

### Faith vs. Works?

FOR the past 500+ years, there's been this old debate about how someone gets saved.

Is it by faith or by works? Many people assume that Protestants believe that we're saved by faith and Catholics believe that we're saved by works.

But that's not true. In a very real sense, the "faith vs. works" argument is a false dichotomy. Because faith is *not* just believing the right doctrine. It's not ticking off whether you mentally assent that Jesus is God. Instead,



faith is trusting Jesus with your whole life. It's a discipleship relationship of surrender. Ultimately, you follow Him forever.

Here's how I express it: "I'm not saved by faith or by works. I'm saved by Grace. And the only reason I can have any kind of faith or do any kind of good work is by His unstoppable Grace."

This perspective goes beyond doctrines.

This paradigm—that "everything is grace"—overflows on what kind of church we will build in this world.

Have a life-changing Feast today!

May your dreams come true,

Bo Sandy

**Bo Sanchez** 

WELCOME
to our Feast Talk series
TABLE TALKS:
Community Recipes of Love
Talk 4: Damascus Road





## Why Worry?

"I LIKE all of you to be free of all anxieties..."

Fr. Mario Quejadas began his homily in last Sunday's Feast with this quote from 1 Corinthians 7:22, part of the second of the Mass Readings on January 28, 2024.

If the promise is that we will be free of all anxieties, why do we still worry? Fr. Mario expounds on God's answer, page 3.

We worry about a lot of things. One big worry is the answer to the issue of how we are really saved. Is it by faith? Or Is it by works?

Bro. Bo Sanchez opens this age-old debate today -- part of our series on *Table Talks*-- Talk 4, titled *Damascus Road*. Yes, what happened in Damascus

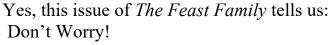
has a lot to do with your salvation. Check out Bro. Bo's intro on page 1.

Bro. Audee Villaraza said don't worry. You'll be happy if you join the *Greatest Party in the Universe*, Talk 3 of *Table Talks*. *Flashback* starts on *page 20*.

Bro. Ryan Nabus welcoming us to The Feast last Sunday, pointed us there's really nothing to worry about. You're okay if you give, *page 11*.



Even in prison, inmates can be free of anxieties. That's the good news in Part 3 of our series on the Prison Mission in our *Mercy Ministries* section, *page 39*.





Randy Borromeo Media Ministry Executive Director









## **Holy Mass**





FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### **Homily REV. MARIO QUEJADAS** on the Gospel Mark 1: 21-28

#### Excerpts:

Good Morning, Church!

Let's applaud the Lord. Thank You, Lord. God is good, and all the time God is good.

How are you this morning?

Again, my name is Fr. Mario Quejadas. You know, I have been living in the United States for the past 30 years. And I am here in the Philippines for a sevenmonth sabbatical at the Ateneo. This is my first time in 30 years that I spent Christmas in the Philippines. And my first time in 30 years that I spent Christmas with my family.

Praise God. Dreams do come true.



#### Why Worry?

Church, did you notice, our Second Reading started with the words from 1 Corinthians 7:22

"I like all of you to be free of all anxieties..."

Worship

medicine

is the

Church, who among you here had worries in life? Who among you had *many* worries in your life? How many of you have not had a worry in life?

You know what? Worries are natural because we are human beings. We are always worried. What's beautiful about this is that God has a prescription for worry.

Today, I want to talk about how Worship is the medicine to worry. In my life as a priest, I also worry and I noticed that when I worry, two things happen.

The first is this: Worry comes in a bundle.

Worry comes in bundle.

When I worry about my Mom...

You know, I have an 84-year-old mom. Until now she dances the Zumba. She goes to church every day, walking 15 minutes towards the church, then one hour and a half back home. Why? Siya ay nag-ma-marites sa mga tao. --She gossips with people. Ha-ha©.

But when I worry about my Mom, I notice that I also worry about my sister. I also worry about my brother-in-law. I also worry about my nephew and my niece.

Did you notice that? When you worry, it comes in bundles. Did you notice, church, in the Gospel stories about demon possession? The demon possession is a lot. The words that are used are *us* and *we*. Not only one.

When you sin... for example, lust. What do you do? Ah, you start thinking, you get your phone, you click at a lot of ... When you are angry at someone, you imagine how you will torture the person.

Right? It always comes in a bundle. But God always comes as one. *Mono-*from the word *monastic*. Love has a focus, joy has a focus-- everything coming from the Holy Spirit. Misery loves company. Right? But joy also loves company. Peace loves company.

When you received your 13-month pay, the first thing that you did was what? Buy something for your family. Right? Some of you feel guilty...Ha-ha©.

Do you want to celebrate Christmas all by yourself? You want to spend Christmas with whom? Family. Joy also multiples.



#### **What Worry Does**

The second thing about worry is this:

## Worries are about those things we cannot control.

Church, can I control my Mommy? My sister and I, we try--24 hours a day-- to control our Mom. Does it work out?

Can you control your children? Can you control politics in the Philippines? Can you control the weather? Can you control your own body?

I know someone-- a relative-- who is a vegetarian. In the past two decades, had a heart attack...

Because control is an illusion that we like to cover ourselves, to think that we are in control of our life. That's what worry does.

The good news today is this: Jesus wants to heal you from your worries. And His medicine to worry is Worship.

Jesus wants to heal you from your worries: His medicine to worry is WORSHIP!

You know, when I worry-- and oftentimes worry comes every second of every day-- the first thing I do is to Worship. What do I do? Usually, I get my rosary, I pray the Rosary.

Or, I go to YouTube to look for Worship songs and I sing. I love songs such as *Give Thanks, God Is Good, All the Time...* 

Or, this is what I do: I sit down and slowly, I say this powerful prayer: *Jesus, I trust in You.* Slowly. *Jesus, I trust in You.* 

You will notice, when you start worshipping, your worries will start to dis-a-p-pear... That's why Worry is afraid of Worship.

Because when Worship comes, it tells you: You are blessed. Somebody loves you. You are swimming in the ocean of God's blessings. You don't need to fear. You don't need to worry. Why? Because you are loved.

But my dear Brothers and Sisters, what I'm telling you is that medicine is only *reactive*. Like, when you have a headache, you take Biogesic or Tylenol. When something happens to you, you go to the Emergency room. Reactive.

There is what you call *pro-active Worship*. Pro-active Worship.

#### **Pro-Active Worship: Discipline of Solitude**

Have you noticed? The Lord Jesus, He does not worry. He doesn't have any anxiety at all. Because He practices Pro-Active Worship.

What is Pro-Active Worship? It is when you have a Discipline of Solitude in your life.

Not aloneness. Not the discipline of isolating yourself. It is called the Discipline of Solitude.

Have you noticed? Christ, even before His apostles wake up, He goes to a secluded place to pray. Because He sees that He gets all His love not from the Pharisees or the Sadducees-- His haters, doubters,



and fakers. Everybody has those in their life. He does not even get His love from His family, or friends, or His disciples. He gets His love from His heavenly Father.

The Disciple of Solitude. He does that every day. It's in that Discipline of Solitude that He gets His identity, His sense of belonging, His very self.

When I don't have that Discipline of Solitude-- you know, even five minutes a day being with Jesus-- it's easy for me to listen to my haters, doubters, and fakers. That's why when they curse me, I curse them also. If they hurt me, I also hurt them. If they don't do *like* on my Facebook or Instagram posts, I don't get hurt. Why? Because I get my identity from others. Sometimes, I even get my identity from myself.

And all of those are fickle, are finite.

So, I am a parish priest in the United States. I was ordained in the year 2000. In the United States, we have what we call RCIA -- the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. So, eight months before Easter, those adults who want to be Catholic come to churches and re-study the Scriptures and the Catechism together. And every year, about 35,000 adults enter the Catholic Church in the United States and they are welcomed on Easter.

So, in my parish, St. Francis of Assisi in Bolingbrook (a village in Will and DuPage counties in the state of Illinois, southwest of Chicago on 1-55 and Historic Route 66) 12 persons were admitted. Afterward, we taught them how to equip themselves to be disciples of Jesus Christ. And one of the lessons I taught them was the Discipline of Solitude.



#### A Businessman's Rocking Chair

There was one businessman, he's from Chicago, in Bolingbrook-- that's about 25-30 miles, without traffic, about 40 minutes' drive but when it's traffic, it's about one-and-a-half hours' drive.

Suddenly, he said, "Fr. Mario, you don't know my life as a businessman. I am so busy."

See that word? "I am so busy."

He added, "I don't have time-- even for five minutes I don't have time for that Discipline of Solitude. I'm so busy."

So, I didn't see him and his wife anymore in church, Sunday after Sunday. But one day, after perhaps about three or four months, they came to church, and they invited me for dinner...Yummy food. Priests like that very much. That's how we get heart attacks.

They are Americans, Caucasians. After dessert, the husband showed me around his house, and I noticed there was a rocking chair -- you know, tumba-tumba in Tagalog--facing his garden.

And I said, "Oh, beautiful rocking chair."

He said, "Fr. Mario, that's where I do my habit of solitude."

"Real-I-ly?"

"Yes."

I asked, "What do you do in your Discipline of Solitude?"

He said, "Just what you said... You know, I read the Gospel of the day--I get it from the bulletin of the church, I read it and I ask Jesus to speak to me. And then I pray for everybody, especially my family. It's about five to ten minutes, Fr. Mario, every day."

And I told him, "And what does that do to you?"

The Americana, the wife, sumabat-- broke in, interjected-- she said:

"Oh, my gosh, Fr. Mario, he is much more loving to me, and so patient to me. He listens now to his kids. Whereas before, you know, he was always shouting at his teenagers. Now, his teenagers love him so tenderly. And now, he is the talk of the corporate office because everybody who works with him appreciates his kind words to them every day. And how he's also joyful to them every day. That chair, Fr. Mario, has changed my husband..."



#### Where Is Your Rocking Chair?

Haah. Fast forward -- after about 18 months. I presided over his funeral.

He died of a massive heart attack.

In the United States, after the funeral of Americans, everybody goes again to the house of the departed, and they would have coffee and cookies and stuff like that.

And I was at the back of the house with the rocking chair, and I said,

"So, what's going to happen to the rocking chair...?"

Wow... It's great here at The Feast, right? Let's applaud them.

May I ask later for sisig (spicy ground pork or chicken) and palabok (savory noodle dish)? Or maybe Jollibee--Chicken Joy, a, with extra rice.☺

So, what's going to happen to that rocking chair?

The wife said to me, "Father, I will give it to one of my children, hoping that what happened to my husband will also happen to them."

Church, where is your rocking chair? Where is that space in your house in which you meet Jesus?

The good news is that your rocking chair could be everywhere.

I know of some people, whose rocking chair is Starbucks-- pricy-before they go to the office, where they meet Jesus.

I know of construction workers from my parish who in their pickup trucks, 30 minutes before their 9:00 a.m. work, they will meet Jesus there.

I know of some teenagers from my parish who, on the bus, they have their iPads, and they listen to Worship songs because that is where Jesus meets them.

Where is your rocking chair? Where is it in your life every day that you open the Word of God and let it speak to you? Let it change you. Let it fill you up. Because only then, that rocking chair that you have, that all your worries are set aside.

When I began as a priest, it was difficult for me to get up from bed in the morning--especially if your Mass was at 6:00 a.m. It was hard. But I noticed, in my life, that if I don't have that solitude with Jesus every morning, I'm scattered. I easily get angry. There's no priority activity on my calendar. And I am irritated at myself. I have a lot on my mind. Just a little post I don't like on my IG or Facebook, I am already angry.



#### Surrender

The invitation today is to have the Discipline of Solitude. Because Worship, Brothers and Sisters, is the antidote to worry.

Jesus is asking you today, "What are you worrying about?"

Jesus is inviting you to trust Him, to give all your worries to Him because He cares for you. He wants to carry all of your problems and fears, anxieties, depression, your sickness. He wants to carry your family, He wants to carry you.

Give everything to Jesus...

Lord, I come to You today. I humble myself before You. I invite You again in my heart. Forgive me my sins. Lord, I give You all my worries and anxieties today, knowing that I am not in control, knowing that You are my Best Friend and the only One who understands my mind, my heart, and everything that is about me.

So, Lord, I come to You. I pray that You give me the Discipline of Solitude every day, so dear, and let time and space You can hug me with Your peace. You can hug me with Your intimacy. You can hug me with the warmth of Your love. I love You, Jesus. In Your Name, I pray. Amen."

Let's applaud the Lord. Thank You, Jesus, Thank You, Lord.



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## **Commissioning Rite for Lectors and Commentators**



#### FR. MARIO QUEJADAS:

Dear Lectors and Commentators, you are not just readers but proclaimers of the Word of God. So, speak in the Name of God. Deliver His message of love and express His thoughts, will, and concerns. Only with strong prayer life can you succeed in your Ministry which is based on an intimate partnership with God and a generous commitment to Christ.

My Sisters, are you resolved to undertake the office of Lectors and Commentators, the duty and responsibility to proclaim the Word of God in the Holy Eucharist celebrated in our Feast?

SISTERS: Yes, Father, I am.

**FR. QUEJADAS:** Are you resolved to serve with the Spirit of Christ, the spirit of humility, gratitude, and generosity, love, and service, not seeking your own pleasure, convenience, and honor, but the glory of God in the building of the Body of Christ the Church?

**SISTERS:** Yes, Father, I am.

**FR. QUEJADAS:** Everybody, stretch out your right hand in blessing to our Sisters:

Heavenly Father, we Thank You for Your gift of Jesus Christ.

Your Word, that brings us confidence, that brings us life, that brings us hope.

Your Word that secures our freedom, that brings us the Holy Spirit.

Your Word that cleanses us of our sins.

Your Word that dispels all our worries and anxieties.

So now, dear Jesus, send the Power of Your Holy Spirit upon these Your servants who present themselves to read Your Word. Take care of them. Give them the Power to Proclaim Jesus Christ here at The Feast so that all who hear the Word of God may be changed by Your love.

This is our prayer, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Let's give the Lord a round of applause for our Sisters.

Thank you, Sisters.



#### **BRO. RYAN NABUS:**

Let's clap our hands for the Lord! Come on!

Good Morning, Feast Bay Area!

How was your week? Good? Surviving, at least? How was your month? How was January for everyone?

They say January is long. Anyway, we're glad God is sustaining us every day Let's all welcome the first-timers in the house. Let's clap our hands for them.

Welcome, welcome! Welcome to the Fast! Welcome home!

While we're at it, I want to see who among you here brought someone to the Feast this month. If you brought a friend, family member, or an officemate this month, we want to recognize you as well. We want to thank you guys for serving the Lord by inviting people. You really are doing the work.

Since we are in the fourth week of January, I want to see who among you here has not missed a single Feast this year. A lot!

Let's clap our hands for them.

We want to thank you for always coming here. Thank you for being part of this family. All of you here who are in this hall, this is your spiritual family.



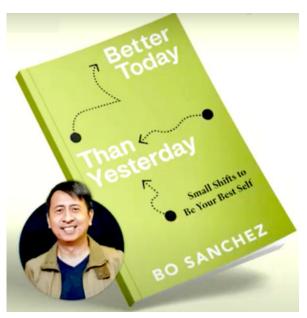
#### Two Announcements

First, we're going to have a Ministry sign-up today.

We invite you to join us. We have different ministries in The Feast. You may choose which Ministry you want to belong to, or to serve with.

Before you go home, just go to the table outside with the sign "Join Us in the Kitchen," and sign up.

We will help you discern which Ministry where you may serve.





Second, you're all lucky today. Who wants to go home with a copy of Bro. Bo's newest book?

Bro. Bo is launching his new book, *Better Today, Than Yesterday*. Here's the good news:

Since you all came here-- you woke up early, struggled through the traffic at the parking area, and exerted effort, you're all going to go home with a copy of the book -- if you buy the book, outside, in the lobby©.

Don't buy just one. Buy many, buy two-- give them to your friends, give them to your family, bless your circle.

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I've been serving here at The Feast with my wife Madz, for 13 to 14 years. We're part of the Worship Ministry. We have a three-year-old daughter--Kylie is her name.

A few months before she turned 3, she discovered this cute hand gesture like this>



So, we asked her, "What's that gesture? Where did you learn that?"

She said, "I don't know."

Sorry if this means anything to any culture, but this is what she discovered in her world.

So. might as well put meaning to it. I said, "The taller finger is Dada, the shorter one is Mama, and the thumb is you, Kylie."

She understood. And from then on, every time she's making that sign, for her, that's the sign of our family-- Dada, Mama, and Kylie.

One day, when we came home, from The Feast, she showed us again her hand-- similar hand gesture, but with two other fingers up.

We wondered why she added two fingers. Did she want to have siblings?

So, we asked her, "What happened to the family? How come there are more members?"

She said, "That's still family-- Kylie, Mama, Dada. The two additions are our friends here at The Feast: Tito Jon, Tita Kath..."

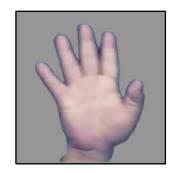
We said, "What about the others?"

She used her other hand and named the fingers after the names of other Feasters she could remember.

Then it dawned on me, our friends here, for Kylie, are Family. The Feast is Family.







## **Love Offering**



Are you happy to be here, Friends? Do you love your Family here at The Feast? Look around you. You have a growing spiritual family you can go to every week. You can actually reach out to them every single day.

Do you want this Family to grow? Do you want this Family to be able to reach more people? And to be able to bless more?

Friends, we need your support. That's why we're inviting you to join a Ministry, to serve with us. That's why we're acknowledging everyone who's inviting a friend to be here. That's why we're acknowledging first-timers.

And that's also the reason we encourage you, and want to challenge you, to give. Because whatever we give to our Family, to our Church, to our Community, God will multiply.



Okay, I invite you to raise your Love Offering to the Lord...

We love you our Church. We love our Family.

Lord, we want to give to You because we are grateful for all the blessings that we receive and we're grateful for all the blessings to come.

So, Lord, use this Offering. No matter how small or how big it is, we know that You can multiply it so that this blessing will be able to bless more.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.



Let's give joyfully to the Lord and let's have a blast as we listen to the Word of God today.

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## Worship!

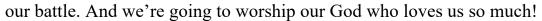
#### **EXHORTATION**

#### **SIS. MHADZ PAMAONG:**

During the Homily earlier, Fr. Mario said a wonderful message: That the antidote to worry is Worship.

Amen.

And that's what we are going to do today. We're going to worship our God who won the victory. We're going to worship our God who's fighting





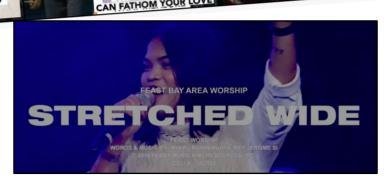
Brothers and Sisters, I want you to know that our faith in Jesus will not remove the struggles that we are experiencing in this life. But praise God, because, in the Bible, there's this most astonishing truth and powerful message and promise given to those who believe. And I pray that this Word will be planted into those who need to be reminded of it. The Word says that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

There's nothing-- not our failures, not our brokenness, not our past, not our sins, not even death. And that love, freely given to us by God, is impossible to measure. But the truth is it was completely magnified on that Cross.

So, all that we are, let us sing. Let us sing about His love...









#### **BRO. AUDEE VILLARAZA:**

May I ask Everybody, from the front to the back, all around this place to just lift both hands, let's pray:

Father in Heaven, Thank You for bringing all of us here together... We could have been in a different place doing something different. But we're all here because we want to worship You, we want to glorify You and we want to crown You with praise.

Father, Thank You! We say Thank You for all the ways You have blessed us with Your love. For all the ways that You have healed us and provided for all of us. But Thank You, more than anything else, Lord, for Your Presence in our life,

made tangible by Your Son Jesus Christ.

We say Thank You, Lord!

Everybody, say that with me: "Thank You, Lord! Thank You, Lord!" In Jesus' Name. Amen and Amen.

Clap your hands. Give God the Praise, Everybody. Come on! Somebody give

Him a shout!

May I ask you to High-5 as many persons as you can and say, "Thank you for being here."

How many of you are blessed to be here? Raise your hands.

Wonderful. Thank you so much, Everybody.

We want to welcome those who have come for the first time.

And we want to welcome those who are joining us online. Thank you for being with us.

May we give a big hand to Fr. Mario Quejadas for that powerful message today: Seek that Discipline of Solitude that I believe we should all have.

Thank You, Lord, for the gift of people here.



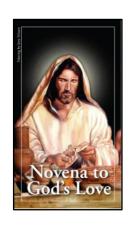


## NOVENA TO GOD'S LOVE DECLARATION OF ABUNDANCE

Everybody, lift your booklets of your *Novena to God's Love* and we'll pray together. Come on. You may also lift your phone if your *Novena* is in your digital Feast app.

Let us pray:







Everybody, lift your hands and help me sing praise and honor to God's Word today:



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

#### **Talk**



We're going to take one of the most famous Scripture stories in the New Testament that unless you have been living in a cave all your life, chances are you have heard the story at least once in your life.

It's called the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*. It's a beautiful parable of Jesus and if you've heard it many times, I pray that God will give you fresh ears to hear, and new eyes to see His wisdom today.

Let's read:

## Luke 15:11-32 TLB

"A man had two sons. "When the younger told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now, instead of waiting until you die!' his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

That's all of us here: We want the blessing of God sometimes right now, instead of waiting for it. That's the younger son. Here's Surprising: His father agreed to divide his wealth between the two sons.

<sup>13</sup> "A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and took a trip to a distant land, and there wasted all his money on parties and prostitutes.

#### And then,

<sup>16</sup> About the time his money was gone a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve.
<sup>15</sup> He persuaded a local farmer to hire him to feed his pigs. <sup>16</sup> The boy became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the swine looked good to him. And no one gave him anything.



#### **Hungry for Love**

That's what happens when you're hungry. You're so hungry for affirmation of love, you're going to get love from the wrong place, even from the wrong person. Because when you're hungry that's a dangerous place to be in.

And no one gave him anything. Verse 17 says:

"When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired men have food enough and to spare, and here I am, dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you,

"and am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired man." "O "So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long distance away, his father saw him coming, and was filled with loving pity and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

I declare that there's somebody here who has been away from the Lord for so long, I want you to know that God sees you where you are right now, and as He sees you coming, He'll be the first one to come running to you.

#### And then, in Verse 21:

"His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and you, and am not worthy of being called your son—" "But his father said to the slaves, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. And a jeweled ring for his finger; and shoes!

<sup>25</sup> And kill the calf we have in the fattening pen. We must celebrate with a feast, <sup>26</sup> for this son of mine was dead and has returned to life. He was lost and is found.' So the party began. <sup>25</sup> "Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working; when he returned home, he heard dance music coming from the house.

<sup>26</sup> and he asked one of the servants what was going on. <sup>27</sup> "'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the calf we were fattening and has prepared a great feast to celebrate his coming home again unharmed.'

I declare a party will begin here right now.

But you know, the older brother, instead of celebrating, he became angry...

28 "The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him,

<sup>29</sup> but he replied, 'All these years I've worked hard 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.

<sup>30</sup> Yet when this son of yours comes back after spending your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the finest calf we have on the place.'

#### The father looks at the older brother...

31 "'Look, dear son,' his father said to him, 'you and I are very close, and everything I have is yours. 32 But it is right to celebrate. For he is your brother; and he was dead and has come back to life! He was lost and is found!"

#### **Big Message Today**

Look at the neighbor beside you. Once upon a time, those brothers and sisters of yours, they were lost. But the day came when they were found and we praise God for that.

Thank You, Lord, for Your love.

Here is my big message for all of you today, and I hope you can help me preach this to someone next to you.

My message today is this: Join the party.

Fr. Mario would say, "Join the Jollibee party." Uter's pray:

Father, Thank You, for this Word will come alive and it will change us today. That's what You want. You want us to be transformed according to who you have called us to be. Whatever distraction or hindrances that might prevent us from hearing Your Word, Father, we let go of that-- shatter our expectations today. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

One more time, Everybody. lift your hands and sing...







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

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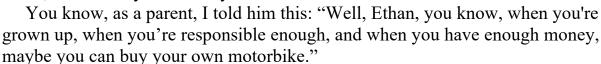
#### **Life Comes in Stages**

A few years ago, we (my wife Kristel and our three-year-old son Ethan) were in the middle of traffic on EDSA.

All of a sudden, there was this Harley Davidson motorcycle that came up right next to us. You know, those big bikes that are so loud you cannot help hearing them. I don't drive a motorbike but if I could I would do it. If I had the resources, yes, I would buy a motorbike.

So, I was admiring this motorbike, and Ethan from behind, just says, "Dad, can you buy me a motorbike?"

I was like, "Son, I wish I could. If I could, I would buy one for myself."



He paused. Many seconds passed, and then he says again, "Dad..."

And I said, "Yes, son?"

"Am I older now?"

Ha-ha. It's a cute story. But it's also a picture of all of us-- how we want life to be quick. We don't want to wait, sometimes. We want the shortcut.

Who among you here when you were younger, already wanted to be an adult? That's a season that you go through. You're young, you want to be old.

So, what do you do? You dress up like you're an adult. You listen to adult music. You have adult friends. You pretend that you're an adult.

But then what happens? You grow up. And now that you're all grown up, you want to pretend that you're young again. Right? That's difficult.

I want you to know that that's not how life is. Because life happens in stages.

Like, you just started working in a company you already want to be promoted already. That can't be.

It can't be that you're just starting to court a girl you want her to say "Yes" right away. What's that? A minute to win it<sup>©</sup>? That can't be.

Because life comes in stages.

Yes, that's how it is. Sometimes, you have to through a season of hardship for you to grow. Because life comes in stages.





#### **Three Stages of Spiritual Growth**

So, it goes also with our spiritual life. Our spiritual life also goes through different levels of growth. Before you can go to a maturity stage, you have to start as a baby Christian.

In the story we just read a while ago, the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*, there are three levels that I will share with you-- different stages of our spiritual journey.

Stage I: Surprised Son

In the Parable, the younger son asked for his share of his father's wealth. And much to his

surprise, the father divided the wealth between his two sons.

First Lesson: This is the mystery of God's Love, my dear Friends.

Do you believe that God loves you?

Yes. God loves you.

But did you know that even if God loves you, God will allow you to make the wrong decisions in your life? The most foolish decisions in your life? Does it mean that God doesn't love you?

No!

The fact that God allows you to have free will is a testimony that God respects you. God loves you.

But God is a parent. Parents, you know this. That if you truly love your children, you're going to allow them to go through hardship in life. Right?

Because of you don't allow them to go through tough experiences, they are going to grow up soft.

#### **Dangers of the First Stage**

As a parent, God will allow you to go through storms and struggles.

Why? Because He wants you to grow into a better person. He wants you to be more faithful

And that's the scary part-- that God will allow you to make foolish decisions. He's going to allow rebellion. Just like He allowed His Son...

Why? So that you can become wiser.

God allows you through a season of feeling empty. Why? So that you can understand what it means to have plenty.

God will allow you sometimes to get lost. Why? So that you know the feeling of what it is to be found.

God is a good parent. He's a good father.

Clap your hands if you believe that.

So, as the story goes, the young son, he flees. He goes away to a distant land and then he spends all his money, he uses all his resources. Then one day comes, his pocket is already empty, and he's hungry.

And the only thing he could think of: "In my father's house, there's food, there's comfort. I can eat there. I can live once again."

So, he goes back. And as he is going back, as he walks towards his father's house, before he even reaches the house, the father sees him from a distance. And the dad comes running towards him.

That's why the First Stage of Spiritual Growth-- hear this out-is called Surprised Son.

Or maybe we can say the Surprised Daughter. Why? Because the First Stage of your Spiritual conversion is when you're shattered by God's love...

The first stage of spiritual conversion is when you're shattered by God's love.

When you realize, "OMG, I haven't been to church for ten years, and now all of a sudden I walk into The Feast and I feel the love of the Lord embracing me."

Have you ever experienced that? You have turned your back on the Lord, and then all of a sudden, you speak to somebody and realize that God truly does love you! And you are smitten by that love-- and it changes you.

But here's the thing: Every stage in your spiritual journey has its dangers. And the danger in this First Stage

At this stage, the temptation is to backslide.

is that there is a temptation to backslide. It means you go back to your old self.

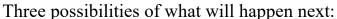


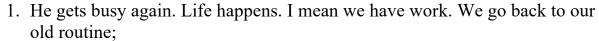
#### It's Easy to Backslide

The Parable ends on a happy note.
The son repents, the father accepts him, and even the older brother does. Although at first, he complains, eventually he also accepts his younger brother. So, they all live happily ever after.

But you know, that's not reality to a lot of us. Because if this were a real story, the way we've experienced it... Walk with me for a moment...

Imagine: The son is now back in his father's house-- with the privileges of being one of the sons and he's getting to eat more than three, five, or six meals a day-- just like you.





- 2. He forgets the suffering he went through because now he is in a better place. Right? That happens to a lot of us.
- 3. He misses the life that he had-- unlimited budget for shopping..."Add to cart," no problem. He misses that wildlife of partying, drinking...

You know, come to think about it, there's a million ways for you to backslide to your old self.

Maybe for some of you, you walk into The Feast, you are blessed by the preacher, you are blessed by the talk, and you are ministered.

Or maybe you attended a retreat and you are inspired to change. But all of a sudden, you're not so much deep in your faith, you encounter a tidal wave of problems over your life. So now, you have a faith crisis.

Or maybe, for some of you, you get busy-- just like the Prodigal son. You get busy you forget about God again.

Or maybe, there's a lot of unresolved trouble in your life that you haven't dealt with yet and now it's about to re-surface... I'm telling you, it's easy to backslide.

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#### **Disenchantment**

But there is that one reason we backslide. We call it *disenchantment*.

Married people know this. We call this disillusionment. After ten years of marriage, you see this person you married is not the same person you saw when you were dating, and you get disillusioned.

And I'm telling you this happens in our church a lot of times. Why? Because when you walk into The Feast the first time, you adore the



event, the music, the Worship, the Worship leaders, the priests, the preacher... Everything is so beautiful you want to come back again.

But here's the problem: Sometimes, you put people on a pedestal. Let me give you an example...

Have you ever experienced Bro. Bo sitting next to you at The Feast? It's your first time at The Feast...

You act as if it's just a casual thing..." It's just a regular Sunday... It's just Bro. Bo..."

You're ashamed to let anyone know...But really, you're like, "Oh my gosh, it's Bro. Bo..."

You're ashamed to let anyone know... You're jittery... You're sweating all over...Already, you could hardly breathe... You're so afraid to speak because you think if he hears you, he'll look at you-- and see all your sins...

That's what we think. We put people on a pedestal, they're like living saints who can see right through you. They see the sins you committed when you were six years old...We're so afraid... We're so intimidated by these people...

You know, that's the perfect setup for disenchantment. Why? Because you're putting them on such a high pedestal... And let me tell you this: The distance of that height up, is the same distance going down-- the moment they do something you do not like.

For example: You adore this preacher so much. Then one day the preacher says something you do not like... All of a sudden, you're thinking, "This was an angel in my eyes -- halos and wings. Now, he's a demon."



#### What's 'Natural'

By the way, I think this is a good time for me to say that if any of the leaders here at The Feast, particularly me, have ever hurt you, or offended you, I'd like to apologize. This is the truth: the leaders here in our Community, including me, are not little angels. We're not little demons, either.

You know what we are? We're just people. Human beings like you. Who sin, who struggle,

who try their best to be like Jesus. We're just people.

And when we offend you-- when we do stuff that you don't really like... Even if the persons beside you, sometimes they offend you also... I want you to know that's not who they really are.

Let me just say this: In *the Prodigal Son* story, there's a part that says when the son came to his senses. Another version says when he came to himself. I love that -- because Jesus is pointing out that all this time when the son became a *prodigal son*, he wasn't himself. He was a completely different person.

#### Luke 15:17 TLB

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

This is what happens when we disobey God. When we sin against God we become a completely different person.

But I want you to know that's not who you really are. Have you ever heard of the phrase *second nature*?

"Second nature"

We refer to *second nature* when people do something so regularly that it becomes a habit-- it becomes part of their *second nature*.

So, for example, if this person likes to deceive people and he does it again and again, we can say that this person is a person is a deceitful person-- and that's his second nature.

Question: Is he naturally a deceitful person? The answer is: No!

Because if you might have a second nature, don't forget that before you could have that second nature, you have a first nature.

What is your first nature? It's called the *Imago Dei* 

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The Imago Dei. The Image of God.

When God created you, He created you n His image and likeness.

In the very beginning, God made you to be good. Because God is good!

And maybe sometimes, people have forgotten to be good. Or maybe they were never raised to be good.

But I want you to know, in the beginning, God made you good.

So, that's the First Stage: We're surprised, we're smitten by the love of God.



From *The Creation of Adam* (also *The Creation of Man*) the iconic fresco painting by Italian artist Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarotti Simoni (1475-1564) https://artincontext.org/the-creation-of-adam-by-michelangelo



#### **Maturing in Faith**

After you're smitten by God's love-- and if you don't backslide, you don't leave God's Vineyard-- then this is the time that you start maturing in your faith.

You start committing to serving the Lord.

By the way, if you want to serve the Lord, please go to our Ministry booth outside. Sign up for a Ministry today.

In the Second Stage, this is the time you start reading Scripture. You start praying more regularly. You become the Better Brother, or the Better Sister.

But again, there are dangers at every level. In this Second Stage, there are two dangers.

The first temptation of the second stage is jadedness.

No. 1 is you become jaded. What do I mean by *jaded*? It's a very profound word.

Can you imagine the first time you ever rode your airplane? Do you remember that day? Maybe you were young, a teenager, or you were a young adult a few years ago, or maybe just a few months ago.

Do you remember the first time you rode an airplane? How excited you were? You didn't know what to expect. You just wanted to experience what everybody was experiencing...

You were in the terminal... you were waiting for your flight... Even before you got into the airplane, you already had 150 selfies on your phone... Because you're excited.

When you were already inside the plane, you were like, "Wow, Lord!" You couldn't even blink because you were afraid you might wake up...

And then you were already flying across the sky... You were looking at everybody down there...

You were waving, thinking they could see you, "Hello! I'm right here..." That's your first experience of riding an airplane.



#### What Becomes Less Interesting

Imagine your second time riding an airplane. Same energy. The third time, fourth time...

But imagine this: This is your 867<sup>th</sup> time to ride an airplane. You're still excited

-- because you want to sleep during the flight.

Sometimes, having too much of something becomes less interesting. And married people know this. That when you start a relationship, oh,

you're so in love. Especially during the honeymoon season. The honeymoon season is so good but it lasts only for a season.

During the courtship period, this is the text > My goodness. If this is not how the text of your suitor, don't pay attention to him, ha. Please.

Then what happens, later, within that span of the honeymoon relationship, it deepens.

Like this >

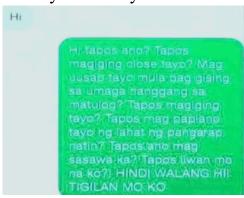


Hello baby. Nakauwi na po ako sa bahay dito sa 3rd Street Juntado Subdivision Molo, Iloilo. Kakarating ko lang talaga, exactly 1:43 andito ako sa tapat ng gate namin, bubuksan ko na at papasok na ako. Naglalakad na ako baby Humikab po ako May hawak po akong soft drinks Nilalamig palad ko baby Nasa loob na ako baby Umupo na ako baby Pinindot ko yung electric fan baby number 3 Baby nakikinig ako ng music. NP: History by 1D Baby may dumapong lamok Baby napatay ko yung lamok

Still thrilling@

#### **Some Issues**

But you know, if you're brokenhearted, this is your reaction when someone says "Hi" to you:





Translation: "Hi? Afterwards, what? We will become close? We will talk starting in the morning up to bedtime? Then we will become *us*? Then we will plan all our dreams. Then you'll get tired of it all? And you'll leave me? NO 'Hi.' Stop bothering me."

Goodness. That's life. When you get too much of something, it becomes less interesting. Just like the brother. The older brother.

He was in his father's house-- all his life. And so to him, what was around him was just *regular*. Nothing new. And he wanted more.

And here's the second danger in this Stage of Becoming

The second temptation is entitlement.

the Better Brother is the temptation to feel entitled.

You feel like since you've been in this house for so long, you should be the one who should be given everything. You're entitled now. You're entitled to have the best piece of chicken. You're entitled to have the parking slot. You're entitled to have the title.

It's the entitlement issue. What is one solution to get rid of the entitlement? It's called *humility*. Because humility will ground you, tell you: "Hey, it's not all about you. You've got a younger brother who was lost but now he's found."

That's humility. And that's what we need to learn today.

That we humble ourselves before the Lord and say, "Lord, without You I cannot do anything. Lord, without You I am nothing."

That's humility. Because sometimes we arrive at the part of our faith where we think we know everything already, so we stop growing.

Humility is a wonderful way to stay in God's Community and be faithful in God's Community.

#### **God's Mercy Up Close**

I'll tell you right away-- because I know you already have a mental picture of what I'm trying to get at.

The Forgiving Father. This is the Stage where we all come to realize that our God is a forgiving Father.

I'll talk to you about two ways how these two brothers discovered about forgiveness.

First, the Prodigal Son. It says in the story, in Luke 15:18:



#### Luke 15:18-20 TLB

<sup>18</sup> "I will go home and say, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, <sup>19</sup> and am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me as a hired man.'" <sup>20</sup> So he returned home to his father.

What did he do? He returned to the father. I love that. Because it simply says that when the son thought of his sin, he knew exactly where he needed to go. He didn't think of his village. He didn't think of his neighbors. He didn't think of his best friend. He thought of his father.

And here's the key: He didn't just *think* of the father, he *returned* to his father. He didn't just think it. He was moved into action.

So, when you come to the Lord, here's the first thing you've got to do: You've got to return to the Lord *first*.

Before you go to your Christian friends, before you go to your leaders, before you go to your mentors, go to God Himself first.

That's how you come to know the mercy of God-- firsthand, up close, and personal.

But you know, I thought about the older brother. Because the title of the Parable is *The Parable of the Prodigal Son*. And so, it's about the Prodigal Son. But I wonder why Jesus put a part there where He put the spotlight also on the older brother.

So, I kept on wondering, "Lord, why would You put that -- if it didn't have any a purpose?

I kept thinking about it... Maybe Jesus also wants me to not just think about the Prodigal Son, but also think about the bitter brother.



#### Jesus' Invitation

Jesus wants us to think for a moment about the bitter brother because, you know, the father forgave the repentant son when he came back. He was the one who came running to the Prodigal Son.

But I want you to read this with me-- in Luke 15:28:

#### Luke 15:28, 31-32 TLB

"The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him..." "Look, dear son," his father said to him, "you and I are very close, and everything I have is yours. "But it is right to celebrate. For he is your brother; and he was dead and has come back to life! He was lost and is found!"

The brother resented his father for welcoming back his younger brother. The father was the one who begged the older brother to come into the house. He said, "Look, dear son ..."

You know, the word there is not *child* but *son--* it's a term of endearment. It means that he truly loves this boy...

Here is my simple point, my dear Friends: Jesus wants us to look at the Prodigal Son, and rightfully so. Because he's all of us. But there's someone also in your family, or your friends list, somebody who needs to come back to the Lord and we need to understand those people. We need to pray for them. We celebrate when they come home.

Here's the key: We also need to celebrate the older brother.

Did the younger son even think of the older brother? How he would feel? The younger brother wasted his money-- then he would go back to his older brother?

We don't really think much of the older brother... But did you know that all of us here are also *the* older brother, or the older sister? That sometimes, we also need the Father to acknowledge us?

My Friends, whoever you are, whatever your background is, that everyone-all of us here-- whether you've been in Community for so long, whether you've been a believer for a short time, I want you

Everyone
is deserving of God's mercy.

to know that everybody deserves God's mercy.

Everybody.

#### **Everybody Is Invited**

The crazy part is this: Jesus didn't invite just the good people to His Table. He didn't invite only those who were praying in the synagogue. Or those who were doing right, obeying the law. No. He invited even the sinners. Jesus invited even the outcasts.

Jesus invited even those who hadn't been to church at all. Because the truth of the matter is that when it comes



to God's invitation, everyone is invited to God's party.

You're invited. *You*, you haven't been to church? You're invited. *You*, you don't even know God and you don't even read Scripture, hey, you're invited. *You*, you've sinned against God again and again, and you've turned your back on Him, guess what? You are invited.

I'm invited. She's invited. He's invited. We're all invited.

May we clap our hands to this party? That God is throwing for all of us.

And His message today is: You can be in a season of your life who's run away, and you've squandered the inheritance that God gave to you... But God is here and He is welcoming you. He has his hands stretched open to receive you today. And all you've got to do is simply just take a few steps forward, toward the Father. And I tell you, when God sees you coming, my Friend, He'll be the first one to come running to you. And I believe God is going to run to you-- not jogging, not just leisurely, but sprinting to you. Because He missed you. God missed you.



#### Today, We Party!

We're going to come before the Lord right now, and we're going to celebrate the depth of His Love for all of us.

Lift your hands, Everybody, across this place.

Thank You, Lord Jesus, for going out of Your way, leaving the 99 sheep to find even one lost sheep.

You are the reason all of us are here. Once upon a time, we were lost, but today, we get to celebrate for we have been found. And today, we rejoice in Your Presence.

Today, we party in Your Presence.

Thank You, Lord, for Your Love. Thank You for Your Grace. But above all, Thank You that You are our Forgiving Father. Thank You for Your Mercy. Amen.

Let's celebrate the Lord today. Sing to Jesus!



#### No More Gap

Before the time of Jesus, before Jesus came into the world, the people were struggling to bridge the gap that was disconnected because of sin. And they did all sorts of ways to bridge that gap-to sacrifice, to pray, worship. But it was not enough-until Jesus came. And when Jesus came, He did not only bridge the



gap-- He didn't even just fill the gap... You know what Jesus did? He closed the gap. So that you would never ever have to be disconnected from the Father again. He closed the gap.

He said, "It is finished. I have overcome sin and death and you can do it too. How? By having life with me."

Because He's the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the way to the Father. And today, we are in the Presence of Jesus our Savior. And if you want to have Life with Him, to have this beautiful Life, I want you to raise your hands.



Look at Your people, Lord Jesus. Look at all of us in complete surrender. We acknowledge that we have sinned against You. We acknowledge that we are broken and that we are living it. But by Your Grace, we can have the strength to overcome this sin. And we can walk away from that sin.

Today, I choose You. I declare that You are my God. And I declare that You came here to rescue me and to raise me to New Life. And Starting right now, I walk towards You and declare that You are enough. Your Love is enough. Your Presence is enough. Your Joy is enough. Your Peace is enough. You are enough.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.

## **Closing Message and Prayer**

**BRO. BO SANCHEZ:** Are you thankful that God has chosen Audee and anointed him to be our preacher and our leader?

I want you to know I'm a Feaster. I'm no longer the leader here. I'm a Feaster like you. I report to this man. We report to him. And we respect him and we love him and we pray for him. Thank you, Audee.



Friends, I'll tell you just one story. I came from Boracay because of a conference. No, it was not a vacation. It was work. It was a Truly Rich Club Conference (financial literacy advocacy).

And yesterday, I was able to talk to one of the participants. I would always see this couple every time there's a TRC conference. They're not only TRC members, they lead a Feast Light (a small Feast usually held in a member's home). This couple, they are not preachers but they wanted to bring people to the Lord.

I saw the husband ten years ago at one of our TRC conferences. He started a small business-- a hardware store. Initial capital: P50,000.00.

Yesterday, he told me, "Bro. Bo, ten years later, my business is now worth P100 million. Question: Is his Feast Light, you think, lacking of funds? I don't think so. As his business is prospering, he can continue to contribute and be a blessing to others.

So, here's my prayer for you: Make today better than yesterday-- in terms of your finances, in terms of your fitness, in terms of your relationships, in terms of your marriage. Make today better than yesterday.

You might say, "Bro. Bo, it seems that's difficult-- P50,000 to P100 million in 10 years. Looks too fast."

No. Every day, just increase, grow by one percent your finances, grow by one percent your faithfulness, grow by one percent your love for one another. Just be better by one percent every day and I pray that will be a blessing.

May I pray:

Father in Heaven, I pray for every person here that each one will just grow by a bit, every day in every area of their life -- not for them, not for a selfish reason, but just like the couple I talked with yesterday, that they will be a bigger blessing to the people around them. In Jesus Name. Amen.





## **MERCY MINISTRIES**

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

--Matthew 5:7

## **The PRISON MISSION PART 3**

## Shining Light



IN the last two issues of *The Feast Family*, we featured the organization, objectives, operations, and theological basis of this Ministry.

How does the Prison Mission accomplish its mission? From its Facebook page, here's one Good News!

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## JANUARY 18 Shining Light



THIS Sunday, we went back to the prison, carrying a powerful message: "Darating ang ating kaligtasan" (Our salvation is coming).

Our ka-Family shared their lessons, showing that hope can transform even the toughest situations.

A warm thank you to those who continually donate food. Your generosity brightens their days and fuels our mission.





Be a Light in the Darkness: Feel inspired? |
Learn how you can contribute
at bit.ly/PrisonMissionWaystoSupport.
#PrisonMission #ShiningHope
#SalvationIsComing
#TransformingLives #GratitudeInAction



#### 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.



grants scholarships to indigent students.



# CARES FOR C

#### 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.

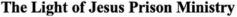




### The Light of Jesus Disaster Recovery Ministry

provides evacuation assistance,

relief goods, financial aid, and other needs of calamity victims.



brings Jesus to the Correctional Institution for Women to give them hope for a new life of dignity.





**Anawim Lay Missions Foundation** provides a home for poor elderly who have been abandoned by their family and have nowhere else to go.

## **CHOOSE HOW YOU WANT TO GIVE**

- 1. Donate ONLINE (through credit card) Go to www. kerygmafamily.com and click 'DONATE' box Paypal I US Donations.
- 2. Pick Up from Your House or Office (Metro Manila Only) Cash or Checks Address Checks to Shepherd's Voice Radio and Television Foundation Inc. and call Joy at (+632) 725 -9999 loc 112 or text (+63) 922-828-9890 and we'll pick them up from your home or office.
- 3. Mail 12 Post-Dated Checks to Our Office for US and CANADA: Address Checks to Kerygma Family, 848 Rainbow Blvd # 1937, Las Vegas, NV 89107. For Other Countries/Philippines: Address Check to Shepherd's Voice Radio and Television Foundation Inc. and mail (registered mail) to Shepherd's Voice, 60 Chicago St., Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines 1109.
- 4. Directly Deposit to Our Bank Accounts. Deposit to Shepherd's Voice Account in any branch of these banks:
  Account name: Shepherd's Voice Radio and Television Foundation Inc.
  BPI: Savings Account no: 0123-4849-67 Cubao Aurora Branch
  Banco de Oro Savings Account no: 003970019804 General Araneta, Cubao Branch Banco de Oro Savings Account no. 000160506123 SM Cubao Branch
  PNB Current Account no. 108410089566 SSS branch
  Metrobank-Savings Account no. 265-3-26509112-2 e Rodriguez Branch
  Allied Bank Savings Account no. 3160-12345-1 E Rodriguez Branch
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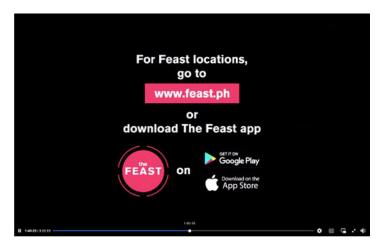
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## Go and make disciples of all men.

— Matthew 28:19