



FAMILY

JANUARY 21, 2024

We're So Skilled in Hiding Our Mess

RECENTLY, a huge survey was made among thousands of unchurched young people, asking them, “Why don’t you go to church anymore?”

One of the biggest reasons: “Because Christians are self-righteous.”

Ouch. Do you know why we’re self-righteous?

Because we forget how messed up we are.

Let me define self-righteousness in my words:

When we believe that other people’s sins are bigger than our sins. But many people’s weighing scale of sin is busted. For example, a lot of people think sexual sin is the biggest sin. But that’s not true.

One day, a priest told me that most of the confessions he hears are about sexual sins—masturbation, pornography, sexual fantasies... But he said very few confess sins of gossip, or injustice, or omission, or spiritual pride... These are the biggest sins of all.

We’re all messed up. The more you can accept your mess, the easier it will be to accept the mess of others.

Have a transformational Feast today!

May your dreams come true,

Bo Sanchez



WELCOME
to our new Feast Talk series:
TABLE TALKS:
Community Recipes of Love
Talk 2: Matthew’s Table

What Are You Looking for in 2024?

IN last Sunday’s Gospel, John the Baptist’s disciples followed Jesus, and Jesus asked them, “What are you looking for?”

Discussing the Gospel, Fr. Albert Garong said we should reflect on the same question as we enter 2024, *page 3*.

Bro. Bo Sanchez also tells us to *look*-- not at other’s messes but our own. That’s the first step in our mission to make disciples for the Lord. Details in today’s Feast Talk which Bro. Bo introduces on *page 1*.

Bro. Bo also tells us to look closely at our Light of Jesus Family-- the main topic of our new Feast Talk series: *TABLE TALKS: Community Recipes of Love, page 20*.

Leading our *Love Offering* session, Bro. Audee Villaraza exhorts that we look closely at what we give, *page 10*.



In our *Mercy Ministries* section, Bro. Jon Escoto reminds us to take a look at the situation of those in prison. Feast District Builder of Laguna and now head of the Light of Jesus Prison Mission, he presents staggering, disturbing statistics that indicate we not only look but really love those in prison with the love of the Lord, *page 33*.

Yes, as we enter 2024, we look forward to achieving our goals, fulfilling our dreams.

This issue inspires us to reflect on what we really should look for.

Hint: Jesus said, “Come and see...”

All for God’s Glory,

Randy Borromeo
Media Ministry
Executive Director

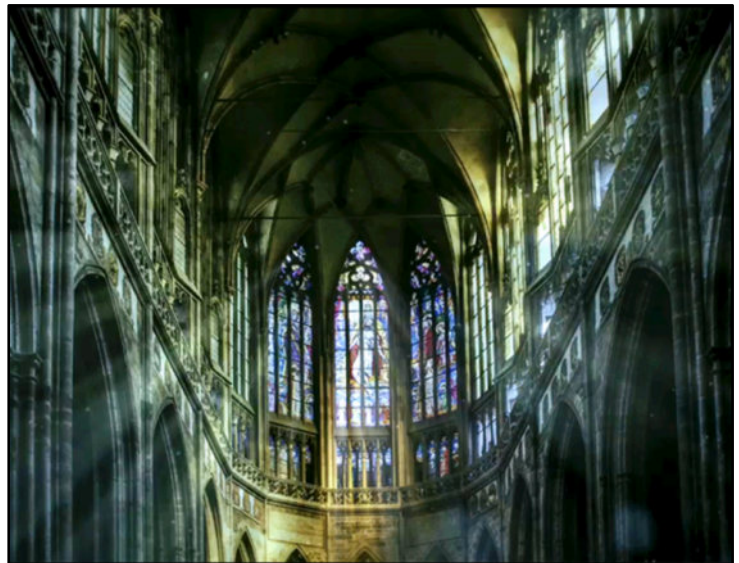




FLASHBACK!

JANUARY 14, 2024

Holy Mass



SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Homily

REV. FR. ALBERT GARONG, SSP

on the Gospel John 1 35-42

John's Disciples Follow Jesus

Excerpts:

GOOD MORNING, Everyone! It's a beautiful Sunday. Let us praise the Lord and give Him a clap offering.

When I was introduced a while ago, and my name is Fr. Albert Garong, SSP, what do you think SSP stands for? Hindi Sobrang Sobrang Pogi-- extra-extra handsome. That goes without saying. Joke only 😊

SSP is our congregation: Society of Saint Paul. Some other priests, like Fr. Paolo Asprer, are also SSP. We often hear after the name of other priests: Fr. Manoling Francisco, SJ, -- Society of Jesus; Fr. Jerry Orbos, SVD-- Society of Divine Word; also with Sisters: RVM-- Religious of the Virgin Mary. These indicate which congregation we belong to.

The FEAST FAMILY January 21, 2024 3



Where We Belong

By the way, Society of St. Paul -- you're probably familiar with our store-- St. Paul's. If you're walking in the mall and then, you know, you're looking at displays, and then you look, you see floor-to-ceiling pictures of actors, and then Chicken Joy, and then underwear models, and then suddenly, Mama Mary looking at you-- that's the St. Paul's store.

How did I end up here? It's funny because I didn't choose to be with the SSP. I really had no idea about my congregation. None at all-- except for the store. I didn't know that it was about a mission of priests and brothers.

So, what happened was that I was graduating high school and a nun overheard me blurt, "I think I'd like to enter the seminary instead of going to a university."

She just overheard me, but she sprang into action. Because without me knowing it, she was calling different seminaries. And the one she really pushed for was St. Paul Seminary.

So, one day in the middle of class, I was called out of the room and told I had a phone call, I picked up the phone, and on the other side, was a priest.

He told me, "Okay, Albert? Is this Albert? Okay. So, this weekend, you have to pack your bag. You have to bring clothes, you have to bring toiletries..."

"What's happening," I said, "am I being kidnapped?"

But it was for a weekend search-in. A search-in is when you stay in the seminary for a couple of days so you can try what it's all about

You know what? The nun was right-- even if it was an invasion of my privacy. She's right because I'm still with SSP now and I love it. And it's because of her that I found my specific vocation-- or at least she was instrumental to that.

Today's Readings also have that core idea of finding what we're looking for.

God through Jesus Christ asks: "What are you looking for?"

We just entered a new year and I hope you entered it with a sense of reflection on what we are doing in this world: What am I doing? What am I pursuing? What will I strive for more? What are your goals for 2024?

But at the heart of all those, the simple question: What do you hope to find?

What are you looking for?

And we are blessed that God has made a way that we can find the answer.

God's Answer

First, because God is the One who enters our space, our life.

Last Tuesday, there was a huge phenomenon here in Manila. Some 6.5 million went out on the streets-- not for a K-Pop concert, not for a political rally-- but for what? The Nazareno-- the Nazarene.

That is amazing.

I don't know how many of you have a particular devotion to the Nazarene --but even if you're not a devotee, the event is hard to miss-- especially when you scroll on social media and you see all these photos of people just trying to touch the image.

Along with that, there are always the questions: "Father, is that okay?" "Father, it doesn't seem right. Isn't that idolatry?"

Because the attention seems focused on the image. The first thing we remember about devotions is that we can never judge a devotion when we are outside of it. Devotees understand something that we don't. So, refrain from judging if you're outside of that. What's more important is those people have found something that perhaps not all of us have found...

To the people, who ask me, I always ask back: "Well, are you *that* hungry for Jesus?"



First Reading: First Samuel 3: 3b-10, 19

3b Samuel slept in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. 4 And the Lord called Samuel. And he answered: Here am I. 5 And he ran to Heli and said: Here am I: for thou didst call me. He said: I did not call: go back and sleep. And he went and slept.

6 And the Lord called Samuel again. And Samuel arose and went to Heli, and said: Here am I: for thou calls me. He answered: I did not call thee, my son: return and sleep. 7 Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither had the word of the Lord been revealed to him. 8 And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose up and went to

Heli. 9 And said: Here am I: for thou didst call me. Then Heli understood that the Lord called the child, and he said to Samuel: Go, and sleep: and if he shall call thee anymore, thou shalt say: Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and slept in his place.

10 And the Lord came and stood: and he called, as he had called the other times: Samuel, Samuel. And Samuel said: Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

19 And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and not one of his words fell to the ground.



Sense of Desperation

We have that sense of desperation. When you think of a life that has no God in it, do you have that sense that everything is lost? Or, perhaps because you have a stable paycheck, your finances are well organized, you have a house, and you have the security that God is only your secret weapon-- and God is someone you turn to only when everything else has failed.

These people, they need God desperately. Perhaps, because many of them belong to the urban poor sector and society has failed them, the government has failed them, even the church as an institution has failed them. But it's good that when everything has failed them, they turn to God.

What are you looking for? Isn't it God? Isn't God the answer? Beneath all those dreams and goals, underneath is your hunger for God.

So, why do we keep putting a lot of things ahead of Him? Why do we not run to Jesus when we see Him? Why is going to Mass so hard to do that we have to drag ourselves to church?

And even when you're there, it's hard to keep your attention to the Mass. You're drifting to so many other practical concerns.



Second Reading: First Corinthians 6: 13c-15a, 17-20

13c The body is not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.14 Now God hath both raised up the Lord and will raise us up also by his power.15a Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ?17 But he who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit.

18 Fly fornication. Every sin that a man doth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body.19 Or know you not, that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God; and you are not your own?20 For you are bought at a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body.



Jesus Comes to Us

Today, we will remember that He answers the question: “What are you looking for?”

For God and no other. So, make sure that everything you do goes in that direction.

And let us thank the Lord that God saw that and He didn’t even wait for us to go to Him. Instead, He came to us. That’s the point of Christmas that we just celebrated. The core message of Christmas is simply that God came to us. We didn’t have to go to God because we cannot do that. That is not a distance that we can cover. But God *can* and God *did*. He came to us just like Nazareno went out -- He saw the crowds, He was moved with pity, and even though He knew it would be crowded and difficult, and smelly, and dirty, Jesus went out to meet the crowd.

Jesus goes out to meet all of us. But what does He do? After He meets with His people, after He answers your prayers, after he exposes Himself to you and blesses you with His Presence, what does He say?

Come and you will see...

Because that’s the other part. Perhaps, you do recognize that God came to you, that God loves you as you are, that God will accept you and embrace you right now-- whether you’ve been to Confession yesterday or 20 years ago, God’s love for you is the same. Yes.

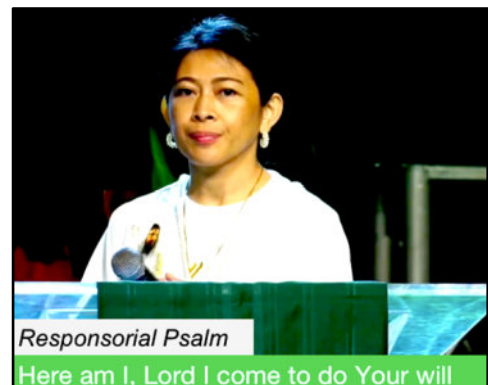
But as He loves you, He also invites you and He says, “Come...”

Because where is that image? Where does the Nazareno go after the procession? He goes back to church. The Nazarene didn’t go out just to show Himself. He went out to fetch the people, to bring them back to church, back to the House of God.

He is saying, “Guys, I go out once a year and I’m happy to meet you. But I’m also here 364 other days in church. And I hope that you will come and see. Come and visit me.

Come and have a relationship with me.”

Because that’s the point.



Our Job Now as Church

My dear Brothers and Sisters, is that what you do? Because as church, that is our job now. Jesus is no longer here with us. Our job as church is not to be the most numerous, not to be the best-sounding church, not to be the most creative with our visuals. Our number one job is to make people come here and feel God's love. *Feel God's love.*

A while ago, I told you about how I became SSP. I remember I met another deacon-- a few years back-- and he was in another congregation. But you know, there's a thing about that congregation he joined. It was a new congregation, they grew quickly, and their founder became very popular, applauded by the whole church as a powerful missionary.

But later on, it was found out that the founder had mistresses, the founder had houses in different countries, he was siphoning the donations given to his congregation (for his gain), he had children with different women.

And when we heard that, the first thing I said, "Ah, okay, I think that's the end of the congregation."

Because their founder turned out to be like that. And that happens in the church. It's part of it. It's a messy church. But it's graced.

I had this assumption that the congregation was already gone. Perhaps, because of what its founder did, it was dissolved.

But a few years later, I met a deacon who was about to become a priest and I asked him, "What's your congregation, Father?"

And he said the name of the congregation...

So, I said, "Ah, that congregation still exists..."

And you know, with my Boy-Abunda (gossip) instinct, I got curious. So. I told the deacon, "Isn't that the congregation of _____? Why are you still there?"



Two Lessons

He told me: “You know, Father, when I entered the seminary of our congregation, I was in the time of search-in (remember the search-in-- when you spend a few days to try if you should join a congregation) when the news about our founder broke out and everything, went into chaos in that congregation...”

And I said, “All the more-- you were just in the search-in stage. You should have transferred to another congregation. Why would you stay with *that* congregation?”

And the deacon said, “Because Father, in the three days that I lived with those priests and brothers I felt God’s love so powerfully through them.”

That was just it. It didn’t matter that things were falling apart. To that guy, all that matters is that in that house, in that community, from the priests and brothers of that congregation emanated God’s love, compassion, and mercy.

And I think that’s a powerful reminder for us all...

My dear Brothers and Sisters, we think of the Nazareno, we think of that spectacle... Take from there two lessons:

No. 1: People are hungry for God. So many people are hungry for God. Sometimes, you do not even know it. But they are hungry and they can’t deny that.

No. 2: Never get tired of inviting people: “Come and see. Come to church and see...”

Sometimes, perhaps we need a little push-- just like what the nun did to me. Please, don’t be shy about your faith. Don’t shy about our faith. We have the answer. We *have* the answer. In this Mass, God becomes Present, *real* in the Eucharist. We have the answer in every church, in every Mass. So, don’t stop telling people, “Come and see...”

Come, and let’s meet Jesus together.”

Amen.





BRO. AUDEE VILLARAZA:

GOOD MORNING, FEAST! Touch as many people as you can, shake their hands, give them a Hi-5 and say, "Welcome home!"

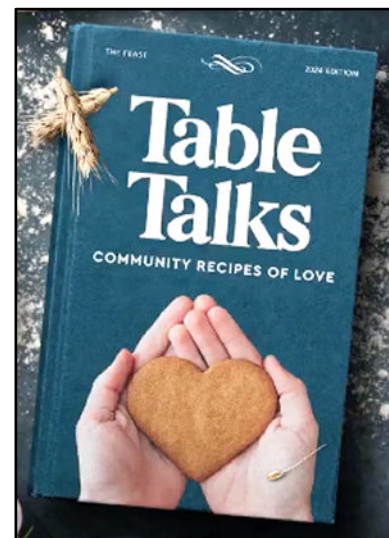
So good to be in the Presence of Jesus.

May we see those who are joining us for the first time? We want to honor you. And w

Everybody, let's clap our hands for them and tell them, "Welcome Home!"

Today, we are going to start a brand-new Talk series-- It's a special series called *TABLE TALKS*.

What makes this series special is that for the next few weeks, we are going to discover, learn, and be blessed by our Community, the Light of Jesus Family, The Feast.



Love Offering

It's fun here at The Feast. There are many specials, many unique events.

When I was a first-timer here, way back in 2008, I remember walking the first time into The Feast at the Valle Verde Country Club, I found the Community so weird. Because I was not used to this huge crowd-- so many people congregating.

What first made it unique to me was people singing, dancing, and they were lifting their hands.

I was so surprised, I was like, "What have I entered into?"

Isn't it that when it's your first time into something, you are jittery? You are scared to raise your hands because like in class, they might call you to recite...

Second, what's unique about this Community is when people give their offerings. Because I came from a small parish where you give 20, 50 coins, except sometimes, P100, or P500...

That's why the first time I attended The Feast, I was astonished. The Feast has envelope... You know, when you're used to small congregations, you give little... But eventually, I learned here, at The Feast, how it is to give to the Lord.

Why do we use envelopes at The Feast? Because if it's not in an envelope, when you put your offering in the Love Offering basket, you might take a change 😊.

That's why isn't it difficult-- when you are not used to giving to the Lord? When you have received a bonus-- your 13th-month pay-- or even your monthly salary, you see you have thousands of peso bills in your wallet... So you're like, "Ay, Lord, I don't have coins..."

So, you're forced to give some peso bills...

But in The Feast, you know, here, I am so blessed of our unique Community. Because here, people are givers. There are so many I've encountered here at The Feast who would give a thick envelope. And in that envelope, you'd be surprised...how amazing what people give.

Sometimes, the envelope is thin, so you think it's empty. But what's in it is a check with -- my goodness-- an amazing offering.



Novena to God's Love

Here, people are being blessed and this is such a unique Community. It's such a special Community and for those of you who are joining us for the first time, I pray that this series that we're starting will bless you. You will be introduced to the Light of Jesus Family and why we love Jesus so much.

And the third factor that makes our Community unique is this little booklet called the *Novena to God's Love*.

I'm holding a brand-new *Novena to God's Love* because mine is at home-- kind of torn already....

But you know, I want to tell you how this booklet changes lives. For those of you who have never encountered this, you know, when you open this little booklet, you will see instructions on how you can use it. It's your personal booklet where there are blank spaces: "My Dream No.1, My Dream No. 2...up to No.7"

What is this booklet for? This is your booklet where you will declare your seven dreams to the Lord -- where you will write them in detail and every day you pray for those dreams.

I want to ask here, how many of you need a fresh, new *God's Love* booklet? You will get one today. We're giving it to you for free. But if you feel like, hey, your booklet is already your booklet, and you're using it every day, that's fine. You don't have to get one-- so that another person who needs it badly can get one today.

But for those of you who are techie-- those not in my generation☺-- you can actually make use of the *Novena* through our Feast app.

You can download the Feast app from IOS if you are an Apple user or if Android, from the Play Store (*right*).

Video on how to use the App is available online.



FEAST

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Let's put out our Love Offering envelopes, Everybody, we do this as one Family.

Everyone, reach out to Heaven. This is your offering-- never be ashamed of what you're offering to the Lord because He's not looking at the amount. He's looking at your heart. And that's more important.

Everybody, say this with me:

Dear Jesus, I give this with a cheerful heart. I know that this amount You will multiply to spread Your Love and Your Word in this world. Use this more, in Jesus' Name. Amen.

I want you, my dear friends, to give with joy and cheers in your heart.

WAYS to Give
HELP US TO CONTINUE THIS MINISTRY

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GCash

FEAST

God bless you!

Worship!

EXHORTATIONS



BRO. NICO NARVAEZ:
Good Morning, Feast!
We will worship God today!
Whether you're doubtful
or grateful,
we'll sing to God!

SIS. TISHA CARO:

God's goodness we can always count on.
Because His goodness is not limited to the great things
of the past. Instead, His goodness runs after us wherever
we go. So, from the front to the back we're going to sing
this, we are going to declare this together. Declare this
over our life. His goodness runs after us.





ALL MY LIFE YOU HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL! ALL MY LIFE YOU HAVE BEEN SO GOOD



WITH EVERY BREATH THAT I AM ABLE



I WILL SING OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD



WITH MY LIFE LAID DOWN
I'M SURRENDERED NOW



I GIVE YOU EVERYTHING



YOUR GOODNESS IS RUNNING AFTER
IT'S RUNNING AFTER ME



FEAST BAY AREA WORSHIP

GOODNESS OF GOD

BETHINK MUSIC
WORDS & MUSIC BY BEN FIELDING, BRIAN JOHNSON, ED CASH, JASON STANLEY, STEVE JOHNSON
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SMOOTH MUSIC PUBLISHING AUSTRALIA

BO SANCHEZ: There are some of you, you're crying and desperate for the goodness of God to flow in your life. You have been in parched desert territory. You've been going through some arid ground. Your soul is thirsty for the goodness of God.

My friend, you have come to the right place. He is the fountain of living water. And He is the One who makes rain fall on the good and the bad alike.

You do not have to discern God's goodness. You do not have to earn and work for God's goodness. You do not have to show a report card with all As to tell God, "I deserve Your goodness."

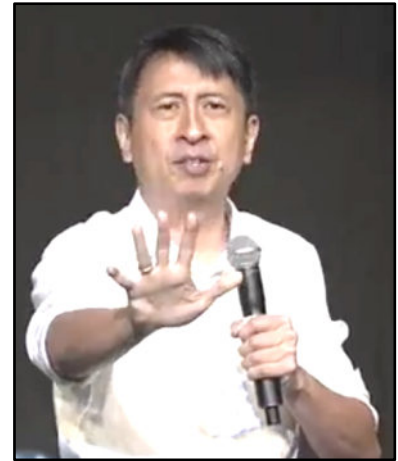
God gives you His goodness. He, today, gives you His goodness. He will be good to you-- whether you are good, or whether you are bad. But He will be good to you-- so that His goodness will make you good. This is what is doing today. And I want you to open your heart, open your life, open your mind. And Everybody say:

*Jesus, I receive your goodness in my life today. Make me good.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

Give God the praise!

I want you to put your arms around somebody beside you. Tell that person, "I'm so happy that you're here."

Let's give a big hand to our Worship Team. They are so amazing.



**YOUR GOODNESS IS RUNNING AFTER
IT'S RUNNING AFTER ME**

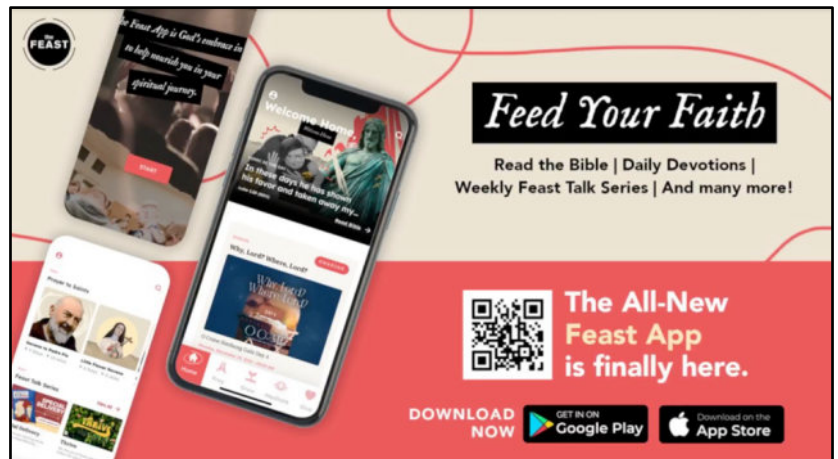
NOVENA TO GOD'S LOVE DECLARATION OF ABUNDANCE



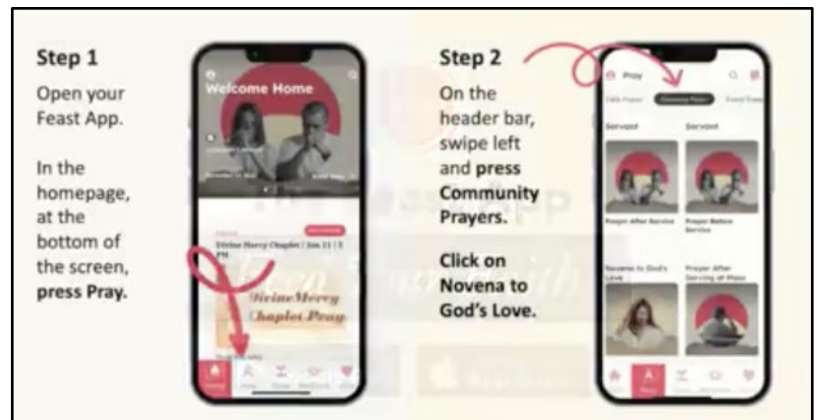
At this point, we're supposed to pray the *Novena to God's Love*.

But what I'm going to do is I'm going to give you two minutes-- two precious minutes-- to pull out either the phone App or the physical *Novena* and then I want you to steal the pen of the person beside you. I want you to write one dream-- even just one dream right now.

Use your phone App -- I just did. I just wrote my dream on my Feast App. It's so good. I love it-- I love being techie, even if I am not, even if I am not. I'm just pretending to be. Oh, so good.



Write down one dream. So, just in case you don't know where it is in the Feast App, it's in *Pray*. So, open your Feast App, and on the *Home* page, press *Pray*. On the Header bar, press *Community Prayer*. Then click *Novena to God's Love*.



Dreams Come True

For those of you who are struggling (with the digital version), may we ask the ushers to give them some physical *Novena*.

What I like about the phone is I bring it everywhere, right? And so I'm bringing my dreams everywhere with me. And I keep on praying for them.



So, write at least 1 dream, and then we're going to lift it to the Lord today. And I want you to make a promise that you will be here every single Sunday, and you're going to lift this *Novena*, and you're going to be praying for your dream.

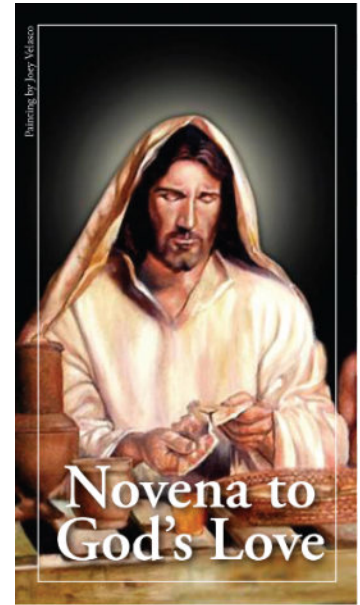
This is what we are going to do as a body. We've been doing this for many, many years now. And so many people have told me how they've seen their dreams come true.

Because they trust in God. They believe that God is a God of Miracles. They believe that God moves.

Do you believe that God is a God of Miracles? Yes? Do you? Do you really believe that God will move in your life? Amen.

I've seen so many people-- they've come up to me, and they've said, "Bro. Bo, you know, out of the seven dreams that I wrote, four have come true."

And they're so happy. You know, they will just keep on trusting in the Lord. Of course, we don't only trust-- we obey, we do our work, we cooperate with grace.





Everybody, let's lift our dreams to the Lord. I want you to close your eyes and I want you to think of that one dream, one, two, or three dreams that you have written down-- something that you want to happen, maybe in 2024, or beyond. I want you just to say this prayer with me:

Father, You are the source of every single blessing that I need. And so I run to You. You are my Provider. You are my Healer. You are my Miracle Worker. But most of all, You are my Father. And I Thank You that You are a good Father. And so, I trust You. And I surrender all my needs to You. And all my dreams to You. Your Will be done in my life. I know Your perfect Will is the best for me. And so, I surrender my life to You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Everybody, let's believe, let's trust, let's have faith. God is here! His goodness will chase and run after us.

One more time, I want you to give a High-5 to 782 people around you-- High-5 with two hands, and tell those persons,

“You dreams will come true!”

“You dreams will come true!”

“You dreams will come true!”

Believe in that. Trust in that. Have faith in that. Say it.



Talk



WELCOME to *Table Talks*. For the next few weeks, we are going to talk about *Community Recipes of Love*.

We're going to talk about us. We're going to talk about The Feast. We're going to talk about Community. We're going to talk about our Family identity, our Family vision, and also our Family strategy for fulfilling that particular vision.

family identity | vision | strategy

For those of you who are new here, at The Feast, some of the things I will be saying will be very surprising-- maybe even shocking. Why?

The Community that you joined is radical. It is controversial. It is wild. And it is not only *this* Community. But we belong to a revolutionary Kingdom that is turning this world upside down.

We are not worshipping or following a king that is wanting to maintain the status quo. No. We are following a Commander-in-Chief. His name is Jesus and he wants to turn the world upside down. We are His soldiers and we say we will do what He wants us to do.

Now, for those of you who have been in The Feast for quite a while, for a few years already, you will be hearing stuff that you've heard before. That's okay. Because like anything in life, if you want to be successful, if you want to mature, if you want to be whole, repetition is the mother of all skills.





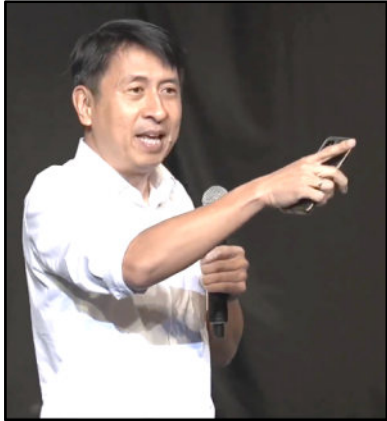
Marketing Rule of Seven

There is a guy, a business author, his name is Jeffrey Fox. And he talked about the Marketing Rule of Seven. He says that you need to hear a message seven times before you take action. Now, he's talking about selling soap and selling shampoo.

But I am going to talk about eternal truths like the incredible unconditional love of God; God's plan for humanity; and God's mission for you and me. So, we are not going to hear this only seven times, we're going to hear this seven million times-- we want to absorb it, and embrace it in our hearts.

Especially if you understand what's happening in the world: The Church is shrinking. Attendance is going down. In a survey done, they were saying that in Spain, for example, there are only 31% of the population who go to church. In Germany, it's down to 16% of the population. In France, it's 10%. It's 9% in Australia.





The Philippine Experience

In the Philippines, would you believe, a Bishop was telling me, quoting his studies, that only 15% of Catholics go to church on a Sunday.

Now, if you think about it, you might say, Bro. Bo, it doesn't seem like it. You know when you go to churches, parishes are full. You know, there are many, many Masses on a Sunday and they seem full. How is it possible that only 15% of Catholics go to church on a Sunday?

The idea is like, yeah, it seems there are many.

So, what I did, I said, let me confirm this survey. I have a few priests who are my friends. I picked up the phone and I called them up.

And there was this one priest, his parish is here in Manila and I said, "Father, how many are your parishioners?"

He said, "15,000."

And I asked, "How many go to church?"

He said, "2,000."

So, what percent is that? 15%.

I know of another parish priest in Quezon City. I called him up and I said, "Father, how many people in your parish?"

Same thing. Same numbers came out.

I know this parish priest in the province. He has a huge, huge parish: 83,000 parishioners.

And I asked him how many go to church.

He said 7,500-- in all the Masses on Sunday.

And that's 9%.

Then I know of a priest in a barrio.

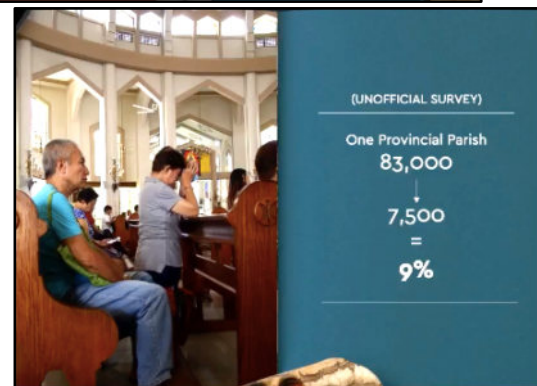
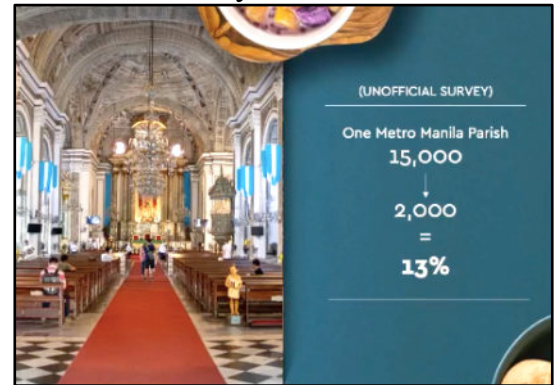
I asked him, "How many parishioners do you have?"

He said, "4,000."

"How many go to church?"

"200."

So, that's just 5%.



Why Is the Church Shrinking?

Why is attendance going down?

There are many, many reasons. But I'm going to give you the *one* reason that I think we need to address.

Let's all stand:

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

We're going to be reading from
Luke 15:4-7, NLT version:



Luke 15:4-7 NLT

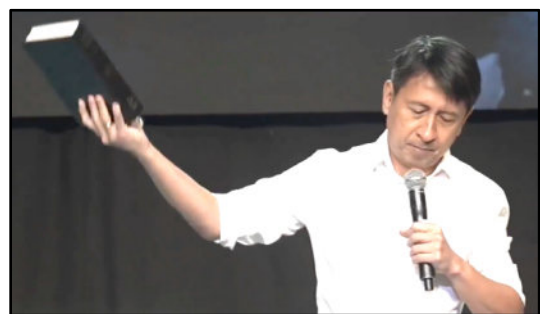
"If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders.

Luke 15:4-7 NLT

⁶ When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷ In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!

Put your hand over your chest. Everybody say:

*Jesus, help me to hear Your Word. And help me to love the lost.
To look for them. To go out of my way. And to bring them back.
In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.*



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



Say this message: *God loves the lost.*

The reason the Church

is sinking is this:

We, as Catholics,

As Catholics, we don't deliberately look for the lost.

don't deliberately look for the lost.

Agree? Disagree? We don't deliberately look for the lost. We go to church, and you know, we're okay.

Somewhere, somehow, once upon a time, we were lost. We found Jesus. We're here now. We're okay. If you study, put under a microscope, all our gatherings, and our teachings, and our songs, and everything that we do in church-- and I am not talking about what we do *here* but what the typical church does-- 90% of all our activities are geared towards people who are already in church. Religious people-- people who are somehow, already, praying and trying to be close to God.

Am I making sense?



Why We Don't Search for the Lost

Let me tell you a story and maybe it will be more graphic.

Once upon a time, there was this guy, and he was walking on the road, it was evening, and it was dark--except for this one spot, there was a lamppost, it was lighted. Underneath the lamp, he saw a boy. The boy was busy looking for something.

And so this man, kindhearted as he was, he went over to the little boy, and he said, "What are you looking for?"

The boy said to the man, "I lost my wallet."

The man said, "Oh, your wallet..."

And so, he helped the boy look for the wallet under that lighted lamp. And then after about five minutes of looking, and searching in vain, the man said, "Are you sure you lost your wallet here? I don't see it..."

And the little boy said, "No. I didn't. I lost my wallet over there where it's dark."

The man was taken aback, and he said, "Then what are we doing looking for your wallet here?"

And the boy said, "It's easier. It's lighted. You know, over there, it's dark. I don't want to go there. I'm afraid."

"But that's where you lost your wallet," the man said.

The boy said, "Yes."

"So, let's go there!"

"It's dark!"

My friends, the reason we don't search for the lost is it's inconvenient. It's dark. We'd rather stay under the lamppost.

You see, our problem is this: We want the lost to come to us.

But Jesus-- we just read it-- He said the shepherd, he leaves the 99, and he goes over the lost, and searches for the lost.

God's goodness runs after *you*.





Beginnings

My friends, at this point, I want to share with you a bit of our history.

This is going to be a short talk. This is an introduction to our Feast series and we're going to unpack what it means to be a Feaster.

What it means to be part of The Feast called Light of Jesus. That's our name. For those who are new, our official name is Light of Jesus and Feast is the name of our gathering.

We started in 1980. Most of you were not yet alive. We were in a garage-- my family garage.

And there were 20-30 people there in the very first prayer meeting on a Tuesday night.

I was the worship leader. I got a guitar-- I was the guitarist. I put a chair in front of me-- I put my leg in front. And we started worshipping the Lord. And then I gave the Talk.

I want you to know that was the day The Feast was born. But we did not call it a *Feast* then. We called it *Light of Jesus*. Just a prayer meeting.

And then as the weeks, and months, and years went by, we began to grow. We began to bring people to the Lord. We went all over the place. And we started growing and growing, and growing.

Until once upon a time, we just stopped growing. And I remember, we were wondering why did we stop growing? It's almost like we hit a ceiling. And it was like a glass ceiling. And it did not budge. After a while, we noticed that young people stopped joining our prayer meetings.

And so we looked at one another and we were saying, "It seems our members are already getting old."

Then our leaders, we noticed that they were nearing their senior years. Some of them became seniors.

So, we were saying, "Are we sure we are the Light of Jesus Community? We might one day become the Light of Jesus Retirement Home.

You know, we were thinking, we were laughing, and we were saying, "It seems we're getting old. Where are the young people?"

And then we realized one thing as we were reflecting, we were thinking, "Is it possible, because we are no longer looking for the lost to the point that our activity became inward looking?"



Our Problem

You see, the problem is this: If you've been attending The Feast for some time now, it's sooo nice. Sooo nice to be with people who have also been in The Feast for a long time. And guess what... You speak the same language, yes or no? Yes. You hum in the same religious frequency. You actually know Bible verses that you can quote to one another. You know the songs already.

You know there's this kind of being comfortable with one another. And it's so difficult sometimes to go and welcome somebody who's very new in The Feast, or was not yet even in The Feast. And to talk to that person because that person is messy. And let's face it: Lost people are messy. Lost people act lost. Broken people act broken. And messed up people act messed up.

And so, we started asking ourselves a very difficult question: Is our prayer meeting so inward-looking that we're no longer welcoming outsiders?

So, I talked to our church elders, our Light of Jesus elders at that time, and I was sharing these reflections. And by the grace of God, they all agreed.

And I said, "I think we need to change. I think we need to do something."

At that time, I was not the presiding elder. For 12 years, I was busy with publishing ministry and Anawim, and all of those.

So, they said, "Okay, Bo you be the presiding elder again and then you do all these changes.

We revamped the whole Community. It was crazy, a crazy revamp.

Wake Up Call

For 19 years, we were an inward-looking Community. To get into our Community, you had to be holy. You had to shape up your life before you can be called a full member of the Light of Jesus. You had to go through a four-year formation program. Your relationship should be in order.

We had rules. Like you're supposed to pray every day, you're supposed to read the Bible every day-- you're supposed to do this, you're supposed to do that. You should have regular attendance.

And if you're not able to fulfill the rules, if you're not able to meet the requirements, if you cannot meet the standards, then, we will quietly tell you that maybe you should quietly leave-- because maybe this is not your Community.

You know, the arrogance. The arrogance in our hearts, I'm telling you, was crazy. You know, we felt so special, we felt Light of Jesus was so special, that it was not for ordinary people who could not reach our standards.

We will not tell you to leave. We will just tell you, "Can you discern? Maybe this is not your calling? Maybe God is calling you to another Community..."

And then we will not tell you anymore the parenthetical remark, "...who has lesser standards."

So, that was Light of Jesus.

And the way you look at me right now, you're saying "Bro. Bo, really, we were like that?"

Yeah. Before you came, we were like that. For many years. For 19 years we were an inward-looking community that had all these systems. And then we threw them all away.

One day, we said, "No more."

You know, it was God who really bonked us on the head.

God waking us up, and God saying, "You've forgotten the broken. You've forgotten the lost. You've forgotten the messed-up. I love them. Look for them."





I remember the first time we decided to have a Feast. We called it The Feast for the first time.

And we said, "This is it. We are going to open the doors and we're going to welcome *everyone. Everyone.*"

God revealed to us, "You're going to look for the messy because you're messy as well. You're just so good at hiding it."

So, since that day, The Feast has grown and you see it now, it's multiplied--hundreds upon hundreds of Feasts all over the world welcoming everyone.

Sometimes, people come up to me and say, "Bro. Bo, the songs are too fast--and so loud."

Everyone who tells me that is 50 years old and above.

And I will just say, "Sister, that music, that Worship song that's fast and loud, it's not for you. It's for your children, for your nephews, for your nieces."

Anyone who's 50 and above, please, now: Forget yourself and forget your needs We are here to bring people closer to God. We're going to go out to the streets, we are going to the children who need the Lord.

Here's another one: "Bro. Bo, may we sing more liturgical songs?"

You know why we sing songs that sound secular? Because we are reaching out to the lost who *are* secular. Now, I'm not saying I don't like liturgical songs. I *love* liturgical songs. Let's sing them once in a while. Let's sing them during retreats, during formation programs when all of us, we're already in the Lord.

But The Feast is for outsiders-- not insiders. I'm sorry. The Feast is not for you who are insiders. The Feast is for outsiders. But guess what... When you are giving, you receive. And so the reason insiders are so blessed by The Feast is they forget themselves and they serve other people.



Our Mission

This is just the introduction to getting to know The Feast, getting to know the Light of Jesus. This is the radical Community you have joined. And my friends, you know, I pray, I really pray you would embrace it.

Let me end this way...

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus gives the mission for the Church. And He says this: Go and make disciples of all nations. That's the mission.

You know, the Church does a lot of things. Yes or no? The Church builds beautiful churches and cathedrals. The Church dispenses sacraments. The Church helps the poor. The Church confronts governments whenever there's immorality in their laws. It does all these wonderful things.

But we need to ask the question: Are we making disciples? Are we going out there to the lost, to the messed up, to the broken-- and loving them? Are we doing that?

In the next few weeks, we're going to explain how we do that and how we keep on doing that, and how we want to do that.

30 The FEAST FAMILY January 21, 2024

Surrender

Today, I want to speak to the lost.

Once upon a time, we were lost. And guess what...
Once in a while, we still get lost. We still are that one
sheep who strays away.

And I want you to know that you have a Shepherd
who went out of His Father's house. Who moved heaven
and earth. He left His Father's house to look for you.
And He became a baby. And He grew up in Israel.
And that Son died on the Cross and rose from the dead
so that He can look for you.

If you feel lost right now, or if you feel there's some distance between you and
God, I want you to rejoice that there is Somebody
who is looking for you. There is Somebody who is searching for you.
He is Somebody who has gone out of His way to look for you.

And I think many times, we forget that. And that's why we don't care
for the lost. We don't care for that messed up officemate, and that relative of ours
that's so broken. We don't think about these people who don't care to go to church
anymore. We forget that *we* are lost. And that is this beautiful Shepherd that leaves
the 99 to search for us.

My friends, today, this moment, here in this place, allow Jesus to find you
Allow you to find you, collect you in His arms, carry you in His shoulders, and
bring you home.

May I invite you to put your hands on your chest and say this prayer with me:

*Lord Jesus, I'm here, back home. Back home in Your arms. Heal me. Love me.
Never let me go. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*



Commitment

My Friends, this is not just a religious gathering. This is an encounter with the Living God. God is visiting us right now, visiting *you*.

And if for the longest time, you've felt lost, Jesus is saying, "*Come home. Come home now. Come home to Me.*"

And maybe for most of us, we've been trying to follow the Lord all our lives. But once in a while, we fall. Maybe most of the time, we fall.

Let's come home.



Everybody, lift your hands and say:

Jesus, I'm coming home. I want to stay with You. I want to do Your will. On my own, I cannot do it. I've fallen so many times. But on this day, on this day, I'm claiming for Your strength, Your supernatural power. You will help me follow You. You will help me belong to You. You will help me serve You the rest of my life until I die. I belong to You. I am Yours. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Please do give the embrace of God to that person beside you, make that embrace tight and tell that person, "Welcome home!"



MERCY MINISTRIES

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

--Matthew 5:7

The PRISON MISSION

‘Liberty to Captives’

“IF you take away the poor, there is no gospel...”

Try this simple exercise: Read the Gospels once again. Strike out all the portions where Jesus served the poor, spoke to the poor, healed the poor, defended the poor, taught about the poor, and told stories about the poor. How much of the Gospels is left? Answer: NONE. The Gospel is the Good News to the POOR!

OUR POOR

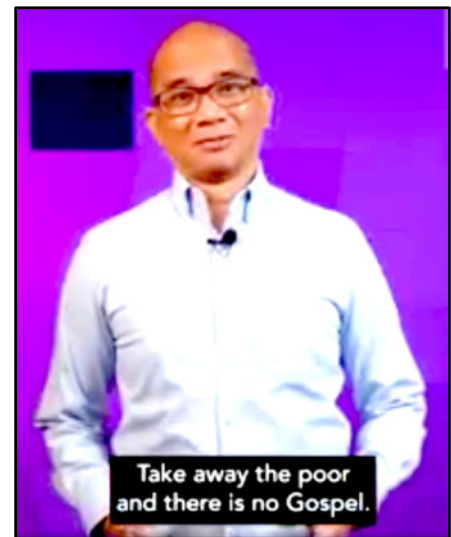
In my study and my actual personal immersion in the plight of our Filipino prison inmates, I have categorized the following as the major issues haunting the conditions of God’s poor in the Philippine prison system:

Gross Overcrowding

In 2018, the Philippines held the sixth-highest prison population out of 21 Asian countries. According to World Prison Brief database, the Philippines was ranked highest in the world in jail occupancy rate in their latest report. As of 19 March 2020, according to the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), the congestion rate in their 467 jails is at a staggering 534%! This severe overcrowding in prisons leads to illness and death tolls in the thousands.

Delayed Justice

According to The World Prison Brief, 75.1% of incarcerations within the Philippines’ incarceration system are pre-trial, meaning people are serving sentences without conviction. What makes the injustice even worse is that people may serve time that outweighs their crimes. On average, prisoners in the Philippines are detained for nine months without being sentenced!



By JON ESCOTO
Head, Prison Mission

Hunger and Malnutrition

Since July 2018, the Bureau of Corrections has been spending only Php 13 per meal for each prisoner (according to the reports of the Philippine Senate Inquiry, as reported by *Rappler* on 03 October 2019). This means the government spends a total of Php 39 per person per day for his/her breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

High Death Tolls

About 5,200 inmates die annually at the New Bilibid Prison (NBP). According to Ernesto Tamayo, the hospital medical chief, these deaths are due to overcrowding, dirty living conditions, and inmate violence. At a 2019 Philippines Senate hearing, Tamayo said that there were “uncontrollable outbreaks of pulmonary tuberculosis.”

In addition to overcrowding, poor living conditions, and inmate violence, NBP lacks nutritional food and basic healthcare. On account of these living conditions, Tamayo reports that at least one prisoner dies at NBP each day.

Corruption

A rich inmate can “buy” a Good Conduct Time Allowance (GCTA), or ‘parole’ in simple words, for Php 50,000, while a poor offender has been in jail for three years, still awaiting the schedule of his first arraignment. Reports are not infrequent that ‘celebrity’ convicts can “live like kings” with personal cooks and nurses for a fee. There have been allegations of prison workers and officials taking bribes to bring in ‘amenities’ (cellphones, TV, laptops, etc.) and illegal items, including drugs. On the other hand, inmates who cannot pay are stuck in the filth, stench, and sore of the sub-human living conditions.



OUR CALL

I believe that in the darkest of places, God reveals His light. In the poorest of conditions, Jesus comes and announces His salvation:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”

--Luke 4:18-19

God’s poor, the prison inmates, are the VIP’s (Very Important Persons) in the ‘upside down’ kingdom, known as the Kingdom of God, that Jesus has come to restore.

While there have already been existing ministries that are serving the prison inmates, still much has to be done in this mission field. What makes our response different from the others who are doing it is two-fold: First is the theological foundations of our ministry philosophy. Second is the scope of our ministry model.

We do God’s work, founded on His truths, empowered by His Holy Spirit, guided by His principles, sustained by prayer, and driven by His love. This determines our identity. This characterizes our relationships as a family of servants. This defines (uniquely) our measures of success.

NEXT WEEK: Theological Basis for the PRISON MISSION



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 to 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>

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

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FAMILY ONLINE NEWSMAGAZINE

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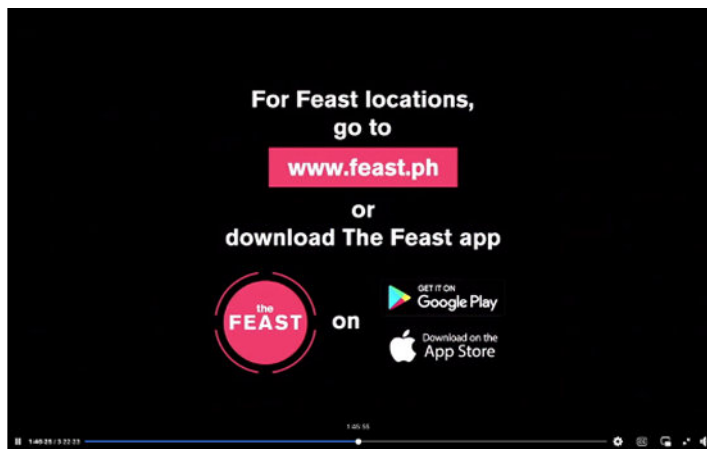
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Go and make disciples of all men.

— Matthew 28:19

