money.

I remember earning my first income... I was excited to give a portion to my Dad because it was like honoring him, like saying: *Thank you for the years that you have been providing for me. Here's something for you to enjoy.*

We're not well-off but I saw how he sacrificed so that he could provide for us. And now that I'm already a dad, I've realized why he's that type of person who would never ask for anything from his children...

Every time I visit him, he'd buy a whole fried chicken and ask me to finish it. Now that I'm a dad, I've realized it's always a father's joy to provide for his family.

Even if nothing would be left for you, you'd give everything to your children. As long as you have provided well for your family, you are happy.

That's why I want to honor every father here who is a provider.

I want to remind you that our God in Heaven is also a Father. That our God in Heaven is also a Provider-- that He takes delight in giving your life abundance.

And we giving today is a symbol showing Him:

Father, I trust in Your provision.

So, I invite you today to give with joy-- but not just with joy but with so much trust that your God in Heaven will provide for everything you need in your life, more than what you need, so you can bless others.



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Worship!

EXHORTATION

RAPHAEL BUSTAMANTE:

As we come into Worship, can you look at the person beside you, tell that person, “You look young today!”

And say, “I feel young.”

So, we’re going to come into Worship as we sing...





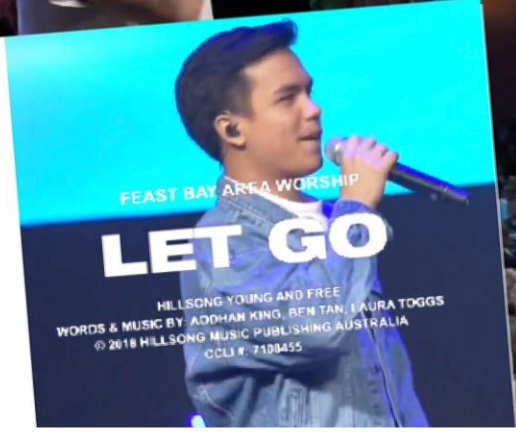
THERE'S NO HIDING FROM YOUR GRACE
I CAN'T DENY YOUR HEART FOR MINE



THE FATHER'S HEART IS BECKONING
AND I CAN'T RESIST NO MORE



MY HEART IS ONLY FOR YOU, LORD
SO, I LET GO AND I LET LOVE



WHEN I LET GO

NOVENA TO GOD'S LOVE DECLARATION OF ABUNDANCE

Let's pray our favorite prayer. Lift up both hands and say:



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 I become more like Jesus every day.



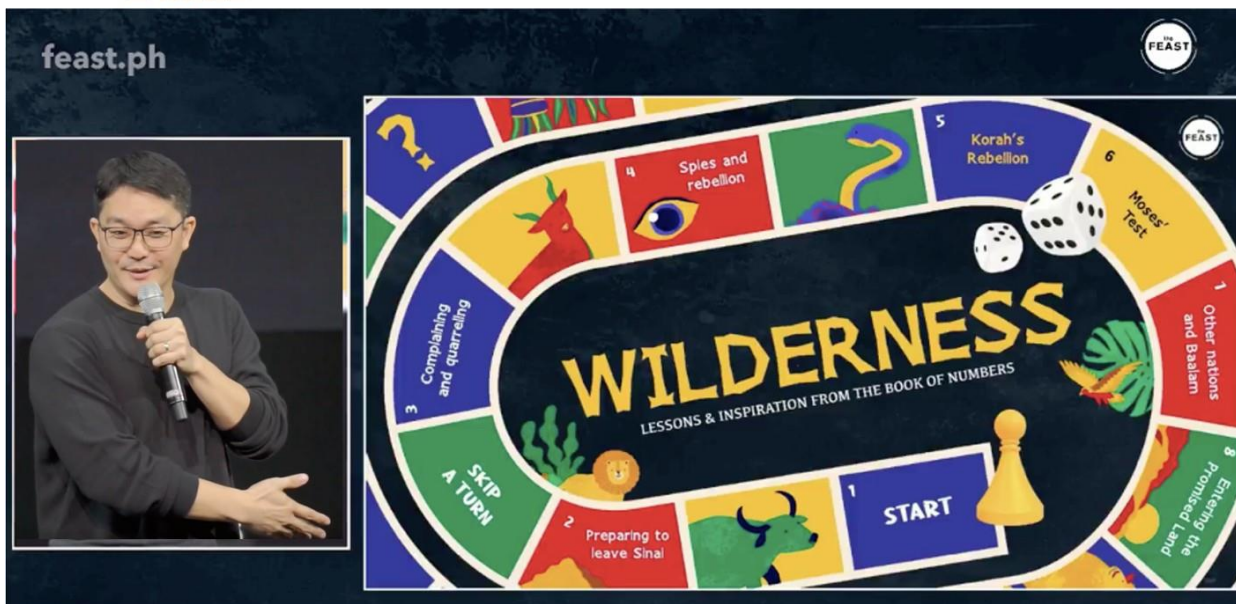
Today, I proclaim that I am God's beloved.
I am God's servant.
I am God's powerful champion.
And because I am blessed,
I am blessing the world.
In Jesus' name. Amen.



*Thy Word
is a Lamp
unto my feet
And a Light
unto my path.*

*Father, we pray that You unravel
Your Word today in our heart
that it may speak the word that we need.
The word of encouragement,
the word of hope, the word of grace,
the word of providence that we need.
This we ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.*

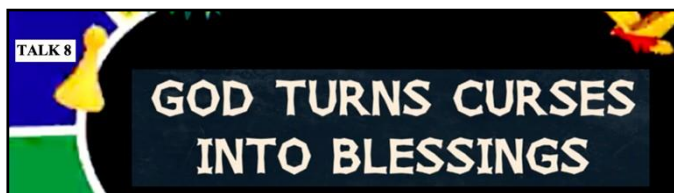
Talk



WE'RE still in our series, *Wilderness*. And we're on the last two Talks on *Numbers*.

The topic today is this:

God Turns Curses into Blessings.



Have you ever experienced something unfortunate? Have you?

I remember one time, several years back, I was a campus missionary. And I was having dinner in a fastfood chain with one of our student leaders. So, we were ordering. So, here's the counter. The student leader was in front of me. So, what he got was a big glass of soft drink, large fries, and a big burger. And after getting his order, as he was turning around, the large glass of soft drink tipped over. The hot and crispy fries, freshly cooked, were now drenched in soft drink, and the burger now also was drenched with soft drink.

This student saved up for an entire week just to be able to buy that meal. Since I was a missionary, I didn't even have the money to buy him another meal. So, what we did, we continued to our table, we sat down. He had no choice—he could not ask for a replacement for that meal, so he started eating the soft drink-drenched fries and burger.

And while we were eating, he asked me, “Bro, why did this happen? Why did God allow this to happen? Is He punishing me for my sins? That's why this happened? Am I cursed?”

‘Over-spiritualizing’

Believe you me, while he was asking those questions I was praying deeply to God because his questions were quite deep.

So, I asked the Lord, “Lord, help me. Because my answer could either make or break this person’s faith... And light bulb...something appeared. The Lord answered me.

So, I told him, “You know, Bro, you need not involve God in this. Notice that your glass is tall and narrow. Naturally, the center of gravity is higher than the height divided by two. And when you turned around, it was quite fast. So, the centrifugal force combined with the higher center of gravity caused it to tip over.”

You know what he said after that?

He said, “Oh, my gosh, it was just gravity. I was over-spiritualizing things. I was blaming God already.”

And in my mind, I was thanking God, “Lord, thank You for the explanation. This man could have lost his faith if I had not answered that well.”

Would you agree with me that it gives us peace when we find logic and understanding in the challenges that we face?

How many of you wish to understand why these things have to happen? Have you prayed for that? I am also like you. I pray for that when challenges come.

Look: Can you further explain what will happen? But would you also believe me if I say, that kind of a prayer is not answered always? Agree?

What if it’s a more difficult, unfortunate event?

I was talking to someone recently.

He went through a breakup and he was telling me, “Bro, why did my girlfriend replace me with someone who has suicidal tendencies, is very jealous, and he’s not even earning well? While here I am, a consultant in a big company, I am serving God, I’m very mature, I’m not even the jealous type...”

Again, I was praying to God, “Lord, how can I explain to this person what’s happening?”

So, I was trying my best, and I said, “Oh, you know, because jealousy is important. Sometimes, because the girl will feel that you are really into her, but you just express it in a positive way. You know, she is saying that she fell for the suicidal guy... because she felt that she was needed by that guy... And because you’re mature, she felt that you don’t need her...”

I also told this guy, “You know what... In relationships, you need to balance dependence and interdependence... like that...”





Explanations

So, I was running out of explanations...

Until, by the end of our conversation, he was still asking me, “Bro, why? Why did she replace me with someone else?”

So, I began to ask, “May I look at the other guy’s Facebook? May I see how he looks like?”

So, I looked at his FB... When I saw how he looks like, I told my friend, “He doesn’t look much better than you... So, I really don’t know why she chose this other guy...”

So, he was saying, “Am I cursed? Is this my fate?”

Let’s go into deeper issues...

We have the ministry for sexually abused children. That’s Jeremiah Foundation. And have you ever wondered: Why does it have to happen, Lord? To people as young as 13 years old being molested by their neighbor, by their uncle. Why, Lord?

To think, if you have been abused in your life, you carry it as if it’s a curse that you bring over to your present life-- because you have wounds caused by that abuse which you will carry for your entire life.

On another aspect... Like me, for example. I was born in a broken family. So, do you know how difficult it is to be born in a broken family? You grow up having that sense of low self-worth already because of your roots.

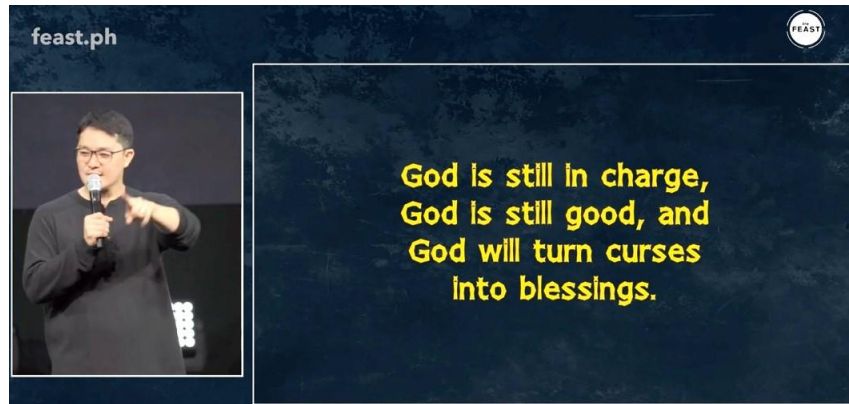
And I tell you this: I have been struggling with some of the issues up to now. Mainly, I’ve been healed by God, but sometimes there are bits and pieces that recur.

So, is this a curse that I have to carry for the rest of my life? Have you ever asked that question? The bad situations – the bad upbringing and the bad background—do you have to carry them as a curse for the rest of your life? Why does it have to happen?

I believe that you will have peace even if you’re carrying something, if you get an explanation from God.

You’ll have peace if God explains to you, “Child, this is why it has to happen...”

But here’s what I realized in life. Sometimes, no explanation will come. And sometimes, bad things can happen to good people. But in my journey with God, I’ve realized that you need not pray, you need not understand everything-- you just need to trust the One who understands everything. And that is God.



So, here I am in front of you today. I came from a broken family. I still don't know why this has to be the setup for my life. But I realized: Where I am now is because God is still in charge. God is still good. And God will turn curses into blessings.

And it's the same for your life.

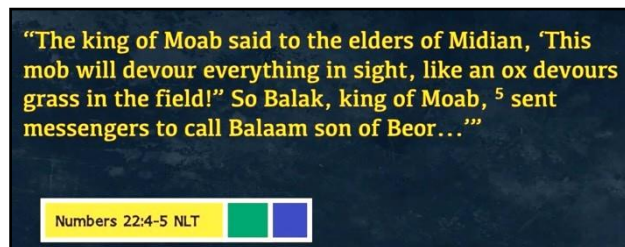
So now, let's go back to the story. If you have been with us in this journey to *Numbers*, you'll note: if it's a movie, the camera was always in focus with what's happening with the Israelites.

But now we step on to Chapter 22: The camera shifts focus from the Israelites to the enemy of the Israelites. Remember, in the previous talks, we learned that the new generation was allowed to enter the Promised Land—Canaan. This new generation is different. The people have been very obedient to God. They were starting to win wars with the Canaanites, with the Amorites.

So, the remaining tribes there in Canaan were afraid. They were like in a war room meeting. The leaders were meeting: "What are we going to do with these Israelites?"

Backstory: The King of Moab particularly wanted to weaken the Israelites who on their way to Canaan had occupied a part of King Moab's territory.

And here's a preview of the meeting:



Who is Balaam?
He was the famous sorcerer of Mesopotamia back then.

So, the tribes knew that their armies won't work:

"We need the big guns."

And, you know, this Balaam was famous because other than the Bible, there are ancient manuscripts that mention his name. So, in the modern context, you can think of him as Dr. Strange (sorcerer supreme in a film based on a Marvel Comics superhero). The evil version of Dr. Strange—that is Balaam.

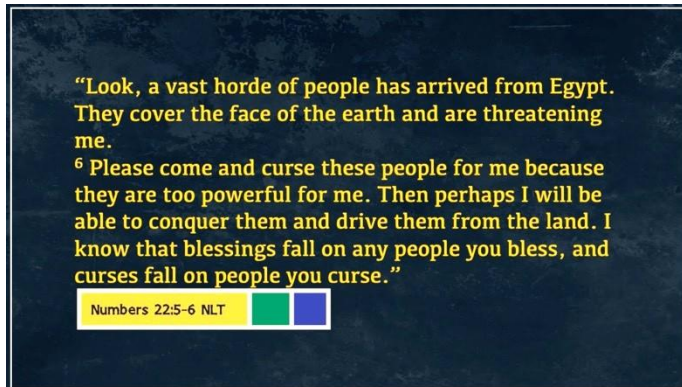
So, they asked Balaam for help to subdue the Israelites by cursing them.

FOUR MESSAGES

There are four powerful messages from this story.



So, this message goes to Balaam.
Numbers 22: 5-6:



What happens next is this...
Numbers 22:9 says:



Isn't that weird? Who among you here want that God would reveal His Presence to you so that you can talk to Him and ask Him: "Lord, Balaam was clearly not a man of God. He was a sorcerer. He was the villain... But why do You reveal Yourself to Balaam, questioning him of what he was about to do?"

So, what is God encouraging us today?

Even over His enemies, God is still in charge.

Because a lot of people, I believe, enter into this sort of paranoia... When there is tsimis—gossip-- in the office, and you know that you are the topic, you say, "Lord, what do I do? They are saying bad things about me."

Today, God is reminding you: He is in charge over your enemies.

Maybe you're in business and your competitors or maybe there are people plotting evil against your business. Yes, it's good and correct to establish systems and processes. But the end of it, if it's not giving you rest and sleep at night, if it's keeping you up, always know that God is still in charge over your enemies.

**Even over His enemies,
God is still in charge.**



So, here's what happens next in the story.
God speaks to Balaam and He tells Balaam...
in Numbers 22:10:

**“You are not to curse these people,
for they have been blessed!”**

Numbers 22:10 NLT

God was already preventing
the misfortune of the Israelites
from happening.

Are you getting this? How the
Israelites were being protected?

So, the second message of the Talk is this: *You cannot curse what God has blessed.*

Here's the interesting part...King Balak invited Balaam to come to his presence.

... At first Balaam declined King Balak's invitation: “The Lord has already spoken to me. I cannot curse these people you're asking me to curse.”

So, what did Balak do—like any corrupt leader would do? What he did was he sent more leaders to peer-pressure Balaam.

And he sent more money offering: “We will pay you more if you do this...”

The Talking Donkey

So, finally, Balaam agreed to go with the leaders to meet with King Balak.

And riding a donkey, while they were going to meet with King Balak, this is what happened to Balaam...

Numbers 22: 28-30:



“Then the Lord gave the donkey the ability to speak. “What have I done to you that deserves your beating me three times?” it asked Balaam. “You have made me look like a fool!” Balaam shouted. “If I had a sword with me, I would kill you!” “But I am the same donkey you have ridden all your life,” the donkey answered. “Have I ever done anything like this before?” “No,” Balaam admitted.

Numbers 22:28-30 NLT

What’s happening?

The Lord sent an angel with a drawn sword, guarding the path between Balaam going to King Balak.

So, the donkey’s eyes were opened to see that there’s an angel. Naturally, the donkey would avoid the path.

The first time the donkey avoided the path, Balaam became angry and he struck the donkey: “What’s wrong with you?”

It’s like you have a pet cat and you’re preventing that cat from doing something. And that cat ends up doing what you’re preventing it to do.

So, the second time, the donkey was walking, the angel was still there, there was a wall, the donkey pressed on the wall, and stepped on Balaam’s foot.

Balaam was getting frustrated and agitated. Remember, the leaders were there watching him. And he was known as the great sorcerer. And now the donkey of the great sorcerer could not even follow the sorcerer.

So, what credibility has he now? That’s why he began to strike the donkey.

And that's why the donkey is speaking right now...
Numbers 22:31:

Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the roadway with a drawn sword in his hand. Balaam bowed his head and fell face down on the ground before him.

Numbers 22:31 NLT



That's when Balaam realized that God was hindering his plans.
Fast forward to the story, see in Numbers 24:10:

"Then Balak's anger burned against Balaam. He struck his hands together and said to him, 'I summoned you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them these three times.'"

Numbers 24:10 NIV

Because here's what happened: When finally, Balaam met Balak, they went to several places over the mountains, looking at the camp of the Israelites.

It's like the movie *300*...

The film is about the war in 480 B.C. between Greece and Persia. King Leonidas (Gerard Butler) of the Greek city state of Sparta leads 300 Spartans, at the mountain pass of Thermopylae, into battle against Persian "God King" Xerxes (Rodrigo Santoro) and his invading army of 300,000 soldiers.

There's a part in the film when they go up the mountain to view the encampments of their enemy.

That's what Balaam and Balak did.

So, at the first place where they did that, they even made an altar sacrifice – seven altars, seven sacrifices, seven bull offerings-- just to empower the divination that Balaam would do.

But remember, God had prevented Balaam from cursing the Israelites.

God told Balaam: "The word that will come out of your mouth will only be a blessing for the Israelites—not a curse."

So, the first time Balaam and Balak did it, Balaam said a curse -- but what came out of his mouth was a blessing.

They went to another place-- again, with all the offerings, When Balaam again tried to say a curse, a blessing came out.



King Balak was getting frustrated.

Young people here, who knows Uncle Roger?

(He is standup comedian Nigel Ng whose online persona (Internet identity) is Uncle Roger, a stereotyped middle-aged Asian man reviewing Asian food recipes who speaks with an exaggerated accent.)

King Balak was like, “Hay-ya-hah! You told me you’re a good sorcerer from Mesopotamia and when you say *curse*, you curse people. But here, I even spent money for the offerings. But when you open your mouth, blessing comes out. My money wasted. Hay-yah-hah!”

King Balak was like that. And the second time, already frustrated, he was telling Balaam, “If you will open your mouth, then not say a curse, please don’t open your mouth anymore. It’s just a waste of resources.”

But you see here the power of God. That even if someone is spending efforts, spending resources, spending time, spending talents, spending treasures, he still cannot curse the people God has blessed.

Why are we talking about this? Because I want you to embrace this fact: That you must relax because your most powerful enemies are donkeys before God. He has power over them.

And what’s interesting is, the Hebrew word the author used and the word *struck*—when Balaam was striking the donkey—was the same Hebrew word that Balak used when he was striking Balaam.

So, it just means the author is proving a point: That with God, our enemies are like donkeys. Because you cannot really curse what God has blessed.

And I think this is truth that you have to absorb today.

Temptation: An Indecent Proposal

Because we also know in the previous talks of how the enemy works. He tries to invert the truth with lies and mix them up together so we get confused. So, sometimes, we think that when we are cursed, we are cursed forever. So, sometimes, we think that when something is blessed, and has been cursed, it cannot be redeemed.

Take for example marriage. I believe that you have power to make your marriage strong. Because marriage is a covenant among you and your spouse and God. So, He has blessed your marriage and He will not allow that to be cursed. What is it that allows it to be cursed? It's our free will, sometimes. Because God will not meddle with your free will.

So, now, what I suggest to you is to always tap onto the power of God whenever trials and challenges come.

And here's one good way for you to ward off temptation when it comes into your marriage... Fathers who are here, husbands...

I was so glad when I saw lots of fathers coming here. You're at the right place. You know how I could confirm that there are really fathers here? Because I saw men with car keys hooked on their belt. That's very father-like. It's very practical.

I believe each of us have the power to become loyal and faithful to our wife.

May I share something that happened recently.

I recently received an indecent proposal. I do financial literacy content on Tiktok. It's one of my advocacies. So, I get a lot of messages. And I try to entertain the inquiries as much as I can because sometimes people might really need financial literacy. Sometimes, people might need prayers.

So, there was this one woman messaging me, asking just about my financial content. But one night, I was shocked. I was already in bed. I was able to put my daughter to sleep already. My wife was still at the office because she comes home at around 12 midnight to 1 a.m.

And I got a message from this person – a photo of the person in revealing clothes with a message: “Hello, po.”

I was scratching my head: What's this? And if you know my background -- I came from a broken family—you know I would not start something like this... I would never go into this... I know the ill-effects of this...



Blessing vs. Curse

But slowly, all the logic and explanation in me was fading away, believe you me. So, I started asking God: “Lord, I want to tap onto You. I want to address this.”

But the enemy was also whispering to me: “Oh, you can explore it, try it...”

So, I replied to the woman: “Is this a *wrong send?*”

The reply came back: “No, *it’s for you...*”

Oh, my God!

So, the enemy’s voice became louder...

And the enemy was trying to tell me already, “Oh, it’s not your fault if you go into this because you’re not the one who initiated it, anyway. It’s okay. Just try to see where it will go.”

That’s why I was tapping onto God’s power: “Lord, I don’t want my marriage to be cursed. You have blessed this.”

So, I asked for His grace.

And I replied to the enemy instantly: “I must end this now.”

I told her, “I’m sorry, I initially replied to your inquiries because I thought you were asking about my financial literacy content on Tiktok. Buy this content you are presenting is inappropriate for me... I love my wife and my daughter deeply.”

End of conversation.

After that, all the enemy’s lies in my head were like shunned away.

I felt like – as in Balaam’s case—there was an angel with withdrawn sword already, saying, “You cannot cross this path, Balaam. Your sorcery will not work on this person because he has tapped onto the power of God.”

What am I trying to say to you today? That one cannot curse what God has blessed. God is in charge. At the end of the day, you will always win because nothing can defeat God— not even the lies of the enemy.

So, just another example:

What if you already failed in the past? You gave in into something like this.

I want also to remind you of the truth: That what one would curse God can bless again and it will remain blessed.

The enemy will always tell you what had been cursed is cursed forever-- and you are doomed. But no. God is in charge. At the end of the day, you will always win because of Him. Amen.

To continue with the story, please welcome Bro. Audee Villaraza!





God turns curses into blessings.

BRO. AUDEE VILLARAZA: I give you Message No. 3 and I hope and pray that this is blessing you.

John Ben already gave you the foundation—about Balak and Balaam. Now, up until this moment, they hadn't met—they've just been texting, they've been emailing. And Balak's been sending messengers to Balaam.

Finally, they now have a chance for an eyeball to eyeball... They are now meeting face-to-face.

So, King Balak, he asks Balaam to do something-- to go up three high places. I'll talk about the third place.

Balaam is on the third high place called Mount Peor (on the left bank of the river Jordan), He sees the expanse of all the Israelites. Remember that he is supposed to declare a curse on the Israelites. But instead of declaring a curse, he says something so amazing. He says:

“This is the message of Balaam son of Beor... ⁵ How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob; how lovely are your homes, O Israel! ⁶ They spread before me like *palm groves*, like *gardens by the riverside*. They are like *tall trees* planted by the Lord, like *cedars beside the waters*. ⁷ Water will flow from their buckets; their offspring have all they need...”

Numbers 24:4-7 NLT

Back to Eden

Wait a minute...

Balaam sees cedar trees, palm groves, water flowing... Isn't this supposed to be the wilderness? It's supposed to be the desert. This is not Boracay. There's a different version of what Balaam sees.

This reminds me of when I was courting my girlfriend—now my wife-- how we have different versions of how she answered me, and made me her boyfriend. My wife's version is that she said "Yes" to me after a month. But my version—and is the correct version: is that it only happened within a week. :)

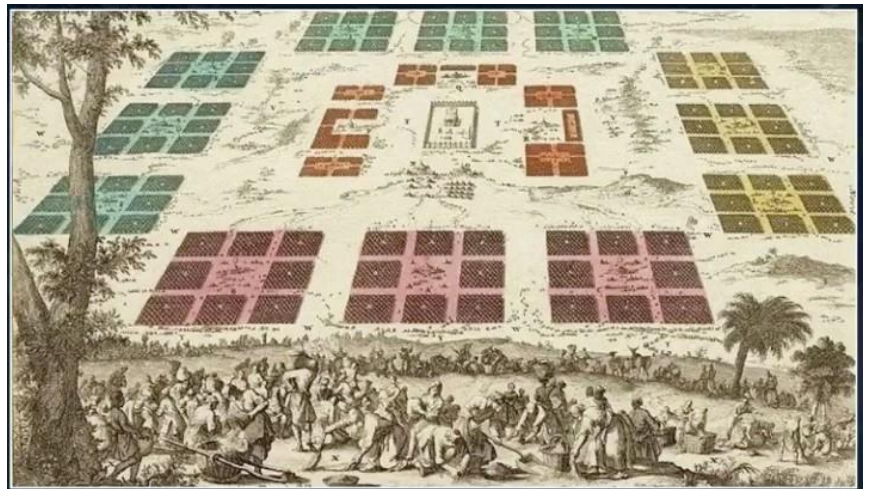
Balaam had a different version of what he was seeing. What's happening here?

There's a spiritual significance. The author wants to point out that although the Israelites were in the wilderness—physically—spiritually, they were in the Garden of God. They were in the Garden of Eden.

Remember what we talked about earlier, in the book of *Numbers*, how God wanted His people to organize in such a way that there was an Outer Zone, there was a Middle Zone, there was an Inner Zone? Remember that?

The Outer Zone represented the 12 Tribes of Jacob—they were protecting the camp of God. Then the Middle Zone comprised of the Levites and the priests—they were the ones taking care of the Tabernacle, picking up all the pieces of furniture and all the fixtures of the Tabernacle. And the Inner Zone, that's the Tabernacle of God.

And we said that when you make God the center of your life, you can experience abundance wherever you are. And this is what Balaam is seeing right now: That in the wilderness, there is an abundance, there is a garden.



Wounded Healer

You know how some people say that poverty can be a curse. They say being poor is a curse. But you know, I've met some people who don't exactly have everything and they struggle with money-- but because they have God in their life, they feel they have enough. How many of you agree with me?

You don't have to have the best of everything— but if you've got Jesus in your life, you feel like you have enough. Right? There's always enough.

There's somebody here who never had the same quality of education as other people had, and yet because God has worked with you and because of the grace of God, you have a good career, you found good work, you have a business. Amen?



All the fathers, raise your hand. Some of the dads here raising your hands, some of you might not have even grown up with a good father. Maybe your father left you when you were young, or maybe your father passed away. Or maybe your dad wasn't really a good dad. But because of the grace of God working in your life, and because you made God the center of your life, you're a good father.

Amen and Hallelujah for that!

There's somebody here who was wounded early in life. Because of an abuse. Because of a maltreatment.

God is the center of your life. God is using you now to help others who are also wounded in that same way, walking with their wounds. Because now you're a wounded healer.

I'm telling you, God can turn curses into blessings.

**God turns curses
into blessings.**



Here's the fourth message—and I love this part: *While you're sleeping, God is actually working.*

What I find so fascinating about this is, for the entire time, when they were journeying in the desert, we've seen the stories of the Israelites—the version of their story—we've seen what God has done through them. We've seen their struggles and their difficulties. We've never seen what the enemies were always doing...

Now, for the first time, ever, the author shifts gears. Now we're seeing the version of the enemy and what they're doing. Balak and Balaam are the enemies of Israel. So now, we're seeing a glimpse of the enemies' side. But, you know, the interesting part is that while Balak and Balaam were organizing against their enemies—would you like to know what the Israelites were doing?

Nothing. They were sleeping in their tents. You know what that means?

That means that while the enemy is busy planning and planning against you, God is also busy working, building to bless you and protect you—without even you knowing it.

I mean, how amazing is God! That while you are sleeping, God is cooking in the kitchen, preparing a blessing for you.

An Accident

You know, something happened last week—and for a parent, it’s the worst thing that can happen to you.

My wife and I went out with a group of friends, some of our Feast Builders here. We had an out-of-town trip—an overnight trip in Rizal. It was a swimming trip. We brought our kids—Ethan and Ellie-- of course, and they were swimming. I’m usually the swimmer – between my wife and me, I am the one who likes to swim, so, I was the one taking care of the kids. Ethan was wearing a floater.

Ellie—she’s only two years old... I took off her floater because she wanted to play by the stairs—and I was watching her. There were two other persons there—nannies watching the other kids.

I took off my attention from Ellie --for a brief moment. I helped one of the kids put on goggles... Took about maybe 5 to 10 seconds. When I turned back to Ellie... she was gone. I thought my wife or somebody else picked her up. I looked around the place, she wasn’t there. I started looking for her. To my horror—it still gives me nightmare imagining it—she was already floating on the pool. I mean not floating, wearing a floater... But submerged in the water-- I don’t know for how long...

I picked her up, and she started crying.

For a parent, that’s the worst thing that can happen... Maybe it was just a few seconds but something worse could have happened... It still gives me nightmares when I think about it...

You know what I am grateful for? God protected her when I couldn’t.

How many times do you leave your home, your family, and you’re so worried, thinking about them, you’re so afraid... But because you believe in God, you entrust them in God’s care—because you know that God loves them more than you ever will.

That’s what I’m talking about.

How many of you are grateful for God’s protection? Clap your hands.

That God can protect you and your family in moments that you can’t. And I’m grateful for God’s protection.



Limitation Is Protection

Once upon a time, in the book of *Genesis*, God said to Adam and Eve you may eat the fruits from the trees in the Garden—*except* from this one tree.

I know some people might think: That one word—*except*-- is a way to describe that God is a killjoy. Because He's denying me fruits from that one tree. Because of that one limitation.

But to tell you the truth, sometimes limitation is really nothing but God's protection. That God doesn't always grant your prayer because it would do more harm to you than good.

So, I'm grateful to God.

But the sad reality is sometimes we get mad at God for not answering all our prayers—not knowing the reason God did not answer your prayers is He knows you might mismanage that at that time.

He knows when you're ready for that job promotion. He knows when you're ready for that spouse. But if God gives you what you want when you're not ready for it, just like that Prodigal Son, you might squander that wealth, you might squander that inheritance.

So, praise God for the times that He knows that we're ready for that blessing. May we clap our hands because God is wise enough to know when to bless you, and when not to give you that blessing—or when to give you another kind of blessing.

But here's what I find so crazy about all these...

While God is busy protecting and blessing His people, the Israelites weren't exactly the most faithful people, right? I mean, they kept disobeying God. Every chance they would get, they would worship other idols. And they would turn to false Gods.

But you know, what is amazing is that this Chapter in the story talks about a character named Balaam. For three to four chapters-- about how he wrestles with his disobedience with God. But I believe that if you dig really deeper, it's not really about a story of a man who disobeys God. But it's about a story of a God who is so faithful to His people that He's so determined to bless and protect His people no matter what.

That's who God is. That even though you're unfaithful, God is still faithful. That even though you run away from God, God is the One who runs after you.

That's what the story is all about.





From Shame to Salvation

So, now, let me shift a bit here. I want to talk about the seven oracles—the prophecies that Balaam speaks about.

Seven oracles. You know, there's a pattern that Bible authors would often use, ancient style. That they would often put the most important part in the middle.

So, now you've got seven oracles. Which is the most important part there? It's the fourth one, right? Because it's in the middle.

Now, remember, the first three oracles talk about events that are going to come very soon. But the fourth oracle talks about something that will happen in the distant, distant future. Something that Balaam will never even see.

He says in Numbers 24:

"I see him, but not here and now. I perceive him, but far in the distant future. A star will rise from Jacob; a scepter will emerge from Israel."

Numbers 24:17 NLT



Balaam could not even see it but he says He is already seeing a *star* and a *scepter*.

Now, know that whenever they use *star* and *scepter*, that's royalty language. They're describing someone of royalty.

What was Balaam seeing? Do you know who he was seeing?

He was seeing Jesus. He was seeing the King of Kings. He hadn't even known who Jesus is yet. But he's seeing Jesus and he's prophesying about this Man who would come. And then Jesus came. When Jesus was crucified up on that Cross, the enemies celebrated. Because they thought they had won. They used that instrument of death—that wooden cross as a tool of shame.

But I want you to absorb this and let this minister to you: What they used and what they thought would be an instrument of shame, in the hands of God, it became the greatest instrument of salvation.

Because God turns curses into blessings. Amen.

Representation of Sin

I love this story... You know what I find amazing and interesting about it is it's so relevant, especially for Filipinos. Why is it interesting for Filipinos? Because the name *Balak*, when you translate into English, means *intention*. Right?

Balak—intention.

Now Balak is somebody who had evil intention against the people of God. So, you could say this perfectly in English translated to: *Si Balak, may masamang balak.*

I was meditating about this the entire week long, and I realized that Balak is a representation of sin. You know how sin will entice you to go to the dark force, to the dark side ... And in this case, Balak was enticing Balaam—using what? Power, greed, money, fame, glory.

But on the other side of the spectrum, Balaam is also a representation of who? Of you and me. Why? In the sense that we also wrestle with sin. And sometimes, we even negotiate with the Lord when it comes to sin: “Lord, is this really wrong? Lord, did you really say that this is wrong?”



**“*balak*” (Tagalog)
means *intention***



Go back all the way to *Genesis*.

That's the Serpent talking:

“Did God really say that you must not eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil? Is this really wrong?”

“... Maybe it could be right because my friend said it was right...”

“Maybe it's okay that I should text another woman at the end of every night because I'm not doing anything wrong...”

“Maybe it's okay if I put a little something in my pocket because other people are doing it...”

Negotiations

Now, we're negotiating with sin. I'll tell you something. And this is something that caught my eye: Even Balaam, he consults God – not once but twice.

He consults God even though he was a pagan. Let's go back a bit. Numbers 22:

... God told Balaam, "Do not go with them. You are not to curse these people, for they have been blessed!"

¹³ The next morning Balaam got up and told Balak's officials, "Go on home! *The Lord will not let me go with you.*"

Numbers 22:12-13 NLT



Balaam blamed the Lord why he could not go with Balak's messengers.

But you know, in his heart, Balaam wanted to entertain that thought. He wanted to negotiate with the Lord.

Let's continue. Verse 14 says:

¹⁴ So the Moabite officials returned to King Balak and reported, "Balaam refused to come with us." ¹⁵ Then Balak tried again. This time he sent a larger number of even more distinguished officials than those he had sent the first time. ¹⁶ They went to Balaam and delivered this message to him:

Numbers 22:14-16 NLT

Just like sin keeps on trying with you.

"This is what Balak son of Zippor says: Please don't let anything stop you from coming to help me. ¹⁷ I will pay you very well and do whatever you tell me. Just come and curse these people for me!"

¹⁸ But Balaam responded to Balak's messengers, "Even if Balak were to give me his palace filled with silver and gold, I would be powerless to do anything against the will of the Lord my God. ¹⁹ *But stay here one more night, and I will see if the Lord has anything else to say to me.*"

Numbers 22:17-19 NLT

Balak entices Balaam with more blessings...

You know how we are when we are kids? When daddy or mommy says *No*?

We'll say, "Okay, I'll try tomorrow. Maybe daddy and mommy will change their mind."

And we keep doing it. We try to negotiate when it comes to the thing that we really want. That's what's happening here.



Above Every Curse

I told you about the time Balak and Balaam went to the third place—to view the Israelites' camp and for Balaam to curse them.

But I did not tell you about the first two times.

The first time Balaam goes up to a high place, he's supposed to curse the people. But he doesn't. Instead of cursing, what happens is that he starts declaring a blessing for the people of God.

So, what did Balak do?

Balak said, "Okay, let's go to another place."

So, they go to the second place. And in the second place, Balaam tries the same thing. He tries to curse the people of God. He sees the Israelites and he wants to curse the people of God—because that's money in his pocket. Instead, a curse doesn't even leave his mouth. It can't even leave his throat. He starts declaring a blessing again.

So, Balak says, "Okay then, let's go to another place..."

The third place. You know the rest of the story—it's history by now. Balaam sees cedar trees and palm groves... What's happening here is that Balak thinks that if he can move Balaam to a different place, to the second place. Or maybe he can move Balaam to the third place... Then it might change his perspective over the people of God and thereby change also the prophecy.

But you see, one thing he did not understand is that you cannot change God's promise. Because God's promise is not bound by a place.

You can be in a difficult situation right now, in a difficult place, and that will not change God's promise over your life, I'm telling you.

My wife asked me this question last week. She said, "Do you believe in curses? Do you believe in witchcraft? In Tagalog, naniniwala ka ba sa mangkukulam?"

We were talking about a topic—not even about the Talk. And I remember that ministered to me.

I didn't really know the answer but here's what I said, "I don't think that it matters whether or not I believe in curses or witchcraft or sorcery. Because I think that what matters the most is that I believe that God's power is above them all. That God's power is above every curse. That God is sovereign in this world.

That's what I believe in.



From Defeat to Victory

Because, you see, the enemy will try to convince you and say words over your life-- say you're condemned, you're not worthy, you're unloved.

But God's voice will say differently. God's voice will be the one that says you are fearfully and wonderfully made. You are made in the image and likeness of God. There is nothing that can separate you from the love of God. Neither height, nor death, nor angels, nor demons, nor principalities, nor powers that be. Nothing can ever separate you from the love of God.

So, what voice are you listening to?

There's a word that was spoken over your life—maybe in the past—that hurt you. But it's not from the Lord. Because no one can curse what God has already blessed. Amen.

Let me say it this way: No one can change how God sees you. No one can change how God loves you. And though people may say, “Hey, yeah, you're cursed, you've got bad luck...” No.

When it comes to God, He sees you as a child. When the enemy says that you are unloved, God says, “I love you.”

That's God's Word for somebody here today. Whatever curse placed over your life, I believe that God's power is over that. He is above it all. He is Lord Jesus Christ and He is sovereign over everything. So, trust Jesus. Because when Jesus says something, it shall come to pass. The Bible says that when God makes a promise, it will never come back to Him empty handed. God's promise will always be fulfilled because His Word is unfailing. His Word is unwavering. His Word is unchanging.

We believe in You Jesus, and You are here. Whatever condemnation that we carry in our life, Father Jesus, here we are laying this condemnation down at the foot of Your Cross, declaring in faith that You can turn it around and use it for Your glory. Because that's who You are. You can shift our heart from defeat to victory.

Father, we declare that Your Word is final. Our failure is not final. But Your word is final. Your Word stands eternal. And in this place, that's what we declare. In this place that's what we sing. In this place that's what we proclaim: That we believe in Your Word. We believe in Your promise. We believe that You will reveal this in the proper time.

Thank You, Jesus. We worship You today!



MERCY MINISTRIES

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

—Isaiah 41:10

PAG-ASA NG PAMILYA FOUNDATION PART 3

Scholarship Granted Before I Was Born

By RICA MAE S. NEMIAGA

YES, I can very well say I received the Pag-asa ng Pamilya scholarship way even before I was born. How's that?

Read on...

I needed a scholarship grant because my parents hardly earned enough to provide for our family-- my father Ricky as delivery driver, and my mother Gemma as vendor of *ginamis*, a traditional Pinoy rice crisp.

There are two of us children—my brother Russel, now 10 years old, and I, now 18. Growing up, we saw our parents struggling to sustain our family. We often had to choose between paying bills and putting food on the table.



*Here we are, from left:
my father Ricky; mother
Gemma; brother Russel;
yours truly.*

I joined Pag-Asa in June 2020. The scholarship has lifted the financial burden off my family shoulders. The financial support has assured I'd have a college education which is so important for me to get a good job, and eventually earn money to support my family, for us to have a better life.

Journey Toward Hope

It is said *hope springs eternal*. I am one who can affirm this is so true.

Basic education was possible for me, thanks to public schools—I went to Bangad Elementary School and Janosa National High School.

At right, here I am, reporting on a project in Grade School.

College education was, at first, just a dream. But I believe God has well thought out how that dream would come true.

We live in Bangad, Binangonan, Rizal. And one of our neighbors happens to be the Gondraneos family—family of Cherielyn Gondraneos Cenidoza, accounting staff at Pag-asa ng Pamilya.

One day, I overheard my mother talking with Lita Gondraneos, mother of Cherielyn, about a scholarship program. Lita suggested I consult with Ma'am Rowena Cequeña (*right*) longtime finance director of the Light of Jesus Family and serving as member of the Pag-asa Board of Trustees. Plus, of course, I got to talk with Cherielyn for her valuable support.

Sis. Weng and Sis. Cherie listened patiently as I explained my situation and they kindly guided me through the scholarship application process step-by-step. I am eternally grateful to Ma'am Weng and sisters Lita and Cherie for introducing me to Pag-Asa and for their unwavering support.

Aside from the financial assistance, Pag-Asa has helped me in dealing with life-- through its spiritual formation program.

Regular talks about God's Word gradually deepened my faith. The speakers discussed not only spiritual nourishment but also shared their knowledge and experiences on practical living.

We had online meetings, enabling me to connect with other Pag-asa scholars from different parts of the country. And this has been a great opportunity to learn from their experiences too.





Aside from leading me to Pag-asa, my mother had earlier introduced me to The Feast.

Above, our founder, Bro. Bo Sanchez, preaching.

I joined The Feast when I was in 7th Grade. Today, we have a Feast Light in the Immaculate Conception Chapel, in our hometown in Bangad. And I am blessed to be a choir member, a lector and commentator, and an animator.

Pain and hardship are part of life, and no one is spared from them. But the Bible verse, Isaiah 41:10, reminds me that nothing is too big or too impossible for God to handle:

10Do not fear: I am with you; do not be anxious:

I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

God has well demonstrated He stands by His Word by making me a Pag-asa scholar.

I was born on June 22, 2004. This issue of *The Feast Family* comes out on Sunday, June 25, 2023. I believe this is not mere coincidence. I believe long before I was born, God has planned that I would be a Pag-asa scholar, and I would share about it, to give hope to someone out there still just dreaming, just hoping to have a good education, to have a better life-- like I have now.

So, I do not fear any obstacle or challenge in life because I know that there is a God who will be with me in the process of healing or overcoming the hardships.

That's my steadfast hope, my pag-asa.



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

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

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

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

FOR EXISTING DONORS:

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

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

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is a shelter for minor girls particularly victims of sexual abuse.



Grace To Be Born

is a halfway home for pregnant women in crisis.



He Cares Mission

provides shelter and pastoral care for street children.



Pag-asa ng Pamilya Foundation

grants scholarships to indigent students.



Jesus Christ Cares for Cancer

provides financial assistance and pastoral care for indigent cancer patients.



The Light of Jesus Pastoral Care Center

ministers to those who are emotionally and spiritually wounded.



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



The Light of Jesus Disaster Recovery

Ministry provides evacuation assistance, relief goods, financial aid, and other needs of calamity victims.

The Light of Jesus Prison Ministry

brings Jesus to the Correctional Institution for Women to give them hope for a new life of dignity.



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



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FAMILY ONLINE NEWSMAGAZINE

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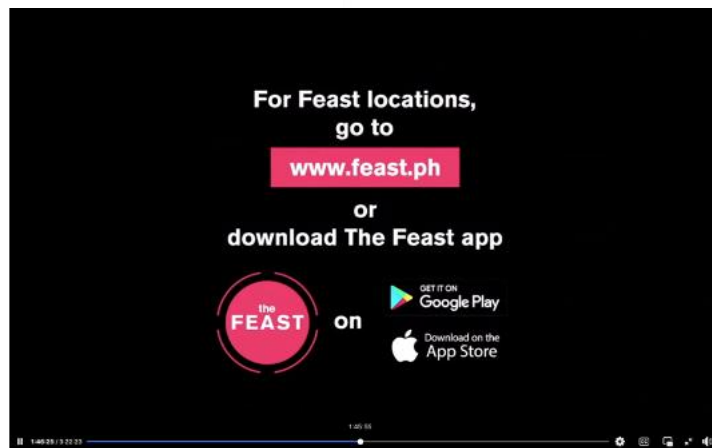
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Go and make disciples of all men.
— Matthew 28:19

