



NEWSLETTER
July 2, 2023



WITH everything that has happened because of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID) Pandemic, we all got a drastic wake-up call on the temporality of life and the reality of death. And we all realized one way or another, to a certain degree, personally, what really matters most to you.

What Matters Most

Many of us lost our loved ones, lost our jobs, lost opportunities, closed businesses, even ended relationships, got hooked into social media and

online live streaming, suffered from depression, gave in to worries, fears, and anxieties.

That's the intro of our new and special Feast talk series, penned by Bro. Tony Valenzuela (*right*) and shared with us by Bro. Audee Villaraza, our co-preachers. We start with this one big message: *God is waiting for your move.*



As planned, in this special mini-series, we will journey together and talk about five aspects of our life that have been hit hard since the Pandemic. And because of the impact, we now see how very important they are to us. Namely, 5 F's: Faith, Family, Fitness, Finance, and Friendships.

Don't miss God's blessings in this series.

May your dreams come true,

Bo Sanchez

**WELCOME to our new
and special talk series
What Matters Most—
Today, Talk 1: *Faith***

Watching Three Volcanoes

AS we work on this issue of *The Feast Family*, half of our attention is focused on three volcanoes: nearest to Manila is Taal in Batangas; Kanlaon, on the island of Negros; and Mayon in Albay.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) reports: Kanlaon: Alert Level 1-- at least three volcanic earthquakes as of June 9, 2023; Taal: Alert Level 1-- phreatic eruptions, meaning bursts driven by steam emissions as of June 29, 2023; Mayon Volcano: Alert Level 3-- hazardous eruption may be possible within weeks or even days.

So, are we afraid? Naturally, we are. Even among us living far from these volcanoes, we fear -- for those directly affected, for the impact of the calamities on our daily existence.

In his homily at last Sunday's Feast, Fr. Albert Garong spoke about fear because last Sunday's Gospel centered on our Lord Jesus telling His disciples three times to have no fear, to be not afraid. Why? Fr. Garong gave three reasons, *page 3*.

It's natural to be afraid. But our fears may be allayed if we keep in mind *What Matters Most*. That's the Feast Talk today as introduced by Bro. Bo Sanchez, *page 1*.

And what matters most? We will know if we have the grace to *Discern God's Heart*. That's last Sunday's Feast Talk well discussed by Bro. Bo and Bro. Ryan Capitulo, *pages 13-28*.



Dr. Michele Alignay has heard more than enough about fears as she serves as Director of our Light of Jesus Pastoral Care for the broken, our Mercy Ministry feature this month as it marks its 30th Founding Anniversary this July, *page 29*.

So, do you fear the impact of volcanoes erupting, and life's trials? Our Lord Jesus says, "Do not be afraid."



All for God's Glory,

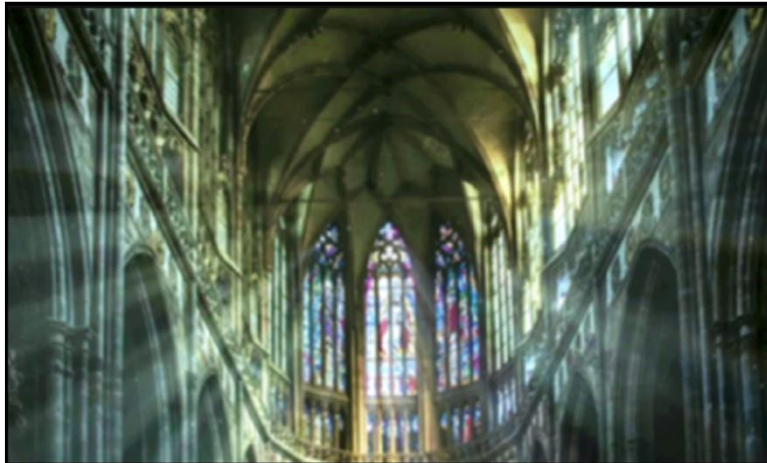
Randy Borromeo
Media Ministry
Executive Director





FLASHBACK! **JUNE 25, 2023**

Holy Mass



TWELFTH SYNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Homily

FR. ALBERT GARONG

on the Gospel: Matthew 10:26-33

GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE! Blessed Sunday to all of you.

Our Gospel today speaks of the reality of an experience that I am sure all of us can relate to—that is, about fear.

Is there someone here who has not felt fear? Raise your hand. No one raised hand. Because all of us have experienced fear. Actually, perhaps some of you came here because you have some fear that you want to bring before the Lord.

You have these concerns, anxieties, worries that are really weighing your heart down that you want to bring before the Lord in prayer. And if that is the case, today's Gospel is for you. Because not just once, not just twice, but three times, Jesus tells the apostles to have no fear, to not be afraid.

If those are three times, there must be three reasons about fear. The Lord gives us three different reasons we should have no fear.

God Gave Us Truth

There are so many lies in the world today.
So many fake news, so many scams.

Recently, the Facebook account of one of my friends was hacked. I was surprised when one day, she sent me a message borrowing money from me.

I was like, “Is this message for me? Should I ask for a second collection at Mass for her?”

It’s good that I know my friend very well.
I know that she did not send that message.

I remember this especially because the sender even posted a video but she didn’t look like my friend!

So much untruth, rampant in the world. So many lies. And the senders are so bold, even as they’re sending lies.

For us, we are standing on solid ground—Jesus Christ. You are standing on the eternal, unchanging truth—the Gospel. Does that inspire you to be brave? Does that inspire you to be courageous? To speak out?

Many times, lies prevail and are spread simply because the people who hold the truth do not want to talk.

They would say, “That’s not my problem.” “I’m not an expert, I don’t want to talk about that.” “I don’t want to say this. Let somebody else do it. Let the priest, Father, explain the Gospel.

But was Father there when you heard your friend talk something wrong about Jesus? Was the Church there? Was the Bishop there when you heard the children asking about God?

Or, do you simply say, “Basta anak, ganun yun.—Child, that’s just it.”



Reading I: Jeremiah 20:10-13

¹⁰ Jeremiah said: “I hear the whisperings of many: ‘Terror on every side! Denounce! let us denounce him!’ All those who were my friends are on the watch for any misstep of mine. ‘Perhaps he will be trapped; then we can prevail, and take our vengeance on him.’¹¹ But the LORD is with me, like a mighty champion: my persecutors will stumble, they will not triumph. In their failure they will be put to utter shame, to lasting, unforgettable confusion.¹² O LORD of hosts, you who test the just, who probe mind and heart, let me witness the vengeance you take on them, for to you I have entrusted my cause.¹³ Sing to the LORD, praise the LORD, for he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!”

Learn Directly from Jesus

Those millions of moments when we could've shared the truth about faith yet we miss the opportunity because we think somebody else can do it. But you're the one there. Father is not at home to teach your children. Father is not there on the streets, in the bus, in the MRT. Or we might see each other there. :)

But most often, *no*.

So, the responsibility falls on you.

The Christian who is actually there, to share the truth of our faith in one's own way, is so important because there is a beautiful detail in our Gospel that I want to emphasize.

Jesus said to His apostles, "What is shared to you in darkness you must bring to the light...What is whispered to you, you must shout at the rooftops."

What's that? Why such details?

Historically speaking, the Gospel we just heard, that's very small fraction of all the what Jesus said to His apostles. They were together for three years—they talked about many issues. Jesus taught them many lessons. But we get only four relatively short books about what He said.

There's an important meaning that I don't want to miss because when we talk about what the Father tells you in secret, what the Father whispers to you, it refers to your private moments of prayer.

When we talk about the truth of the faith, yes, it's important that you listen to our teachers, to the Pope, to the bishops, to the priests, to the teachers, to the catechists. We listen to our preachers like Bro. Bo Sanchez and all the Feast builders because they have prepared for the message, they have studied about it. Very good.

But that does not replace the important duty of all Christians—to learn directly from Jesus, our Master. When was the last time you have opened your Bible and just asked the Lord to explain to you, asking Him, what's the message is all about.

When was the last time you said, "Babasahin ko ito-- I will read this. I will pray about it with the Lord. I will ask the Holy Spirit to lead me into understanding this." Or, we go directly to *Didache* or *Sabbath* because these are guides explaining Bible messages? That's good. No problem.

But please, in the privacy of your own times with the Lord, let Him be your teacher. Learn from Him the truth because He wants to teach you—the truth.



God Gave Us Power

Sometimes, truth alone is not enough. We know when we see on the television news people who dare to speak the truth—but soon, they are persecuted for speaking out. We know people who were whistle blowers, who wanted to change something by telling the truth but because their enemies are more powerful, they are jailed, they are killed.

In your own situations, I'm sure there are many situations that you know something is true but you feel powerless to share them: "My boss might get mad at me... My wife might get angry if I say she's getting fat... Ouch."

Sometimes, the truth seems insufficient-- that's why the Lord Jesus Christ gives us a second force: power.

He says, "*Fear no one.*"

Because who has the power? Are they, our bashers?

As Christians, we know that only One holds real power here—our Lord. The Lord is ultimate power and He has already told us that He wins. In the end, God wins. So, why will you side with the losers?

God prevails. He has all the power. So, don't be afraid of people who can hurt you only temporarily, who can persecute you in maybe just one season of your life. Because in the end, we all have to face the Lord. The Lord has the power.



Reading II: Romans 5:12-15

¹² Brothers and sisters: Through one-man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned¹³ for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world, though sin is not accounted when there is no law.

¹⁴ But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin after the pattern of the trespass of Adam, who is the type of the one who was to come.¹⁵ But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one-man Jesus Christ overflow for the many.

God Gives Us Love

One more thing: truth and power are good. But Jesus wants us to know those are not only what we need.

Not only is God truth, not only is God power. God is love.

There are forces in the world—government leaders, who are truthful and powerful but do not really have love.

Not God. In God we find all three.

As Jesus Christ said, “These birds who seem to have no worth, I know everything that is going on with them. You people, I can tell the number of hair in your head.”

God can tell you everything about your life-- not just because He knows. But because He cares, because He loves you.

That is why we should have no fear. That is the ultimate reason we should not be afraid. It’s not just because God is true, not just because God is powerful, but because God loves you infinitely. And that can never ever change.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, God gave us power. God gave us truth. And most important, God gives us love. So, have no fear. Share the Gospel to the world. Stand on it. Live by it. Amen.



Responsorial Psalm

Lord, in Your great love, answer me



DR. RYAN CAPITULO:

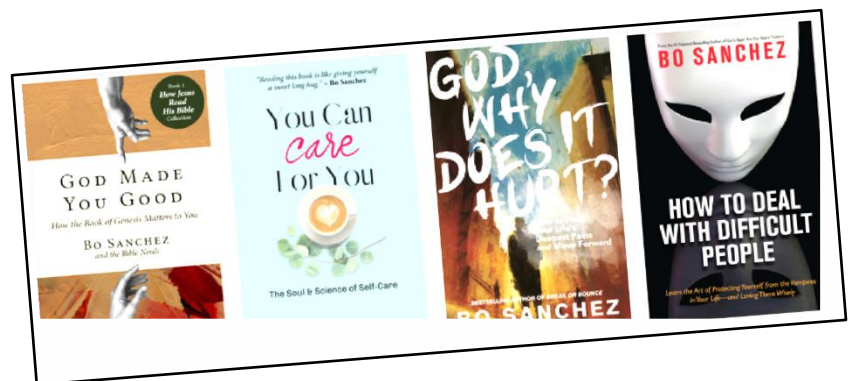
GOOD MORNING, Feast Bay Area family!

Give the Lord a big hand!

Before anything else, the Feast books have been invited to participate in the Big Bad Wolf Book Sale at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) Forum Tent!

The good has come to the big bad wolf, right? Please do visit the book sale at the PICC Forum Tent. It will run until July 3. It opens at 10:00 in the morning and closes at 1:00 in the morning. Our authors will be there to give mini talks, to sign your books.

So, please visit them-- *kapitbahay lang*, at PICC Forum, after The Feast.

Love Offering

I would like to thank all of you for your generous giving to The Feast.

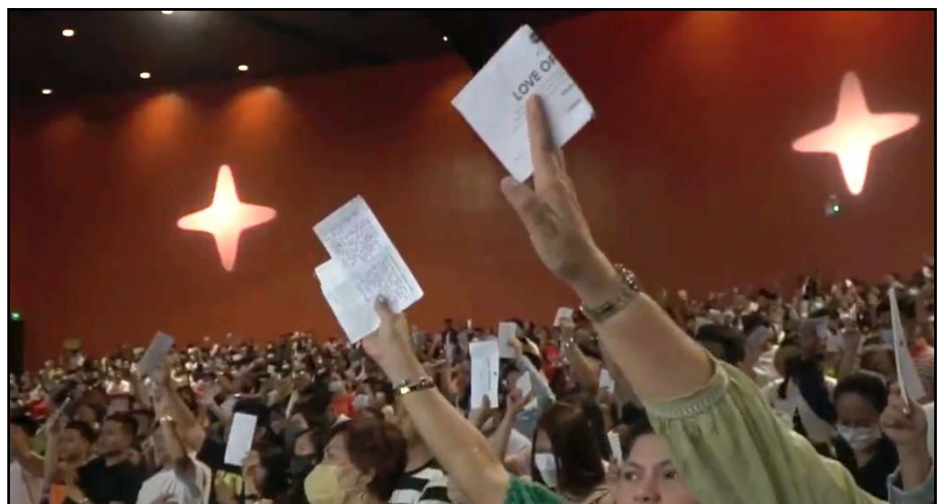
Let me tell you something about one of our Mercy Ministries called He Cares Mission, a street children caring center. This center caters to so many street kids with their various programs.


A couple of years ago, I participated in their Saturday program where we gathered almost 400 street children, mostly in Quezon City. We gave them a bath, we clipped their nails, we cleaned their ears, we gave them new clothes, we conducted a children's party for them, and we talked to them about Jesus.

So, my dear brothers and sisters, every time you give to The Feast Bay Area, I'd like you to remember this: Your Offering is helping these street kids become closer to God. Give yourselves a big hand!

Please lift up your Offering to God and say this after me, *"Heavenly Father, I give you my best offering! Use my offering to inspire more people to be generous. Bless me more, so I can give more.*

In Jesus' Name. Amen."






WAYS TO GIVE

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For GCash, Debit & Credit Card Giving visit:  **GCash**
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Worship!

EXHORTATION

SIS. JUSTIN ZURIELLE MARASIGAN:

Good morning, Feast! Are you ready to worship God today?

If you're ready, we're going to invite you to stand. We're going to lift all our voices and let's bring Him some moves, okay?



BRO. JHONN JAVIER:

Come on, Feast! Give praise to our Lord! Come on, don't hold back! Give Him all the glory! Give Him the praise! You can shout! You can lift your voice! Come on, Feast! Give praise to our God!

Thank You, Jesus! We're so thankful God for your Presence here. We believe that You are here, God.

And so, we thank You! We praise You! We honor You God!

Thank You, Jesus for Your presence for You are the God who never fails. You are the God who loves us.

If you are online, if you are here, let us worship God together and declare that He is our refuge, He is our strength. He is the breaker of chains. He is the God who loves us.



DR. RYAN CAPITULO: Lord, You have never failed us yet even in our rock-bottom moments. Lord, You have never failed us yet even if we turn our back on You so many times. Lord, You have never failed us yet, especially when we were praying for healing for ourselves and the people we love. Lord, You have never failed us yet especially when we were asking for help on how to achieve our dreams. So, Lord, whatever You say, we will believe it. Lord, whatever You command us to do, we will do it. Because we are Yours. We are Yours, Jesus Christ!





Was nothing without You
You filled me up with joy

Had nothing without You
My cup now overflows

Once broken without You
But now you made me whole

You called me as Your own
In awe of what You've shown

Now with You, I'm ready
To speak of all You've done

Now through me, come use m
To see your kingdom come

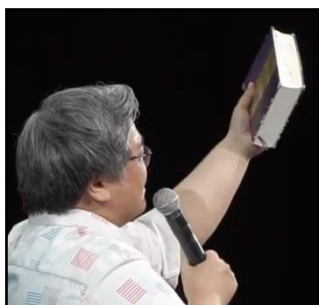
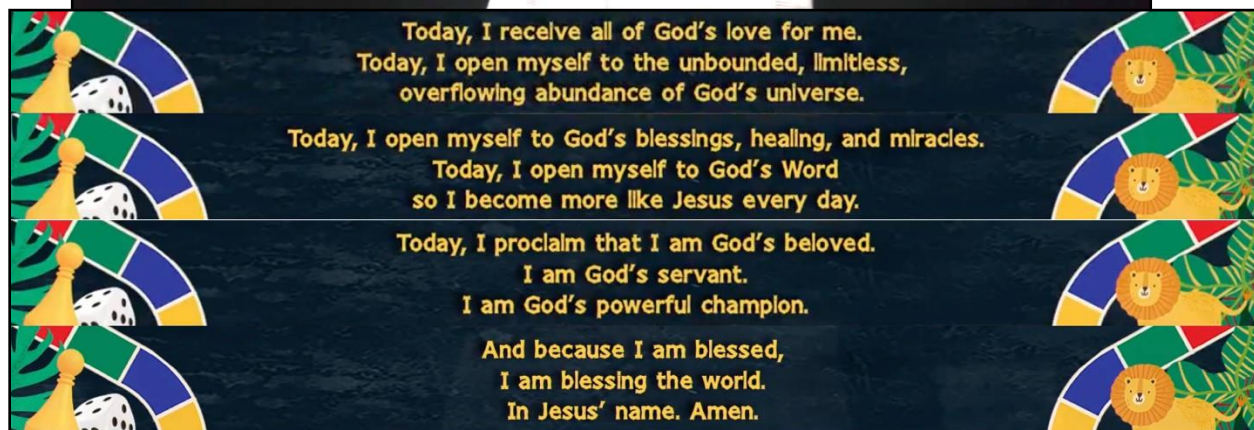
So here now I am singing
I won't stay silent

All praise that's due to You
All glory, I give to You

WON'T STAY SILENT
FEAST BAY AREA WORSHIP

FEAST WORSHIP
WORDS & MUSIC BY: VANYA FATIMA CASTOR, HANNAH DELA ROSA, MICHEAL FRANCIS VIÑAS AND JHONN ROBERT JAVIER
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NOVENA TO GOD'S LOVE **DECLARATION OF ABUNDANCE**



Let us glorify
His Word
by singing



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

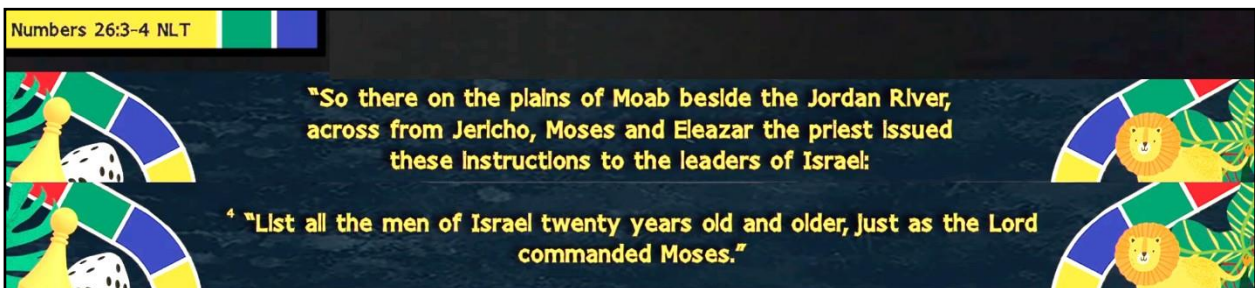
Talk



TODAY, we are ending our beautiful Talk series called *Wilderness: Lessons and Inspiration from the Book of Numbers*.

For Talk 8 today, we will be preaching the message *Discern God's Heart*. Yes, discern God's heart.

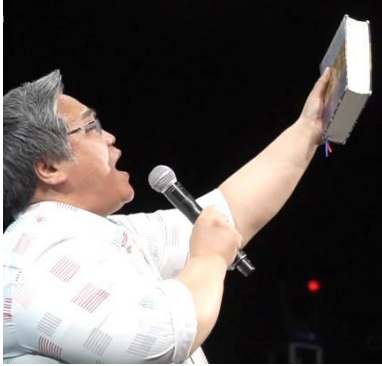
And we shall read from Numbers 26:3-4:



At the very start of our Talk series, we learned that this book is called *Numbers* because God asked Moses to number the Israelites and conduct a census.

Now, this Bible passage we just read is about the second census that they conducted. Because many died already and they were preparing to enter the Promised Land. And they were preparing to divide the land among all the tribes of Israel.

Question: Do you want to receive blessings from God? Yes! Then be counted. Be part of the census of Jesus followers and receive your blessings from God.



Let us glorify His Word
once more:

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

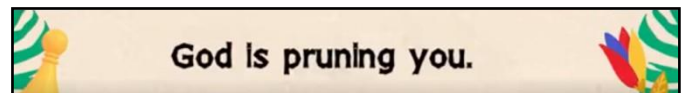
We glorify You Lord God for Your Word. Hallelujah!

Yes, as I said a while ago, the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness—oh, it was very dangerous, very difficult. And so many died. And yet, after doing a second census, they counted more than 600,000 Israelites who are about to enter the Promised Land.

The book of *Numbers* is actually teaching us that we should regularly count. We should regularly make census of all of our blessings.

Because the problem with many of us is this: We focus too much on the negative. We fail to count our blessings. We fail to make a census of our blessings because we focus too much on the negative incidents happening in our life—sickness, death, failures, disappointments... And when we do that, we fail to see the blessings.

Yes, of course, we will experience trials and difficulties. Because with our trials, God is pruning us. Pruning is difficult. Pruning is hard. Pruning is stressful. But pruning is essential. So that we will bear more fruits. So that we will be stronger. So that our faith in the Lord will be greater and stronger.



So, when you are diagnosed with diabetes, for example, God is pruning you. Perhaps, God wants you to live a more healthy and more active lifestyle.

When you get buried in debt because you are a shopping addict, perhaps God is pruning you so that you will be a steward of your financial blessing.

If you got separated from your spouse, for example, God is pruning you. Perhaps, He wants you to, you know, look at yourself again and change what needs to be changed.



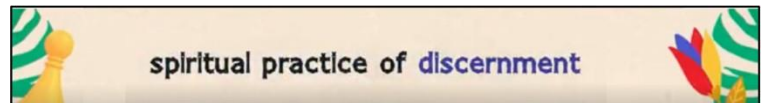
Count Your Blessings

So, my dear Brothers and Sisters, make this your practice: Count your blessings. Focus on the positive in your life. Do not focus too much on the negative and you will realize you have so many blessings that you have taken for granted.

In our study of the book of *Numbers*, we learned from Chapters 1 to 25 that God was actually teaching the Israelites how to live, and how to survive in that difficult, dangerous wilderness.

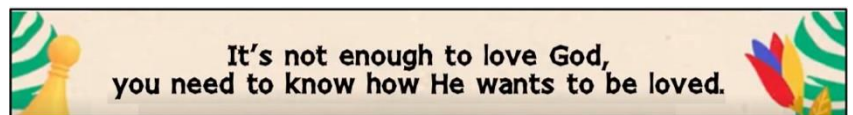
As we end our study, we will learn that from Chapter 26 up to the very end the book of *Numbers* that God is actually teaching the Israelites how to live in the Promised Land. So, God was giving so many laws to the Israelites to guide them on how to live in the Promised Land.

So, this part of the book of *Numbers* is actually teaching us the spiritual practice of discernment.



Question: Who wants to be a disciple of Jesus? Raise your hand. Now I know all of us, we want to be followers of Jesus.

But I'm telling you, Jesus followers, it's not enough to love God. You need to know how He Wants to be loved.



We are Jesus followers. So, we must practice spiritual discernment – so that we will know how best to love, how best to obey, how best to worship our God.

Nineteen years ago, I said *Yes* to God. I decided that I want to be a disciple of Jesus. I decided that I want to be a Jesus follower. And in my faith journey, God led me to the **Three Major Discernments in My Life**.

Discernment No. 1: God wanted me to leave my homosexual lifestyle behind. And I did that. I said *Yes* to God. And by His grace alone, I've been living a life of chastity and sexual purity. It's grace alone.

And now, I have also discerned that God wants me to proclaim the beauty, the complementarity of sex and gender and to defend all of us from the colonization of gender ideology.

That's what I am doing now.

Discernment No. 2 for my life:
God wants me to live out my faith in all aspects of my life—even in my profession. I’m an OB-GYN-- Obstetrics-Gynecology—doctor.

So, it was a difficult process for me. But I’ve decided that I won’t prescribe artificial contraception.

I won’t do ligation. I won’t do artificial insemination, and even in-vitro fertilization. Because they contradict the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Yes, I lose patients because of my decision. Yes, I lose income because of my decision. But it’s okay.

And I have also discerned that God wants me to continue fighting against the legalization of abortion here in the Philippines.

Discernment No. 3: The third major discernment for my life is God wants me to have a healthy body and a healthy lifestyle.

Well...Can you please shout: *Anyare? What happened?*

That’s the problem...Well, I’m still a work in progress, right?

God is not yet done with me. So, pray for me so that I’ll have a healthy body.

My dear Friends, again, I ask you this question:

Do you want to be a Jesus follower?

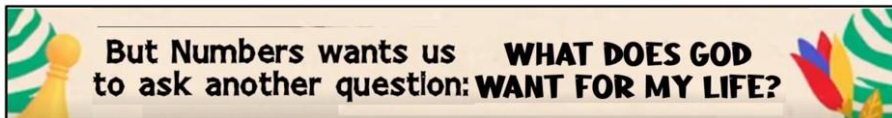
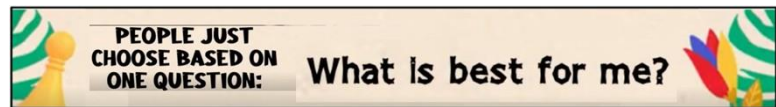
You know what to do: *Discern God’s Heart.*

That’s what you have to do. Discern God’s Heart. But for you to be able to do that, please stop asking this question: *What is best for me?*

Stop doing that. Because you won’t discern God’s

Heart if you keep on asking that question *What is best for me?*

Instead, you should ask this question:



If you *really* want to discern God’s Heart, you have to spend the rest of your life answering that question.

New Situations, New Laws

The last part of the book of *Numbers* also tells us about the story of Zelophehad—an Israelite who had no sons.

He had only daughters. And they had a problem because the law of the Israelites back then, the daughters may not inherit anything from the father. Only the sons may.

So, when Zelophehad died, his daughters went to Moses and said this:



Numbers 27:3-4 ESV

"Our father died in the wilderness.... And he had no sons. Why should the name of our father be taken away from his clan because he had no son? Give to us a possession among our father's brothers."

They had no law back then regarding this particular issue. And God gave them all the laws they needed, right? But when God heard the cry of the daughters of Zelophehad, this is what He told Moses:

Numbers 27:7-11 ESV

"The daughters of Zelophehad are right. You shall give them possession of an inheritance among their father's brothers and transfer the inheritance of their father to them."

The Lord adjusted. The Lord gave them a new law because of that new situation. This is what the book of *Numbers* is teaching us: New situations require much more than knowing God's laws.



What Is in God's Heart?

I met a woman who was abandoned by her husband 20 years ago. And the husband had another family. So, this woman became a single mother and raised her four children all by herself.

And now, 20 years after, the husband is sick and he is reconciling with his wife. He wants to move back into their house -- to spend the rest of his days there.

What should the wife do? This woman is still discerning God's Heart regarding this matter.

I also met a father who was offered a job in Taiwan with a salary of P50,000.00 a month—and he is earning P35,000.00 here in the Philippines. So, he is discerning: “Is it worth it to go to Taiwan for additional P15,000.00—but I will leave my family behind... And my kids are still very young...”

He is still discerning God's plan for his life.

I have a friend—a public servant, a government employee-- who is being offered a bribe... This company is trying to bribe him because the company wants to win in a bidding of government contracts.

And my friend is having some financial difficulties right now. So, he's really very tempted to accept the bribe. I hope he doesn't accept it. But he's very tempted to accept the bribe. He is discerning... We know what God's Heart regarding this. But he is discerning and praying he won't give in to the temptation.

What am I saying?

Every single day we are faced with so many issues, so many concerns, so many decisions to make. And we have to discern God's Heart each and every time.

We need to ask our self always: What is God's plan for my life?



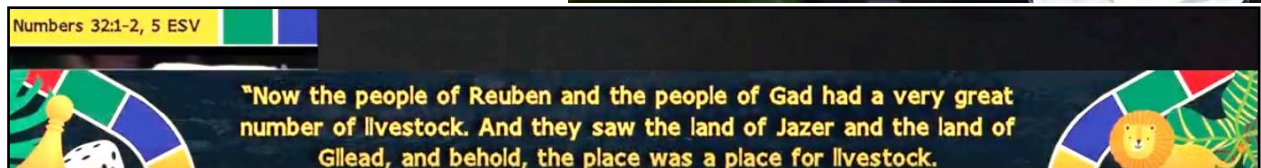
To help us even more, please all welcome Bro. Bo Sanchez!

What's Good?

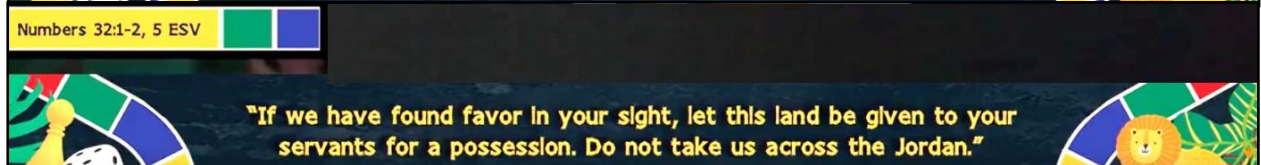
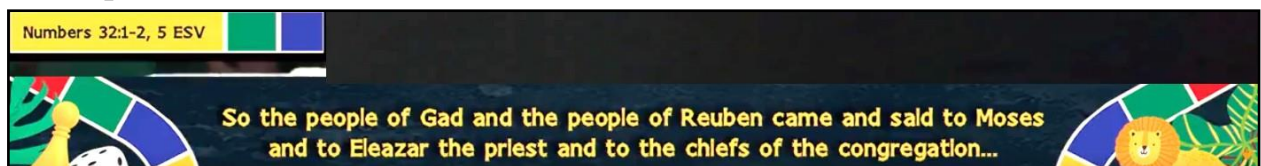
BO SANCHEZ: We now reach this point where there were two tribes – there were 12 tribes of Israel—and there were two tribes that had a request. But it's not like a request—it's more of a demand.

We talk about these two tribes – the tribe of Reuben and the tribe of Gad.

Let's read Numbers 32: 1-2:



So, they had a lot of livestock, they saw this piece of land, and they said, “Oh, perfect for us.”



So, what's happening here?

God is giving the Promised Land to all the 12 tribes. There were two tribes who said, “We do not want the Promised Land. We want the land *beside* the Promised Land.”

So, that was the situation.

Now, here is the discerning question: Are they doing right? Are they doing the Will of God by doing that?

When you read the Bible, you'll note there seems to be no answer. Why?

This is a hermeneutic lesson I'm giving to you. Hermeneutics interpretation—how to interpret.



What's Right?

Biblical authors usually—sometimes they do not do this—but *usually*, they do not give a commentary on the morals, on the ethics of the behavior of the characters in the story. The authors will just tell you what the characters are doing.

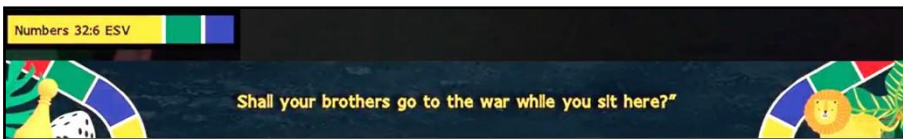
The Reubenites and the Gadites, they asked Moses, “If this is okay with you, may me just stay here in this land. This is perfect for us. We’ve got livestock—sheep and oxen, stuff. This will be perfect for us. It’s not *in* the Promised Land—it’s just *beside* it.

Katabi lang naman, e. Pwede ba dito na kami?

Question: Are they doing okay? And again, the Biblical author is silent—does not tell you whether they’re doing good or right...

So, we go on:

Moses, he asked this question in Verse 6:

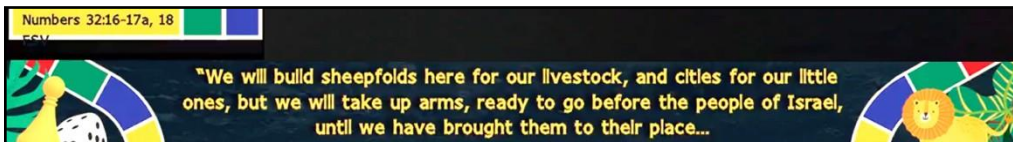


So, that was the main concern of Moses:

“You’re going to stay here—in this land, outside

the Promised Land-- How about the 10 tribes? They are going to be fighting, trying to clear the Promised Land, they are going into battle with all the tribes there, while you’re sitting pretty there...”

I want you to listen to this answer. Numbers 32: 16-18 says:



Are they good or are they good? Are they okay? They seem to be good.

They’re saying, “Op, op. op, Moses, if that’s your concern, we’re going to live here beside the Promised Land, we’re going to build sheepfolds, we’re going to build cities for our little ones... But we’re going to stand beside all the other 10 tribes and clear the Land, and battle with their enemies, and when everybody is settled in the Promised Land, that’s when we will return to *our* land—outside, just beside the Promised Land.”

So, discerning question: Are they okay, or are they *not* okay?

Hmmm, very *nuance*. It’s...oh, I don’t know... we don’t know...

The Biblical author keeps us in suspense... Or, does he?



The Biblical Design Pattern

The Biblical author would give hints into what he's thinking. Because if you really want to know whether the Reubenites and Gadites did right or wrong, whether they did the Will of God or not, you have to go through the Biblical storyline. You keep on reading. We're in the book of *Numbers*. Read the book of *Deuteronomy*, and then keep on reading all throughout the Old Testament, and then you will see: Aha! Then you know...

You see, decisions have consequences. Every decision that you make in your life will have consequences. If you make bad decisions, you will get bad consequences.

And so, if you want to know whether the Reubenites or the Gadites—whether they did the Will of God, you go through the storyline of the Biblical story.

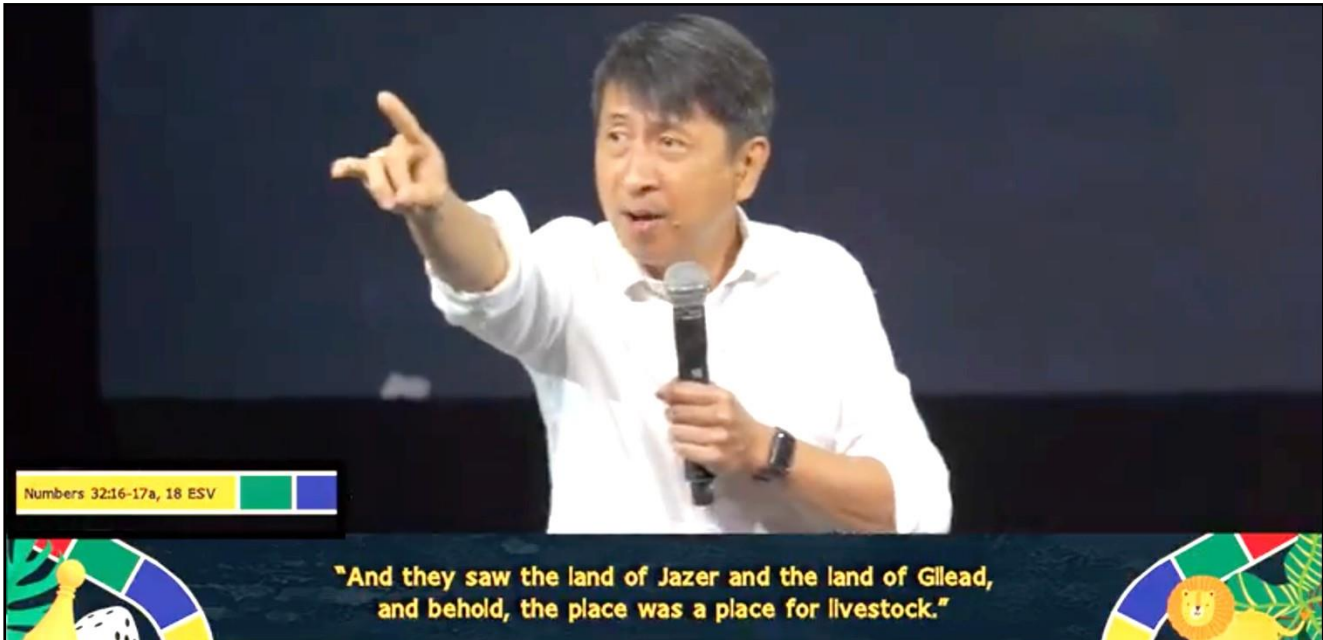
But even if you do not finish the storyline – and I'm going to tell you now—they did suffer bad consequences. Okay. But even if you did not read the entire storyline of the Bible, you actually already have a hint of the answer—that they were not actually doing the Will of God. Why?

We talked here about design patterns some many, many weeks ago. And we said repeatedly that Biblical authors use design patterns.



And one of the very clear design patterns when somebody is not doing the Will of God is this: You see, the Biblical authors, they use, *always*, Genesis 1, 2, and 3 as the lens when they wrote the story. And in Genesis 1, 2, and 3, there are stories there that are like a template. And so, when Adam and Eve, they fell, there's a design pattern there.

Eve saw the fruit and *took* it.



They Saw...They Took

Here, you found it. It's here. It's clearer in Hebrew, of course, than in English, but let's read again the verse that we read a while ago, Numbers 32 (*above*).

They *saw* and they *took*. Like Eve *saw* the fruit being offered by the Serpent, and *took* it.

All throughout Scripture, you find that design pattern.

Everybody say, "*saw... took.*"

You've got Abraham. Again, very interesting. Abraham and Sarah did not have a child, could not have a child.

Sarah says, "Get my maid servant Hagar."

So, when the Biblical story was telling that incident, that scenario, the author does not tell you: *And then Abraham did something bad and got Hagar.*

No. The author wants you to pick it up. And we know through the Biblical storyline that bad consequences happened because of that decision.

But, same design: Abraham *saw* Hagar and *took*.

King David. King David in his palace. While everybody was at war—they're fighting armies, King David, one lazy afternoon, was strolling at the roof of his palace. And lo! He sees Bathsheba. What was she doing? Bathing. That's why her name is *Bathsheba*. ☺

And then the Biblical author uses the same design pattern: David *saw* Bathsheba...



Just Somewhere in the Middle

And so, the Reubenites and the Gadites, they *saw* the land, and they *took*.

It's a design pattern. The Biblical author is giving you a hint: "Looks like there's something wrong here... Maybe they're doing something wrong..."

What were they doing wrong?

It seemed as though they were more committed to their preferred land—than to God.

Did I just punch you on the solar plexus? There are times in our life when we are more attached to what we want-- the *blessing*-- than to the *Blessor Himself*.

There are times in our life when are so stubborn -- when we insist...

You know, to be fair, the Gadites and the Reubenites, they were not like the ancestors. No. The ancestors of these people, they were on an all-out rebellion. They did not want God. They did not.

No. The Reubenites and Gadites were not like that. *They were somehow there in the middle.*

They are like: "We want You, Lord. We really want You. But, but please, this land..."

God was giving them the Promised Land. And they did not want it. They wanted their version of the Promised Land.

That's when we get into trouble. When we trust in our wisdom, and not in God's wisdom. When we are like, "We want this, Lord. This is the best for us." What is more advantageous for us?"

You know what? A three-year-old can ask that question. It's a good question. It's a fair question. But it's not enough to ask the question, "What is best for me?"

Because God is a God who does not live in three dimensions. He is not limited to your height, to your width, or to your length. He is a God with million dimensions. And He sees the future. And he sees what's a million years from now. And He is a God who knows what is best for you, and for your neighbor, and best for your child, and best for your grandchild.

God sees everything and He knows what is best for you.



War: Man vs. God

All throughout the Biblical story, there is a war. We read it in *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*.

What's the war?

It's the war between man's stubborn will... We're pretty stubborn, yes or no? We are so stubborn, we are so proud, we are so immature, we like what we want and then we fight for it, and we compromise, and we insist. We are more committed with what we want than with God Himself. And I am telling you, this is crazy. You find it all through the Biblical stories. We insist.

So, the first force of this war is man's stubborn will.

But there's another force in this battle and you find it here all throughout Scripture.

It's really funny, because the Gadites and the Reubenites, they wanted a land a bit outside the Promised Land. And you find a God – if you read through *Deuteronomy*, and you find all the way to the *Prophets*, you will find a God who does not reject totally—but keeps on saying, “Come back...”

So, in their unfaithfulness, God remained faithful. And in *Deuteronomy*, you find a God who says --okay, I mean, you don't see this text but you kind of like see this in the story—where God says, “I will still allow the Eden-like blessing to flow out of the Promised Land.”

There's still this God who bends, and waits, and, you know, just tries to find a way to reach you.

All throughout Scripture there is a war: between man's stubborn will and God's stubborn Love. And I want you to know there's a clear winner to this war in this book. And the clear winner is that God's stubborn Love is stronger than man's stubborn will. He will keep on reaching out to you.

He will keep on saying, “Come here, come back to me.”



Time for Discernment

When I was 30 years old, I was discerning what I wanted to do with my life. I was thinking... I was attracted to married life, but I was attracted to single life... I was torn... you know...

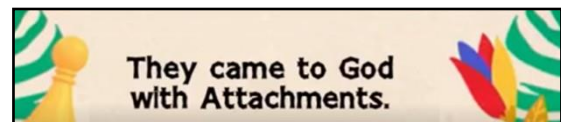
But I said to myself, if I would get married, I do not want to be like some missionaries who got married, and didn't have money. And I said, no, no. If I'm going to get married, I'm going to be a millionaire missionary. I want to keep on serving the Lord without any care, or money will no longer be an issue. I just had that in my mind.

And so, I went through discernment, I struggled with it... Discerning the Will of God is very difficult especially for the major decisions of your life. But I said, "Yes, Lord..."

I remember going up a chapel, up a mountain, and I took a retreat for seven days, and I brought with two important guides: a Bible and a wise Jesuit priest. And he led me into that discernment.

So, in that retreat, oh, my gosh, I said, "Lord God, okay..."

This is the thing: When you go into discernment, do not become like the Reubenites and the Gadites. They enter the Presence of God with attachments already. And that's not good.



Saint Ignatius of Loyola would say this: that if you want to discern the Will of God, you come empty. You do not come with biases. Because they will color your decision-making. You do not confuse the end and the means. Do not be attached to the means. Be attached to God.

God is the only end. Everything else is the means.

I remember on the third day of that retreat, oh, my gosh. It was such a struggle. I was lying down on the floor of the chapel. I was drenched in sweat--my whole body. Every ebb of my energy drained out of my body. I was struggling, struggling... to be detached... to be clear...



My Blank Check for God

On the seventh day, I felt I was free.

I felt, on the seventh day of that retreat, I remember, I said, “Lord, what do you want? What do you want for my life? That’s what I want.”

I felt I was free from attachment.

It was like I was giving God – and I love this illustration—I was giving God a blank check.

I signed it already.

And I said, “You put the figure, Lord. You tell me what You want for my life.”

I think that’s something I’m inviting all of you to do today. To sign a blank check and then to give it to God, and say, “Lord, You tell me what to do. No attachments. No biases. I just want You. You tell me what to do.”

Do not become like the Reubenites. Do not become like the Gadites who were more committed to their preferred land than to God Himself.

You say, “Lord, Your Will. That’s what’s best for me and my family. Your Will.”

Are you ready to do that right now?

Of course, after the seventh day, and I gave that blank check to the Lord, it became clear what I wanted to do and what God wanted me to do.

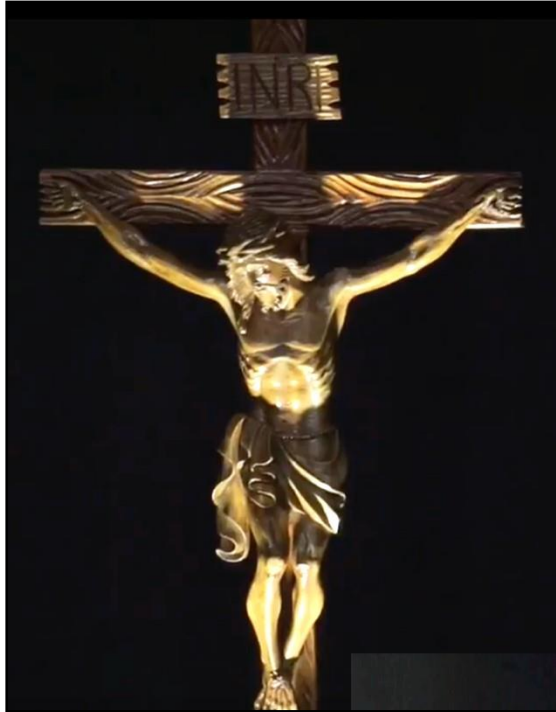
I went to my priest friend who was leading me in that retreat and I said, “Father, this is what I believe God wants me to do.”

He smiled, and he said, “Go for it.”

And 25 years later, here, we are: Marowe and I are celebrating our Wedding Anniversary this year.

I am an entrepreneur, and God has blessed our businesses, and the storyline of following God and obeying God-- in the midst of all the trials— God has blessed.





Jesus' Blank Check

Let me end with how the stubborn Love of God defeated man's stubborn will.

He did it—all throughout Scripture, all throughout the Old Testament.

But then God had a *checkmate* move.

Because we can follow Moses, and we can follow Abraham, and we can follow Isaiah, and we can follow Jeremiah, of course.

But they were all imperfect.

And then He sent His Son Jesus who, in the Garden of Gethsemane, gave a blank check to His Father.

He said, "Your Will be done, not mine."

That is Jesus.

And today, Jesus says, "You can't do it on your own. It's okay. It's difficult to be detached. But I will be with you. I will help you."

Write that blank check to God our Father.

Put your hand over your chest, ask Jesus for help. He died on the Cross, nailed His Self Will on that Cross. Nailed it.

Because He wanted God's Will.

And that's what we need to do. As we are standing before the Father, ask Him for help to be able to write that blank check. And to surrender all attachments. So that you will be very free to do what He wants You to do.

Everybody, say, "*Jesus, help me. Help me to write that blank check, and to sign it. Help me to tell You I will do Your Will.*"





Your Blank Check

Let's all make a decision. Are you ready?

For some of you it's the first time you're making this decision and to give a blank check to God. Sign it with your name. If you're ready, let's do it.

For some of you it's re-surrendering of your life to the Lord. You've done this last year, five years ago, ten, 20, 30, years ago. I don't know when, but we surrender today. This is the moment you're standing before the Presence of God in His throne room. I want you to get that check in your mind and in your heart. I want you to sign it. Sign it. That's right, sign it with your name and then give it to the Lord.

May I invite you to symbolize this by lifting a hand, lifting an arm to the Lord, and imagine that you are giving that check to the Lord. That blank check. And you say this prayer with me. If you are ready, say it:

*Lord, I'm giving You my life, my heart, my mind, my emotions, my imagination, my commitments, my attachments, my future. I'm yours.
Your Will be done. Not mine. Your Will. I follow You. I follow You.
I follow You.*

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MERCY MINISTRIES

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

—Jeremiah 29:11

The Silent Ministry Caring for the Broken

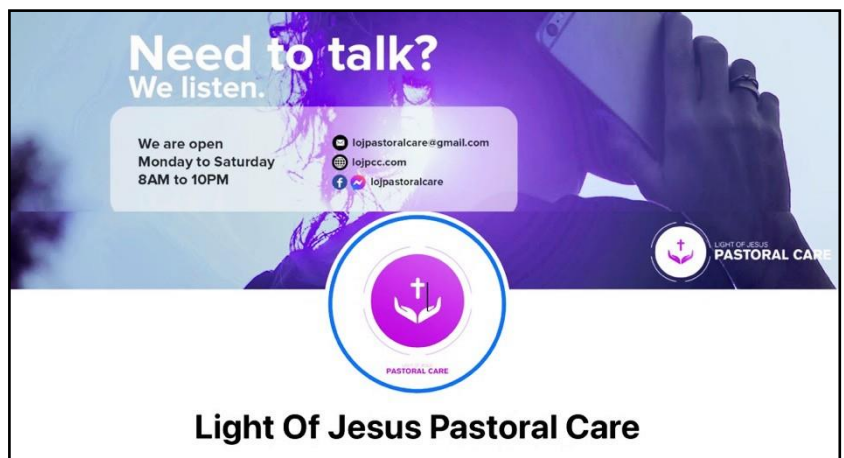
By **GAIL P. BAYTO**

THIS is what you see if you check out the Facebook page of our Light of Jesus Pastoral Care.

Yes, if you need to talk, the Light of Jesus Pastoral Care is here to listen and to provide psycho-spiritual support amid your difficulties.

Most of our Light of Jesus Mercy Ministries take care of their beneficiaries,

yet the mission of the Light of Jesus Pastoral Care Center is distinct.



Being one of the Mercy Ministries of our faith-based community, Light of Jesus Family, the Light of Jesus Pastoral Care Center is co-founded by Bro. Bo Sanchez and Sis. Ditas Español with the mission of providing comfort and support to the emotionally burdened through one-one-one support sessions. The Ministry used to be the Light of Jesus Counseling Center. Later, the name was changed to LOJ Pastoral Care Center.

For Dr. Michele Alignay, now the Director of LOJ Pastoral Care, competency and experience were preparations to take in the role of leading the Ministry. Her secular work is practicing psychoeducation as a speaker, consultant, and resource person for seminars and trainings on family life and well-being. In 2022, she took the reigns as the Director of the LOJ Pastoral Care.

Divine Design

Being in the Light of Jesus Family is God’s design. Sis. Ichel, as we fondly call her in our LOJ Family, grew up with her parents being in Couples for Christ, and then she was with Youth for Christ. After college graduation, she joined the Singles for Christ (SFC) community.

In the singles group, she met Koots Alignay. Koots’ parents were part of the Light of Jesus Family; and his father, Dante Alignay, was one of the employees of LOJ at its headquarters called the Light House in Cubao, Quezon City.

With his parents, Koots attended the LOJ monthly prayer gathering, The Feast, in Teatro Aguinaldo, Quezon City. Eventually, he invited his SFC friends, including Ichel, to attend the monthly Feast.

While they served in SFC, Bro. Koots and Sis. Ichel attended The Feast monthly for their spiritual nourishment. “We grew closer as friends until we became a couple,” she shares.

They married in 2012 and just celebrated their 20th Wedding Anniversary in 2022.

Even if they were serving in SFC and CFC, they were attendees of The Feast. In mid-2013, with two small kids in tow, they decided to be all-in and actively serve at The Feast Valle Verde. “We’ve made it our spiritual community,” she adds.



Koots and Ichel have also been attending the LOJ’s inspirational event, Kerygma Conference, (now called The Feast Conference). In 2011, Sis. Ichel was invited to be a speaker for the Solo Parents Stream of KCon.

This was followed by an invitation for her to write for the *Kerygma* magazine, now called *Feast Magazine*.



Professional Training

Professionally, Ichel is called Dr. Michele Alignay. She is a board-certified Guidance Counselor (RGC) and a Psychologist (RPsy). She took her Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology at the University of Sto. Tomas. Then worked for ten years as a full-time school guidance counselor for premiere exclusive schools.



Entering the second year of work, she started working for her graduate school degree in Miriam College, where she completed her Master of Arts in Family Psychology and Education. Dr. Alignay refers to 2000 to 2010 as the first decade of her life's mission.



She shares, “My first decade of career consisted of simultaneous life events – fulfilling work, faith community service, marriage, and having a child. Year 2010 ushered in my new decade, new challenges, and changes in my personal and professional life. In 2009, I gave birth to my second child -- my daughter. So, the following year, I gave up my full-time work, to be able to give my best time and care for my two kids.”

Letting go of a full-time career was a temporary solution. Since she is armed with the skill and license as Registered Guidance Counselor, she knew that one day, “my gifting will have its landing!” She continues, “There were days that I checked myself if being a full-time mother was worth it. My answer would always be a resounding “yes” and I hanged on, knowing God has greater plans for me, beyond raising a family.”

While mostly filling her time, fulfilling her task as a mom, she pursued part-time private counseling practice. She took in writing work on parenting and family for mainstream magazines (*Smart Parenting* and *Moms Today*) and started giving talks and learning sessions mostly for schools – for students, parents, and faculties.

She adds, “To arm me further and deepen my passion for working with families, I took a leap of faith in taking my post-doctorate degree, Doctor of Philosophy in Family Studies. Reflecting on why I took it... I just needed to hone my skill and deepen further what I know about children and families.”

While in the pursuit of it, she was also teaching in Miriam College Higher Education. Since then, she has been a part-time lecturer for graduate and undergraduate courses of the Department of Psychology, and in the Family Studies Post-Graduate program. After years of working and studying while raising her two kids, and building her family, she completed her doctoral degree in 2018.

Pastoral Care

Today, Ichel's secular work is focused on conducting learning sessions, consulting and training about well-being and mental health, family life, parenting, and personal growth. She is fully immersed now with providing services for corporations, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and brands.

One of the services that she actually gave up was private counseling.

"It was taking too much from me – both time and inner resources," she explains. "But eventually, the Lord has His way of putting me back to how everything started, however indirect."



Mission team,
from left: Koots
and Ichel Alignay;
Ditas and husband
Vic Español.

In 2021, she had a meeting with Sis. Ditas Español, then the Director of the Light of Jesus Pastoral Care Center. Sis. Ditas invited her to take her place in the Ministry, as she would be retiring the following year.

Ichel recalls, "I told her, '*Tita, ang laki po nito. Napakalaking* responsibility. This is such a big responsibility and I have to pray about it.' I really felt that I needed to go through an in- depth discernment about it. I asked her to give me a month to discern."

The following day, after her meeting with Sis. Ditas, she was like, "*Hindi talaga ako mapakali*—I felt uneasy."

She attended an online morning Mass. And, "I was really crying. I could not explain why I was in tears. There was a nagging thought of taking part in a bigger mission, much bigger than myself."

Discerning the Call

To help her through her discernment, Sis. Ichel consulted three important persons in her life.

First was one of her closest friends, who is also heading a department in one of the Mercy Ministries.

Her friend advised: “You are called for mission. Ibe-bless ka naman ni Lord.— God will bless you.”

Then, Sis. Ichel had the same discussion with a very close friend in the Community who has been supporting her professional pursuits.

This friend told her, “Your life mission is so aligned with the work of Pastoral Care!”

The last person she talked with was her mentor and spiritual mother in Miriam College.

She said, “Ichel, I don’t see you as an administrator in the academe but I see you there in that position... That’s who you are. Your life has been prepared for that.”

Sis. Ichel says she was also reflecting then about her time for her corporate or secular work: “Yet I realized that it is the Lord who paved the way to bless me with these good projects. So, why don’t I commit to His purpose for me in the Ministry. And I claimed for His leadings and financial blessings through my professional projects.”

Yes!

Dr. Ichel looked back in 2016 when challenges in the home front and family health made her want to give up completing my doctoral dissertation, the last humungous requirement to complete the degree.

She muses, “It was so difficult managing the home, work, and my academic life. I was praying so hard then and bargaining with the Lord to work through me, even if I don’t have this Ph.D.”

But that moment of deep prayer and anguish, she says, the Lord impressed in her: “*Yung Ph.D. mo, hindi para sayo yan. Para sa trabaho ko yan. Instrumento lang kita.*” (Your Ph.D. is not for you. It’s for My work. You are just My instrument in My mission).”

So, from asking for one month of discernment, she gave Sis. Ditas her “Yes!” to lead the Ministry-- after four days. She attests, “The Lord paved the way from the start of my journey with The Feast in 1999 to make me part of His greater mission through the LOJ Pastoral Care Center.”



Caring for Carers

The LOJ Pastoral Care is celebrating this July 2023 its 30th Anniversary.

It is a ministry of well-trained volunteers who are armed in doing Immediate Skills Psychological-Spiritual Support through “Care Sessions.”

The volunteers have been serving for 5 to 25 years and are dedicated to the mission of helping in the journey of individuals who are broken and distressed.

Sis. Ichel shares what inspires her: “It is not an easy task, and so my work entails supporting the volunteer Carers, so they can support better those seeking help. As I mentioned, the LOJ Pastoral Care has a distinct yet unobservable mission – to journey with those secretly struggling. The mission and donations support both the Pastoral Carers and the Clients availing of sessions.”



Connect with LOJ Pastoral Care

The LOJ Pastoral Care Center may be reached through the following:

- Scheduling of sessions may be through Facebook Messenger:
 - <https://www.facebook.com/lojpastoralcare/>
- Other online links:
 - www.lojpcc.com
 - lojpastoralcare@gmail.com
 - lojpastoralcare@gmail.com
- We provide the following services:
 - ‘Care Sessions’ – One-on-one session with a Volunteer (scheduled online chat or audio call)
 - Prayer or Intercessions – prayer requests may be sent via messenger (<https://www.facebook.com/lojpastoralcare/>)
 - Group Sessions – special learning sessions

Operational Hours: Monday to Saturday: 8AM to 10PM (Manila Time)



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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Our Partner Beneficiaries

Jeremiah 33 Foundation
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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1. Donate ONLINE (through credit card) Go to www.kerygmfamily.com and click 'DONATE' box Paypal I US Donations.

2. Pick Up from Your House or Office (Metro Manila Only) Cash or Checks Address Checks to Shepherd's Voice Radio and Television Foundation and call Joy at (+632) 725 -9999 loc 112 or text (+63) 922-828-9890 and we'll pick them up from your home or office.

3. Mail 12 Post-Dated Checks to Our Office for US and CANADA: Address Checks to Kerygma Family, 848 Rainbow Blvd # 1937, Las Vegas, NV 89107. For Other Countries/Philippines: Address Check to Shepherd's Voice Radio and Television Foundation and mail (registered mail) to Shepherd's Voice, 60 Chicago St., Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines 1109

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FAMILY ONLINE NEWSMAGAZINE

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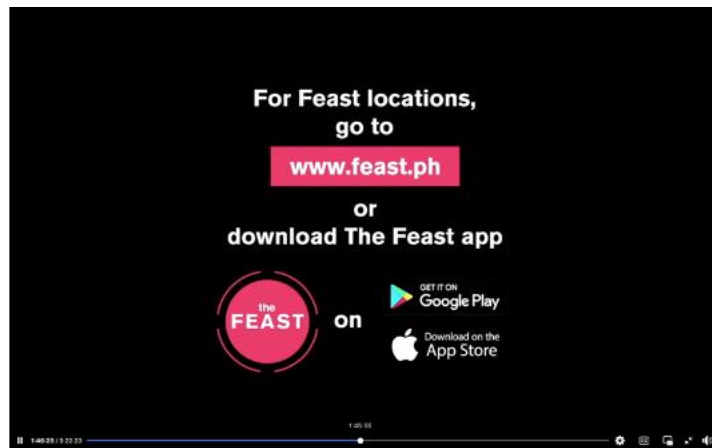
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Go and make disciples of all men.
— Matthew 28:19

