



Thank You!

WE say Thank You a lot of times. We say Thank You throughout this month of October as we have this exciting Feast Special Mini-Series for you:



Bro. Audee Villaraza, our Feast Bay Area main preacher, shares the talk schedule and preachers:

October 8: Talk 1 - *Grateful Living* by Bro. John Ben Rodriguez:

October 15: October Talk 2 - *Generous Living* by Bro. JC Libiran;

October 22: Talk 3 - *Greater Living* by Bro. Didoy Lubaton;

October 29: Talk 4 - *Glorious Living* by Bro. Audee.

Bro. John Ben introduces Talk 1 in the following *Page 2*.

Yes, we have a power-packed Feast this October— our heartfelt Thank You again and again to the Lord and to you!

May your dreams come true,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bo Sanchez".

Bo Sanchez

Be Grateful

"Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus."

--1 Thessalonians 5:18

YES, as simple as that.

Be grateful not only when life is good, not only when life is happy, not only when you are young and strong.

Do so in all circumstances-- in the hard times, in the struggles, in the uncertainties.

Why?

Because if you are not aware, the enemy will lead you to the other path.

There are just two ways of living:

- 1) Gratitude
- 2) Grumbling

Reality: At any given time, you choose gratitude or grumbling.

Like two sides of a coin, they cannot be face up at the same time. That is why the instruction of Paul is to be grateful in every circumstance. No ifs, no buts.

Be grateful. Period.

Two Forms of Grumbling we must be aware of: 1) Complaining; 2) Comparing

We give you three tips to grateful living:

- 1) Be grateful for what has been
- 2) Be grateful for what is
- 3) Be grateful for what will be

Bonus tip: Be grateful for what won't be ending.

The greatest form of gratitude is surrender.

Have a thanks-filled Feast.

All for God's Glory,
John Ben Rodriguez



WELCOME
to our
Feast Special Mini-Series
for October 2023:
Thanks-Living
Talk 1:
Grateful Living



Want To Be Happy? Then, Obey, Obey!



LAST Sunday's Gospel was about the *Parable of the Two Sons*.

A father sends his sons to work in his vineyard. One son didn't want to work, but he did. The second son said he would work, but he did not.

Fr. Bob McConaghy said this Gospel is about obedience. And he asked who are you: the first or the second son? *pages 4-9*.

It may not be easy to obey—parents, the Lord. But if you do, you will be *Thanks-Living*. How? Bro. Bo Sanchez, Bro. Audee

Villaraza, and Bro. John Ben Rodriguez introduce the Feast Talk today, *pages 1 and 2*.

Yes, obey, obey. Why? Because Jesus is obedient. Didn't He obey His Father to go down here on Earth? Yes, He did, showing to one and all *God Is Relentless* in loving us. That's Talk 9, the last of our long Feast series, *Dear Prodigals. Flashback* by Bro. Audee on *pages 16-32*.



One who well obeys her own Ministry – to serve as a social worker-- is Sis. Arsenia Binohhi, Center administrator of our Anawim Home for Abandoned Elderly, our featured Mercy Ministry this month.

And she's happy with overload blessings, *page 33*.



So, are you the one our featured servant leaders pointing at—to obey and be happy?

All for God's Glory,

Randy Borromeo
Media Ministry
Executive Director





FLASHBACK!

OCTOBER 1, 2023

Holy Mass



TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Homily

FR. BOB McCONAGHY

on the Gospel: Matthew 21:28-32

Parable of the Two Sons

YOU know, we often speak about Jesus' Resurrection and then Ascension and going up to Heaven. But rarely do we speak about what was involved with Him coming down from Heaven.

In Heaven, there is nothing but love, nothing but joy. Billions of angels constantly singing and He listening to all of that.

And then His Father says to Him, “Go out into the vineyard, that little speck called Earth in this vast universe. I want you to go there-- *not* to live.”

You see, when you and I were born, we were born *to live*. When Jesus left Heaven, He came here *to die*. And so, for the first time in His existence as God, He did something that He never did before—He obeyed.

And when He obeyed-- and we celebrate Christmas, and we celebrate the Finding in the Temple-- what we learn is He was really fully human. He went through the terrible 2's. He went to early learning of His religion. And He knew it so well that He was able to teach when He was 12. And yet, He was taken out of that ministry immediately by his mom and dad.

The Gospel says that He was subject to them. So, first, He obeyed the Heavenly Father and then He obeyed His earthly foster father and mother.

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Jesus Obeyed

So, Jesus lived in a small town-- Nazareth-- which had only one well (called Mary's Well, John 4:7).

And there He stayed and He did ordinary work for ordinary people and never distinguished Himself even though He had all of this power.

Why? Because He was called to obey. Then eventually, He understood what it was like to lose someone.

Joseph probably died when Jesus was about 18 and so, there, Jesus lived as an adult with Mama Mary. Imagine: He's 24 years old. Most men are married by age 24-- but not Jesus.

I wonder what the town's people thought-- because He never said who He was or why He was here. But imagine at 24, 26, inside, He must have been boiling-- dealing with the need to obey by carrying out His mission and He had to wait obediently for another four years.

And finally!

"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17)

The Holy Spirit descends upon Him and He still has to obey. The Holy Spirit takes Him out into the desert. He didn't want to go there but He had to. He had to experience loneliness. He had to experience blindness because there were no lights in the desert. He had to experience hunger and not having a human touch so that when He touched others, He would know what they were going through.

He could not do any of those unless He obeyed.



First Reading
Ezekiel 18:25-28

Reading I: Ezekiel 18:25-28

Thus says the LORD:²⁵ You say, "The way of the Lord is not fair." Therefore, listen, O house of Israel. How could it be that my way is not fair? And is it not instead your ways that are perverse?²⁶ For when the just man turns himself away from his justice, and commits iniquity, he shall die by this; by the injustice that he has worked, he shall die.²⁷ And when the impious man turns himself away from his impiety, which he has done, and accomplishes judgment and justice, he shall cause his own soul to live.²⁸ For by considering and turning himself away from all his iniquities, which he has worked, he shall certainly live, and he shall not die.

Who Did Not Obey?

And so now, we have this Gospel today, where Jesus talks about a father sending two sons-- to do what? To obey.

One says, "No, I won't." But then goes.

And the other one says, "Yes I will." But then doesn't.

And Jesus speaks to the chief priest and the elders, asking that question (which of the two obeyed his father.)

They answer: "The first one who said he wouldn't but then he did and obeyed and really obeyed."

Jesus says, "That's not you! You're the second one. You're the one who said you were obeying."

And what was their obedience about? Being servant leaders, gathering the Jewish people together to prepare them to welcome joyously the Messiah.

John the Baptist said, "He's coming! He'll be here soon. What did you guys do?"

He said, "No way, this guy living in a desert, living on milk and honey. Forget about it!"

Then through His entire obedient ministry, all they did was criticize Him. All they did was bring out the worst in people pointing to Him.

And then finally, at this point, Jesus had already cleansed the Temple. The Temple on the outside looked beautiful and holy yet inside it was corrupt. That's why Jesus overturned the money changers.

So, He was saying to them, "You're disobedient."

But you know who were? Those that you think are dirt—tax collectors, prostitutes. He could go on from there, and say, "Lepers, people who are sinners, and drunkards, those outside the law, they get to Heaven before you do! Why? Because they repented and after they repented, they obeyed."

And so, you and I are called to obedience. Usually, obedience has a negative connotation because you and I have a need to be independent, to do our own thing, and to do it our own way. That's normal, that's natural. It's very human.

It was natural for Jesus to be God only-- but then He obeyed and became human. You and I become divine when we use our humanity-- no matter where we are spiritually-- to obey.



How Do We Obey?

First of all, by being like the tax collectors, and the prostitutes, and the drunkards, and those outside the law-- to realize that even if you are there somewhere in your life, that you feel as though you're not close to the Lord, that everybody else in here is holier than you, that you feel like a hypocrite. Welcome to the group!

I remember I used to go on parish visitation as a parish priest back home.

I would go into some house and I would say, "Come, join us at Mass!"

They would say, "Ah, I don't want to be there with all those hypocrites!"

And I always say, "Oh, come on! One more won't hurt."

We are all hypocrites and we are not saints yet. We're on our way there.

But while we're on our way there, we are called to obedience-- not negatively, but positively.

Obey the commandments!

Think about any commandment that you have ever broken and were happy— I mean really happy. You can't find one. Because ultimately, disobeying leaves us empty and unhappy.



Reading II: Philippians 2:1-11

Brothers and sisters:¹ If there is any consolation in Christ, any solace of charity, any fellowship of the Spirit, any feelings of commiseration:² complete my joy by having the same

understanding, holding to the same charity, being of one mind, with the same sentiment.³ Let nothing be done by contention, nor in vain glory. Instead, in humility, let each of you esteem others to be better than himself.⁴ Let each of you not consider anything to be

your own, but rather to belong to others.⁵ For this understanding in you was also in Christ Jesus:⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be seized.⁷ Instead, he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and accepting the state of a man.⁸ He humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, even the death of the Cross.⁹ Because of this, God has also exalted him and has given him a name which is above every name,¹⁰ so that, at the name of Jesus, every knee would bend, of those in heaven, of those on earth, and of those in hell,¹¹ and so that every tongue would confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.

Welcome Home!

So, our Lord, in calling us to obedience, is calling us to happiness. And one of the ways that we do that is by going to Confession.

Here at The Feast, I always make a pitch, "Come on home."

That's when we say "Welcome home! You are loved!" Especially maybe if you're here for the first time and don't feel quite holy-- more like the tax collector, more like the prostitutes.

But you know what? Our Lord is saying to you, "I love you, not as you should be, but as you are."

Come home! Go to the Sacrament of Penance and get all cleansed. Your sins can all be wiped away and completely forgotten. And you can let the guilt go. There'll be a priest here hearing Confessions, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Next two weeks at PICC, I'll be there from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. to hear Confessions. I love to preach, but even more, I love to welcome people home in the Sacrament of Penance. But that's just the first step in obedience.



Responsorial Psalm

Remember You mercies, O Lord

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

R. (6a) Remember your mercies, O Lord.

⁴ Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,

⁵ guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior.

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

⁶ Remember that your compassion, O LORD,
and your love are from of old.

⁷ The sins of my youth and my frailties remember not;
in your kindness remember me,
because of your goodness, O LORD.

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

⁸ Good and upright is the LORD;
thus he shows sinners the way.

⁹ He guides the humble to justice,
and teaches the humble his way.

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

Call to Servanthood

The second way to obey is following the will of God very often.

People will say, “Father, what's the will of God for me?”

We really can't answer that question specifically, and finally. Why? Because it's a huge mystery.

But what is the will of God for you?

Well, the way in which you and I are going to be judged is rather simple. And here is where the obedience begins to live itself out after repentance.

“When I was hungry, he gave me to eat, thirsty you gave me to drink, ill or in prison you came to visit me, and naked and you clothed me, a stranger and you welcome me.” (Matthew 25:35-37)

Ah! Maybe, I'm called to be a part of the Warmth Ministry. See, that's what the Warmth Ministry does. The servants welcome people and many of the people that they welcome are strangers here at The Feast for the first time.

You know what? I've had people tell me that they came back to the faith because of the way they were greeted by servants in the Warmth Ministry.

And by the way, the servants said, “Goodbye, come again!”

God's grace works that way. Maybe the way He's calling you to obedience is calling you to servanthood. He calls all of us to servanthood-- but maybe serving in some way. If you ask members of the choir, “Are you happy when you're here?” They'll say yes. Why? Because they're servants-- they know they're obeying a call to use the talent that's on loan from God. They could sing at a disco or at a bar but they sing for the Lord! And how can you really obey and find God's will? By sharing with one another. That's why we have the Light Groups here, and Jesus is always right in their midst. *“Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in your midst.”* (Matthew 18:20). Join a Light Group. Ask after the session today, “How can I join one?” And then you have a small community with whom you can share your hurts and your brokenness while at the same time, they can encourage you in ways that you can be a servant.

Yes, today is all about obedience. The first one who really obeyed was Jesus. He became a missionary and came to a foreign land-- and He obeyed not because he was reluctant to do so, but because He loved so much.

And so, you and I, we are called to obedience-- not to restrict our freedom but to truly set us free.

Have a good week!

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BRO. AUDEE VILLARAZA:

Good Morning, Church!

Greet the person beside you and say, "It's a beautiful day"-- as you take your seat, as you prepare for our Love Offering portion, our favorite part here at The Feast.

I want to greet all those who are coming here for the first time. We clap our hands for you. Welcome to The Feast!

My name is Audee Villaraza. And it's an honor and my privilege to serve you today.

Everybody say, "Welcome home!"

Praise God! Thank you so much for being here. After The Feast, we invite you to stick around and come here in front of the sage. I'd love to meet you, pray for you, and then connect with you! Our leaders are excited to be with you also.

If you are joining us online and you're there, welcome to this beautiful family! Thank you so much for tuning in and being with us today.

You know, today is October 1. That means that we have people celebrating their birthdays this month. October celebrators, let us pray for you:

Heavenly Father, thank You for blessing your child with another year of goodness, of gladness, mercy, purpose, and love. We believe that You have a blessing for them. We pray that Your greatest blessing to them will be Your Son, will be Your Presence.

May they grow more in faith in the season of their life. May they come to realize that You are their God and may they never walk away from that.

We pray for abundance, for blessing, for healing, for provision, and for purpose. Thank You, Lord Jesus! And together with one voice, we declare that the best is yet to come! In Jesus' Name. Amen! Happy birthday!

Love Offering

For those of you who are coming for the first time, you might be wondering what is this part that we do here. Well, this is the part where we give to the Lord—the first fruits of our labor. That means that this is the part where we tithe to the Lord.

Before you do that, before I ask you to lift up your Love Offering envelopes, I'd like to read to you the answered prayers that we gathered last week, so you know who the Lord is blessing here at The Feast.

Last Sunday, September 24, we had a total of 233 answered prayers! Can we give the Lord a big hand?

We know that the Lord is working here in this vineyard and to share with you how He's working in the life of Emerita. She said:

More testimonies:

"Thank You Lord for all the sales income that open opportunity for our company"
- ANONYMOUS

"Thank You Lord for giving us our twin babies that they be safe in my tummy. Thank you for my husband's life. Please always be there to guide and keep us safe"
- TEAM G'S

"Thank You Lord for the gift of life and all the blessings given to me and my family"
- JINA

"Thank you, Lord for letting me attend the live Feast again. Thank you at makakapunta na si Kyle sa Canada"
Share! - JEPOY



Total Answered Prayers
From September 24: 233

"Thank you, Lord for healing and recovery from thyroid cancer. Thank you for the fruitful and blessed years as the director for graduate studies at PWU. May I be blessed to publish researches and books. Help me to lead and produce future leaders"
- EMERITA

"Thank you, Lord for my loan approval. Thank you for my son's academic award"
- ARIAONE

"Thank You Lord for the approval of multiple US Visa"
- ANNE

"I always thank you Lord for leading me back. I was away for 3 months to go to my review classes and today I came back. Thank you for not leaving me alone during the very exhausting review. Thank you, Lord for always bringing me back to life"
- SHEENA

Praise God! Praise God! Please continue to share your blessings with us. Write them on your Love Offering envelope. Write to us, and message us on our Facebook accounts. Because we'd love to know how the Lord is working in your life and how He's blessing each of you every single day.

All right, Everyone, together we do this as a family, as a Community, say this with me: *“Dear Jesus, dear Jesus, thank You for blessing me this month. Thank You for blessing me even if I don't have the answer to my prayer yet. I believe that You will send it at the right time and in the right version.*

Today, I give this with a cheerful heart. Bless me more so that I can give more. In Jesus' Name. Amen and amen!



Worship!

EXHORTATIONS

JIMMY SAN BUENAVENTURA:

Good Morning, Feast! It's a beautiful Sunday to celebrate our relentless God! If you're ready to worship and dance a bit, let's clap our hands!

Now, if you believe in God's perfect love, why don't you give Him a shout of *Praise!*



VANYA CASTOR:

God, You are faithful. You are true God of Love.
God, Your love is relentless.

We know this but sometimes, we still sit at His feet, waiting for a Word from God. But when He died on the Cross, everything that had to be said had already been said. Now, all we have to do is believe. Amen?

As we continue to worship, I want to invite you to believe. And one little way we can start to believe—truly believe in the love of God-- is by singing praises to Him. So, I want to invite you to offer our song to Him today. Let's sing!

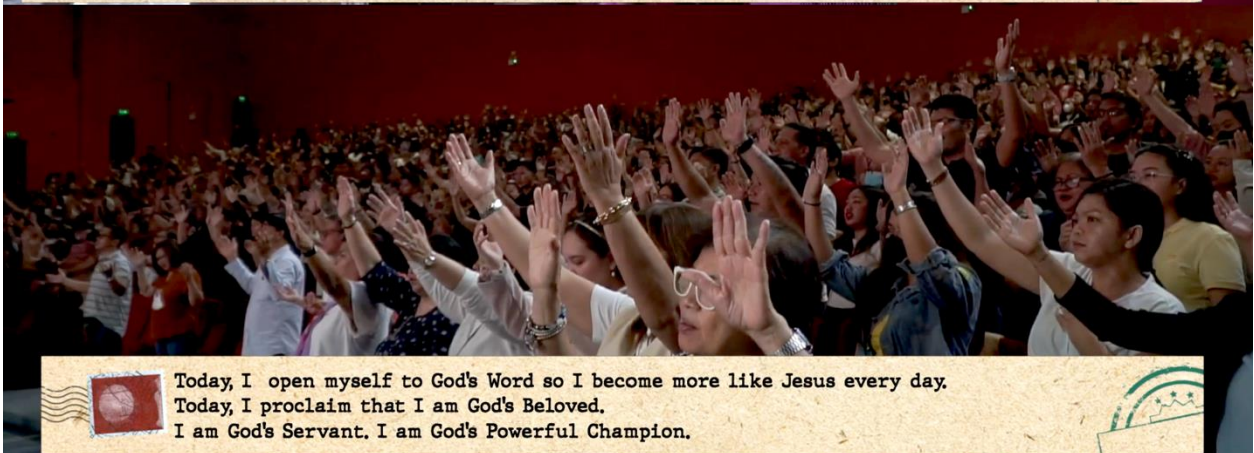




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NOVENA TO GOD'S LOVE DECLARATION OF ABUNDANCE

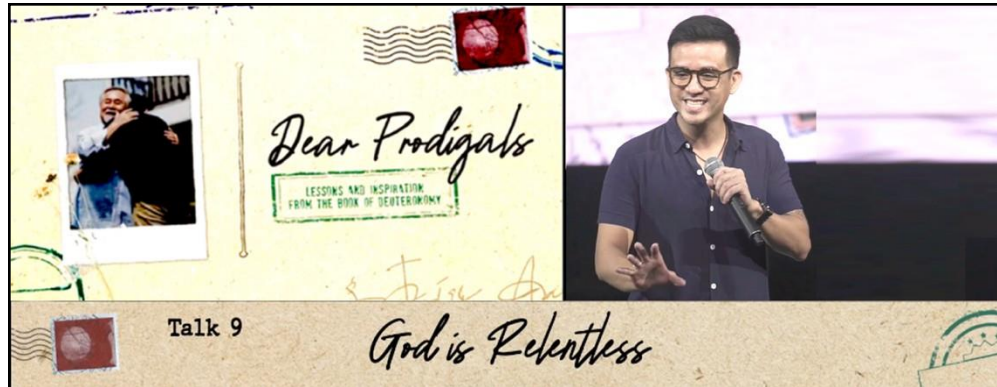
BRO. AUDEE VILLARAZA: Everybody, stretch your hands out towards the Heavens, as wide as the Love of God. Receive God's Love today over your life and over your situation and say this together with me:



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



Talk



BRO. AUDEE VILLARAZA:

Our big message for today: *God is Relentless*.

Praise God! You know, never in our wildest dreams we would ever think that we would take on such difficult teachings as the *Torah*—the first five books of the Bible.

Actually, 10 years ago, if somebody approached us and said, “You know, why don't we study *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*?” --we would think that the guy was high on cough syrup. Because it's such a difficult teaching! I mean why would you teach this? And yet, here we are—and we are at the doorstep, finally finishing *Deuteronomy*.

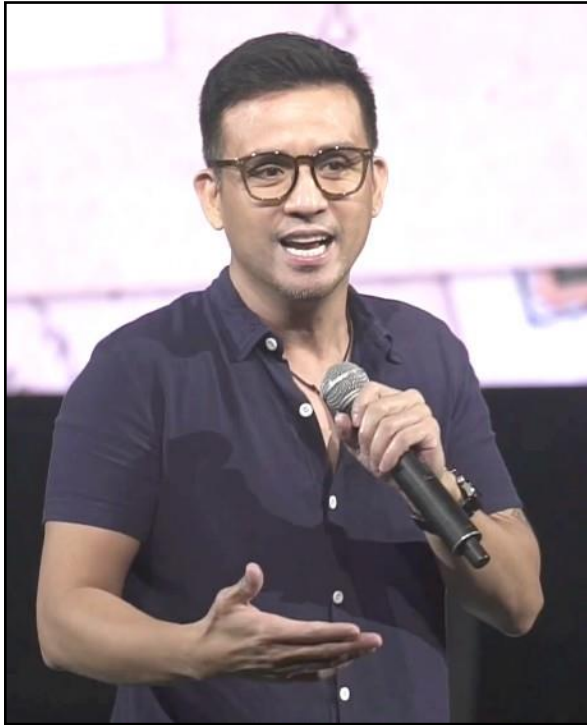
We finished the *Torah* together! Are you happy that we finished the *Torah* together? It's such a difficult teaching because, I mean, I'm sure that if I ask you this question, you will give me an honest answer.

Between the Old and New Testaments, which do you prefer studying?

I mean they're both good, right? But between the New and the Old Testaments, which one would you prefer studying?

Let's be honest-- just to be brutally honest with you. We love the New Testament! Why? Because in the New Testament, it feels like God is kinder, sweeter, happier. Because in the Old Testament, that's where God seems like He's always angry. That's the God who drove out Adam and Eve from the Garden.

The Old Testament is where God drowned the entire humanity and saved only one tiny family in a floating zoo, right? God seems to be angry in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, that's the God who let an entire nation—the Israelites-- to die in the desert.



Old or New?

So, between the Old and the New, yes, I prefer reading the New. But is it true that God is angry in the Old Testament?

Back in the day when I was first starting out in Ministry, I encountered one of our leaders. This is the kind of leader that I love to be under him. He mentored me, by the way, and he was the kind of person that you would love to be around-- somebody who was so full of wisdom, full of humility, full of love. And this was the kind of person that whenever you're with him, you feel like you're a plant that's being watered. You have people like that in your life? People who give life to you? That's the kind of leader that he was.

And so, I loved him. Every time I was with him, I was always excited to learn something new. But then one day, I emailed him with a proposal that was for an event that was going to happen at The Feast a few weeks before Sunday.

A few days later, he replied to me and I tell you, for the first time ever, I was shocked because the email that he sent to me-- that reply--it was the coldest reply ever and I kind of thought, "Oh no, he's mad at me."

And then I started justifying.

Why would he be mad at me? Maybe it's because of that one time that while we were having a meeting and I was sitting in front, I fell asleep and my mouth was wide open. Maybe that's the reason he was mad at me. And that went on for many days-- I kept on thinking, what's wrong? Why did he reply in such a cold way? Until I saw him that Sunday.

And that Sunday, when I came to him face to face, I was shocked because everything was normal! I mean he was happy, he was jolly, he was good to be around! So, I realized this: That was the day that I finally understood that sometimes, the way people speak, and the way people communicate, is not directly revealing who they are as a person.



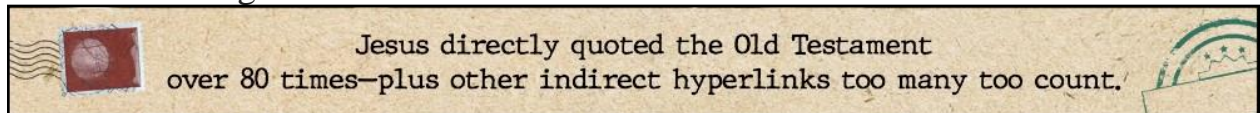
Lessons from the *Torah*

I mean, sometimes when we read something, the words that we consume are dependent on our values, our culture, on our experience. So, sometimes when we read a line, our perception is based on how we've experienced it before. So, if we're used to seeing emoticons in the text and the person all of a sudden doesn't send an emoticon, "Ay! Galit na yan sakin."

Because that's our experience, that's the pattern.

That's why when we read the Bible, sometimes, we encounter passages that are hard to comprehend. You feel like, *God is angry at me*. But the truth is, it's not really true because God's heart will always be for you.

The more that I read about Jesus, the more that I research and study His life, the more I realize that the heart of Jesus contains the *Torah*. Jesus loved the *Torah*. He quoted the *Torah* more than 80 times-- plus all those hyperlinks, over and over again.



So, if Jesus loved the *Torah*, there must be a reason we also need to love the *Torah*, right?

Some of you are probably wondering why would I love the *Torah*. It's not relevant to me. I can't learn anything from the *Torah*.

I'll teach you something today. Jesus will reveal in one story in the New Testament how He will summarize the entire teachings of the *Torah* with one parable: the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*.

Let's go back to where it all began-- in *Genesis*. It says in Genesis 2:9 that the Lord God made all sorts of trees grow -- trees that were beautiful, that produced delicious fruits. And in the middle of the Garden of Eden. He placed the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It's the story of Creation.

SIX PARALLELS:
The Garden of Eden
and the Parable
of the Prodigal Son

I am going to give you six parallels between the Garden of Eden and the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*.



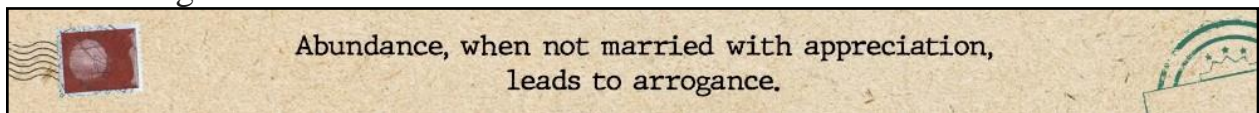
1 THEY LIVED IN GOD'S ABUNDANCE.

The first one is that in the beginning, lived in God's abundance. That's the first parallel. Adam and Eve lived in God's abundance because in the original design, God created a place of abundance—the Garden of Eden, and in that place, in that Garden, His children were living with Him.

Similarly, if you think about it, in the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*, how does the story start? The father lived in one house together with his two children.

So, it all starts with abundance. But then, here's the takeaway lesson: It doesn't end in abundance. It's followed by what? By arrogance.

Here's the first takeaway lesson for you. Abundance -- if you do not marry that with appreciation, if you don't marry that with thanksgiving and humility, it will lead to arrogance.



And I have seen people do this. I don't even have to look too far. I just look at myself in the mirror. I know I'm talking to myself through this talk.

There comes a time in your life-- and this happened to you when you were successful in your line of work, in your career-- you thought, "Hey, I was able to do this on my own without God's help."

Have you ever felt like that sometimes? That you did it on your own and you became proud and you became arrogant? That's what happens when you achieve abundance without God.

In the process, you become proud, you become egotistical, you remove yourself from that abundance that God originally designed for you.

2 THEY INSISTED ON GETTING ABUNDANCE THEIR WAY.

So, in the first story, the parallel is that Adam and Eve lived with God the Father.

They were abundant.

But then, they said, “Okay, we choose to eat this forbidden fruit.”

So, in a way, they were saying, “God, I don't need you anymore. I can do this on my own.”

And similarly, the youngest son in the Parable, when he asked for his inheritance early, he was saying, “Father, I don't need you anymore. I can do this on my own.”

You see, that's the first mistake. That we think that we can do stuff on our own without God. That's a very dangerous recipe to have. But I want you to know that in the beginning, God created abundance. A place where everything flows.

The second parallel is they insisted on getting their own way. They lived in abundance and then they started creating abundance for themselves-- on their own.

Let's go to the text. I learned this. This is amazing. Okay, I love reading the book of *Genesis* because even though this is my nth time to read this, I continue to learn something new. Does that happen to you sometimes? When you read the Bible over and over again? Yes, I've read this so many times but there's a certain passage that God will use to give fresh meaning to you.

I'll reveal to you something that I've never discovered until this week -- about the Garden of Eden. There were many trees there, right? There were trees that they could eat from, and then there was one tree that they could *not* eat from. What was that tree called? The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

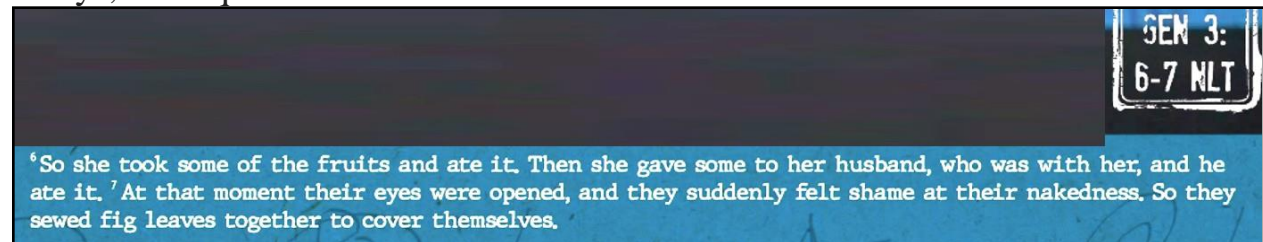


GEN
2:9 MLT

“The Lord God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

We Desire What's Forbidden

But check this out: Not one time did the author say that Adam and Eve ate from the other trees. The only time the word *ate* was used was in Chapter 3 verse 6. It says, and I quote:



Wait a minute... You mean to tell me that the entire time that they were in this lush garden, they never ate from the other trees? The only fruit that they ate was from the forbidden tree?

Isn't this true in our own life? Like you're already so richly blessed and yet you still want that one thing that you know you're not allowed to have.

That's the rule of life. The more that it's forbidden, the more you desire it. You already have a good marriage and yet you're still looking for that illusion... What *if* that person who got away from you...

You already have a good career and yet you're still looking for that one job that you know you cannot have.

So many people buy stuff that they know they can't really afford. They'll buy on credit. Why? Because this is what happens to us. You know you can't afford that iPhone but you're willing to give up an arm and a leg and sometimes even a kidney just to get that iPhone. Am I preaching the truth?

We want what we can't have and so what do we do? We try to create abundance on our own.

And that's the story of Adam and Eve-- when they chose the forbidden fruit. But it's also the story of the youngest brother. He had everything in his father's house. In his father's house, he had servants. He could eat anything from his father's house. He could have breakfast, brunch, lunch, merienda (afternoon snacks), dinner. He can even have late midnight snacks. But what did he do?

He said, "No, I want to create abundance on my own. I'm going to leave my father's house."



Are You Ready for the Blessing?

And then there's the older brother.

I mean, some of you might think:
“But yeah, the older brother did not leave the father's house.”

Did you know that you can still sin against God even though you are in His Presence? Did you know that even though you're living in His house you can still sin against Him?

Ask me how...

When you could continue to complain repeatedly about what you do not have-- when you do not appreciate the blessings that God has already given you. You're always looking over the other side of the fence, and you're always envious of what the others have and what you don't have.

That's what the older brother did. In the book of Luke, the older brother says:



LUKE 15:
29, 31 MLT

“All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends..! His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours..'"

He was living in his father's house. His father said to him, “Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me and everything I have is yours.”

Let me say that again, “*Everything I have is yours.*”

I want to preach this to somebody right now: You're struggling because you think that God is blessing the person beside you, and He's blessing more people than you. He's blessing that person who's already married and yet you're still single right now and your biological clock is ticking.

And some people here are praying for children and you see your friends give birth again and again, and then you're complaining...

I want to say this to you: God says, “*Everything I have is yours.*”

Here's how I would look at it. Remember how the youngest son asked for his inheritance early, prematurely? Everything that the father owned was his but the problem was he wasn't ready to wait for the blessing. He wanted the blessing right away.

God's Timing

See, some of us mismanage the miracle and mismanage the blessing simply because we're rushing for the blessing. Meanwhile, God is preparing you for the blessing because He knows that you might not be ready for it yet.

But if you continue to trust God, you'll understand that He knows the right time for when you're ready for that job promotion. He knows the right time for when you're ready for that spouse. He knows the right time for when you're ready for that healing. He knows the right time for that blessing to be given to your life.

So, what do you do? You trust in the Father. You remain in His house. He says, "Everything I have is yours."

Unfortunately, the sad reality is that Adam and Eve did not trust in the Lord. What happened? They were exiled from the Garden.

The young son did not trust in the Lord.

And now God says, "The land that you will walk on is cursed. Everything that you do from here on will be cursed. You have to work for it, you have to toil for it."

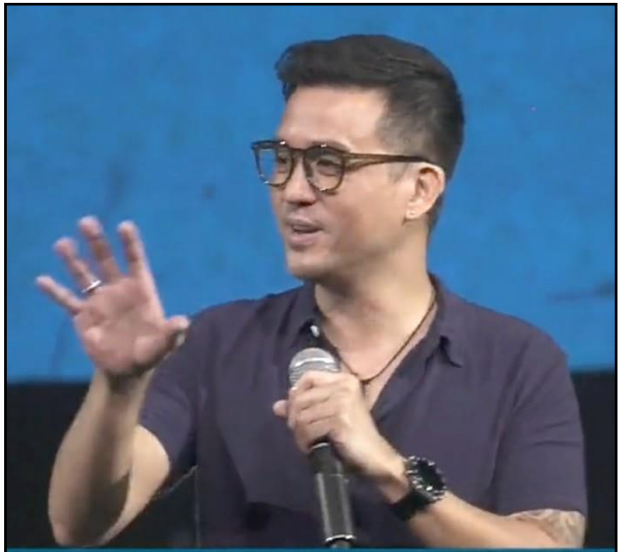
And that's what we're doing every day. We work six days a week. The seventh day is a Sabbath. But for six days a week, what happens? You work hard.

Why? Because that's the stuff of life. That's what happens.

But you see, here's the key: All this time, Adam and Eve weren't working with God anymore and what happened was that they bore three children, and two of them we know of -- Cain and Abel.

What happened between Cain and Abel? Abel was favored by God and Cain was envious of his brother. So, what did Cain do? He killed his brother.

Isn't this how life always is? When you see God blessing the other person, in your head, you're also killing that person with envy. But you see, one key takeaway from this is that if only Cain was able to realize that God loved him, maybe he would have done differently.



3 GOD RUNS TOWARDS THEM.

The problem with all of us is that we always think that God loves the other person more than us and so we complain. But you forget that God is also your God and He also loves you. So, the key here is to receive God's love. Because when you realize that God's love is relentless, it won't matter how much God is blessing the other person. Because you know that God is also blessing you.



The truth is, when you walk around in this world with an empty love tank, you're always chasing blessings, you're always chasing love. Sometimes, you'll find love but you'll find it in the wrong place. When you walk around with an empty love tank, you'll always war with your neighbors because no matter how much you are richly blessed right now, always, there's something to complain about.

That's the second parallel: That they created abundance on their own. But here's the crazy part: Even after they were exiled from the Garden, even after the son walked away from his father, here's how crazy God is-- in a good way: God continued to run after them. He did! Let me show you back to *Genesis*. The story says that after Adam and Eve fell, God started looking for them.

"Then the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

GEN
3:9 MLT

There are two ways to ask a question. The first way is this: You ask a question simply because you want to understand. That's the first way.

The second way is you ask a question because you want to argue and debate over that statement that the person said, you know...

So, I want to ask a question-- and as a husband. All the husbands raise your hands. Husbands, I've learned this free tip for you: I've learned that whenever my wife asks me the question, "Where are you?" there are two ways of deciphering that. The first way, listen to me, is this: When your wife asks you *Where are you?*, it simply means that she misses you. She cannot stand the sight of the absence of your presence. So, she's asking where you are.

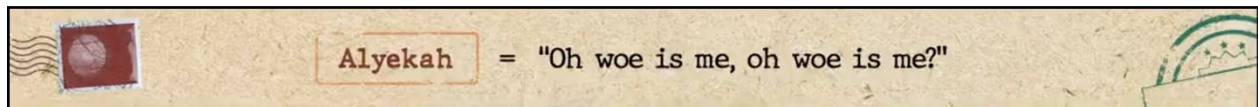
The second reason-- and oftentimes this is really the reason-- she wants to ask you to do something, some errand. Oftentimes, No. 2 is for me too.

God Hurts When Children Leave

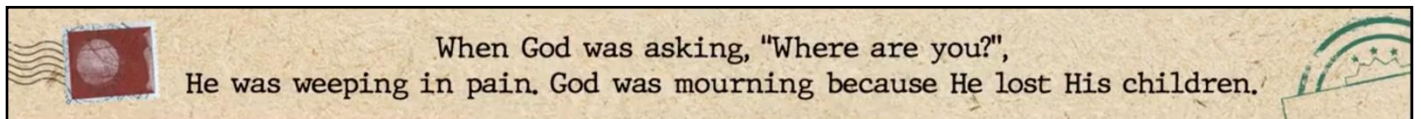
And so, what does it mean when God asked Adam and Eve, “*Where are you?*”

The first time I read that-- I preached this a few times-- the first time, I realized that maybe God is asking where they are because He wants to reprimand them for eating the forbidden fruit...Until this week... I came across this word in the original Hebrew language... Get ready to be blown away!

In the original Hebrew language, the phrase *where are you* is *alyekah*. It simply means, in English, “*Woe is me!*” In Tagalog, “*Kawawa naman ako!*”



God was there looking for Adam and Eve not because He wanted to punish them. God was looking for them and He said “*Where are you?*” not because He was mad. He was actually *weeping in pain*-- because He lost his children!
Woe is me! Kawawa naman ako!



My children, here's the truth: Parents, you know this: Whenever your child leaves home -- because of a fight or because of a disagreement-- isn't it true that there is a part of you that hurts? Is this true: You might be angry, you might be bitter but deep inside you, there's that part that hurts?

Did you know that whenever you leave your Heavenly Father, He is hurting? God hurts when you leave home.

That's why He says, “*Where are you?*”

4 THEY HIDE IN AGONY.

But here's the fourth parallel-- and I hope you're receiving this the way I received it. Adam and Eve, they hid in agony.

I'll show you...

When God asked "Where are you?" here's how Adam replied:

GEN 3:
10-11 MLT

"I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked." "Who told you that you were naked?" the Lord God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"



Adam said, "We're hiding from You, Lord, because we're naked."

What does that mean? Were they hiding because they thought that God was going to be repulsed by their nakedness? As if God was shallow. Like, were they afraid because they were ashamed? Yes, I think that can be given as an explanation or definition.

But here's the key again. We go back to the original Hebrew language of the word *naked*.

Naked also means "agony"

In the original Hebrew language, *naked* means *agony*.

Now, here's the message: God was hurting because His children were lost.

But when Adam said, "We hid because we were naked," he was saying, "We hid because we too were in agony."

When children leave their parent, there's also a part of them that hurts. Why? Because they know that they have broken the person who loves them the most.

I mean, you can take it out on your parents because you say, "Well, my father hurt me or my mother hurt me."

But deep inside, you're hurting because you do know that you hurt your parents -- just like if you know that you've hurt somebody who loves you so much, it hurts you.

5 THE BARREN LIFE OUTSIDE THE GARDEN.



Isn't it that's what Adam and Eve were saying?
“*We were in agony simply because we're not with you.*”

And the prodigal son felt that so much, if you think about it. When he realized that everything was in his father's house, he said, "I'll go back to my father."

But he said, "If I go back to my father, I know that he'll accept me. But I'll go back not as a son but as a servant."

He was willing to go back to his father's house not as a son anymore but as a servant.

And I'm wondering who among you here is so afraid to go back to the Lord... And you're not going to Confession or receiving Communion because you're so afraid.

But I want you to know that *fear* has a name. It's called *agony*.

You're hurting deep inside because you know you've been separated from God.

Stop that. You need to come back to the Lord today. You need to return to Him. You are a prodigal child and you need to come back.

Now, Adam and Eve had been separated from the Garden, and they were about to experience the barren life outside of the Garden.

Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden of Eden. It was also true with the Israelites-- how they lived as slaves.

That's what happens when you get exiled from the Lord-- when you get disconnected from Him.

The youngest son, what happened to him? He started serving the Gentiles. He started eating pig slop.

In the Father's house, everything is there. But the moment you walk out, and you start doing things on your own, here's my question-- think about this: In the life that you live, in the work that you do, are you working with God or are you working on your own?

6 THE LONG ROAD BACK HOME.

How do you know, Bro. Audee, if I'm working with God, or if I'm working on my own?

When you work with God, you get physically tired. When you work with God, you get problems, you get stress. But at the end of the day, there is fulfillment. There is that sense of purpose, a sense of gratitude: "Even though I don't have rest today, I'm coming home with fulfillment. I know my purpose."



But when you are not working with God, it feels like it's just a pattern over and over again. It's like a recurring theme and you feel like there's no purpose in your life.

So, work with the Lord. That's message No. 5: Work with the Lord. If you've left the house, maybe it's because you're stressed right now.

Here's No.6: Let's go back to Luke. Adam and Eve left, and the youngest son left. But they trekked the long road back home. They returned.

All of the *Torah* and all of the *Prodigal Son* stories are summed up by this one statement in Luke 15:20: "So he returned home to his father."

"So he returned home to his father."

LUKE 15:20 MLT

The author didn't say how long it took for the journey for them to go back home. He left us room for imagination: Jesus, when He told the Parable, He wanted to point us back to the *Torah*, how long the Israelites took to get to the Promised Land: 40 years!

You want to know why it took them 40 years to get from Egypt, from slavery, to the Promised Land?

I'll show you. We pick up the idea from the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:13:

LUKE 15:13 NKJV

And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possession with prodigal living.

God Allows Foolish Decisions

Prodigal means *foolish*. It took the Israelites so long to journey from the desert, the wilderness, to the Promised Land because they were *foolish*.

Did you know that God is so good that He will allow you to make your own decisions in your life even if it's a foolish decision? He will do that. That's why it's so scary sometimes to make a decision.



Why? Because if I am making a wrong decision, God's not going to stop me. He's going to allow me to go through that decision because He wants me to learn a lesson.

So, for the Israelites, it took so long for that trip back home. Why? Because they were foolish.

Just like us-- just like you, just like me. As it was also for the Prodigal Son. But eventually, he found his way back home. Now, how did the Prodigal Son return? How did the Israelites return?

I'll read it to you. The Prodigal Son story says:

¹⁷ When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger!

Step 1: Admission

The first step is to get back to the father's home. Here's what it's called: It's called *admission*.

The author of the story, St. Luke, wrote that in His Parable, Jesus said when the Prodigal Son finally came to his senses, he admitted that he did something wrong.

If you need to go to the Lord, back to His home, the first step is always *admission*. You admit your sin, you acknowledge your sin.

Step 2: Contrition

Here's the second step: it's called *contrition*:



¹⁸ I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant."

First step is admission: "I admit I have sinned against you."

Second step is contrition: There must be repentance.

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Go Home!

Fr. Bob McConaghy preached this earlier for us: to repent and confess to the Lord: “Father, I have sinned against both You and Heaven.”

And you know, sadly, Adam and Eve never did both. They didn't *admit*. They didn't confess and they left.

But thank God, we're shown the way today: Through the life of the Prodigal Son.

Adam and Eve, they never went back to the Lord. They couldn't find their way back to the Garden. Because they never admitted, they never confessed, they never acknowledged what they did was wrong.

But you see, the youngest son, he did something that I believe we should do. This is something Adam and Eve never did: That is, the son came to his senses that he sinned against his father and he confessed, “Father, I have sinned against both of you and Heaven.

He said “I will go home to my father.”

He didn't say, “I'm going to stop by my friend's house so that he can give me good advice. I'm going to go to my leader first, so that he can pray over me.

Those are good steps, by the way.

But the son said, “*I will go home to my father.*”

He did not have any stopover. He went straight to the father's house.

And I know what some of you are thinking: “Is it that easy? I can go straight to my father? I don't need Church anymore? I don't need my Christian friends anymore?

You do need them. But there's sense in which when you realize you've sinned against God, you go straight to Him. Go home to the Father first.

That's what the son did: “*I will go home to my father.*”

And here's how the father greeted him:

LUKE 15:
20 MLT

“And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.”

My dear friends, no matter which path you take in life—can be the right road, can be the wrong road, can be a U-turn, whatever area of life right now, or whatever season you're in—here's the message: Every road that you take, no matter if you've gotten lost, when you acknowledge Jesus in that path, that will lead you straight home. Amen.

Where You Belong

No matter what road you are taking—can be the wrong road. And yet when you say, “Lord, today, I will walk with You,” that becomes the right road. Amen.

And guess what: Every road that leads to Jesus, it leads back to the Father’s arms where you belong.

**THE ROAD WILL ALWAYS LEAD BACK
TO THE FATHER’S ARMS**

That’s where we belong. You don’t have to wait for your friend to pray over you. You don’t have to wait for somebody to affirm you, to push you forward. No. All you have to do is to make a decision today: “Lord, I want to take that step towards You.

Can you do that with me? Just put your right foot forward, and try your best to balance. And then on the count of 3, put that foot down—signifying your step toward the Lord. Are you ready? Yes. Here we go: 1- 2- 3.

Doesn’t that feel good?



You take that first step. Sometimes, your knees are weak. Sometimes, you’ll trip. But I guarantee you that when you take that step towards the Lord, He’ll be the first One to open His arms for you today. Amen.



Thank You, Lord!

Father, look at Your children—how and who they are. We are all sinners in this place—I, most of all. We're all sinners in need of a Savior. In this moment, we bow to You, to Your Sovereignty, to Your Lordship, and to Your Kingship.

And we say, forgive us for all the ways that we hurt You.

Now, we know, Lord, that the reason it's so hard to come back is we've been hurting. And in that hurt, we were led to different places and situations that we did not plan for. But we thank You, God, for Your Son Jesus whom You sent. That now we have a way back to You. And all we have to do is reach out to Him, and receive Him, and accept Him, and embrace Him. And then, we are back in Your Home.

Today, this is Your Upper Room, Father-- where Your Presence will be felt by everyone. I pray that You descend upon the heart of Your child in this moment and speak to each one.

We thank You, Lord, that You never gave up on us. We thank You that You never quit-- not even once—on us. Even though we were unfaithful, You continue to be faithful. Even though we were selfish, You continue to be selfless. Thank You, Lord, that Your grace abounds and that Your mercy never ends, and that Your love is overflowing. Let Your love overflow in this place today. May goodness and mercy follow us the rest of our days and may we walk forever in Your love. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen and amen.



MERCY MINISTRIES

*God blesses those who are merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.*

--Matthew 5:7

ANAWIM YEAR 28 PART 2

An Anawim for God's Anawim

By ARSENIA D. BINOHHI

I REJOICE with Anawim on this, the 28th Year of our Ministry where I happily serve as Center Administrator of our Home for Abandoned Elderly.

Anawim is a Hebrew word which means *God's poor*. I was one.

Yes, I come from a family of modest means. But a family full of love. Both my parents worked as farmers. They usually left the house early in the morning and arrived home late in the afternoon. But even as they struggled to make both ends meet, they made it a point to have time for us seven children.

We lived in Banaue, Ifugao. I studied at Kinakin Elementary School located in Banaue, graduating in 1996, and Immaculate Conception School, also in Banaue, graduating in 2000.

I remember during my elementary days, every time there were school activities or projects where they were needed, my parents were always at our side to support us. They instilled in our mind the importance of education, loving the things that we are doing, and a good relationship with the people around us. This is why I was inspired to pursue and excel in my studies.

Sadly, when I was only 13 years old, my father died, succumbing to an illness. But life had to go on with my loving mother solely, courageously fending for us.

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Finding Anawim

By my college time, we transferred from Banaue to Baguio City.

Knowing well the life of people in need—as I was one-- I took up Social Work at Saint Louis University, Baguio City, graduating in 2004, and eventually I became a registered social worker.

Then, I met Bernardo Binohhi in Banawe. He courted me in Baguio, and we got married in 2005. A year after, 2006, I fortunately worked as a social worker in an institution for the differently-abled children in Baguio City. I worked there almost five years.

Through those years, we were blessed with three children. And because of rising needs of my family, I had to look for other job options.

I surfed the Internet and I chanced upon a post of the Anawim Lay Missions (ALMS) Foundation hiring for a registered social worker. So, I immediately inquired for the details through email.

I found out ALMS runs the Anawim Home for Abandoned Elderly, one of the Mercy Ministries of the Light of Jesus Family founded by lay preacher Bro. Bo Sanchez, *here, at right*, with me amid the lush greenery of Anawim.

Bro. Rey Ortega, then among the servant leaders in the LOJ Mercy Ministries, responded to my email. And long story short, I was hired as Anawim Center social worker on April 11, 2011. Year 2020, I was promoted as Anawim social services head. And a year after, I was promoted as the Center administrator but still acting as the social services head.

When I started in Anawim, I had to transfer from Baguio City to the Anawim Center in Montalban (now Rodriguez) Rizal, leaving my husband and kids in Baguio. I usually went home to Baguio every week. But thank God, after a year, I was able to bring my family with me in Montalban.



Administration Programs

As Anawim Center administrator, I oversee the overall operations of the Center, attending to both personnel and client members or resident elderly. I confirm admission/discharge of members. I formulate plans, programs, and policies and submit them for approval to our Anawim Executive Director Bro. Carlos Dimson, *here at right*, with Bro. Hermie Morelos (*center*), Chairman of LOJ Mercy Ministries and also Chairman of Anawim's Board of Trustees.

I then ensure implementation of approved programs/policies.



Here, I am presenting Anawim's programs in a recent seminar.

As social services department head, I supervise the day-to-day work assignments and distribution of workload of the social workers and social welfare aides.

Among other related services, I also ensure that Anawim complies with all the laws and regulations of the Department of Social Welfare and Development which are pertinent to Anawim.

Overload of Blessings

Yes, heavy, full time, overtime job. But I don't call it that way. For me, Anawim is a load, overload of blessings.

Every day, I thank our loving God for these blessings. To mention some: **I've grown in my spiritual life.** There are lots of spiritual enhancement activities in Anawim that allows us to grow spiritually.

We have a Feast in Anawim with Bro. Hermie Morelos as our Feast Builder. Anawim Feast Light, as we call it—because it's a mini-version of the Light of Jesus Family—holds our prayer gathering every Wednesday.

My husband and children family have also become closer to God because I also share to them what I am learning in Anawim. My two children used to volunteer as an altar server in the Anawim Chapel.

Blessings, *back row, from left: my husband Bernard, daughter Bea Mae, son Brent, and me. Front row, from left: sons Berhel and Ben Malic .*



A family aside from my own biological family. I feel Anawim is my second home because in Anawim, we treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. I gave birth to my fourth/youngest child in Anawim.

And so, I really feel the care and support of my Anawim family.

I work and serve at the same time. I love to take care of my mother but I couldn't because she is in the province.

By serving the elderly in Anawim, I feel I am also serving my mother while I am working—

and that gives me a feeling of fulfilment.

My self-confidence is well uplifted. I am so blessed to have leaders in Anawim who believe in me and allow me to bring out the best in me and so with the other Anawim servants. We feel their love for us and so we also love serving in Anawim.

Yes, I am here, very blessed to serve the *anawim*—as I was once. To let everyone know that poverty is never a hindrance for God to reach out to those who feel the least and abandoned. He is our God who every day fulfills His promise: *“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



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

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FAMILY ONLINE NEWSMAGAZINE

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Mercy Ministries Chairman
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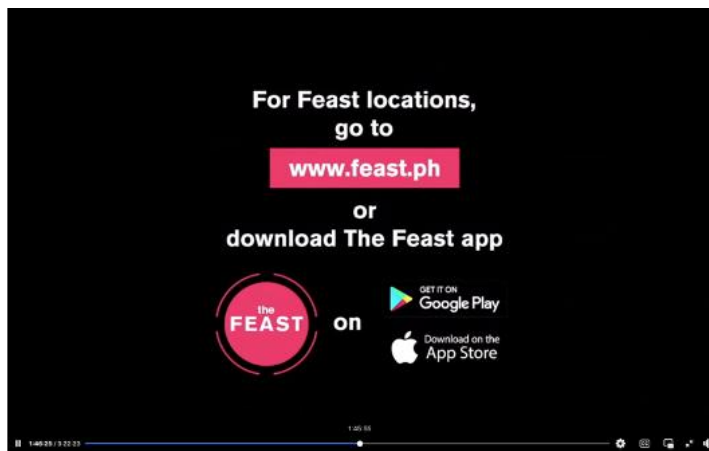
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Go and make disciples of all men.

— Matthew 28:19

