



FAMILY

SEPTEMBER 24, 2023

Life Is Difficult

HOW many times have your plans not gone your way?

Perhaps you failed an entrance exam.

Or you got your visa denied.

Or you got retrenched from a job.

Or your marriage failed.

Or you found out that your child took drugs.

The Bible does not sugarcoat this fact:

Life is difficult.

Every page of the Scriptures shows this truth in full HD (High-definition video).

But God's message to you: *What you think is a period is only a comma.*

What you think is the end is not the end.

Believe me, you will have many commas in your life where you will think, "It's over." But it's never over unless God says it's over.

God will turn your heartbreak into your hallelujah.

Have an awesome Feast today!

May your dreams come true,

Bo Sanchez



WELCOME
to Talk 8
of our Feast Series,
Dear Prodigals,
our study of the
Book of Deuteronomy.



LETTERS

Take It Easy

OKAY. Take a deep breath. Yes, take it easy now as you go through this issue of *The Feast Family*.

Why? Because this is a difficult issue.

What's difficult?

Forgiveness. That's what Fr. Mark Demanuele said in his homily last Sunday Feast, as he tackled the day's Gospel, Matthew 18:21-35. That's about the apostle Peter asking our Lord Jesus how many times we should forgive someone who hurt us. And Jesus gives a difficult answer, *page 3*.

Our founder, Bro. Bo Sanchez, actually sets the tone of this issue with *Life Is Difficult*—his intro to this Sunday's Feast Talk, *page 1*.



What makes life difficult? When we make bad decisions. That's about the Feast Talk last Sunday discussed by Bro. John Ben Rodriguez (*extreme left*) and Bro. Audee Villaraza. *Flashback* starts on *page 14*.

Okay, inhale, exhale. Actually, there's a way to make life not difficult. Simple: Trust God. Bro. Didoy Lubaton (*below left*) shared *how* as he welcomed us to last Sunday's Feast, *page 7*.



And another way is the Feast Little Acts of Love. Be inspired how this Ministry has made life easy for residents of Calasiao, Pangasinan, the place that most suffered during Typhoon Egay--particularly Barangay Malued, led by Filipina de los Santos, Barangay captain, *page 30*.

Yes, life is difficult. But with God, we have ways to take it easy.



All for God's Glory,

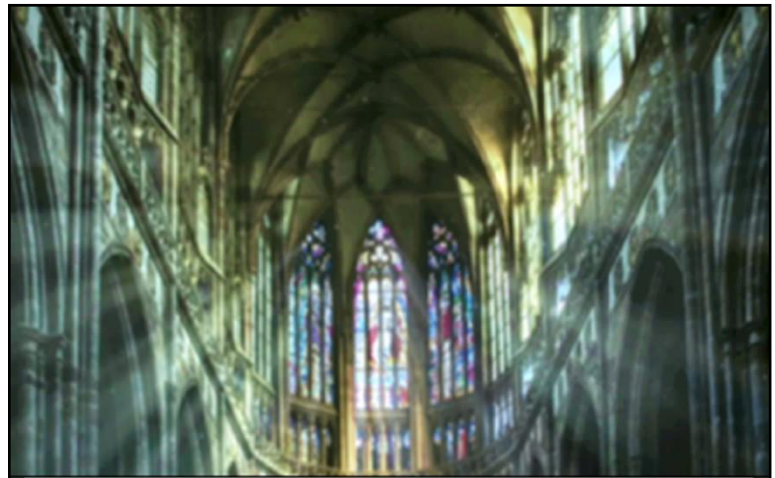
Randy Borrromeo
Media Ministry
Executive Director





FLASHBACK!
SEPTEMBER 17, 2023

Holy Mass



TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Homily

FR. MARK DEMANUELE

on the Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

Forgiveness

Excerpts...

OH, Peter. Oh, Peter, what did you do today? I don't like it. Peter, you shouldn't have asked Jesus a question like that-- because now I have to preach about *forgiveness*!

Why are we afraid of *forgiveness*? Because it's not part of our DNA.

Honesty, come on! Each one of us is so easy to forgive? I don't think so. We find it very hard to forgive! We still struggle to forgive our brothers and sisters. As much as we wish... we still struggle with it because forgiving is one of the moral obligations that we all have, but we all find it so difficult.

So, when Peter asks a question like this to Jesus, and he tells Him seven times-- which was already being over-generous... But sometimes, we don't even forgive the first time. Imagine on the seventh time!

The FEAST FAMILY September 24, 2023 **3**

We Are Called To Forgive

And Jesus tells us: 77 times!

Hay, naku! 77 times! It's already too much, Lord. How can we do that?

If you realize, we are all the same. All of us are like the people in the beginning and I'm going to read to you what Sirach said to us: "We are all the same people whose wrath and anger we know are hateful things yet the sinner hugs them tight."

Yes, the sinner hugs this wrath, this vengeance, this anger with him. We want to be like that. We truly want to be a person who shows that he is bold when he never forgives, who shows that he is the best if he is what we call an eye-for-an-eye, a tooth-for-a-tooth. We want to live in the Old Testament-- in the old ways, in this unfortunate way.

Later, the Reading says something like, "We cherish wrath, who will forgive?"

We cherish wrath. Because it's part of us-- that we do not want to forgive.

So, I ask myself, "So, why then do we have to forgive?"

And the answer is given to us in the Readings of today. This is the reason we are called to forgive. Listen to this:

"The Lord is kind and He is merciful; slow to anger, rich in compassion."



Reading I: Sirach 27:30-28:7

³⁰ Anger and fury are both abominable, and the sinful man will be held by them.¹ Whoever wishes for vengeance will find vengeance from the Lord, and he will surely be attentive to his sins.² Forgive your neighbor, if he has harmed you, and then your sins will be forgiven you when you pray.³ A man holds on to anger against another man, and does he then seek a remedy from God?⁴ He has no mercy on a man like himself, and does he then entreat for his own sins?⁵ He who is but flesh holds on to anger, and does he then request forgiveness from God? Who can obtain pardon for his sins in this way?⁶ Remember your very end, and let animosities cease.⁷ For corruption and death are suspended over his commandments. Remember the fear of God, and do not be angry with your neighbor.

We Are Called To Forgive Ourselves

The Lord is kind-- to me, to you, to all of us. Slow to anger, rich in compassion for each one of us. The reason we are called to forgive is He was the first one to forgive us. He was the first One to send His only Son here on Earth to die on the Cross so we are forgiven.

That's the first reason we are called to forgive.

Yes, it goes against my DNA but because He was able to do it with me, He's asking me to do it with my brother and sister. He is full of compassion in the Readings. He pardons all my ills. He redeems my life from destruction and comes to me with compassion.

Is there not a bigger reason for me to forgive? My brothers and sisters, that's not the only reason.

The second reason today that I'll give you is that we are called to forgive-- including ourselves.

When I point a finger at you, it's pointing back at me. So, I'm also doing the homily for myself, okay?

The second reason is given to us by Paul. Listen, in his letter to the Romans, Paul says: "We are the Lord's."

We are of God! We are God's people! We are the children of God!
Then Father, forgive me already... I am called to be like my Father, to be Christ-like...

We are of the Lord's and for that reason too, we are called to forgive.

So, when the Lord today speaks to Peter and tells him not seven but seventy-seven times, you know what he's saying? His mercy is bottomless.

How much do we go when we like, go somewhere and pay a bit extra so that we have a bottomless drink? It's like that.



Reading II: Romans 14:7-9

Brothers and sisters:

⁷ None of us lives for himself, and none of us dies for himself.⁸ For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.⁹ For Christ died and rose again for this purpose: that he might be the ruler of both the dead and the living.

Two Important Decisions

How much more mercy do we want?
God's mercy for us is unlimited.

Have you ever gone to Confession and the Lord tells you, "Oh, wait a minute. You reached your limit. No more mercy for you."

Never! God never does that to me. I struggle with the same sin. We struggle with sins. We struggle continually with the same. And I go to the Confession each time and I do ask for forgiveness for the same sin day after day.

And the Lord never tells me, "Enough."

The Lord is always telling me, "Come, it's okay. Let's start again."

Many are the sins I have but I am forgiven.

He is compassionate with me. He is merciful to me. The only thing He is asking me-- and us-- is to do what we heard in the Gospel of today. For He forgave me, He is asking me to turn to my brother and sister and forgive them.

But Lord, is it true? Lord, some hurts are unforgivable.

I am forgiven. Any hurt I give to the Lord, He is forgiving me. He never stops. He never stops forgiving. So, I am called also to share my bottomless mercy with my brother and sister. I know this is difficult, I know this is very hard.

So, I ask of you two very important decisions:

First: Let us ask for the grace of forgiveness. As I told you at the beginning, it's not part of me. It's not in my DNA, so I need God's grace for me to do it.

So, first of all, do not be afraid to ask God for the grace of forgiveness. We need that. We cannot do it alone. I need God's grace.

So, please start by praying for that person whom you need to forgive.

Pray for the person who hurt you. Do not remain chained to your resentments because you are pretty imprisoning yourself. You've got the key in your hands to let go of those resentments.

So first, pray for the grace.

Second: Pray for that person. Kill him with love. Yes, kill him with love. That's the way we are called to do it—not on our own but with the grace of God, with the power of the Spirit in us, we can do it. Amen.





BRO. DIDOY LUBATON:

Let's give the Lord a big hand! Let's thank the Lord today. Praise the Lord! Give blessings to Him!

Welcome home, Brothers and Sisters! For those who are watching online and attending for the first time, welcome as well! This is our Feast! We're called the Feast Bay Area. The Light of Jesus Family is our community name, and we're back here in PICC!



Thank you for showing up. You could've been somewhere else. You could've been doing something else-- but you chose to put God first in your activity today.

We have our Awesome Kids service already for children aged 4-6. The venue is on the other side of the building-- the signage will guide you.

We also have the little kids area where the children can play while the parents can watch on a screen we put there showing online streaming of the ongoing Feast.



Also, there's Confession ongoing as well.

The FEAST FAMILY September 24, 2023 7

Love Offering



BRO. DIDOY LUBATON:

How many here have prayers yet to be answered this year?

I invite you to give because it also shows we trust God. Generosity comes not because of our excess. Generosity comes because it's coming from our trust in God's provision.

It can be tempting to worry. It can be tempting to say, "Lord, I don't have enough."

But Scripture, the Word of God, reminds us that God gives our needs and fills in our wants. As Matthew 6:25-26 puts it:

"Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"





Giving Is a Sign of Trust

The Word of God gives assurance that He will provide for us-- so that we can freely give.

My family and I are embarking on a big decision. I'm not going to tell you what that is, but it's a very big decision.

And we're like, "Lord, nakakatakot-- it's scary!"

It also entails spending some money and we're like, "Sige Lord, bigay namin sa 'Yo. Bahala ka na.—

Okay, Lord, we give this to you. Be in charge...If I build Your house first, You're going to take care of my household..."

And you know what that gave me? Not necessarily magic-- as in a big amount of money appearing on my bank account. But surrendering my anxiety to God gave me something much more valuable: that is, peace that goes beyond understanding. That "Yes, Lord, I will do my part, I will strive. I know I am limited at this point but You are the Provider-- the Giver. You will fill me up. That's why I can still freely give.

For those who come here, because they're hurting, they're going through some difficulties, know that because of the goodness of God, you can praise still! Even if you are burdened, you can say, "I get to still give because God provides for me."

Giving is a sign of trust. Show your trust through your giving.

Ways to Give
Ways to Give
Ways to Give

Light of Jesus Family Mega Manila, Inc.
003970143807

The Builder of the Light of Jesus Family
Mega Manila Feast Bay Area, Inc.
000-4000-24846

For GCash, Debit & Credit Card Giving visit: GCash
www.TheFeastPICCAM.com/Commit

BDO
 UnionBank

Worship!

EXHORTATION

NICO NARVAEZ:

Welcome home, Feast! We're going to worship God this morning! Are you excited to worship God today?

Come on, hands up!

Keep your hands up! Let's give our best to God today!



TL DELA PENA-SAN JUAN:

Brothers and Sisters, we have just been reminded that life abounds in us and that we're able to partake in God's goodness because He intentionally made a way for us to do so. May we just take a moment to let that truth and weight of those words sink in?

All of us are given that opportunity because of God's love for us and His ultimate desire is for us to get to know Him intimately-- that we're fully aware of His majesty, and that we're also confident of His love as a loving Father for us.

And if we really, really, truly understand the depths of His love for us, then we'll know that nothing ever seen, ever experienced compare to what God has in store for us. And as Fr. Mark said, whatever we did in the past, God will never give up on us.

So, as we continue to worship, I invite you to respond and express your desire for more of God. You may raise your hands to Heaven as a sign of your willingness to surrender to Him, to meet Him halfway.

And if you're ready, as prophet Hosea says, "Let's come forward and get to know the Lord more."

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



BRO. JOHN BEN RODRIGUEZ:

Almighty Father, we believe that You are here today, and the deep prayer and yearning today is that each one aligns his/her heart with Yours. Because oftentimes, one's heart is troubled by the noise that is in the world—the noise of our fears, the noise of our worries, the noise of the challenges that we're facing at the moment.

But we believe that Your powerful Presence is here to change each one's life. Our prayer is to have an open heart so that we may receive the Holy Spirit pouring on us today-- because we believe that if we have You in our heart, peace will overflow, if we have You in our heart, grace will flourish. We believe that no amount of challenges can hinder us from journeying in life! No amount of fear can stop us from doing what is right! And no amount of hurt in the past can prevent us from enjoying Your blessing!

So that today, we raise our hands and declare that You are good!
We want You in our life and we want You to be King in each one's heart!

Jesus, You are Lord, You are my King! You are my God! And I desire nothing but You!





FEAST BAY AREA WORSHIP

YOU ARE LIFE

HILLSONG WORSHIP
 WORDS & MUSIC BY: AODHAN KING, BEN TAN, MICHAEL GUY CHISLETT & SCOTT LIGERTWOOD
 © 2017 HILLSONG MUSIC PUBLISHING AUSTRALIA
 CCLI #: 77102402

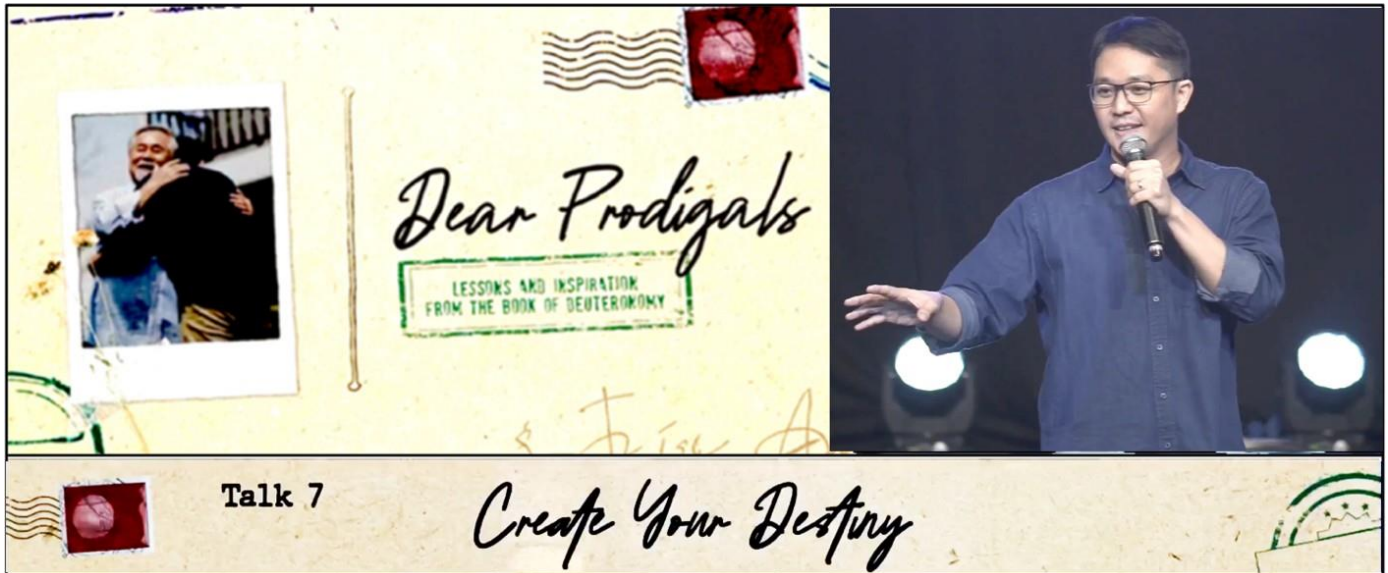
NOVENA TO GOD'S LOVE DECLARATION OF ABUNDANCE



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

The FEAST FAMILY September 24, 2023 13

Talk



BRO. JOHN BEN RODRIGUEZ:

Today we'll be reading a verse from Deuteronomy 30:15-20. This is Moses's command to the Israelites-- because they're about to enter the Promised Land. And I believe this is very much applicable today:



¹⁶ "Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster. For I command you this day to love the Lord your God and to keep his commands, decrees, and regulations by walking in his ways.

If you do this, you will live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you and the land you are about to enter and occupy.

¹⁷ "But if your heart turns away and you refuse to listen, and if you are drawn away to serve and worship other gods, ¹⁸ then I warn you now that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live a long, good life in the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy.

²⁰ You can make this choice by loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. And if you love and obey the Lord, you will live long in the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

And now he repeats:

¹⁹ "Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!

Two Options

Have you noticed the recurring pattern in Moses's message to the Israelites?

I think it's quite a simple message.

Two options:



So, if you're ordering, please choose option one. Is that clear and simple enough? But would you agree with me-- that the challenge for me is this: Sometimes when life presents us with options and choices, it's not that easy to distinguish which are *curses* and which are *blessings*.

For example, you had a bad day at work and you ate at a restaurant to pamper yourself.

And after that, you thought, "Should I order cake?" Which will you choose: Option 1 or Option 2?

What if there's a notification for life, you see? Option 1, Option 2. Will you choose the cake or not? And there's a little eye icon-- so, there's an explanation. So, when you click the cake, there's Option 1—choose life. It says there. Don't eat the cake! You have said this 30 times this month already because you had a hard day at work every single day.

So, choose life. You already had cake. Besides, your blood sugar level is already doing the cha-cha with the borderline.

Wouldn't it be nice if life decisions were like that and you had those means and tool: "Lord, there's an opportunity presented to me today. There's a challenge ahead for me. How do I choose life-- or death-- in this situation?"

That is also my desire. And my desire for everyone because we all need one word—*alignment*. We need alignment with God's heart so that when something is presented, we're aligned with God.

And you will see: *"Lord, how can I perceive this beyond my own logic, beyond my own understanding? Because upfront Lord, I don't understand it. I don't want it. But if this is a path, Lord, that leads to life, I need to have the grace and the wisdom from You to decide the proper step.*

Lord, I want Option 1. Father, in times that we cannot discern if a certain option goes with Your way or goes against Your way-- or probably there are times that it will be against our own way-- may we have the grace to choose You and follow You each day. Because Your path and following You leads to life. Amen.

You Have the Power To Choose

You create your destiny. You dictate your own weight. Right? In some sense, it is true-- because you have also the power to choose what to eat and what not to eat, or to exercise or not.

And I think this is the message of the verses we are reading today.

Who among you here is familiar with the *Matrix*?

For us who are in Engineering, we don't like *Matrix* because there's computation there.

But who among you here is familiar with Morpheus? He gives Neo an option: Would you choose the blue pill or the red pill? This one leads to this, this one leads to that.

Do you think Morpheus has a preference? Does he want Neo to choose that? Of course, he does-- because he wants Neo to be the savior. But what does he do? He knows that he has to give the option. And the truth is the person must choose for himself.

In the same way, we must choose for our own self.

Why? The wives will know this.

Some wives will come to me and say, "Bro. JB, why is it that when some advice is said at The Feast, my husband follows it? But when I keep telling him the advice, over and over again, he doesn't follow. Why is it that way?"

It's because if a decision comes from within, and the person decides to do it, most likely it will happen. Because there's power in the decision.

So, in the same vein, when God is speaking through Moses, the way He's presenting options, He is saying: "I want you to have power over your decision."

So, if you look at the blessings in *Deuteronomy*-- we will talk about this and dig deep-- the first option is actually simple. Option 1 is life, and Option 2 is death. Bro. Audee will talk later about *death*, but I will talk about *life*.





A List of Blessings

In Deuteronomy 28, you see a list of blessings. If you choose God, you will have blessings-- you will have many descendants, the harvest will be good, you will have economic and financial abundance, and you will have military victory.

Blessings in Deuteronomy 28
many descendants | huge harvests
economic abundance | military victory.

The intro is in Deuteronomy 28:1:

"If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully keep all his commands that I am giving you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the world."

Wow. God will elevate you. For us who are working on our careers, we know that. You will be promoted.

But we also know that with great power comes great responsibility. With great power comes great responsibility.

So, if you look at it, you'll see that this is hyperlinking to *Genesis*.

You are not to have blessing and power alone for your own sake. That was highlighted also in our Talk last week-- that God cares for the little ones-- and we should too. So, let's not use power to afflict and abuse the little ones.

Here is the hyperlink in Genesis 12:2-3:

"I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³ I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

GEN 12:
2-3 MLT

God is blessing you with power-- with authority, with finances, with everything good in your life so that you may use this power eventually to bless the people around you.

Here's the reality my friends that I want to share this truth with you today: If a blessing is not shared, it may become a burden.

Imagine you get a whole cake, but you don't share it. You'll enjoy it but certainly you'll feel it in your belt.

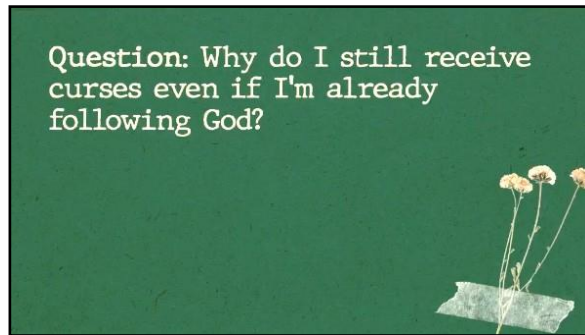
IF A BLESSING IS NOT SHARED,
IT MAY BECOME A BURDEN.

But if you look at it, you'll see-- straight forward-- that God is presenting us a choice between good and bad. But again, as I said in my intro, sometimes the options are not easy to discern.



Reasons Curse Still Happens

So, some of you might be asking this question which I was also asking as I was preparing this talk.



“Lord, why do I still receive curses even if I’m already following you?”

Have you ever asked that question?

"Lord, here we are, we're attending The Feast... We're trying to follow you... Of course, we sin once in a while. Of course, sometimes we get angry, and sometimes we lose our cool..."

But why does it feel that sometimes even if I'm following you, the curse does still happen in my life?

There are two reasons.

2 Reasons:

- 1) Because of other people who chose curse.
- 2) Because of the enemy switching labels.

First: Because of other people who chose curse. That's why our talk last week is important. If you're a person of authority and you have power, your choices affect those under you.

Another example: I came from a broken family. So, the choices of my parents in the past have had an effect on me. Growing up in a different setup has very much an effect on my self-worth, of my finding my identity.

Second: Because of the enemy switching labels. We talked about this: The enemy's goal is to confuse you, to make what is bad seem good and what is good seem bad.

Surrendering to God Is a Journey

I had a revelation recently. I was reviewing my journal entries from 2010. I used to write down significant events in my life. I also wrote down my prayers. At the time, I was still single, serving in the Kids Ministry and Campus Missions.

As I was reviewing what I had written, I saw a line in my prayer there that says: “Lord, when it’s my turn to be a parent, I want to be there for them (my children) especially in their formative years.”

And I realized, oh God, He was answering my prayer that I had already forgotten.

Because, as you may know, my daughter has a medical condition and initially, my wife and I really saw this as a burden, a challenge, a curse, because it has limited our life in terms of our finances, our time, our everything.

At the beginning of this journey, there were days that my wife and I would tell ourselves, “We can no longer engage in *rackets*. Before, I could do documentaries while you give talks out of town... We could no longer do these.”

As parents, we desire to have that particular level of financial capacity-- because it would make a difference for our children. We had been really good at it in the past-- in managing what we had and maximizing it.

We were really praying, “Lord, we want more financial provision.”

And then the situation of my daughter came in. And now that I’m trying to make sense of this, I’ve realized one thing: surrendering to God is a journey, and understanding the will of God is sometimes a journey. It will not be revealed to you in one fell swoop that you will understand.





Curse or Blessing?

Sometimes, it comes in bits and pieces. And now that I have all these bits and pieces and trying to make sense of them, and I'm connecting to the heart of God, I'm trying to figure it all out, I now realize that my daughter and all those that come with her are blessings in our life. Her condition forced us to change our work schedules. Her condition forced us to find other ways to help her. You know the saying: God will not give you a burden you cannot handle. And I now realize that it's true.

Now, when I see my daughter, I realize, "Wow, God, this is such a blessing and privilege that You have given me."

And a big blessing came to us just yesterday.

It was the day of assessment of my daughter by her developmental pediatrician. The pediatrician was to assess if her development is at par (with the growth and development of children her age).

And naturally, as parents we were nervous.

We were coaching our child, "O, when the doctor asks you, answer, ha?"

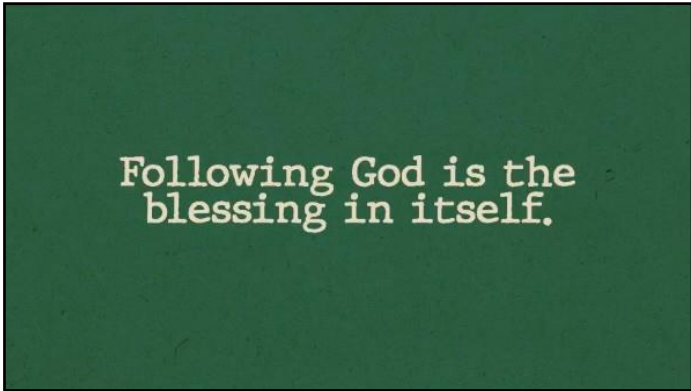
We were very much pressured. But we were blessed when the results came.

The doctor said, "Your daughter is *at par*."

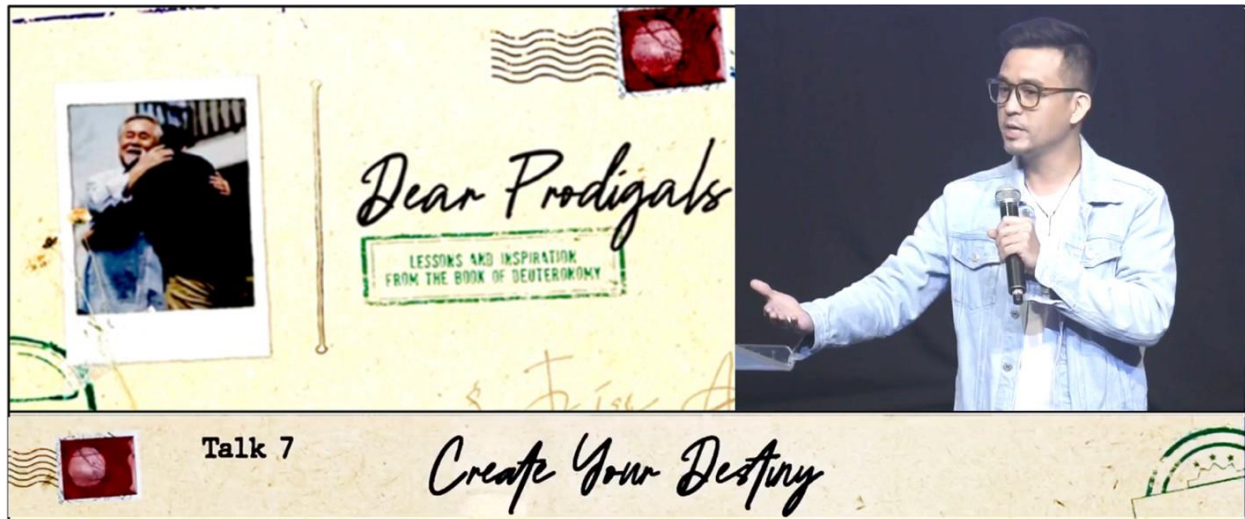
Now, it's clear validation.

It's not a curse but a blessing, a privilege, that I tried to label before as a curse.

In choosing life, following God is a blessing in itself. Challenges may come, confusion may come-- but if you follow God, God is with you. If you do that, you're choosing life.



Following God is the
blessing in itself.



BRO. AUDEE VILLARAZA:

Let’s talk about death. May I start with a simple story?

One day, when we were teenagers, my brother came and he started raving about this book.

He said, “This book is so revolutionary. It’s the most amazing book that you will ever read! It’s going to change the way that we consume...”

At first, I didn’t believe him-- until I started reading the book.

And I was like, “Wow! He’s correct!”

Have you ever read that book when you were young? That’s *Choose Your Own Adventure*. It’s a good book, right? For those of you who don’t know this book, this is the first book ever written-- at least during my time-- from the second-person perspective. So, as you’re reading it, you become the hero of the story.

In what way? You get to choose how the story progresses based on options. For instance, after you've read two to three pages, you’re given options. And depending on what option you choose, that’s how the story will progress. The outcome becomes different if you choose another one of the options. So, in a way, there are multiple endings to this book.





Life or Death?

That's what Moses is trying to get at the Israelites. He says you have two options: You have the option to choose life, you have the option to choose death. Life leads to a blessing but death leads to a curse.

Automatically, we're going to choose life. Everybody wants to choose the blessing. But did you know that it's not really true? Because it's not always easy to choose the right thing. As much as it's not always easy to do the right thing.

Now, JB already told you about choosing life.

When you choose life, yes there are blessings, and there's abundance. But what happens when you start choosing *curse*? There's death.

Moses started talking about this. This is a very important and hard message to preach today but I pray that the Holy Spirit will open up your heart to receive this.

In Deuteronomy 28:15, Moses says:

"But if you refuse to listen to the Lord your God and do not obey all the commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come and overwhelm you..."

DEUT 28:
15 MLT

And then Moses proceeds to list down all the curses:

Your towns and your fields will be cursed. Your fruit baskets and breadboards will be cursed. Your children and your crops will be cursed. The offspring of your herds and flocks will be cursed. Wherever you go and whatever you do, you will be cursed.

DEUT 28:
16-19 MLT

"The Lord himself will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in everything you do, until at last you are completely destroyed for doing evil and abandoning me."

DEUT 28:
20 MLT

As you're listening to this, don't you feel scared? When I was reading this I was like, "Why is God out to punish me? Why does it feel like God is out to get me?"

Ethan's Story

We had a recent experience with our son Ethan. School had been great for him in the past three weeks. I brought him to school. I would drop him off and I would leave-- to work and do errands.

Last Tuesday, something happened. I got a call. I was in the grocery and somebody from the school said, "Daddy Audee, are you close to the school?"

I said, "No, I am actually back at home, I'm in the grocery. Why?"

"Because Ethan has been crying inconsolably for a few minutes now and we can't stop him."

And I was like, "Is it an emergency? Do you need me to drive back there? It would take me about 15-20 minutes to get there."

They said, "No, no. I think we can manage it. But I want to ask you a question. Is there a recent death in the family?"

"No, not that I know of. Why do you ask?"

The teacher said, "Because your son, keeps on saying that your wife, his mom, had been sick and that she passed away-- but by some miracle, she was rescued, she survived."

And I was like, "That must've been a dream-- because my son is too young to be on drugs!"

So we fetched him and confronted him about it.

We asked him, "Ethan, did you say that mommy was sick?"

And he said, "No. I just missed you and Mommy."

So that's it. The next day, the same thing happened except that I didn't get a call. We fetched him. The teacher said that my son needed to be pulled away from class. He needed to be in a special class with a special teacher because he was crying again.

And again we confronted him about it.

By this time, as a parent, you know when your kid is thinking of something... But he was not saying whatever it was-- until we kept on prying and prying, and finally, he said the truth.



Calling Your Attention

Ethan said, “Daddy, I’m afraid to be in class because I have a scary teacher.”

“What’s scary about her?”

“She shouts so loud and she’s always mad at me.”

I knew that you don’t always take your kids based on what they say. So, the following day, as a parent, I deliberately looked for the teacher to talk to her. And true enough, to confirm my suspicions, she was the sweetest small, little lady. But yes, she had a loud voice.

I asked her, “Teacher, Ethan is actually afraid of you because you have a loud voice. Can you explain to us why you have a loud voice?”


She said, “Daddy, the reason I have to have a loud voice is these children are transitioning from Kinder to Grade 1. Kinder is playschool. Grade 1 is when they have to sit down at their own tables. They need a little more discipline. They don’t listen. They have to learn how to listen and so the reason I have to raise my voice is I’m calling their attention.”

And I could very well see the same thing about God. You know, there are passages in the Bible that sometimes are so hard to hear. But what if the author makes it feel like it’s a threat? Because that’s the only way that God can call our attention.

God is simply telling somebody today that this is serious stuff! If you choose life, you get blessed but if you choose death, you get a curse.

This is an important message for somebody here to hear.

Take note: Moses lists down all the blessings in 14 verses. You know how many verses about the curses? 32.

	Deuteronomy 28:	Blessings	=	14 verses
		Curses	=	32 verses

Twice the number of the blessings. Because God is calling your attention. He simply wants to say, “You got to choose life because I care about you.”



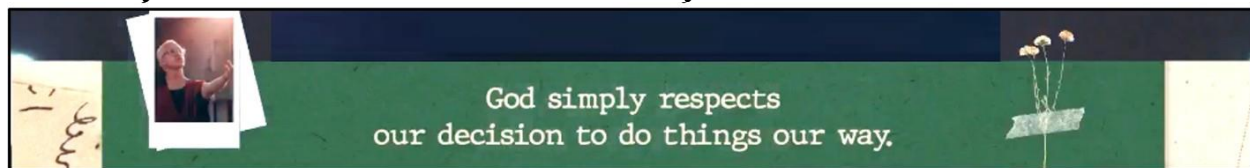
What Is *Curse*?

One thing you have to learn when you hear the word *curse*: The very first time the word *curse* was used was in *Genesis*. [This is a hyperlink.](#) When Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden of Eden, they were told that the ground that they would walk on would be cursed. In the Garden, they just sit down and enjoy the fruits in the trees. Now they have to work, they have to toil and sweat until the harvest comes. But sometimes, the harvest doesn't even come because that's an effect of sin.

But here's one thing you need to know:

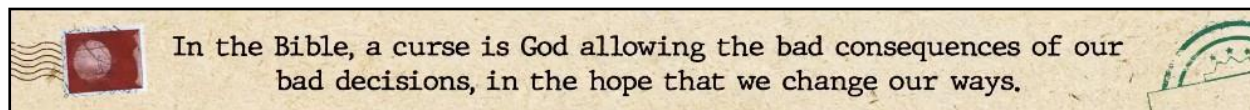
The truth is, God doesn't have to punish us-- because sin is its own punishment. God has given you free will. You can decide if you want to walk with God. And you know what God will do if you don't want to be with Him? He's going to remove His Presence from your life. You don't feel Him.

That's why I believe God will always respect the decisions that you make-- however you want to choose the decisions of your life.



That's why the curse in the Bible is God allowing the consequences of your bad decisions-- so that one day, you might want to change and be with God.

That's what a *curse* is—not because God wants to punish you, not because God doesn't love you. But because He wants you to experience the choices you have. Some choices you make will lead you away from God.





Two Points To Remember

I'd like to imagine that there's somebody here who hasn't been with God for the longest time and maybe you're asking, "Is there a place for me up in Heaven, for somebody who has sinned against the Lord again and again? Can God ever forgive somebody like me who keeps repeating the same mistake and the same sin again and again?"

If that's you, I want to repeat what Moses has to say about this.

In Deuteronomy 30, he says:

"In the future, when you experience all these blessings and curses I have listed for you, and when you are living among the nations to which the Lord your God has exiled you, take to heart all these instructions.

DEUT
30:1 MLT

While I was reading this, I was like, "Wait a minute, why does it look like Moses can see the future?"

He says, "In the future, the Lord your God will exile you."

I mean, where is he coming from?

Here's the context: Remember that *Deuteronomy* wasn't written during the time that these things were happening (when the Israelites were exiled in Babylon—because they refused to pay tribute to the then reigning King Nebuchadnezzar II who besieged Jerusalem). *Deuteronomy* was compiled during the Babylonian exile so, in a way, this was in the context of the Israelites being in exile.

But two points I want to leave to you:

First: Prophecy. Some authors believe that when he (Moses) was writing his prophecy, he was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He knew that a time would come when the Israelites would be exiled. (So, the readers who read this passage were already exiles in Babylon. They were living in the middle of the curse.)

Second: Predictability. Human behavior is very much predictable. You wake up at a certain time to do a certain thing and you respond a certain way on some things, right?

The more that you grow up, the more you realize: "Hey, I've been with my wife for almost 10 years this coming October and I know some of our habits are very predictable."

It's true! When you're together with somebody, his/her actions become really predictable.

The Enemy's Ploy

But here's the thing: This is exactly where the enemy gets us.

Because if the enemy knows your weak spots, he knows exactly how to trigger you to stay in that area.

For example, if the enemy knows that you're struggling with sin-- for instance, you're struggling with lust-- the enemy will expose you to maybe just a naked picture. He knows that he doesn't need to do much because that will trigger a pattern of predictability in your life-- because now you're thinking about lust.



If you're somebody who's addicted to greed, the enemy will expose you to corrupt practices or situations where he knows that if you're exposed to those, the only thing you would do is follow the pattern of your predictability-- if that's something you've been doing again and again.

So, how will you stop the predictability? You replace it with a good habit. Start a cycle right there. If you are addicted to porn, you stop whatever triggers you with porn—an image, a thought, a situation. Get yourself out of that.

But you know, the truth is, we can't do it on our own. Fr. Mark said the same thing again: we struggle with sin and we keep repeating the same sin again and again because of the truth that we cannot stop on our own.

Thank God that we don't have to-- because what the enemy could not predict is that one Man would come and would be able to overcome sin.

That's why it's so important that you need Jesus.

Sin will always be a part of life. That's why you need Jesus to be part of your life.

After Moses says that God will exile the Israelites, he gives them powerful hope. He says:

"If at that time you and your children return to the Lord our God, and if you obey with all your heart and all your soul all the commands I have given you today,³ then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes."



This is for somebody here right now who is so far away from the Lord. You've walked away. This is a promise that if you return, the Lord is quick with His mercy. He will restore your fortunes. He will restore your life.

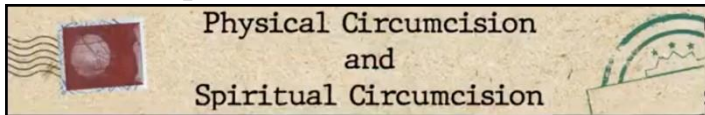
The Solution

But here's the solution in Deuteronomy 30:6:

"The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live..."

DEUT
30:6 NIV

Let me explain. There are two kinds of circumcision:



The physical one is what all the men know about. It's a rite of passage for all the guys. At a certain age, you get circumcised for a hygienic practical purpose.

Back in the day, it wasn't for hygiene. It was for a religious purpose-- a covenant that they had with God.

I had my circumcision when I was 7 years old and I didn't remember anything. I needed to confirm with my mom what age I was because I only remember one word about it—*ouch!* Masakit! Di ba? It hurts, right? But you know, the most ironic time in a boy's life is also when you're circumcised. Because people are saying, "Congratulations! You're now a real man!" And they're saying this to you when you're wearing your mommy's skirt. How ironic! So, that's the physical circumcision.

Spiritual circumcision is the same kind of circumcision in the sense that it's also painful. But it's not a physical pain.

Spiritual circumcision is you vacating your throne and saying, "Lord, this is Your place. Take Your place, Lord."

This is when you are allowing the Lord to rule your life. Because the truth is we cannot do it on our own. We need Jesus to be the One to help us.

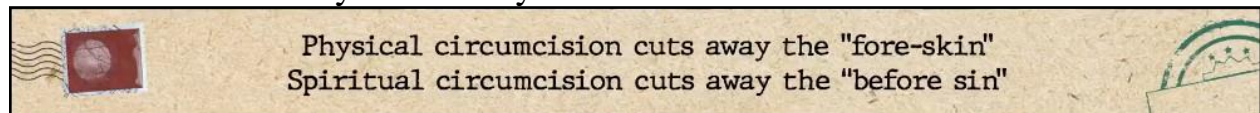
And this is where we turn to Paul.

In the book of Colossians, Paul said:

"When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature."

COL
2:11 NLT

Physical circumcision is when you cut away the foreskin. Spiritual circumcision is when you cut away the "before sin".



That's what it is! It's cutting away the "before sin" that we cannot do because sin is hard.





The Real Message

We said that the big message today is
You create your own destiny.

But you know, in basketball, the players sometimes pump-fake. When they're not shooting the ball, they are pumping fake (just pretending an attempt to shoot the ball).

That "big message" is actually a pump fake. That's not the real message.

The real message is this: God is the one creating a new destiny for you.

THERE'S SOMETHING BETTER THAN CREATING YOUR DESTINY —
GOD IS CREATING A NEW DESTINY FOR YOU.

Because you cannot do it on your own. You need the power and the grace of God to help you. I don't know what kinds of sin, inequity, or shame you've been carrying. But you need Jesus, yes? But the way that you can have Jesus is that you need to choose Jesus. He can't force you to choose Him.

That's why when I came to Christ at the age of 25, I realized that I needed Jesus to be by myself. It's a personal decision.

But it's not only by myself. I need to choose Jesus not only for myself but also for others. You're not just making a decision for your own life. You're also making a decision that will affect other people's life. It will affect your spouse if you're married. It will affect your parents if you're still under their roof. It will affect your co-workers. It will affect the generations that follow after you.

That's why it's so important that we choose Jesus.

The greatest decision that you could ever make is to follow Jesus.

Jesus says:

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

MATT 7:
13-14 MLT

The road to curse, to death, to sin—it's wide! It's an open highway-- there are no blockages there. You are free to enter!

But the journey to life, Jesus is saying, is small and it takes a deliberate decision to stay in that path even if it's small because that's what we're meant to do: to follow that small path.



MERCY MINISTRIES

Do not be afraid of sudden panic, or the storm that strikes the wicked; for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.

--Proverbs 3:25-26.

The FEAST LITTLE ACTS OF LOVE PART 5

Loving Filipina and Her Barangay

IN the first four parts of our series on The Feast Little Acts of Love, we presented the following:

1) the recent series of calamities that hit the country; 2) the most devastated places; 3) how the Ministry responded through acts of love of the servant leaders; 4) acts of love of a donor.

In this issue of *The Feast Family*, we share the experience of a beneficiary who struggled through the disasters, particularly Typhoon Egay.

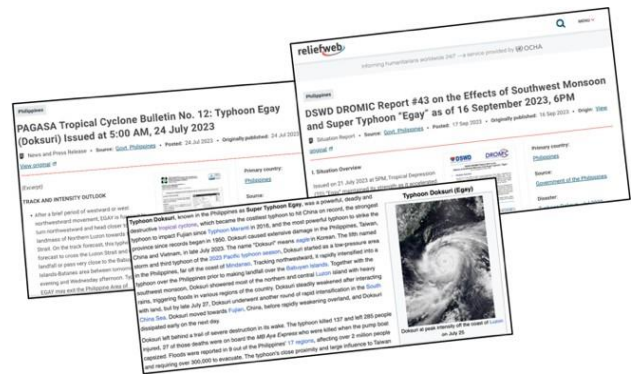
The first of the series of typhoons, Typhoon Egay hit northern Philippines on July 26, 2023. Egay initially killed 5 persons and displaced nearly 27,000.

The following days, floods caused by Egay already affected 2 million persons, pushing over 300,000 to evacuate. Coming with strong winds and heavy rains, Egay toppled trees, blew off roofs, and flooded many parts of Pangasinan, the most affected province.

Badly hit was the city of Dagupan, specifically the town of Calasiao which, with seven rivers and 14 creeks, is the center of calamities in Pangasinan.

Bro. Barz Lomibao, head of The Feast Little Acts of Love-Dagupan, told *The Feast Family* among the places the Ministry first helped was Calasiao, the place that most suffered, particularly Barangay Malued, led by Filipina S. de los Santos, Barangay captain.

30 The FEAST FAMILY September 24, 2023



Loving Malued

As of 2020, census records of the Philippine Statistics Authority show the population of Malued as 9,265, or 5.32% of the total population of Dagupan.

The population is relatively young: 28.90 %, those aged 14 and below are young dependents, teenagers; 64.54%, aged 15 up to 64, are the economically active; 6.55 %, senior citizens, aged 65 and over.

During Typhoon Egay's onslaught, Malued reeled amid strong winds and floods soaking the barangay.

Bro. Barz said The Feast Little Acts of Love promptly helped Malued evacuees with feeding programs and consoled them with entertainment at the evacuation camp at the Malued Elementary School.



Faith in Action

Before leading Barangay Malued, Filipina lived quite a simple life: grades at the Malued Elementary School; high school at Dagupan City National High; college at the University of Luzon, graduating in 2001; plus, high tech course at the Systems Technology Institute (STI)

And now she puts her education to good use as Punong Barangay (Captain) of Barangay Malued. But more than skills, Filipina leads her Barangay with deep faith.

She affirms: "I am Catholic, a believer."

So, it didn't take her a second to be a partner of The Feast Little Acts of Love: "I was invited by Bro. Barz and Sis. Josephine Lomibao (part of the Light of Jesus Family Servant Liturgical Ministry) on March 20, 2023."



Here is Filipina (in red blouse) with joyful co-servants.

Yes, by God’s grace, what she gives she has received back.

“I’ve received a lot of blessings like meeting friends who include me in their prayer meeting.”

Filipina (3rd from right, in dark blue shirt) attends Feast Dagupan led by Bro. Barz.

She adds: “I’ve met brothers and sisters who are generous in all aspects.

And she means more than the relief received by her Barangay.

She points out: “I’m blessed because I feel loved in this Community.”

Well, it must have been meant to be so. As clear as her very name, Filipina de los Santos-- Filipina of the Saints, the people giving her and Barangay Malued little acts of love.





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.

Email Address: jocelyn@kerygmfamily.com

Website: <https://kerygmfamily.com> Telephone Numbers: 8725-9999/
Fax 725-1230

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.

CHOOSE HOW YOU WANT TO GIVE

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 Inc. 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 Inc. and mail (registered mail) to Shepherd's Voice, 60 Chicago St., Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines 1109

4. Directly Deposit to Our Bank Accounts. Deposit to Shepherd's Voice Account in any branch of these banks:

Account name: Shepherd's Voice Radio and Television Foundation Inc.

BPI: Savings Account no: 0123-4849-67 Cubao Aurora Branch

Banco de Oro Savings Account no: 003970019804 General Araneta, Cubao

Branch Banco de Oro - Savings Account no. 000160506123 SM Cubao Branch

PNB - Current Account no. 108410089566 SSS branch

Metrobank-Savings Account no. 265-3-26509112-2 e Rodriguez Branch

Allied Bank Savings Account no. 3160-12345-1 E Rodriguez Branch

Union Bank Savings Account no. 00-206-000940-1 Tektite Branch

Note: Text, Fax, or email us your name, date and amount of deposit, and the branch of the bank where you deposited your donation, or fax the deposit slip to us.

Email us at support@kerygmfamily.com or text us at (63) 922-828-9890/ (63) 998-968-4416 or Fax to (+632) 725-1230



FAMILY ONLINE NEWSMAGAZINE

***The Feast Family* online newsmagazine is produced by the Shepherd's Voice Radio and Television Foundation, which is also our partner beneficiary, with editorial services by the Light of Jesus Family Library Ministry.**

Founder: Bo Sanchez

Mercy Ministries Chairman
Hermie Morelos

Editor-in-Chief
Cynthia U. Santiago

Chief Photographer
Edmundo L. Santiago

**Feast International
Region Head**
Vic Español

Reporter-Writer
Cybill P. Bayto

Multimedia Staff
Ronaldo Antonio U. Santiago
Dylan Anthony A. Santiago

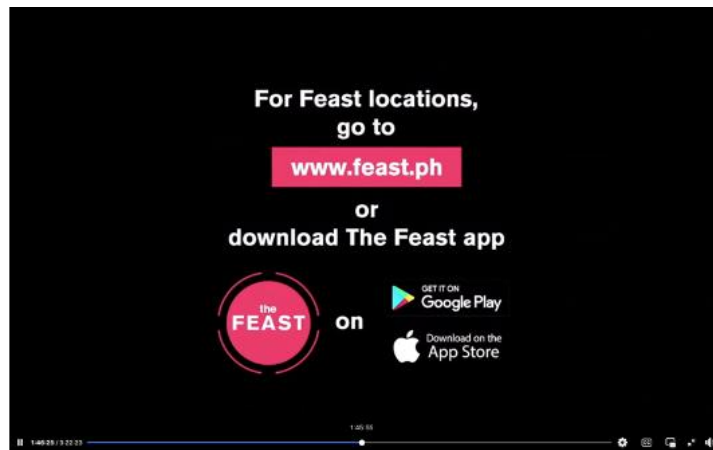
Media Ministries Head
Randy Borromeo

Contributors
The Feast Builders

Finance Officer
Rowena Cequeña

Publication Consultant
Chelle S. Crisanto

Human Resources Manager
Erika Ventura



For comments, article contributions, write or call us:
Email Address: lojlibrary2819@gmail.com
Landline phone numbers: 8725-9999, Fax 725-1230
Mobile phone: 0998-953-0657

Go and make disciples of all men.

— Matthew 28:19

