

### NEWSLETTER January 8, 2023

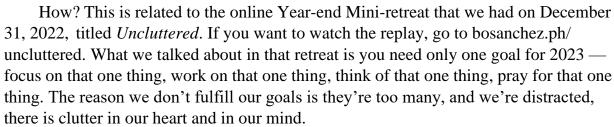
# Start Right

#### HAPPY NEW YEAR, EVERYBODY!

You need to start right. You've got to start your 2023 in the right way. And how do you do that?

Well, remember what I always share with people: If you win the morning, you win the day. If you do the right thing in the morning, it really impacts your whole day...

You need to start this day in the right way and it will impact your whole year.



My dear friends, if there's only one thing that should happen in your life in 2023, what would it be? Write it down... When you see your Goal No. 1 gaining momentum, you can start working on your other goals.

I want to close this message with a prayer:

In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray for every person praying with me at this time—that You, oh God, will bless this coming year. Bless their day today, bless their coming week, bless their coming month, and bless the whole 2023. Lord God, You are here. You are alive. You are Present. You are powerful. Let an avalanche of blessings overflow in their life. In Jesus' mighty name. Amen and Amen.

May your dreams come true,

Bo Sandy

**Bo Sanchez** 

\*Editor's Note: This message is an excerpt from Bro. Bo Sanchez's New Year Message on <a href="https://www.facebook.com/BrotherBoSanchez/videos/679945580538266">https://www.facebook.com/BrotherBoSanchez/videos/679945580538266</a>

We start The Feast 2023 right with *The Gift of Hope*—Talk 3 of our series titled *Unwrap: Receive the True Gifts of Christmas*.

Bro. Ryan Capitulo, Feast SM Manila Builder, preaches the entire talk.

## The Gift of Hope



HAPPY NEW YEAR, Feast Bay Area Family! Join me in welcoming this blessed year 2023 with hearts full of hope!

I'm sure you have unwrapped all the gifts you received this Christmas season. Did you like all of your presents this year? Did you gain weight like me having eaten all the edible gifts you got? Did your family and friends give you the items you wrote on your wish list?

Whatever you received, I'm sure you had a blast unwrapping them on Christmas night!

Here in The Feast, we received the best and true gifts of Christmas in our beautiful miniseries, *UNWRAP!* In Talk 1, we unwrapped the gift of PEACE by learning from our past, living every moment to the fullest, and choosing to follow God's leading in our lives.

In Talk 2, we unwrapped the gift of JOY and we discovered that it is both a feeling and an attitude that God wants us to relish despite the trials and sorrow we may have experienced in the past year.

Today, we shall close our mini-series by unwrapping this gift that we all need as we usher in a new year, a new season, a new beginning that may be faced with doubts and uncertainties. Now, more than ever, we need the GIFT OF HOPE!

As we unwrap this gift, I will be preaching the message, "Hope is our light!"

All for God's Glory,

**Dr. Ryan Borja Capitulo** Feast SM Manila Builder





## 2023 Resolution: Real Joy!

I AM now responsible enough to say to the Lord, "Thy will be done."

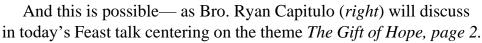
This is a quote from the homily of Fr. Mark Demanuele, presider during the Holy Mass at The Feast Bay Area Christmas Grand Feast on December 18, 2022. He was discussing the Gospel of the Day, Matthew 1:18-24, as read by Fr. Paolo Asprer (right), all about Joseph surrendering to God's Will, as he accepted Jesus as his son.





Fr. Demanuele pointed out we can have real joy if we can be like Joseph, "listening to God and putting into action His will always." Details start on page 4.

For true joy, our founder, Bro. Bo Sanchez, in his New Year message, pointed to the theme of the recent Year-ender Mini Retreat he led titled *Uncluttered*: to declutter your life and focus on just one goal in 2023, page 1.



Yes, there's hope we can have joy even amid life's challenges the message of the Christmas Grand Feast. Flashback by Bro. Bo and Bro. Alvin Barcelona, pages 23-38.







Bro. Audee Villaraza pointed out joy, especially in Worship, is not just a matter of the posture of your body, but the posture of your heart, *page 10.* 



Bro. JC Libiran attested that joy amid trials is possible as he sat with "neighbors" for Noche Buena Conversations, on the 8 Pillars of Joy, pages 13-22.

Yes, life happens—there's happiness, there's sadness. But hey, bravely, let's face our 2023, have one, concrete, doable goal. And be ready to say, "Thy will be done, Lord."

All for God's Glory,

**Randy Borromeo** Media Ministry **Executive Director** 





# **Holy Mass**

**Lighting of the Candles** of the Advent Wreath









Candle of Hope Candle of Peace

Candle of Joy

Flashback: In the past three Sundays

#### **TODAY:** FR. MARK DEMANUELE

with concelebrant Fr. Paolo Asprer on the lighting of the Fourth Candle of the Advent Wreath:

The Candle of Love.

Hey, Good Morning! I've got a secret— I'm going to tell it to Fr. Paolo, on his ears. Listen to this, it's a secret: Jesus is coming! Yes, Jesus is very close. Today, let us light the fourth candle of the Advent Wreath with Didoy Lubaton and his wife and two children.





Big hand for our family! God bless you! Thank you so much for lighting our candles as we sing together:

O come, O come, Emmanuel And ransom captive Israel. That mourns in lonely exile here Until the Son of God appears. Rejoice! Rejoice, oh, Israel! To thee shall come, Emmanuel.



#### FR. PAOLO ASPRER

Reading the Gospel: Matthew 1:18-24 NIV

#### Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

- **20** But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.
- 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."
- 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:
- 23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").
- 24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

#### **HOMILY**

#### FR. MARK DEMANUELE

on the Gospel Matthew 1:18-24

#### Excerpts...

I THINK it was about three years ago that Pope Francis wrote a very beautiful exultation (in a new Apostolic letter) titled *Patris Corde* (*With a Father's Heart*) which is practically about St. Joseph. And at one point, he says something which is so beautiful for all of us.



Pope Francis says, "We all have a Joseph in us and we need to nurture this Joseph..." What he is asking of us is to truly follow and also to be inspired by this great silent St. Joseph. Today, the Gospel speaks a lot about him...

I wish to share with you three points that I feel are very good for us—taken especially from this Gospel.

#### **Discerning Joseph**

First point: Joseph is a discerning man. Imagine this guy had everything planned, everything is going according to plan, and then out of the blue, his bride comes and tells him, "I'm pregnant."

OMG. I can imagine the confusion Joseph had at that moment. And this, however, is what we need to learn from this great saint:

When Joseph is discerning, he does not let his emotions run with him. For example, his anger or revenge: He says he wants to send Mary away— in a very subtle way, so nothing happens.

And in this way, when we think about us getting into a problem— it is a very different way. We try to run away from the problem. We try to run away from our concerns. And what do we do? We go to our vices...

But what does Joseph do? Joseph gives me this beautiful example: he sleeps over his problem. When we say *he sleeps over*, it means he does not run away. Instead, he calms down. And I'm sure that in that moment of calmness— when he sleeps over his problem — he prays.

We know that Joseph is a righteous man.

When we speak about a righteous man, it means he is very close to God.

I'm sure that in his discernment to know what to do, Joseph was surely praying and while praying, he was also giving time for himself for a good decision...

Yes, Joseph was concerned. We cannot say that Joseph took it lightly. Joseph was concerned so much that he wanted to ask God's will at that moment.

## God's Will Is Not a Guessing Game

Now, God's will is not a guessing game.

Because sometimes, we say, "Ah, maybe God wants this... Ah, maybe God wants that... Ah, let me see... you try this..."

No. It's not a guessing game. God's will is something that we need to slowly discover.

And we discover not by going after signs: "Ah, yes, I saw signs... Ah, yes, I remember this... Maybe He is telling me something about that..."



No. It is a time for me—like Joseph—to calm down, sleep over that problem, and let myself trust in God's way to guide me, to enlighten me, to help me to understand, and then empower me so that when the decision is taken, I know what to do.

So, in my discernment, I'm asking the Lord for guidance—not with my emotions but with my connection with God—that is, with prayer and with time for me to discern what the Lord is saying to me.

And in the end, when we decide, when we feel that we know what to do, sometimes, it means that we need to move away from our own egoistic plan.

I need to embrace what the Lord is asking of me.

And to embrace this, sometimes, we need to move away from our comfort zone.

That is what happened to Joseph. He had to move away from his own plans, his own comfort zone.

And we know what Joseph had to go through: from going to Bethlehem—nobody's opening the door, his wife about to give birth—and he runs away to Egypt...

So, he had to move away from his comfort zone and let God's will be in his life.



#### Reading I: Isaiah 7:10-14

<sup>10</sup> Yahweh spoke to Ahaz again and said <sup>11</sup> Ask Yahweh your God for a sign, either in the depths of Sheol or in the heights above.

<sup>12</sup> But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask. I will not put Yahweh to the test.' He then said: Listen now, House of David: are you not satisfied with trying human patience that you should try my God's patience too?

<sup>14</sup> The Lord will give you a sign in any case: It is this: the young woman is with child and will give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel.

### **Obedient Joseph**

The second point is obedience. When we talk about obedience, I always wish to speak about being faithful to God. Being faithful means that when I do understand what the Lord is asking of me, I embrace that:

"Yes Lord, it is your will, not my will."

So, after sleeping on his problem, Joseph became sensitive to God's message. He was listening, not only with his ears but with his heart. He was listening to God and then when the dream happened, he was tuned in to God— to know what was His message.

How beautiful it was when Pope Francis came here. He promoted in front of everybody all over the world the "sleeping Joseph."



The sleeping Joseph. Although he was sleeping, he was in tune with God—so he could be faithful in obeying what the Lord was asking of him. And he obeyed by responding to God, opening the door of his heart wide to Christ's love.

In that way, when he opened his life to Christ, Christ guided him. Christ became his light.

In the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans, he says Joseph becomes so attached to Christ that he feels, "It's not me but Christ who lives in me."

That's why faithfulness and obedience are important to the Word of God.



#### Reading II: Romans 1:1-7

<sup>1</sup> From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, <sup>2</sup> set apart for the service of the gospel that God promised long ago through his prophets in the holy scriptures.<sup>3</sup> This is the gospel concerning his Son who, in terms of human nature <sup>4</sup> was born a descendant of David and who, in terms of the Spirit and of holiness, was designated Son of God in power by the resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ, our Lord, <sup>5</sup> through whom we have received grace and our apostolic mission of winning the obedience of faith among all the nations

for the honor of his name. <sup>6</sup> You are among these, and by his call, you belong to Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> To you all, God's beloved in Rome, called to be his holy people. Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.



## **Responsible Joseph**

First, a discerning Joseph. Second, a very obedient Joseph. And third, a great, responsible, and trusting Joseph.

He took responsibility.

He could've said, "This is God's will, but I don't really like what He's saying...Oh, I just need to do what the Lord says, oh well."

No. When you're doing that, you are not conforming yourself to God's will.

But if I say, "Yes, Lord, I take responsibility. I know that this is what you want out of me. I will do it, and I will do it well—not half-heartedly but wholeheartedly."

I am now responsible enough to say to the Lord, "Thy will be done."

Joseph didn't trust his own capability. He knew that he was weak but he trusted God and in trusting God, he ensured that God was going to help him deal with it until the end.

These are three points on how we can truly be Joseph and nurture Joseph—as Pope Francis told us:

First, discernment; second, obedience; third, take responsibility.

In that way, you are being a Joseph—listening to God and putting into action His will always. Amen.



# Worship! EXHORTATION



**AUDEE VILLARAZA:** You know what? It doesn't really matter what the posture of your body is when you worship the Lord—because what's more important is the posture of your heart. Where is your heart placed?

I truly believe that joy should neither be invisible nor it should be silent.

The Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

So, if the Lord redeemed you, say so. If God blessed you, say so. If God healed you, say so.

I have a question for you today: What kind of joy did you bring to the house of God right now? Is it the silent type of joy or is it the loud kind of joy?

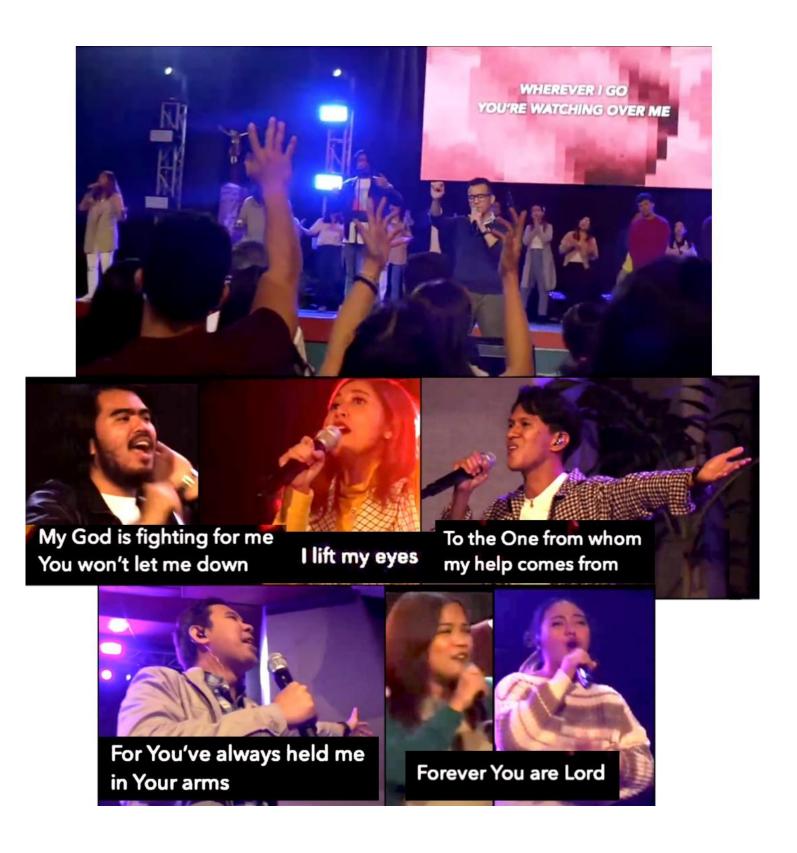
Do we have any joyful people in the house of God right now? Who's ready to celebrate? Come on, clap your hands! We're going to bring joy! We're going to receive joy!...

I want to declare, in the mighty name of Jesus, that your 2022 will not be as great as your 2023. I declare that your best is not behind you. It's still ahead of you — in Jesus' Name!

I declare, in the mighty Name of Jesus, that all the things that the enemy came to steal, kill, and destroy this year, God will rebuild, restore, and replenish—year after year after year!

I declare that whatever you lost along the way all these years, God will replace with something better— in Jesus' Name!

As God says to somebody right now, no weapon formed against you shall ever prosper. God promises to somebody right now that you are more than a conqueror through Him who loves you and that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. Because greater is He that is in me, that is in you, than who is in this world. Because if God is for you, and for you, and for you, then tell me, what can be against you?! Come on!



# WELCOME HOME! $\bigcirc$



**Hosts TONY VALENZUELA and MAYI LUBATON:** 

Welcome to our Grand Feast!



Everybody, let's have a big wave—from left to right, and from right to left!

Our Grand Feast today has a special message— and it's all about joy. Today we are going to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus. To give us a Noche Buena taste, please welcome Team Libiran.

## NOCHE BUENA CONVERSATIONS



This is like a family gathering for us. We'd like to invite you to our *Noche Buena Conversations*Thank you to Jhay and Lhei Jatap for preparing our food.

JC LIBIRAN: I'd like to introduce myself, Coach JC Libiran, my wife Milen, and our daughter Yana.





We welcome our guests, our neighbors, *from extreme right*: Bro. JB Rodriguez; Bro. Audee Villaraza, wife Kristel, and children Ethan and Ellie;

Bro. Lep Sumera, wife Saly, and son Migs; Bro. Alvin Barcelona and daughter Aia; Bro. Didoy Lubaton.

We are blessed that you are joining us. Your presence is a blessing. Thank you for coming. What is important is we are together.

## 8 Pillars of Joy

I want us to jump off into our sharing stories. I recently read this book by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Dalai Lama titled *Book of Joy*.

The book shares that there are Eight Pillars of Joy: Gratitude, Perspective, Acceptance, Humor, Humility, Forgiveness, Compassion, and Generosity.

I believe this time, this season of Christmas, it's really good that we get to celebrate and I hope our neighbors will learn something from this.



#### Gratitude

I start with us. I'd like to be grateful because we just celebrated our 11th wedding anniversary yesterday (December 17, 2022). But we've been friends since high school. And at the same time, we're very blessed because of our daughter Yana whom we waited for five years— after our four failed pregnancies. She's celebrating her birthday this December 20— she'll be six years old already.

Today, Yana, what's your magical moment?



MILEN: I'm always thankful every time I see Yana— she's very special. So, we always train Yana how to be grateful too. Every time we go to sleep I ask her, "What's your magical moment?



**YANA:** My magical moment is when we have adventures and make new friends.

## **Perspective**

ALVIN BARCELONA: Perspective. You know, we learned in one of our talks at The Feast that Perspective is everything. Rick Warren (American Christian pastor and author) said: Joy, sorrow, good, bad, peace, and trouble—they happen together, at the same time. And the secret is to know where are you focused on.

Like right now, 2022 is about to end—has the year been happy or sad? What's the answer? It depends... What do you remember: when your lover left you, or when you found another lover?

Or Christmas: Is it merry or sad? Again, it depends...on what you are singing: Pasko na, sinta ko, hanap-hanap kita— It's already Christmas, my love, I am still looking for you...

How sad.

Or, are you singing: Last Christmas, I gave you my heart. The very next day you gave it away...

The tune is danceable. Her lover left her, but she's still happy.

Like my new look: Does it suit me?

Again it also depends... If you ask my fans, they will say I am handsome. But if you ask my bashers, they will say I look like an addict. Perspective... in the eye of the beholder.

**JC LIBIRAN:** What's good about it, Bro. Alvin, you get to say it with joy even if, of course, it's challenging for the family.

Of course, you continue to be strong. As our leader, you show us that despite all the challenges, you still continue to lead us with love. And that's why we honor Bro. Alvin as our leader.



## **Acceptance**

**DIDOY LUBATON:** It's true. There are things that we just have to accept.

We started this year with a Grand Feast, right? Remember the (Coronavirus disease) super-spreader event? The week after, many got sick.

I felt bad— I was like, "Lord, we put people into harm. So sorry."

But it happened. We already did it. So, we just helped as many persons as we could. We just had to accept that it is what it is. And then help ourselves.

I learned this from my mentors: that you can be a player or a victim of your circumstances. So, you have to play, or rather be just sorry that you are a victim of your situation.



I also learned this: For example, I am really happy for you, Bro. JC and Milen, celebrating 11 years, and with Yana. But we all know— even Feasters, they still don't have their Yana. What do we say? Nothing. Embrace the situation. Continue to pray for them. We've seen people losing family members. We've seen people losing their babies through miscarriage. We've seen people diagnosed with many illnesses— lifelong, chronic illnesses...

I believe that God did not make it happen or allowed it to happen to rob us of our joy— but actually to realize we still have Him as our joy. Sickness happens because we can look to God as our healer. As Bro. Alvin said, it depends on your perspective: you can be broken and remain broken, or in the breaking, you will find your blessing.

So, we accept. For example, if things are within our control, play the game. Do something about it. That's our problem. If it's beyond our control, that's no longer a problem— it's already a *situation*. We accept it. And let's work and do something about it. We help one another and be there for one another.

And being part of this Community, of this Family, I say thank you—to everybody because we are an accepting Community. Come as you are. Whatever you are going through, whoever you are, whatever dress you wear, whatever setup you have in your life, you are welcome here.

So, thank God for the gift of Acceptance, we can still keep our joy.

**JC LIBIRAN:** Our prayer, our total surrender to God, is: "Your will be done, Lord."

## Humility

**SALY SUMERA:** For me, in my life, God used me to accept things.

Before Lep and I became boyfriend-girlfriend, I worked in a corporate firm. After that, we met and got married. I'm blessed to be in union with a very handsome man.

And we've been blessed to have Migs.

So, it was really tough for me to decide whether I should be a stay-at-home mom or a working mom.

My pregnancy was complicated during the first trimester—so, Lep decided that I quit my job.

Humility for me is being vulnerable— to be able to say it's okay not to be okay. And have faith that God will transform this weakness into something good, telling me, "You trust me. Saly, you trust me."



So, with full trust in the Lord, and in Lep, I humbly quit, I resigned from my job. And I faced motherhood. It's not easy to be a mother, so I just want to honor all mothers, especially my mother.

When Migs came into my life, I realized when a little baby cries, it doesn't mean he is saying, "I need this, I need that." You just have to be sensitive to what he really wants to convey.

Also, I want to share what Nightbirde (American singer-songwriter Jane Kristen Marczeweski) says: "You can't wait until life isn't hard anymore before you decide to be happy."

So, for me, humility is being happy

**JC LIBIRAN:** Along that line, you know, you applaud our Feast Builders, but I want to honor their wives who have been supporting them. You see the kids. We welcome them because we want to make The Feast, a family event for us.

## **Forgiveness**



#### **LEP SUMERA:**

Mine is about forgiveness.
And actually, it's the story
of my life. I am like the Prodigal
Son who was accepted back
by his father.

Likewise, I was forgiven, and embraced by the Lord—only because of His mercy.

That's why I am here in front of you.

If not been forgiven, perhaps I would not have existed anymore.

I was just struck by a message during the recent mini-Christmas party at the home of Bro. Alvin. We talked about forgiveness and acceptance. Because when you talk about forgiveness you need to accept the person.

I was blessed because one of those at the party shared about Bro. Alvin.

The guy said, "Si Bro. Alvin ay basurero— he is a scavenger. He picks up garbage."

And this guy said *he* was the garbage who Bro. Alvin picked up, didn't throw away, didn't abandon, didn't look at his mistakes. That's forgiveness.

The year will end—friends, please listen. Is there someone you need to forgive?

Maybe some are thinking, "Let's go to the next topic..."

We said that when we talk about forgiveness, the first you must set free is yourself. So, when you think about that person you need to forgive, ask God's grace— how God forgave you— I think that's the best gift we can gift to ourselves: forgive.

But as I said, perhaps one thing we should not forget is the Year 2020 up to this year has been so tough—there were a lot of mistakes, failures we went through. May we forgive ourselves for our mistakes. Because it's only through forgiveness and love for ourselves that we can really experience true joy this Christmas.

Hug yourself and say, "I love you. I forgive you." God bless you, Everybody.

## **Compassion**

What Lep said is true. The past years, since 2020, have been difficult. Aside from the Pandemic, we had a situation with our daughter (who got sick).

I thought we already graduated from God's trials. But if you are with the Lord, challenges will come. I realized that it's not the absence of challenges that will give meaning to your life. It's actually the Presence of God in your life amid the challenges.

So, what Didoy said earlier is beautiful: If something is no longer under your control, it is already a *situation*.



With my family, we have begun to embrace our situation. Before, I felt that in such a dire situation, it would be difficult to be compassionate towards others because all my energy, all our resources, and all our time were consumed by our current challenge. But recently, God made me realize that there is no one too poor that he cannot give— in whatever situation, you have this capacity to be compassionate towards others.

When we had challenges, to be honest, when someone was in need, I just prayed for them. I didn't do what I did before—do concrete action, and help them out physically. I missed doing that.

But recently, God taught me that even if you have a situation, it's part of the flow of your life that you always have to serve, and give to others—because this allows the blessings to flow into your life. So, there's input, there's output, and when this happens, there's *life*.

We had financial burdens because of the medical needs of our daughter. So, what I missed was materially blessing other people.

But now, I am happy because of our food delivery business, Food Panda. We are able to give vouchers guaranteeing discounts — P150 or P200 discounts. And the discounts we give as tips to our riders.

That experience taught me a simple thing: that sometimes, we are limiting ourselves in terms of being compassionate toward others because we think we lack the resources, we lack the time, we are caught up in our challenges.

But actually, if you open your eyes a little wider, you will see that there are these pockets of opportunities to bless other people.

## Generosity

#### **AUDEE VILLARAZA:**

When you come to know the Lord, you realize that the Lord is a Giver. So, when you give, when you become generous not just to yourself but to others as well, you realize that you practice what's in the very heart of God—the Lord's nature—as if you are enacting how the Lord gives. You feel great that you are not the one receiving but you're the one giving.

As parents, sometimes our joy, when there's a special occasion like a birthday, days before the occasion we are already excited to give our gift— even if we have not wrapped the gift yet.



Because you're excited to give. You feel more blessed to give than to receive.

I'm doing this by example. We don't have a nanny for our kids or a maid. So, we do everything— I am the one washing the clothes, ironing them, and cleaning the house. Kristel is in charge of cooking our food, taking care of the children. So, we do everything together. We're very generous. Because generosity is not just about giving money. It's also spending good time with family.

But you know, I'm so generous, I will give the last part of this sharing to my wife.:)



KRISTEL: My story about generosity...

When we were planning to expand our business (Maria's Kitchen Manila, a home-based bakeshop) I was afraid that we would incur bigger expenses... like salary for my staff...

Then, a few days after, my staff reported for work, and we got to chat...

And then I realized this person is blessing me, helping me with my many tasks—but I also bless her in some way (giving her a job, paying her salary).

Before, I thought I could do my tasks all by myself. But then I realized I had limited capacity— I could not do all the tasks

I wanted to do.

But when my staff came, we were able to do more—like we could accept more orders, and we had corporate accounts.

It felt great that I blessed her and she blessed me... That's generosity to me.

#### **Christmas List**

JC LIBIRAN: I really believe, my friends, all of us pillars of joy, we already have that joy. But we just have to ask how we can make it even more real not just for us but also for the people around us. And in that case, Christmas won't just be in December— it's all throughout the year that we can experience it.

We are blessed today because, for our little get-together, we have invited someone to share with us a song. Let's all welcome Bro. Adrian Panganiban...





Grown-Up Christmas List
Do you remember me?
I sat upon your knee
I wrote to you with childhood
fantasies

Well, I'm all grown up now
And still need help somehow
I'm not a child but my heart
still can dream
So here's my lifelong wish
My grown-up Christmas list
Not for myself, but for a world in
needNo more lives torn apart
Then wars would never start

And time would heal all hearts
And everyone would have a friend
And right would always win
And love would never end...

This Is My Grown-up Christmas List

Song by Amy Grant/ Source: LyricFind Songwriters: David Foster / Linda Thompson Grown-Up Christmas List lyrics © Warner Chappell Music, Inc

At this point, there's a VIP, a very special person who would like to greet all of you a merry Christmas and he's coming all the way from Philadelphia, USA...

#### The Best Gift

**FR. BOB McCONAGHY:** Oooh, my dear Feasters I hope you're enjoying the Grand Christmas Feast. I'm sure you're having a wonderful time.

I am glad I have this opportunity just to give you a brief, simple Christmas message from Christmas City in the United States: Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

You know the best kind of gifts, when you really think about it, are unexpected gifts — somebody receiving something they didn't know they were going to get.

I'm going to give you a way to give someone an unexpected gift. For someone who is a member of your family.

Not your immediate family, but the family of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — your brother, your sister in the Lord who is poor.

R. BOB MCCONAGH

I call it Operation Rice Bowl. Tonight, in your room, put a rice bowl and a candle next to it— and each night you're going to light that candle.

What you will do earlier that day—when you go to lunch, you will eat rice *only* and the amount you will spend on that lunch, at night, you put it into the rice bowl. And you do that every day and every night until Christmas Eve.

When you are home, say a prayer as you put the money into the rice bowl: "Lord, surprise me. I want to give this unexpected gift to someone that You have chosen. Let Your Holy Spirit, on Christmas or Christmas Eve, lead me to that person and simply give them an unexpected gift... Love is in little things. And little things done with great love have eternal consequences.

So: rice only at lunch. The money you spend on that lunch, otherwise, you put into the rice bowl and pray to our Lord to lead you to that person. Buy a Christmas card, put the money in it, sign your name, and under your name, say simply, "Pray for me."

And then I will ask our Lord to guide you to that person on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. And, therefore, not only you'll have a *merry* Christmas, you'll have a *joyous* Christmas.

Sa paningin ng Ama, kayo ay mas mahalaga kaysa ginto— In the eyes of the Father, you are more valuable than gold.

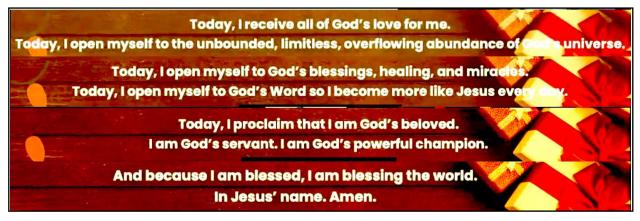
Kaya't maging mabait kayo sa isa't isa. — So be good to one another.

May the Lord bless you this Christmas and may we have much more glee in 2023. See you in January.

Merry Christmas and God Bless!

## **NOVENA TO GOD'S LOVE**

**BO SANCHEZ:** Let's pray our favorite prayer...





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

Talk 2:





From the Book of Psalms Chapter 30, verse 5, let's read together:

Psalms 30:5 NKJV

For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life;
Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning

Joy comes in the morning

This is a pattern that God established from the very beginning. I want you to know that

once upon a time, in the universe, there was chaos, and there was darkness. And the first morning, God created light. And then night came. And the second morning God created the atmosphere and the firmament. And then night came. And God created the land, God created the plants. And then night came. And then the fourth morning, God created the sun, the stars, the moon. And then night came. And on the sixth morning, God created animals and humans. And then night came.

Do you see the pattern?

And then on the seventh day, God created rest. And relationship.

I want you to know that you may be in nighttime right now but every morning God creates something new. Because *joy comes in the morning*.

The Israelites, they came from Egypt and they were traveling in the desert, they were hungry. And they would enter their tents hungry. But there was this one morning when there were shouts in the camp because when they went out of their tents, they saw manna, provision scattered in the desert stands.

I want you to know that there are times in our life when we enter our tents, we are hungry. We are hungry because our needs are not met. But God is telling you today that *joy comes in the morning*.

Because you will get out of those tents and you will see manna, you will see provision.

Once upon a time, centuries later, the Israelites, they had an enemy. And the enemy was a giant. And he taunted and he insulted and he ridiculed. And he threatened day in and day out—40 days. And on the 40th day, when they woke up, one morning, God sent a champion. And the champion, with a stone,



a smooth stone, he shot to the forehead of that enemy— and the giant fell.

I want you to know that right now, you may be facing an enemy. And that could be poverty, that could be depression, that could be addiction, that could be frustration. But whatever enemy that you are facing right now, you are in the nighttime. And weeping may endure for the night. But please understand this: *joy comes in the morning*. And you will see your enemy fall to the ground.

And Jesus, He was beaten, and Jesus, He was spat on, and Jesus, He was scourged, and Jesus, He was whipped, and Jesus, He was crucified. But then, when He was buried in that tomb on Saturday night, do you know what happened on Sunday morning? *Joy came in the morning!* 

Because the angels, they began to sing, "O, death, where is thy sting? O, death, where is thy victory?"

Everybody, say, "Because joy comes in the morning!" Everybody, say that again:

"Because joy comes in the morning!"

And, although guys, you've been hearing this message all day: 2022 may be a year that you remember. Because this year was the year when you had heartache. And this was the year when your dreams were not fulfilled. And this was the year when you did not get that job promotion. And this was the year when you had a failed business. And this was the year when you faced so many enemies.

But *there*'s *going to be a new morning*. I want you to believe...



Everybody, sing with me again: Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet And a Light unto my path...

#### **Four Questions**

- 1) Who in the past seven days experienced even at least one moment of happiness?
- 2) How many of you experienced at least one moment of happiness yesterday—in the past 24 hours?
- 3) How many of you are happy today?

I'll ask the fourth one later...

I asked those questions because there is a mental disorder— a physical condition— it's called *anhedonia*.

Because of the malfunctioning of the wiring of the brain, the person loses his capacity for joy.



And it's similar to the malfunctioning of the wiring of the brain that causes schizophrenia, or bipolar disorder. *Anhedonia* gives you this condition where you cannot be happy. So, if you raised your hand even once when I asked those three questions, you are blessed. You can feel joy. You do.

Here's my fourth question:

4) On your typical day, what do you do that makes you feel happy?

Think. Think for a while: On your typical day, what do you do that actually gives you joy?

What I usually do— and I think a lot of you do this— is after Christmas and before New Year, in that little segment where some of us are not working—we take a mini-retreat—whether that would be two hours, four hours, or half a day. This is what I do: kind of like reviewing the whole year — 2022.

You kind of think about what were the blessings, what were the lessons, and you write them all down, wiping your tears, you move to the next section, and you start making goals for 2023.



### **Write Down Your Blessings**

Now, after reviewing your year, looking at the blessings and the lessons, before you start writing your goals for 2023, I suggest — for your own mental health— the following:



To actually write down things that you do on a typical day that make you happy.



So, you write whether: *I play with my dog. I talk to my child. Make coffee.* Whatever.

The key is this: to be able to design your day so that you are happy — write not an extraordinary event but as something that you do on a daily basis.

I asked myself that question: What are the things I do on a typical day that make me happy?

And I realized something— and this is a secret I want to share with you, in terms of having more joy: Stack your morning with a lot of joyful things.

In my typical day, for example, I'm happy when I bike in the morning. And when I go around the village under the beautiful sun, I'm happy. And then what I do is I bike to a coffee shop and then I read my book under a tree — there's a tree beside the coffee shop, I sit under the tree, and I read, and I am happy.

And I realized, I'm happy in all those activities because I'm outdoors. Outdoors make me happy. And I bet, that. A huge portion of this audience will be happy when you go outdoors.

This will be no surprise because the Book of *Genesis* says that when God created the world, He created a *good* world imbued with beauty. There is goodness in this world. And, you know, psychologists will tell you that if you are depressed, one of the practical things you can do is this: every single day, get out of your room, go outdoors, get the sun, let it be absorbed in your body, be in the good world that God has created. And there— it raises your serotonin levels and you'll have a fighting chance against whatever mental disorder (you might go through).



You know, the Pandemic was exacerbated by emotional challenges, financial challenges, and medical challenges. We were trapped in our home and we did not go out.

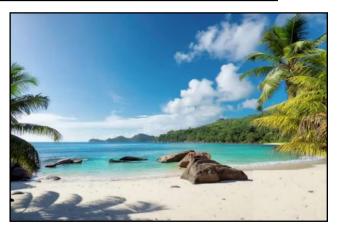


What am I saying? I'm saying that if you go to the Bible, you'll note there are such things as natural joys.

When you look at the mountains, if you look at the sunset, if you look at the ocean— all these, you look, and you say, "Wow! These will actually make me happy."







When I had COVID, during those 30 days, my little backyard saved my life—literally.

Because every day, I would go there, and I would be healed by the joy that I felt outdoors.

Let me state the obvious: Joy is a feeling. And it is God's gift. Natural joys are actually God's gifts.



There are other sources of joy.

Psalms 65:11 talks about harvests that are really reasons for joy:

You crown the year with your bounty and your carts overflow with abundance. The grasslands of the wilderness overflow. The hills are closed with gladness.

Are you somebody who... you know, you get happy when you get a salary increase— when you get a bonus?

Or are you one of those strange people who are like, "Ay, may bonus, nakakainis. How annoying..."

We're not like that. There's a natural joy, there's a feeling of joy when that happens.

I'll give you another one Proverbs 23:24-25:

Children make you happy. How many of you can say that?

Parents, if you have children with you right now, look at them and tell them, "You are my joy—and my haartache. But mostly my

and my heartache. But mostly my joy."

Children give us joy. How many of you your parents— even one of them—are still alive? Yes? You are so blessed.

I lost both of my parents. And I cannot do what I am going to tell you to do right now: Give them joy while they're there.

Because a time will come when you cannot do that. Grab a date with them. Spend time with them. Visit them. Talk with them. Listen to them. Ask them questions. Because this is the only time you have with them. Give them joy.



### **The World Worships Emotions**

The Bible talks about the joy that we get when we have food in front of us. Especially— and the joy multiplies—when you've got loved ones around the table.

Psalms 104:14-15 says:

#### Psalms 104:14-15 NLT

You allow them to produce food from the earth— wine to make them glad, olive oil to soothe their skin, and bread to give them strength.

You know, I'm a semi-vegetarian. And so when my friends come, and we gather and we eat, and there's Lechon on the table, they don't feel very comfortable — because of me.

They tell me, "Bro Bo, I feel guilty."

I ask, "Why?"

They answer, "There's Lechon."

"So?"

"You cannot eat. We're the only ones who could eat."

I tell them, "Do you know that in the Bible, Jesus uses the picture of a banquet overflowing with food as a picture of the Kingdom? So, please, God wants you to enjoy. And God wants you to eat. And God wants you to have a feast. That's joy!"

But not too much. Because the picture of the Kingdom is both in Heaven and on Earth. So, be sure that you eat in a way that it's reasonable enough so that the Kingdom you will experience is on Earth— not the Kingdom in Heaven right away.

Joy is God's gift.

The reason I am spending a few minutes laboring to stress this point is that there are segments of Christianity—certain preachers, authors, writers, spiritual leaders—who look at the emotion of joy with suspicion.

What they do is they demonize emotions in general and they say, "If you are *really* holy, you shouldn't be very happy most of the time. Because loving God is about commitment, discipline, sacrifice, suffering."

Now, I want you to know that that's a half-truth. There *is* truth in that. But if you go through Scripture, you'll see that there's a lot of joy in it. But I understand where that brand of spirituality is coming from.

It's an overreaction to how the world worships emotions, puts emotions on the altar as gods, and says that "Oh, you are your feelings— and therefore emotions decide on everything."



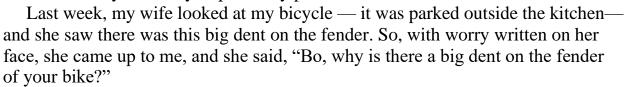
## **Feelings Are Not Gods**

I was listening to a relationship guru, and she said this — it was a 15-second clip—"Why remain in a relationship if your partner does not make you happy?"

I understand—it's 15 seconds—I do not know the whole context of the talk. But some people, they just get the 15-second quote, and say, "Ah, I will leave my partner because he does not make me happy."

Yes, this is an overreaction to this — how the world worships God. If you go to my wife right now, and ask her, "Does your husband make you always happy?"
What do you think will her answer be?

Let me tell you a story to prove my point.



And me, very cooly said, "Oh, two months ago, a car hit me from behind." That's when she turned ballistic, and she said, "Whaaat? When? Two months?"

And she said this: "I almost lost my husband two months ago and I get to know this only now? Why didn't you tell me?"

I said, "It was just a bump."

Believe you me, I spent the next 28 minutes apologizing about 300 times for her to be able to forgive me.

The point I am driving at is that I do not always make my wife happy. But it's okay. Why?

Because feelings are not gods we worship—

Feelings are not gods we worship but teachers that show us our desperate need for God.

but teachers that who guide us during our desperate need for God. That's what feelings are.





### **God Wants Us To Be Happy**

Now, let me go back to my first premise: that Joy is God's gift. That God wants us to be happy.

Why? Because God is a father. I'm a father. I want my boys to be happy. I have yet to meet a mom and a dad who will tell me, "My one ambition in my life is to make my children depressed."

All parents want their kids to be happy. And yet, at the same time, all parents know that you need short-term pain as necessary for long-term joy.

Parents know that—by heart. They understand. They want their children to be happy but they know you've got to allow for short-term pain.

How many of you, parents, when your kids were sick, the thought entered your mind, "Lord, ako na Short-term pain is necessary for long-term joy.

lang and magkasakit, huwag na ang anak ko. Let it be me to get sick, instead of my child."

It's there actually in your mind.

My boys—aged 22, 17—they would get sick, an average of maybe 2.5 times a year—flu, abdominal whatever, measles, COVID... My youngest son, aged 17, got sick 42 times in his lifetime. My eldest son, aged 22—55 times in his lifetime.

Can you imagine all those sufferings? Not only that.

My eldest son, when he was seven years old—a dog bit him. We had to bring him to the hospital for those multiple anti-rabies injections. Not fun. Torture.

When my youngest son, Francis, was two years old, we rushed him to the hospital because of dengue.



It was so scary for me because weeks before, I visited the wake of a 12-year-old boy who died of dengue. I was there. I saw him. I grieved with the father who's a friend of mine.

And so, then, I was in the hospital, I was seated on the hospital bed, I saw my two-year-old boy... dengue... dextrose needle stuck into his arm...

And I was saying, "What kind of God would allow these things to happen—when a helpless child can suffer like this?"

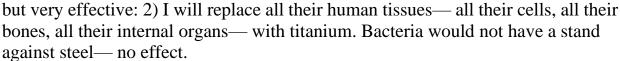
#### Two Kinds of Joy

In my mind, I said, "Is there a way for me as a father to protect my sons, to prevent these things to happen? From kids getting sick, from kids being bitten by a dog. Is there a way for me to protect my kids?"

I thought of two solutions:

1) Let them live in a bubble—to actually live in a bubble 24/7 — no more germs. But then I asked the question, "Is it a *life*?"

I had another solution—very radical,



And you know what? Let all the dogs try to bite them. The dogs will lose their teeth. And if a dengue-carrying mosquito will try to land on their metal skin, the mosquito will just slide off. I would have solved the problem. My children will be protected from pain, from suffering, from sickness. Yes?

No. Because by doing that, I would have turned them into monsters. And I would have destroyed my children.

My point is: *Parents, do not over-parent*. Your children will have to go through frustration, and pain, and suffering. Because that is the only way for them to grow, for them to mature.

And God, He will allow weeping that will last for a night. But He promises that *joy will come in the morning*. He will allow short-term pain for your long-term joy.

So, in the Bible, there are two kinds of joy: Natural joy and—for lack of a better term—supernatural joy.

Natural joy is a feeling. Supernatural joy is an attitude— and it comes from a profound trust in God. And because of that, this deeper kind of joy is not dependent on good

If natural joy is a feeling, supernatural joy is an attitude.

Supernatural Joy and Sorrow are deeply connected

circumstances. What happens is this: this supernatural joy, this deeper joy, it is actually connected with sorrow—they are deeply connected.

You find that all over the Bible.

#### **Night and Morning**

I experienced it last month. My father-in-law passed away. And for five days, —in the wake, in that room, with that coffin, with the loved ones, the family, the friends visiting— love overflowed. But so did two other things: tears and laughter. It's funny. Why? In Psalms 30:5, I repeat:



And then Romans 5:3 says:





I am going to end with this verse— I won't even explain it. I'm going to ask the last speaker to explain this because he will do a far better job than I can.

Let's read together 2 Corinthians 8:1-2:



I want you to underline those three phrases:

1) Severe trial; 2) Extreme poverty; 3) Overflowing joy.

How? Please explain to me. How in the world can you have overflowing joy when there is a severe trial and extreme poverty?

Alvin Barcelona, please explain it.



**ALVIN BARCELONA:** How, indeed?

In the midst of severe trial, overwhelming joy?

Bro. Bo explained it already. He said joy and sorrow are deeply connected. Which is very true.

They happen at the same time.

You have something to be joyful for, and you also have burdens to bear.

Last week, we talked about peace.

And Jesus Himself said it:

While you are alive, you will have trouble.



For example, you are sick. Yet when you get well, you don't have money. Then, when you already have money, your sweetheart leaves you. Then, your sweetheart comes back to you. Yet, again, you don't have money.

There are always problems while we are alive. So, what is the secret?

Even when you have problems, when Jesus is with you, you are able to bear your problems. You will have peace. Why? Because No Jesus, No Peace. Know Jesus, Know Peace. No Jesus, No Real Joy. But Know Jesus, Know Real Joy.

That's the secret. There's sorrow, there's trouble. But see Jesus in the trouble. See Jesus in the sorrow. And that sorrow will turn into joy.

See JESUS in the sorrow and you will see JOY in the sorrow



## Sadness and Happiness—At the Same Time

One last story:

I want you to look at this photo. Look at the face of this woman. She's smiling. She has joy. She has peace. She's my Mom. And she has terminal cancer. I went to her—I flew to Sydney right after the three-day Feast Conference.

Because a few months. ago, she called me up to tell me, "Alvin, I have cancer."

Of course, that devastated me. But I prayed. You know, she's in Sydney— maybe the doctors, the hospital can do something... But the cancer got worse. My wife went to the hospital, saw her there. But the hospital discharged her already — because they said there was nothing more they could do to cure her. So, she was transferred to a hospice, to a nursing home— just palliative care, just to manage the pain.



When I got there, she was already in that nursing home. You know what I did there? Nothing. There was nothing anymore I could do.

This is what's interesting. Here, in the Philippines, I was very busy. I had to fly to Cebu for the Feast Conference—which I missed. Then to Davao. Then lots of parties and meetings, year-enders... But I left and flew to be with my Mom—just to do nothing.

Actually, I did something. I watched her. I sat with her during her meals. I pushed her wheelchair. I sang to her: *There could never be a portrait of my love...Moon river, wider than a mile...* just songs of her time...

Because if songs of my time, she might become jittery...

So, I sang, *It's now or never*... She was very happy. She applauded. She laughed...

Wait, you might have



forgotten: she has cancer. Sadness and happiness— at the same time. And I was also happy and sad— at the same time.

### **Being Like Jesus**

My last question to her when she was at the nursing home: "Ma, what do you want me to do?"

Her quick answer: "Bring me home, Alvin."

Quickly, we arranged everything. We moved Heaven and Earth to get her home.

It was no joke. She was getting weaker and weaker. She endured an eight-hour trip from Sydney

to Manila. And we got her home. She's now home.

In the house, her room is not very beautiful. At the nursing home, you press just one button and the nurses of various nationalities take turns in attending to her. And the place is clean, and well in order, the food is okay.

At home, her room is simple, there were even cracks in the ceiling. Yet she is very happy—because she is with her loved ones—her children, her grandchildren.

For me, my world changed. I got back to being busy—talks, Advent rituals, meetings, Christmas parties. But one thing changed.

In the last weeks that she's home, I gave time for her. Just the same — just feed her, read the Bible to her, sing to her,

or just hold her until she gets to sleep.

That's what she wants: "Hold my hand until I sleep."

But that was not easy. Day after day, I see my mother getting weaker and weaker. But there is joy. Why?

Because I see in her Jesus. And she sees Jesus in me. I even made it literal. During our Feast Bay Area Christmas party, I put on a costume that made me look like Jesus.

And my Mommy said, "Come to me."

But I warned her: Mommy, this me. Not Jesus taking you already. But just practice."

She laughed. Ha-ha-ha! My Mom laughed and she has cancer. At the same time.







What do you bear now? Are you sad? Going through hardship? But are you also able to be joyful? At the same time.

Weeping may endure for the night but joy will come in the morning.

But why wait for the morning and endure the night—if you can make every moment *morning?* Let morning be every part of your day! How?

Let morning be every part of your day.

See Jesus every moment. And there will be joy. This Christmas, let me give you the secret to true joy:

Joy is Jesus-others-then you.

Jesus first, bring him to others, and the joy will come to you.

Let me pray for you and with you:

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

Father in Heaven, this Christmas, may I receive the best present:

Your Presence. And may I give the best Present to others—Your Presence through my Presence. That is Your joy. And that will be my overwhelming joy. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Let's come before the Lord and experience overwhelming joy.

**Editor's Note:** On January 3, 2023, Bro. Alvin posted on his Facebook page: "We thank you for all your prayers for our Mom. She is now peacefully with the Lord. Join us

in celebrating and remembering the fullness of the life of Aida Perez-Barcelona Aguilos Wilson."

Our deepest sympathies.



## 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.

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Thank you for the Love. Your monthly donation helps us continue extending support to our Light of Jesus spin-off organizations, including our partner beneficiaries. Your gift will sustain our operations and, we hope, help us reach out to the persons our Lord has called us to make disciples and give them renewed hope.

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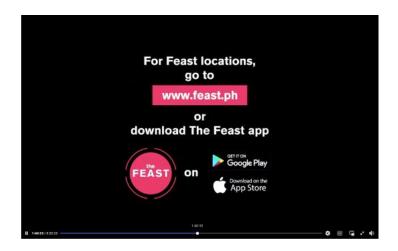


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# Go and make disciples of all men.

— Matthew 28:19