

Do You Want To Grow Spiritually?

OF COURSE. Who wouldn't?

But we have very different definitions of spiritual maturity. For many, growing your spiritual life means growing your prayer life.

That's part of it-- but it's not enough.

May I surprise you? You'll hear this only at The Feast: Growing your spiritual life means growing your PARTY LIFE.

Many psychologists have tried to outline the stages of our psychological development. The most popular is Erik Erikson's 8 Stages of Psychosocial Development. And there are many more proposed models.



But are there also stages in spiritual development? Absolutely.

I found three clear stages of spiritual growth, and wonder of wonders,

I was surprised to find all three in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Here's a hint: Spiritual Maturity has to do with your Party life.

Have an amazing Feast today!

May your dreams come true,

Bo Somety

Bo Sanchez

WELCOME to our Feast Talk series: *TABLE TALKS:* Community Recipes of Love Talk 3: The Greatest Party in the Universe



Good News: It's Party Time!

YES, this issue of *The Feast Family* is about Good News and Parties.

In his homily last Feast Sunday Mass, Fr. Bob McConaghy discussed the Gospel's Good News announced by our Lord Jesus, *page 3*.

What are Bro. Bo Sanchez and Bro. John Ben Rodriguez happily looking at? A buffet table? What's new? Bro. Bo actually starts this issue with Good News: The Feast Talk Today is about your Party Life! So, forget your diet regimen and get ready to party, *page 1*.

Yes, forget about cutting down on food because we have a lot to eat at Matthew's Table, Talk 2 of our ongoing series, *TABLE TALKS: Community Recipes of Love.* For yummy treats, check out *Flashback* by Bro. John Ben, *page 18*.

One who also loves parties is Bro. Audee Villaraza. He welcomes us with Happy Birthday greetings to our January celebrators, *page 10*.



Now, even our brothers and sisters in prison have something to party for. In our *Mercy Ministries* section,

Bro. Jon Escoto, head of our Prison Mission, tells us why and how in Part 2 of his article on the Ministry, *page 37*.

Okay, you may eat solid food now.

Because the Good News is the Party treats we are talking about are yummies for the soul.

Come, let's really party!

All for God's Glory,

Randy Borromeo Media Ministry Executive Director











FLASHBACK! JANUARY 28, 2024

Holy Mass





THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Homily REV. FR. BOB McCONAGHY on the Gospel Mark 1:14-20 *Jesus Announces the Good News*

Excerpts:

Ah, the Feast of the Sto. Niño, the celebration of Catholicism coming to this country in 1507. Yes, a celebration of our Catholicism-- a Catholicism that was identified by St. John Paul II when he spoke to 6 million young people over at the big lawn in the Araneta City (Cubao, Quezon City).

And he said this: "The Philippines will be the evangelizers of Asia." And I believe that is true.

But the Feast of Sto. Niño is also a celebration of Philippine culture. And over the 24 years that I've been here, I've learned so many beautiful things about your culture.

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Culture Shock: Most Embarrassing Moment

I remember, one time, Bro. Bo Sanchez was interviewing me on this Monday night *Date* show with Sis. Marowe. And it was about divorce and annulments.

It kind of stunned me when he said, "Well, first of all, we want to ask you this, Father..."

The last thing I expected him to ask of me... He said, "Father, could you share with us, perhaps, an embarrassing moment that you've had here in the Philippines?"



And wow, that came immediately to my mind... Let me tell you: In America, certain gestures are understood one way-- but are understood in an entirely another here in the Philippines. I had been here almost five years.

I was preparing to go home to the United States for one year and then come back. So, I have been to Eastern Samar many times because we delivered medicines down there for the poor. So, I got to know the Mayor -- Mayor Nelia Pinangay in Arteche (municipality in Eastern Samar) very well. Her brother-in-law was a good friend of mine, Claro Pinangay.

One day, Claro came up to me and said, "Father Bob, the Mayor said you winked at her."

And I said, "So?..."

He said, "In the Philippines, if you wink at somebody, you're flirting with them."

I didn't know this. But for five years, I celebrated Mass at least four times a week at Greenbelt (Makati) chapel. And the way that an American would acknowledge someone, or say "Hi," to someone-- as they're looking at them-would be to wink. So, after every Mass, I was going around the Sacristy, and I was seeing these young people here-- I was 50 years old at that time-as I went by, I was giving them a wink.

And nobody ever told me what it meant... But I can imagine the tsismis (gossip) -- that they would go back to their office and say, "Guess what? You know that American priest? I was at Mass this morning and he winked at me."

But I didn't wink only at women. I also winked at men! And I didn't know what it meant!

So, I said at the Despedida (Send-Off or Farewell) Mass, "I said all these years, you never told me!"

And they just started laughing. So, that was my most embarrassing moment... How about five years of embarrassing moments when I was totally unaware of that part of your culture? But now I am. So, you'll never see me wink at you, I promise.

Resilience in the Face of Tragedy

The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light.

That's at midnight Mass on Christmas. *Have seen a great light*.

One time, another thing about your culture...

One night, I was on the show of Pia Hontiveros (chief correspondent of CNN Philippines, anchor of *News Night* and host *Politics as Usual, News P.PH,* and *Global Newsroom*). And she was interviewing me about being in the Philippines. I had been here for some time.



And she said to me, "What do you admire most about Filipinos?" I said, "That's easy. Their resilience in the face of tragedy."

My dog, Isaiah, lives with a family, good friends of mine, the Pinangay family, in Tacloban, right along MacArthur Highway which was the hardest hit by the Yolanda typhoon. They almost drowned. But they didn't. And I waited four days until I found out they were alive. As soon as I could get a flight, I flew down to Tacloban. And the site was devastating, overwhelming. As soon as I got off the plane, the smell of death. I would have to make my way to the San Juanico Bridge to go over to Samar, and then Eastern Samar with the family. (All moved back to Arteche after their house in Tacloban was destroyed by Yolanda.)



First Reading: Isaiah 9: 1-6

1Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory. 2The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. 3You will enlarge the nation of Israel, and its people will rejoice. They will rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest and like warriors dividing the plunder.4For you will break the yoke of their slavery and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders. You

will break the oppressor's rod, just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian. 5The boots of the warrior and the uniforms bloodstained by war will all be burned. They will be fuel for the fire.6For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

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Our Calling

I remember, we drove on the main highway past the (Concabato) bay, and there was a Jollibee. I had eaten often at that Jollibee. But now (also hit by Yolanda), the Jollibee, of course, was not open. But I remember this, distinctly-- even if it was 10 years ago.

There was a sign in the blown-out window, and it said simply this: *"We have no roof, we have no food, we have a lot of hope."*



It takes childlike trust to put that sentence in the

window ten days after the devastation. And that's what I noticed around Tacloban. People weren't depressed. They were helping each other out. But that sign... Little did the person who wrote that sign-- the manager, a waiter, a waitress-- little did they know that a foreign priest would use that beautiful childlike sentence 10 years later-- and it's true.

Any American, any foreigner who comes here who has experiences, and sees what you go through, and how you handle it, would wish they would be able to do the same: resilience in the face of devastation.

Another thing that I think is important to learn is that you and I, by this Gospel, are called to be childlike.

What does that mean? I think that meaning was taught to me best by a four-year-old.

When I was a parish priest in America, in September and October every year, I would go on parish visitation, in the afternoon and the evening. And one day. I went to this house and there was a big lawn there. The mom was hanging the laundry and there was this girl. She was playing in her sandbox.

So, I went over, asked her name, and I said, "All your friends have gone back to school, ha?"

She said, "Yes."

And she's playing there just the same, and I said, "Don't you miss them?" She said, "No-- I like me."

That was a beautiful childlike sentence. She wasn't worried about the future. She wasn't thinking about the past or her friends. She was living right in the moment, knowing she could trust her mom and all those who love her to take care of her.

For adults, for us, that's very, very difficult to do.

'I like me'

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength.

Wow. That takes a lot of energy. But those two little words in there: You can't love the Lord with all your heart, you can't love your neighbor-- unless you love yourself. *I like me*.

Are you able to look in the mirror and say, "I like me"?

You can-- if you know your identity. We hear that word a lot-- *identity*.

And so, some people might say, "I identify as a heterosexual." "I identify as a homosexual." "I identify as a lesbian."

That's not your identity. That's your sexuality. One dimension of who you are. An important one, yes. But it's not you. It's not your identity.

Others might say "I'm a mother." "I'm a father." "I'm a lolo-- grandfather." "I'm a lola-- grandmother."

Yes. But that's your relationships with others.

Others might say, "I'm an office worker." "I'm a congressman." "I'm an electrician." "I'm a student."

That's not who you are. That's what you do. That's what you produce.



Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18

1This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus. 2May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. 3All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. 4Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. 5God decided in advance to adopt us into his

own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. 6So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son... 15Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, 16I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, 17asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. 18I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

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Your Real Identity

But what is your real identity? You are a child. That's your identity.

And a child gives himself in complete trust and humility to someone who loves him beyond anything his imagination can conceive. That's the way that God actually loves you...

The way we know is that no one's ever been *me* before. No one will ever be *me* again. I am a single, unrepeatable act of God's love. And He loves me just the way I am-- not as I should be.



And once we accept that, then we can have that beautiful virtue called *humility*. Humility doesn't mean being shy. Humility means "I recognize that all my talents are unknown to God. That there's no such thing as a self-made man, or a selfmade woman. And in that realization, I am not proud. Because when

I'm proud, I don't need to make progress. When I am humble, I know I have a lot of progress to make."

And what humility also means is *generosity*. That it gives so much more joy in giving than in keeping.

A childish person says, "Mine, mine."

But a childlike person says, "Yours." And then gives back great joy.



Finally, to be childlike is to be *available to others*. And when you're being available to others and being a servant to others, the worries begin to be less powerful in your life. That each moment is *now*.

Five seconds ago is not *now*. Ten minutes from now is *not here yet*. The only moment you have is *now*.

And that little girl in her sandbox only enjoys now.



His Sto. Niño

How we can embrace the beautiful truth that God loves us is in this Gospel. Children in Jesus' day were to be not seen and not heard.

You would never touch another child and say, "Oh, cute little child," like we do naturally-- but not in Jesus' culture. Children were not all that important. And there's a beautiful picture of Jesus at that moment picking up a child and hugging that child, and the child looking so relaxed just like the lost sheep relaxed on His shoulders. Ah, we need to think more about that and meditate on that.

Have you ever held a child? And if you have held a child, without you knowing it, did anyone take a picture of you holding that child? If they ever did, you know what you would notice about yourself? That nothing else mattered-- except that baby. That you gave your full attention and full love-- in the look on your face in looking at that baby.

If the baby is crying, it doesn't matter. You will still hold her. You will not put her down. You will feed her or him.

Now, visualize you are that baby. And each night He picks you up. He knows what you've been through that day. He knows your hurts, your fears, your worries, your being misunderstood. He knows all of those.

And still says, "I love you so much."

Try to imagine and meditate often at night. No matter what your day has been... of Him picking you up-- the child you are, the baby you are-- and holding you.

You are His son-- Sto. Niño. You are His child. Allow Him to love you. Happy Feast Day!

God bless.

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BRO. AUDEE VILLARAZA:

Good Morning! Everybody, shout: Good Morning!

Can you High-5 as many persons as you can and say, "I'm glad you're here!"

May I ask all the first-timers-- your first time ever to join our spiritual family, The Feast, may you please stand up we want to recognize you, we want to clap our hands for you. Welcome home!

We want to greet a very special person today because it's his birthday: Bene Sanchez (eldest son of our founder, Bro. Bo Sanchez, and Leader, Feast Youth-Mega Manila).

We want to greet Bene Happy Birthday! He turns 24 years old (on January 21).

For those of you who are also celebrating your birthday this month, may I ask you to stand up, we'd love to pray for you. It's a spiritual gift. God is going to bless you.

Extend your hands to them. We join our hearts today with one intention to pray for these persons:

Father God, we know that you've got



plans for them-- plans to prosper them, plans to give them hope and not to harm them, to give them a good future. And whatever those plans look like, Lord, we trust in You. We know that it will be full of grace, full of joy, full of hope, and full of love. Plant good seeds in their heart starting today, Lord, so that they will experience Your abundance like never before. We declare breakthroughs and milestones this year for these children of Yours. In Jesus' Name. Amen.



Love Offering

Question: Who among you attended the Coldplay (British rock band) concert last Friday and Saturday (January 19-20, 2024)? None? Let me rephrase:

Who among you did not attend the Coldplay concert -- but it seemed you attended because you got stuck in the traffic because of the throng of fans going to the concert venue?

Quick side story... Last Friday, my wife Kristel, our son Ethan, and I attended



a birthday party of our son's classmate in Bulacan-- because our son studies at Barcelona Academy in Bulacan. We live in Quezon City. So, the most asked question we get is "Why Bulacan?" We always say the school is just 20 minutes away from our place via the North Luzon Express (NLEX) highway.

During the party, during the "Bring Me" game, the host asked the children to bring their dad onstage. And the host asked us dads where we live. Everyone said Bulacan-- except me. I said Quezon City and I had to explain again that we live just 20 minutes away from Bulacan...

Going home, we were shocked-- sadly, there was a traffic jam along NLEX because of the Coldplay concert. One posted on social media that he left his house at 2 p.m. and arrived at the concert at 7 p.m.-- bearing five hours in the traffic. But the concert was so amazing that the fans said it's *sulit*.-- the sacrifice was worth it...

One thing I realized, that was not new to me. How many of you here came all the way from the far north, south, east, west?

Yes, you come here every Sunday. Why? Because God is worth it.

Another question: Who among you is tired, sleepless? But why do you come here every week? Because God is worth it.

One more question: Who among you has many problems, has many burdens? But why are you here every Sunday? Because God is worth it.

Final question: How many of you here trust the Lord enough to give a portion of your income-- the first fruits of your labor-- even if you have debts, even if your salary is just little? But why do you do it?

Because God is worth it.

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God Is Worth It

Everything that we do -we come here every Sunday, we worship the Lord... and I know we need this one day during the week when we come together as a family and do corporate worship, be side by side with our brothers and sisters.



But the reason we do what we do is God is worth it.

Let's give the Lord a big hand because He is worth it.

So, when you give to the Lord today, know that the money that you put here in this envelope-- yes, you worked for it. Yes, you spent time on your business. You spent time in your job. But you know, it's God who gave it to you, to begin with. So, I want you to know that everything you put here, is sulit. Because sulit si Lord.-- God is worth it.

Now, lift your envelope and say this with me:

Lord, I give this wholeheartedly, completely, and cheerfully. I know I worked for this. But You blessed me with it. And so, I give back a portion of Your blessing. I know that I cannot out-give You. But through this little way, I believe You will use this, multiply it, and bless others mightily. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Give to the Lord today with smiles. God bless you.



Worship! EXHORTATIONS

BRO. JIMMY SAN BUENAVENTURA:



Praise Jesus! Praise His Name! Hallelujah! Psalms 145:9 says, *The Lord is good to all. His tender mercies are over all his works.*

All his works. That includes us. Amen? Amen. I truly believe that whoever we are, whatever we have done in the past, it doesn't matter. You know why? Because there is no other condition when God says His mercy is over all His works. His doors will never close to us.

Let's declare His greatness and His love as we worship today.

Let us lift our hands. Let this be our sign of surrender. We are going to surrender our life to Jesus. We are going to surrender all our hopes, all our dreams, all our plans, all our battles, and all our pains.

We need Jesus.



Worship! EXHORTATIONS

SIS. TL SAN JUAN:

Good morning, Brothers and Sisters, and all stand up to prepare for Worship. And as you do so, can you smile at the person beside you and say, Thank you for being here."



And if you're with that someone who invited you here, tell that person, "Thanks for being God's instrument."

I know most of us can relate and would agree that a lot of us if not all, are here because someone invited us. And since then our life has never been the same.

And today, God is extending that invitation. But not just to be present, but to partake of His love, His mercy, and His goodness.

This is the day that the Lord has made. So, come, let's partake of the Good News. And let's sing, dance, and worship Him today. He is worth it.





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BRO. JOHN BEN RODRIGUEZ:

Almighty Father, we Thank You that You call us Your children. We are Your sons. We are Your daughters. And today, here in this place, we are here coming home to You, God. Because this place is where You are. This is our home. This is where our Father is. Our Father who loves us. Our Father who provides for us. A father who will carry us through the challenges of life.



God, You are here. And You will never rest. You will never stop loving us until we see the great plan that You have for us. That's why we continue to sing and worship You and raise our hands because You are good. And You are God. And You are King. In Jesus' Name. Amen.



NOVENA TO GOD'S LOVE DECLARATION OF ABUNDANCE



BRO. JOHN BEN RODRIGUEZ:

Good Morning, Everyone! Before we pray our favorite prayer, I'd like you to bring out your Novena to God's Love --



if you have the printed copy or the digital copy on your phone. This is the part where we pray

for our dreams because the first prayer that we pray in The Feast is actually from this booklet. So, I invite you to raise your copy as a sign that you're raising to God your dreams. Let's pray:



Talk



WELCOME to Talk 2 of our Table Talks: Community Recipes of Love.

Today we are going to talk about *Matthew's Table*.

And the big message of the talk today is this: *God loves sinners*. And it's true. Who among here has committed sins



or mistakes? Have you ever felt this: Do you sometimes really think:

"Lord, have You really forgiven me? Do You really love me-- despite my sins?"

And sometimes, they are repeated. You know that --because when you confess. you tell the priest the same sins over and over again.

But today, I want to remind you that God loves sinners. Period.

Even before you repent, even before you change your ways, even before you stop the wrongdoings and follow God.

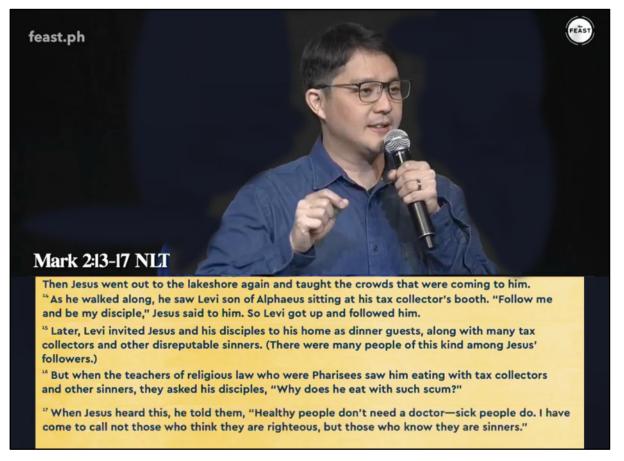
Why? Because that is called grace-- grace that is freely given. You do not need to do anything. You just have to receive it.

And my question to everyone today is this: Do you want to receive that grace of God today? If you want to receive that grace from God, I invite you all to raise your hands to the Word of God, as we sing:

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

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This passage is the very foundation of why we do our Feast and how we do our Feast.

What's the status of your heart today? Who among here needs Jesus' healing and grace?

I believe that His invitation is at this place today:

Come, dine with me. I am your healer. I can heal you.

Put your hands over your heart and let's pray:



Thank You, Lord, for loving me despite my sins, my past, my failures. And Lord, teach me to see myself the way You see me. Amen.

Let's raise our hands to the Word of God and sing: *Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet and a Light unto my path.*

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So, I guess that passage we just read pretty much sums up what we want to do here at The Feast. Because our goal here at The Feast is to gather sinners to experience Jesus' love.

Have you experienced Jesus' love here? Yes!

Did you notice that we read from Mark that the tax collector who invited Jesus was named *Levi*?

Marl	2:13-17 NLT
"As h	esus went out to the lakeshore again and taught the crowds that were coming to him. walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Levi got up and followed him.
	r, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax tors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus' rers.)

Then, why is the Talk titled *Mathew's Table*? Do you know who Levi is? Levi is the tax collector who later on would be called Matthew the Apostle.

And in their context, it was very controversial what Jesus did. Back then, Israel was conquered and governed by the Romans. And imagine, Levi, or Matthew, working for the Roman Empire as a tax collector-- imposing heavy taxes on the people.

So, people would think, "He is a traitor. He is a Jew but he is following the Roman Empire and oppressing us…"

So, what Jesus did was very controversial. Why did Jesus dine with Matthew? The nerve, right? But that passage is saying God told us that Jesus came for everyone. Everyone included.

Tell the person beside you, "Kasama ka.--You are included."

Even your officemates. Sometimes, we hate our officemates who boss us around... Sometimes, we hate our neighbors... But they're all included. Every sinner-- not just you. God loves every sinner.



Today, we'll be learning 8 Steps to Love Sinners

1. Be comfortable with mess.

The verse says ...many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners were there ...

Believe me, some people do not like what we do at The Feast because they think that we are tolerating the sins of other people. But this is actually just the first part of what we're doing. We are actually making the venue conducive for them so they can experience God.

I remember people would come up to me and ask for prayer. When they say, "May you pray for me *and my partner*?" I already know there is something different-- because *partner* sometimes connotes the person is separated from his spouse and is living with somebody else. Sometimes, the word connotes same-sex partners.

Sometimes, I am stunned, I freeze-- but I have to remind myself that these people are coming to God and they are seeking Him. And I have to emulate what Jesus did at Matthew's Table -- I have to appreciate them and embrace them with God's love.

I do not lecture them and say, "Hey, what you're doing is wrong. That is sin." Because what will happen? They will shy away.

How do we deal with their concerns?

That's our first step: We must be comfortable with mess.

That's what's amazing with Jesus. Jesus is the holiest person and yet he was

the most non-judgmental person in the world.

Jesus is both the holiest person and the most non-judgmental person in the world.

So, I think the

practical tip here is instead of judging, we genuinely pray for these people.



2. Don't forget your own mess.

An interesting survey asked young people and the unchurched: Why won't you go to church anymore? And the No.1 answer was this: Because we feel that the people in church are self-righteous.

Even I was affected by that. We sometimes tend to condemn faster than we can connect to a person.

Sometimes, by the mere appearance of someone, we already have a label for the person: "Hey, he has a tattoo... His life is a mess."

"Ay, he has long hair...He must be a drug addict." Little did you know he is growing his hair so it can be made into a wig for a cancer patient who underwent chemotherapy and thus lost his hair.

You judge quickly and you lose your opportunity to be an instrument of God's love for the person.

You see a person with a nose ring or large hole in his ears...and you think... So, what is self-righteousness? Let's define it:



You would agree with me that we are all sinners, right?

But sometimes we do this: We put a little hierarchy of sins: "Bro. JB, my sin is only gossip. It's not as bad as sexual sin."

In the eyes of God, they're all sins. What's important for us is to accept

and remind ourselves that we were once messy people. Because the more we can accept our mess, the easier for us to accept the mess of others.

The more you can accept your mess, the easier it will be to accept the mess of others.

The Church is not a community of perfect people-- but forgiven people. Even the priest confessors would say that the most commonly confessed sins are sexual sins-- pornography, masturbation, infidelity. But sometimes lesser people confess sins of omission-- not doing what you are supposed to do-either you're too busy or shy. That's one sin that is happening. Maybe you're living a good life, you are not sinning much-- but if you're not reaching out and helping others, that is also a sin.

So, that's how we look at different levels of sin. That's why it causes us to be self-righteous.

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Are You Self-righteous?

Some people would equate it this way: "If I don't have any sexual sin, I'm quite at another level than other people who are enslaved by sexual sin."

But in the eyes of God, sinners are equally loved. They are equally blessed with the same grace.

Even a gossip-- How do you know if a gossip is being slowly transformed and renewed by God?

Because the usual "Marites"-- gossip-goes like this: "Mare, you know the latest? The mistress of our neighbor's husband lives just next to their house. Hmm, convenient..."

How do you know that the "Marites" is slowly being transformed by God?



The language changes: "Sis, come here. We have a prayer intention... Do you know that our neighbor..."

Still gossip. Ha-ha[©] But at least, she's improving... It doesn't happen in an instant but if you have to be in that mode, you start slowly to be comfortable with mess and deal with people this way: We do not use words that condemn them, we listen to them, we treat them like they're our equal.

Here's another indicator that you're a little at the self-righteous side: When you are here, at The Feast, or you are listening to a priest's homily, or another preacher, or another inspirational speaker, you tell yourself, "I wish my spouse is here... He should hear what the priest or preacher is saying... I wish my son is here... or my neighbor is here... the message is for her..."

While it may be true that those people need to hear the message, maybe the way you're wishing is an indicator that you must also ask: "How does this message apply to me, Lord?"

You need that certain sense of introspection to learn what the Lord still wants to change in you.

Jesus Loves Sinners

Jesus was known as a friend of sinners. Sadly, many Christians are known as

Sadly, many Christians are known as the enemy, the critic, and the judge of sinners.

the enemy, the critic, and the judge of others.

That's true. Sometimes, especially those people who have homosexual tendencies, they're afraid to go to church--because by just the way we look at them... they can already feel what we're thinking...

So, we have to be a bit more sensitive.

From our experience in Ministry, we realized **3. Be known as a friend of sinners.** when we love the sinner, in due time, the sinner learns to love himself

and stops sinning.

Every person

needs God's love.

From my experience, when I love the sinner, in due time, the sinner learns to love himself and stops sinning.

There's a void in everyone's heart that can be filled only by God.

Sometimes, they find it in different places, in sin, in another gender expression. So, when we allow them to be here in Community, being immersed in the love of God, they get to feel the true love of God.

And they begin to realize: "I don't need this fake love anymore. I can have the true love of God."

Speaking of being sensitive, I remember one time, when we were still building up the Feast here in PICC, the afternoon session-- the 2:00 PM-- was held in Meeting Room 5-- not here in the Plenary Hall because we didn't have many attendees then. I was the Worship leader then.

We were told to greet the people, shake their hands, so that they would feel welcomed.

I always saw this lady in front, so every week, I would greet her and tell her, "Hi, Sis. Welcome. How are you?"

One particular Sunday-- I think the fourth time I greeted her: "Hi, Sis. Happy to see you again here."

And then I waved at her tummy and I said, "Hi, Baby."

Her smile vanished. She frowned and told me, "I'm not pregnant!"

Oh, my God, I did not see that lady again.



Be Sensitive

What did that experience teach me? Even if it was something that I thought was harmless and well-meaning, I was not sensitive enough to be able not to assume that the woman was pregnant. She was alone. Maybe she had a different interpretation of what I told her.

Maybe she was like, "This guy thought I was pregnant, and the baby had no father..."

So, be sensitive. I think that's clear: that we should not be critics and



judgmental. I like to believe that most of you are kind to people.

But sometimes, there are languages that we use, there are terms that we use that

drive people off-- because it makes them feel that they do not belong in this group. What are those words?

Example: pasaway-- disobedient or stubborn: Oy, kayo mga pasaway... kaming mga Feasters, kasi ganito kami. -- Hey, you disobedient, we Feasters are like...

Or: "*Kayong mga hindi madalas magsimba*...-- You who often don't attend Mass..."

You do not use words like that. Because once upon a time, you didn't attend Mass regularly, either. Right?

I love that the bigger Catholic Church is doing something about this. I think they're focusing on the heart of what church should be as

Jesus intended it. Are you familiar with *Fiducia Supplicans?* Translated into English, it's *Supplicating Trust*-- issued by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (the Vatican's Doc

the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (the Vatican's Doctrine office) and approved by Pope Francis.

The Church has mixed emotions about it. The conservative people are quite iffy. It's essentially giving a blessing to couples who are not considered to be married according to Church teaching. So, *irregular union*.

What's the definition of *irregular union*? Irregular unions in the view of the Church are these: live-in relationships; civil unions; unregistered partnerships; and same-sex relationships.

Fiducia Supplicans "Supplicating Trust"



So, *Fiducia Supplicans* is saying that people can get a blessing from the Church if they are seeking it. Again, to qualify, it doesn't mean that irregular union is equal to marriage. (The blessing does not signify approval of the union.) It doesn't mean that the Church's stand on the sanctity of marriage is now changing. No.

We are just saying that if people are asking for the blessing and they are seeking God, and coming to church, we should not deny them of the blessing-- because here is where they encounter God. And in my opinion, it's a very good move.

And why is the Church doing this? Yes, because we are Matthew's Table.

Bro. Bo's friend priest (Fr. Francis Gustilo) said it very well:

People come to priests to ask, "Father, bless my car." "Father, bless my Novena." "Father, bless my rosary bracelet." "Father bless my house." "Father, bless my cat, bless my dog."

And does the priest ask you, "Are you in a state of sin? If you are in a state of sin, I will not give the blessing."

No. What does the priest do? He just gives the blessing. Because you are seeking it.

And I think they are allowing the blessing because of its result: that these people, yes, they are still in a state of sin, but we want to offer our Table for them. So that when they continue dining in, and dining in, and receiving the love of God, taking in the nourishment of God, they get to eat the true food-and one day, they will realize, "Lord I now know the taste of Your true love. I can now follow You wholeheartedly."

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Here's the Reality:

Wives, you cannot even correct your husband,

You cannot correct people who don't trust you.

right? They don't listen. Agree?

So, it's important for us to *care* first.

And you notice that in Jesus' approach: He cared for people first before confronting them.

To confront means you point out their wrongdoing. To care means you point out their worthiness and you actively serve their needs first.

When you do that, when you point out the worthiness of a person, the person is compelled to change.

Parents, you must always first see the worthiness and the value of your child. Quick question, Parents: When your child was born, did you require, "Fold up your diaper... before I love you." Or, "Eat by yourself... Your daddy and I are going out. Warm your milk. There's a microwave oven there."

The parents have unconditional love for their children-- immediately. And sometimes, along the way, that is lost because the person grows up, sometimes you end up having disagreements. But in the end, you should believe in the goodness of your child.

And wives here, you might be saying, "Bro. JB, why is it that when I correct my spouse, he doesn't want to follow? Like, when I tell him, 'Let's change the light bulb-- we've been using it for six months already...' He would say, 'Well, we saved on electricity bills...'" You might be saying, "I'm caring for the person before I confront him, and correct him, but why is he still not following me?"

Maybe, you're not addressing the worthiness of your husband first.

Tip: Most men would want to be adored. We want to be seen as your heroes.

Bro. Bo and Sis. Marowe were preaching this: That if you want your husband to follow you, you must make the husband the hero.

Tell him, "Dad, I need your help. Our light is busted. You are the only one I can rely on when it comes to this."

And you know what? He will change the light bulb. Because you have addressed the worthiness that he needs. He needs to feel that you respect him. If he's not that way, he'd be embarrassed and would think, "She believes in me... I should live up to her belief in me..."

Many would not live up to your expectation. They will just feel nagged.

God Transforms Lives

The Pharisees knew the 613 laws and they had been teaching them and they had been correcting everyone-if they made a mistake... But it was an ineffective strategy.

So, Jesus knew what to do. People wondered why He had a different approach. Because His pastoral strategy was centered on loving people-- because only love heals.

After being in Ministry for nearly 20 years, I can tell you that I believe that we really can't change anyone-only God can transform lives.

Only God can change a person.



5. Allow God to do the changing.

I believe we can't change anyone, only God can transform lives.

The moment you realize that, it will be easier for you to love and accept people.

Speaking of confronting sin, there is something a hundred times more powerful. It's self-confrontation.

Self-confrontation

What is self-confrontation? When the person gets immersed in the love of God, keeps attending here,

keeps listening to God, keeps being fed by your encouragement and reaching out-and your love-- the person realizes his wrongdoing-- and self-confronts.

And you know what? When the confrontation comes from the person himself, it's very powerful.

Why? Because the change will be permanent. Because the idea comes from him.

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Hands of God and Adam from the painting of Michelangelo Buonarroti

'No Turning Back...'

It takes time for a person to self-confront. It takes time for a person to change his ways.

But will you journey with the person?

I'm proud to say that we have seen a lot of transformations here at The Feast.

We had a servant who had a relationship with a married man.

We did not tell the servant, "You cannot serve anymore."



6. Journey with people.

Obviously, we don't put servants in that state in leadership roles-- but we allow them to still serve and experience God and we ask them to continue coming to God.

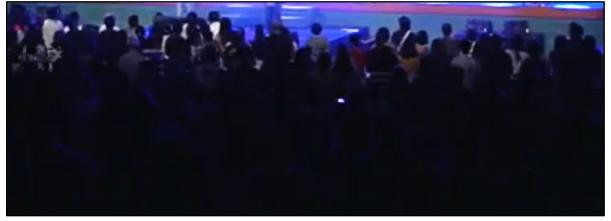
And one day, they will come to us, they will tell us they've changed.

Like this woman told us, "Bro, I was able to let go of my illicit relationship."

I remember one servant who had been in a same-sex relationship for so long. Until one time, in one Worship song, he heard God telling him, as the lyrics of the song say: *"No turning back..."*

So, he changed and never turned back to his old ways. He's now living pure as a single man.

So, change can happen. So, let's journey with people. We don't correct them. We just allow them to be here, we love them, until eventually, God will change them.



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See them as persons, not projects.

Bro. Bo's Challenge:

Today, I challenge you to write down the names of three persons with whom you will share God's Love.

1.							
2.							

2. 3.

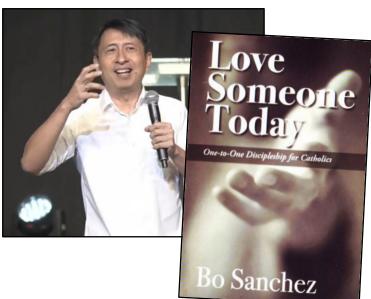
Pray for these persons every day. And then seek them out. Invite them for coffee. Listen to them. Care for them. And pray for them.

You can invite them to read together the little booklet called *Love Someone Today*. (You can find a copy at FeastBooks.ph)

You can say, "Do you have 15 minutes each week? We can have coffee and read this book together."

Read one chapter each week and follow the instructions in the booklet. You'll be surprised at how God will you to help the lost find their way back to Him.

And you could invite them to a Feast or Feast Light (small Caring Group).



But here's a big question: What if he doesn't respond? What if he doesn't follow Jesus? Was your friendship a failure?

Jesus said the greatest commandments are "Love God" and "Love your neighbor."

So, when you love people, you don't do it because you want to convert them. You love people because you're a Jesus Follower.

Love is the highest goal-- not converting people or changing them.

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The Older Brother

Our talk next week is about the Prodigal Son.

Quick Review: The son gets his inheritance from his father, squanders it, then goes home empty-handed to his father who welcomes him with a party, killing a fattened calf to celebrate his return.

The older brother was angry. 25 '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. 30 Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!'

-- Luke 15: 11-32 NLT

Bro. Bo points out:

"In the Prodigal Son story, there was

a party for him with a fattened calf.

Question: Who paid for the calf?

The Father? Yes. But in one sense, it was paid by the elder son. Remember that the youngest son already asked for half of his property. So, technically, what remained belonged to the older son.

Here's the point: *Reconciliation is expensive*. Someone has to pay for reconciliation."

Yes, there's a price. Will you be that older son?

How do you relate to us inviting people to be at The Feast? Because of the reality that they will experience rejection. Some will ignore you. Some will condemn you, and say, "*Hu, pa-simba simba pa kayo, mga hipokrito naman kayo.* -- Huh, you're going to church but you are really hypocrites."

It hurts.

When someone tells you you're a hypocrite, say, "Yes! That's why I'm there at The Feast every Sunday!"

Even us preachers. We're here every Sunday because we need to be marinated in the love of God until it seeps into every fiber of our being, into our heart, into our mind -- until eventually, we get to follow God.

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Are You Willing To Pay the Price?

Will you be that older son?

I'm telling you, this is not a walk in the park. It will be difficult especially if it's a reconciliation with a family member you haven't spoken to for so long. It will take a price to be able to do it.

But my question: Are you willing to pay that price-- for Jesus? This is my last story:

This is my last story:

You know, I realized I'm already at the age when God already blessing me with wisdom. In Tagalog, pinapantanda na Niya ako. -- He's making me old⁽²⁾

Why? Because before, I got to be invited to be a ninong-- godparent-- in a baptism. But just recently-- January-- I was invited to be a ninong in a wedding.

And I immediately said "Yes!"

Because the couple getting wed were once students in The Feast at the University of the Philippines that we built. By God's grace, we were able to put up a Feast at the UP Campus last 2011.

And the students are now aging[©] to the point that they're already getting married.

What's interesting is I never

knew that they would end up together because they were still young, they were seeking God, they were serving God and yet, there they were experiencing a great life because they had met God-- first-- at The Feast UP. And then they met each other while serving God there. What a beautiful story.

Sometimes, your intention: "Lord, I'll bring him or her to The Feast." -- God refines.

That was my experience.

Initially, the girl I was courting I brought to The Feast-- because Bro. Bo often said, "Can you hug the person beside you?"

So, I was like, "Yes!"

But at the time I brought her to The Feast, Bro. Bo was not the preacher. There was no instruction to hug the person beside you. So, it seemed the Lord knew beforehand my bad intention...O

But still, He led me to The Feast.

And I found the greater love that I needed here.





A Moment of Vulnerability

The story of the students who eventually got married was just one story of the people transformed at The Feast UP where I was a campus missionary.

I remember we had one student here who, when she was a child, was sexually molested by her nanny. Now an adult, she found healing at The Feast.

I know one student back then who got his girlfriend pregnant and they went to an abortion clinic. They were so broken and wounded.

And I thank God I was able to be part of building His Kingdom and providing blessing and healing for these people.

Why am I sharing these stories?

May I share with you today a moment of vulnerability? This was a good reminder for me. Why? Because I have a confession...

I have been delaying building a Feast (in Binondo, Manila) for so long. Why? Because I am daunted by the immensity of the work to be done-- the organization of the venue, the contracts, everything about setting up systems, the funding...

But these experiences are telling me, "It's worth it."

It's worth it. The price is worth it.

Because I could have ended up on the same path... You know, I came from a broken family...

And one person was asking me, "If you're not in The Feast, what are you doing instead if you're not a preacher?"

You know, probably, I already have many children-- with different mothers. Then I am separated from all of them. Because that's the sin of the generation of my family. But praise be to God, someone invited me to a praying meeting.

That someone said "Yes" to God: "Lord, I will bring this person to You."

Someone prayed for me and since then, my life has never been like my old ways.

I believe that same invitation God has for every one of you today. You are His instrument... You will change the trajectory of someone's life-- because you said "Yes" to sharing God's love. That's the price. But it's worth it.

Everything Is Paid For

Remember that the price had already been paid The price has already been paid for you yesterday,

today and tomorrow.

ever since by a better older Brother.

That older Brother is Jesus. Who will never cease to pay the price for you today. He will pay the price for you tomorrow. And even the price for you in the past. Your past, your present, your future-- everything is paid for.

Because He loves you so much.



Jesus loves you that much.

Can you lift your hands as we worship :

God, Almighty Father, we Thank You because of the immense mercy and love that You have for every one of us.

Father, now we know that You are commissioning us to go on a mission to love people, to be more accepting, to be more sensitive. And we believe, Father, that even though our efforts will not bear fruit immediately, we believe that You are using us to plant seeds in these people that You will call us to love and minister to until one day, they will experience You fully. This we ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Come on, let's continue lifting our hands as we worship and sing to God...

Commitment



I want you to lift your hands as a sign that "Lord, I'm recommitting my life to you."

Some people here are in a state of sin and you've been yearning for healing and transformation in your life. I want to tell you that God is telling you today: Your sins are forgiven. You are loved. You are worthy and valuable in my eyes.

Some people here are being called by God to reach out to people and share His love. Offer your efforts to God.

Father, we offer ourselves, our lives to You. You are our Healer. You are our Savior. You will provide everything that we need, oh God. And starting today, we cooperate with Your Perfect Will because You are our Savior and our Lord. And we believe that a beautiful life will happen to us because of Your goodness. We will trust You all of our days. Because You are King of our life. In Jesus' Name. Amen.



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God's Call

BRO. BO SANCHEZ:



Give a big hand to this wonderful hero of the Lord. God will use him in a powerful way in Binondo.

I just flew from Davao. We had The Feast Conference there yesterday (January 20). There were 3,000 participants.

And I just want to share with you the Good News that God is working in Mindanao.

So many wonderful Feasts are being built all over Mindanao and I am conveying their greetings to you.

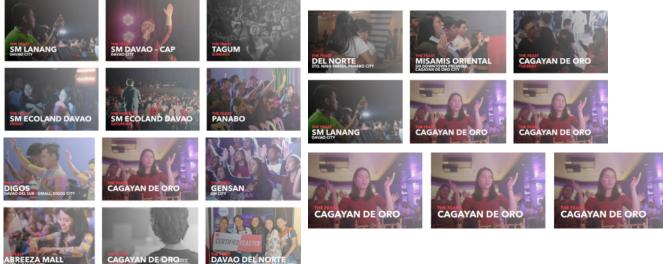
So, do not ever say, "Oh, this is the work of Bo, this is the work of Audee, this is the work of John Ben, this is not me...No.

You. God is calling you to serve in some way. I don't know how.

And tell somebody beside you, put your arm around that person, and say,

DAVAO D

"Mag-serve na tayo.-- Let's serve already." God bless you, Everybody.







MERCY MINISTRIES

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

--Matthew 5:7

The PRISON MISSION PART2 *Theological Basis for Our Ministry*

WHILE the national government can justify that it has no budget to support its prison system and has other economic priorities to be concerned about, 'human personhood' must be respected with uncompromising reverence.

When we deal with human beings, yes even with prisoners, we should do so with the sense of awe that arises in the presence of something holy and sacred. For that is what human beings are: we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

We consistently uphold that every individual, precisely by reason of the mystery of the Word of God who was made flesh (John 1:14), is entrusted to the maternal care of the Church.



We in the PRISON MISSION therefore are our 'brother's keepers' for our poor brothers and sisters in the prison cells and facilities.

"Every threat to human dignity and life, most especially as glaring as this sorry state of our prison system, must necessarily be felt in our very heart; it cannot but affect us at the core of our faith in the Redemptive Incarnation of the Son of God, and to proclaim, and work for, the Gospel of life in all the world and to every creature. -- Mark 16:15.

(St. John Paul II, The Gospel of Life [Evangelium Vitae], no. 3)

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OUR RESPONSE: THE PRISON MISSION

The PRISON MISSION started its 'trial existence,' around three years ago, feeling its way, seeking God's inspiration, patiently waiting on God's confirmation. We have done 'informal' initiatives of serving our inmates during this process.

The overall strategy of the PRISON MISSION is to bring WHOLISTIC salvation to the prison inmates. Not just to the spirit, as the 'religious' sector would provide, because we learned that...

The glory of God is man fully alive. (St Irenaeus)

Not just the body, or the material needs-- on the other hand, because we learned

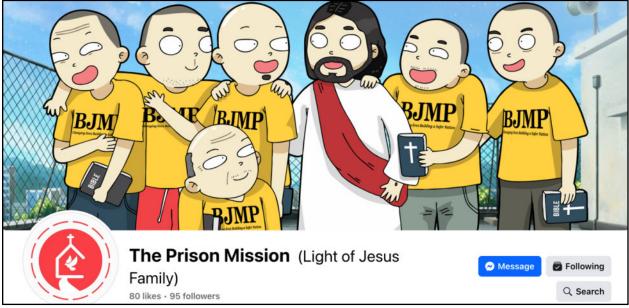
... spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature. (Catechism of the Catholic Church #365)

Our Objectives

The PRISON MISSION seeks to serve the total 'human person' of the prison inmates.

We have the following as the objectives:

- Provide support for their basic practical needs, medical needs, and legal supports.
- Create a community of support within the jail facilities for their spiritual and psycho-spiritual needs by bringing them to a personal and growing relationship with Jesus Christ, and an active engagement in the Catholic Church.
- Bridge 'ex-offenders' (inmates who served their sentences) to 'outside' groups and communities that will provide continuing 'formation/discipleship' and practical support.
- Provide links to educational assistance to the CICL (Children In Conflict with the Law), CAR (Children At Risk), and the children of the inmates.
- Equip both current PDL's (Persons Deprived of Liberty) and ex-offenders



The Prison Mission is on Facebook.

Our Strategy

• The Ministry provides two (2) levels of support.

First level is a 'direct' support/assistance coming from the resources of the Ministry.

Second level is 'bridging and monitoring.' This means that the Ministry 'links up' the inmates to resources who have the 'focus,' competencies, and resources to provide support to these areas of needs.

• Harness existing networks in the efficient delivery of the services, sourcing of resources, and raising of funds.

Our Hopes

First, we hope that we can plant seeds in the heart of prison inmates that will grow and bear fruit even AFTER their release from incarceration. This is a serious prayer as current data suggests an unencouraging reality: According to World Prison Brief (2017), 74.4% of the total population of prisoners return to prison in the Philippines. We hope that we can empower freed inmates to live out this 'new life in Christ,' receiving not just 'authentic' freedom, but living it out sustainably outside of the prison walls.

Second, we believe that we can't change people. Only God can do that. Our work is to simply provide the support that they need AND be present with them. The rest, we surrender to the work of God in prayer. This makes our work both unique and 'wider' in scope. Third, we hope that our service be a fruit of our continuing love and devotion to Jesus Christ. Because only by seeing Jesus in the Eucharist will we be able to consistently see Jesus in the inmates we serve. Jesus loves the prisoners because **Jesus himself was a prisoner**. He knows how they feel. He knows what they need. He feels their pain. May we have the compassion and empathy of



Jesus by becoming intentional in our 'solidarity' with our inmate brothers and sisters.

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous[p] will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the

king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' -- Matthew 25:35-40

Lastly, we hope to have more inmates and ex-offenders taking on the mission of using their past hurts for the healing of others. This is the ultimate transformation: becoming like Jesus, who Himself is the Wounded Healer.

"...by his wounds we were healed." (Isaiah 53:5b)





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@kerygmafamily.com Website: https://kerygmafamily.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.







Acts 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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Go and make disciples of all men.

— Matthew 28:19