



NEWSLETTER
March 5, 2023



Is Your Life in Gridlock?

ONE day, the rains were extra heavy. And a citywide power failure happened. No stoplights. In one snap, there were no rules on the streets. It became every man for himself. Cars counter-flowed at will. And there was absolute chaos. The city was in total gridlock. It took me six hours to get home.

I've met people whose lives are in chaos too. They're stuck in a gridlock. Why? They broke God's Laws.

Here's the truth: You may not like rules because you think they restrain you. But *laws don't restrain you-- they release you from chaos and enlarge your freedom.*

Have a life-altering Feast today.

May your dreams come true

Bo Sanchez

WELCOME
to Closer Talk 7:
God Wants You
To Live a Full Life



Bad News Is Good News!

MOST, if not all, we get from Media are bad news. Journalists hardly deal with good news-- well, because it's already *good*. They report the *bad* so somebody will do something to make it *good*. That's how bad news becomes good news!



Fr. Albert Garong, in his homily at The Feast last Sunday, pointed out that bad news is actually an invitation to do something good. Like, last Sunday's Gospel was about bad news -- Jesus vulnerable in the wilderness, open to the temptations of the Devil. How was it good news? Read on, *page 3*.

Today, our founder, Bro. Bo Sanchez, will talk about bad news. Like, people stuck in a gridlock of a dozen and one chaos. How is that good news? Read on, *page 1*.



Also last Sunday, in Talk 6 of our Feast series *Closer* Bro. Bo and Bro. Audee Villaraza, reminded us of the *baddest* news ever: Jesus arrested, scourged, died on the Cross. Now we know how is that the *goodest* news ever, *pages 14 to 35*.

One difficulty, if not bad, is bringing along kids to The Feast. The best news in this issue is a picture of Bro. Didoy Lubaton delivering his usual exhortation on Love Offering and at the same time introducing to his cutest son Hosea our Feast Family, *page 10*.

Now one bad news you don't ever want to hear is family problem—even small. Ana Naval grew up struggling with a big one. How is that good news? Quick, find out on *page 35*.



So, amid life's bad news, if someone asks you, "How are you?" Say, "I'm *good!*"

All for God's Glory,

Randy Borromeo
Media Ministry
Executive Director

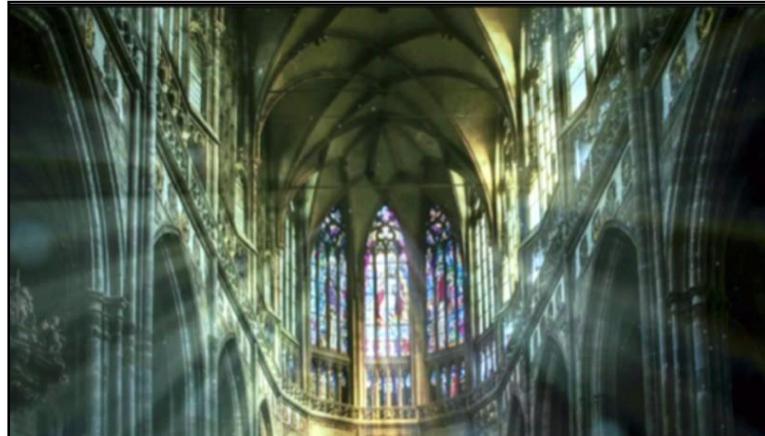




FLASHBACK!

FEBRUARY 26, 2023

Holy Mass



SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

FR. ALBERT GARONG

on the Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

Excerpts...

Good morning, Everyone! We are now in the holy season of Lent. Did you observe Ash Wednesday? Like ash put on your forehead. We priests call Ash Wednesday as Catholic ID. Because during Ash Wednesday, churches are filled up.

Someone asked me, “Father, is it forbidden to erase the ash put on our forehead? Because it’s hot, our sweat erased the ash.”

I said that it’s okay when the ash is erased.

Someone also asked, “What if it’s already Friday and the ash put on Wednesday is still on my forehead?”

I told the person, “Maligo ka.—Take a bath.”

The Human Condition

I have a question: Who among you here can wake up on time without using an alarm clock?

(Many raised their hands.)

Uy, a lot. Without an alarm clock at all? Wow! Sana all.

And who among you regular human beings need an alarm clock to wake up on time? I will raise my hand because I'm part of that group.

But who among you set your alarm like this: I need to wake up at 7:00 a.m. so, my alarm is 6:30, 6:36, 6:39, 6:43, 6:47, 6:51, 6:54, and for good measure, 7:05.

Raise your hand. Admit it. Yes, I'm part of that group.

Ang hirap 'no? It's hard, right? Sometimes, we wonder... Why does getting up have to be so hard? Why is the simple act of rising from your bed-- and you know that you want to do it, you have to do it-- and yet there's so much struggle involved? It's simple but it involves mental gymnastics sometimes-- there's an app that requires some math before the alarm stops. Or there's another app that requires that you take a picture of something to make the alarm stop—so you really have to stand up.

Simple act of waking up is such a struggle and you know, the night before when I was setting my alarm I realized, "Isn't this symptomatic of something?" That there's something wrong, right? Human as we are, that's not just where we struggle.

We struggle on a lot of things that on paper makes sense, that on paper we want to do, that we *should* do-- and yet we never do them. It's everyone's experience that we love things we shouldn't love and we don't like things that we know are good for us. We fall for the same wrong person again and again, enter into the same toxic relationships. We avoid risks like the plague so we always go by the *safe* path even though we know that the *risky* path is where God wants us to go. We know the right thing, but we hardly follow through. That is our experience, right? And that is the human condition.





God's Invitation

Today, we listen to the Gospel and we hear that Jesus is tempted. He was sent into the desert. By whom? By the Spirit.

For me, one good way to appreciate Lent is precisely that time when the Spirit leads you to the wilderness-- when God asks you to leave the things that you are comfortable with, to go to the desert. Why? Because there you can be more vulnerable.

Because knowing our brokenness, in our regular life, we have built systems and routines and we have accumulated stuff-- and even relationships that allow us to function even though we are so dysfunctional.

So dysfunctional that we have put up so many things in our life so that even though it's against our worst instincts, we can still do things-- exactly why we set so many alarms just to wake up. So that even if we struggle, we can still do something.

But the invitation of the Lord is to leave all those structures, all those systems. Go to the wilderness. Why? So that we can be vulnerable again.

Because sometimes, the systems we put up, the routines you built-- the walls you build in your life to make you functional-- keeps bad things away. But these systems also keep God away, make your life predictable, controllable.

But the Lord asks you, "Can you instead be vulnerable? Can you embrace for this season your vulnerability?"

And so, the Lord invites us to go to the wilderness. Leave for a while those that give you the illusion of control, that let you function without dealing with your dysfunctionality.

God says, "Let's be here in the desert and let's be vulnerable. Be vulnerable with Me."

Two Realities

And once you're there, what do you find in the desert? You find two realities:

1. You discover you are broken.

Yes, I am broken, I am flawed. For some reason that I don't know, I am just dysfunctional. I don't know why but it's who I am. But everyone else is also broken. We are all ash-- that's why it's called Ash Wednesday.

Some may feel, "Maybe I am broken in a different kind of way because I have many temptations." "Bakit ganito ako mag-isip, Lord?—Why do I think this way? May mali ba sa wiring ko?—Is there something wrong with my wiring?" "Bakit si Ate parang ang galing niya, hindi siya natetempt?—Why is my sister so good, she's never tempted." "Bakit 'yung spiritual leader namin parang wala siyang problema?—Why does our spiritual leader seem he has no problem? Parang ang banal banal niya.—He seems so very holy."

No, we are all on the same boat. None of us here, not me, not your builders, not your bishops, not the sisters, not the Pope. We're all deeply broken, and that's okay-- because the second thing you find in the desert is that...

2. Jesus is with you.

We have this fear that the Lord takes us to the wilderness and says, "Okay, this is your survival pack. See you in 40 days."

But that's not true. The Lord leads you to the wilderness, asks you to be vulnerable, and sits there with you every single moment. Never does He leave you behind. Because the hope is that once we embrace this vulnerability, we then acknowledge that we really, truly need God.

That's the thing, right? And in the Gospel, that's the temptation that the Devil gives to Jesus.

The Devil is so wise because he didn't say, "Okay I will stop you Jesus from saving the people."

No, he's crafty. What the Devil says is, "Okay, Lord, you want to save the people? That's good!"

I support that. But let me give you a different way: by tempting Jesus to turn stone into bread.

The Devil is saying, "You want people to follow you? Satisfy their needs!"



‘Create a Spectacle’

Because isn't it that when there's free food, many come to attend Mass?

When we are announcing a meeting in our parish, it's a *must* that we include in the announcement, “Snacks will be served later.” So that many will attend the meeting.

When you satisfy people of their needs, their desires, people will flock to you.

So, the Devil says, “Isn't that beautiful? Many will follow you.”

But the Lord says *No*.

So, instead, the Devil says, “Okay, just jump from the Temple and create a spectacle.”

Again, when miracles happen, when spectacles happen, people will flock to you. That's why we are all experts in making spectacle of ourselves in this age of social media. We are OA—overacting. Everybody needs a camera. *Lahat OA*, because we want followers.

“So, create spectacle.”

The Lord says *No*.

And finally, the Devil says, “Okay, just bow to me and I will give you all the kingdoms, all the powers.”

The Devil is saying, “If you want them to follow you, conquer the world, take over, and people will have no choice but to follow you.”



1st Reading – Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

⁷ The LORD God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being. ⁸ Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom he had formed. ⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹ Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the LORD God had made. The serpent asked the woman, “Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?” ² The woman answered the serpent:

“We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden;³ it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘You shall not eat it or even touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman: “You certainly will not die! No. ⁵ God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is evil.” ⁶ The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So, she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so, they sewed fig leaves together and made loin cloths for themselves.

Jesus Leads the Way

See? The Devil offering a different path. But Jesus Christ chooses the path that the Father has laid for him. That is the path of patient, loving sacrifice. That is the path of solidarity and compassion.

That's why He allows himself to be tempted because He leads the way-- He leads the way to being vulnerable, to being there in the desert so that we will know that He understands what it is to be in the wilderness-- and at our weakest.

The hope is that we will cling to Jesus more. We understand that we are broken. But instead, what do we do? We follow the Devil's path.

We say, "Okay, I will look for another way. What I want is my way. So, this is what I will do... Lord, I like what you have planned for me but I want to use this gift of freedom to do my own thing."

That's what the world wants, right? Do your own thing. You be *you*. You do *you*.

But Lent tells us that if we just follow our own path, it will only lead to death. That's what Adam and Eve did-- and they introduced death in the world.

But Jesus, in choosing obedience, Jesus in choosing the path of the Father -- as what the Second Reading tells us-- gives us life instead.



2nd Reading – Romans 5:12-19

Brothers and sisters:

¹² Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned ¹³ for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world, though sin is not accounted when there is no law. ¹⁴ But death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin after the pattern of the trespass of Adam, who is the type of the one who was to come.

¹⁵ But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one, the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ overflow for the many. ¹⁶ And the gift is not like the result of the one who sinned. For after one sin there was the judgment that brought condemnation; but the gift, after many transgressions, brought acquittal. ¹⁷ For if, by the transgression of the one, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ In conclusion, just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so, through one righteous act, acquittal and life came to all. ¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so, through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous.



The Highest Form of Worship

My dear brothers and sisters, we began Lent with Ash Wednesday and we were already given so potent a symbol-- that we are all ash. But if this ash is united to the Cross of Jesus Christ, it becomes life-giving, it becomes meaningful.

So, that's the invitation-- and I hope we understand that. That's why we go closer to the Lord. That's why we attend Mass.

It is often said that the Mass is the highest form of worship. Why is that? Do you understand why people always say that? That there's no prayer greater than the Mass? Because in the Mass, we unite with the only Person who can heal us, with the only Person who ever gave a worthy sacrifice enough to atone for us.

When the world says, "No, make your own thing, make your own sacrifices. Make up for your own atonement. Heal yourself..." we go to Mass and say, "No, we cannot heal ourselves. The only way for us is to unite ourselves to Jesus Christ."

And remember, the only Person who ever offered that union for us is Him.

That's why in the middle of the Mass, at the highest point of it, we say, "*Through Him, with Him, in Him*"-- and then we consume Him.

My dear brothers and sisters, this Lent, we allow ourselves to be truly vulnerable and, in that vulnerability, may we learn to hunger and thirst for Jesus. Amen.





DIDOY LUBATON: Keep on praising the Lord, Everybody. Kindly give the Lord a big, big hand. Hallelujah! What a beautiful Sunday, Everybody!

May I ask you to sit down and greet as many people as you can? Greet how good, how beautiful, how handsome they are and just say thank you to them for being here.

May I see a raise of hands who's attending for the first time?

Hi! Welcome guys!

Everybody, greet our first-timers, clap for them. So good!

Also, for those people who are attending online, we welcome you. You are part of our Family.

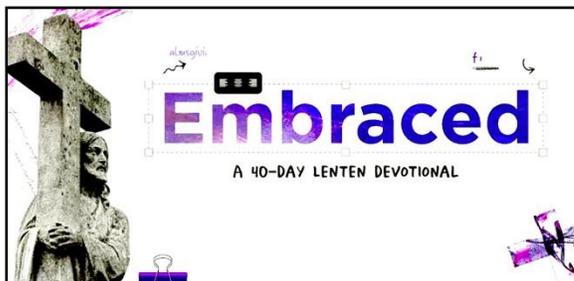
Hello, this is my son Hosea. This is our Family, our Feast Community.

We can bring kids onstage. Daddy has to do what he has to do.

We have many offerings to you. We have Lenten specials. We are going to have a Holy Week Retreat on Holy Thursday and Good Friday, 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

Bring your family and friends to this retreat.

And here's another invitation:



**Watch daily at
The Feast App**



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Love Offering

DIDOY LUBATON:

I always want to encourage people to give. This is for you, from 2 Corinthians 9:11: *Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous and when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.*

So, two blessings we receive from this Ministry of Giving: the needs of the believers will be met; and they will joyfully express thanks to God.

May I boast in the Lord? I am rich. I am rich with Community. Plus, I receive practical provisions. When the Lord says you will be enriched in every way, God means it-- so you can be generous.

Yes, I'm asking you to give to Church today. But I also want to highlight your generosity.

My wife (Mayi)--she doesn't like that I do this to her-- but I honor my wife because the Community and I are enriched by her presence in my life. And she allows me to do this-- she allows that I practice my profession as a doctor and also to serve in Church and bring the kids to our faith gathering.

It's difficult to bring along the kids. But that is the gift of our Community. Our kids are going to catch the good Community values. We're not going to teach them through words -- but they're going to feel the Presence of God through you, through the Community, as they see that we can live together.

We (the servants) actually are not the only Builders of the Community— you, together with us, are.

So, thank you for building this Family, for building this Community. It takes a lot of effort, it takes a lot of expenses, just like any household. But I really want to let you know that this is God's Kingdom, this is God's Community and when we get out there, we're going to be enriching the life of the people that we serve in our workplaces, in our businesses.

We will always be enriched in every way so that we will always be generous.

Palakpakan natin ang Panginoon. Let's applaud the Lord.

WAYS TO GIVE	
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Worship!

EXHORTATIONS



ANNIE BURCE: Good morning!

Brothers and sisters, I know that we come from different backgrounds and we may have different pieces of baggage.

But I believe --and I declare-- that freedom is coming for all of us.

Do you believe that? Yes!

So, as one family, let us come together in worship and declare that to the Lord!



KRIZIA OCOMA: We praise You, Jesus!

How I wish that in every second of our life, we would easily and peacefully say, “Freedom is coming!”

But we know that that’s not always the case. Some of us are still in the dark, behind closed doors, waiting for answers. Exactly, Lent-- where we wait and prepare for Easter to come. But it is during these times when we need to be reminded that God works even in the midst of darkness. Amen!

Jesus raised the little girl back to life behind closed doors. God called St. Paul who eventually became one of the greatest defenders of our faith despite formerly a persecutor of Jesus followers.

Jesus could inspire and bring new hope and life to people in the past. What now stops Him from doing that in here?

So, if you’re not happy, guess what? God’s not done yet!

Declare it: God’s not done yet... We are worshipping a God who is not done yet!





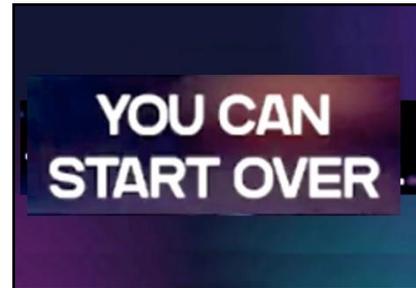


FEBRUARY 26, 2023

Talk



Talk 6



BRO. BO SANCHEZ:

Today, I receive all of God's love for me.
Today, I open myself to the unbounded, limitless,
overflowing abundance of God's universe.

Today, I open myself to God's blessings, healing, and miracles.
Today, I open myself to God's Word
so I become more like Jesus every day.

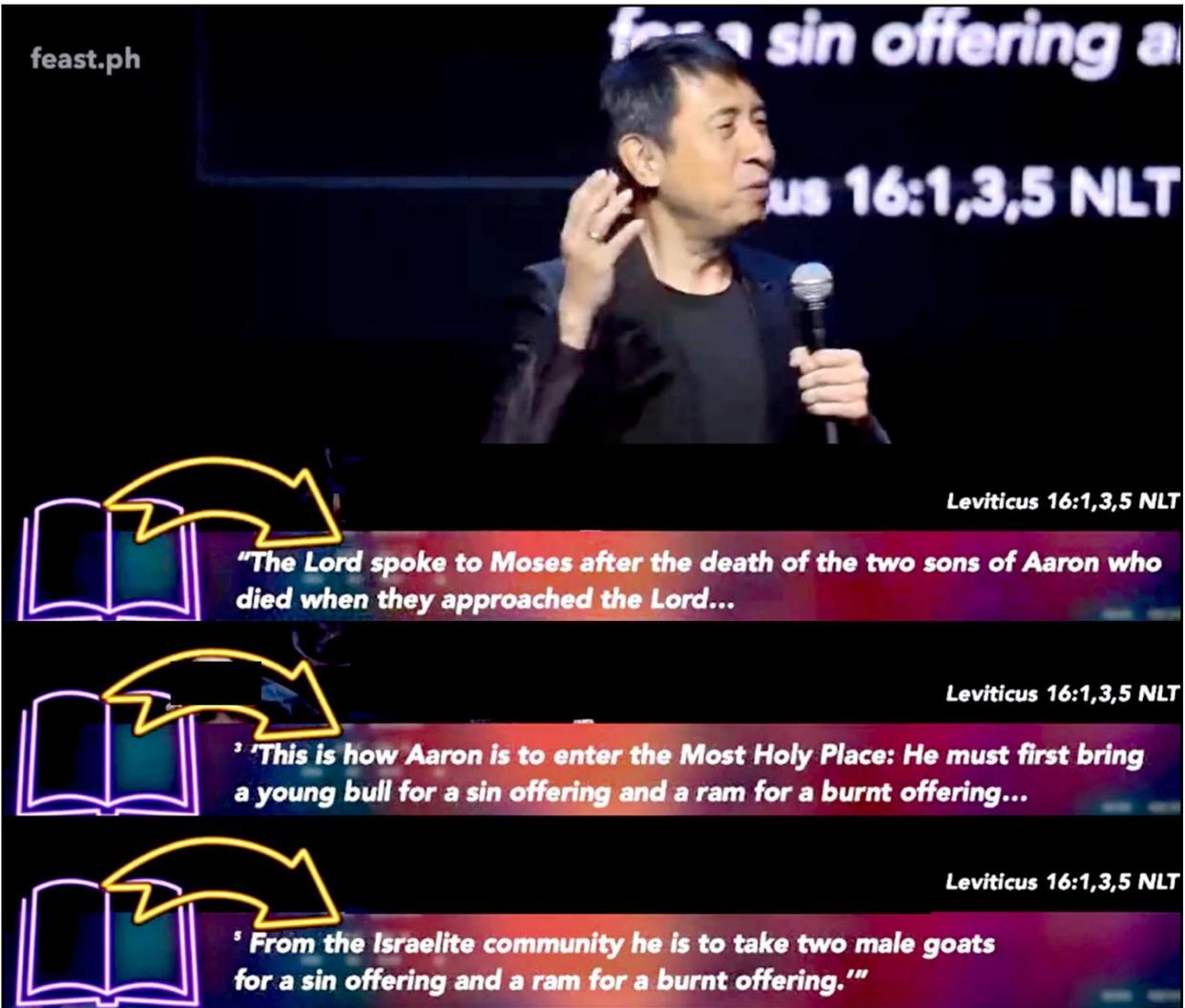
Today, I proclaim that I am God's beloved.
I am God's servant.
I am God's powerful champion.

And because I am blessed,
I am blessing the world.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path.*



Leviticus 16: 1, 3,5:



“Bro. Bo what are we reading about? I don’t understand a thing of you just read.”

I’m telling you, we are going to look at the symbols. But more important, we are going to look at the meaning behind the symbols because they are going to speak to our heart.

I want you to put your hand on your chest and say: *Father, speak to me. You brought me to this place. This is a Divine appointment. From the very beginning of time, you planned this. And so, I am here, standing on holy ground, and I will receive Your Word that will change my life and that will bless me. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.*



Today, I want to preach the message *You Can Start Over*.

There are people here, you've made some mistakes—and you are in a mess right now. Or, at least one area of your life is in a mess. Or, you did not make a mistake but other people around you made some mistakes and right now, you are caught in a bind. And in your heart, you want to start over.

And some of you, you're frustrated. And you want to give up. But we just sang a song that says that Someone will not give up on us.

And I want to preach this as loudly, and as clearly, and as confidently, and as boldly as I can: You, if you're losing hope right now, or, you are just tired, and you do not know what to do—I'm giving you God's Word.

God is telling you: "*You can start over.*"

Everybody, inhale. Hmmm.

What does that mean? You're alive. And while you are alive, you can start over.

There is hope. Because God is our hope.

And I want to preach this as loudly, and as clearly, and as confidently, and as boldly as I can: You, if you're losing hope right now, or, you are just tired, and you do not know what to do—I'm giving you God's Word.

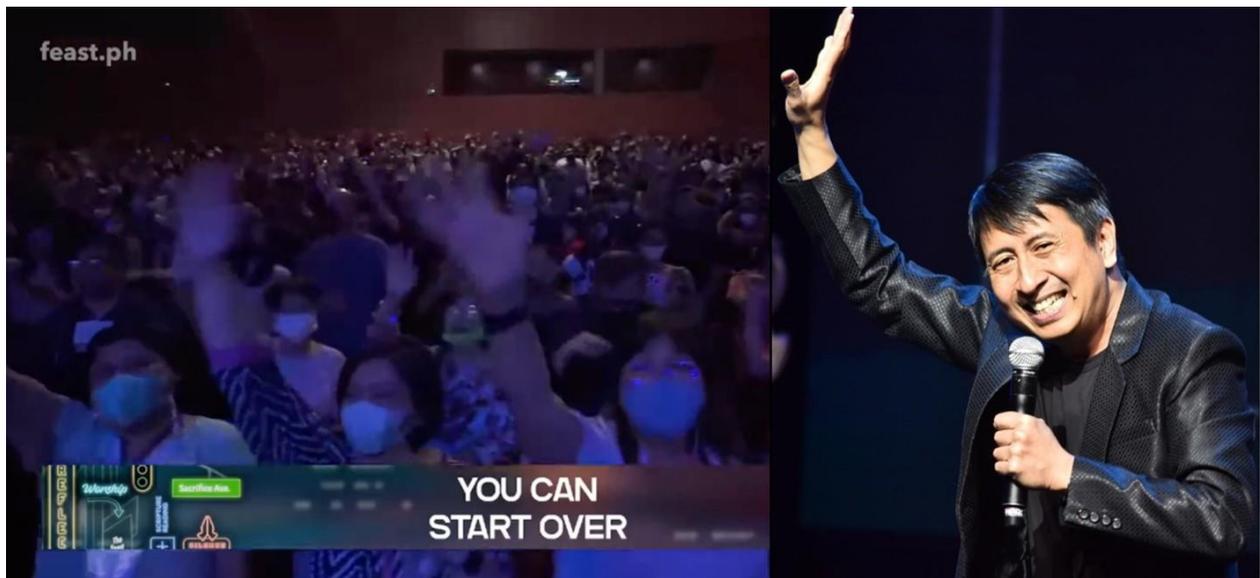
God is telling you: "You can start over."

Everybody, inhale. Hmmm.

What does that mean? You're alive. And while you are alive, you can start over.

There is hope. Because God is our hope.

I want you to tell... No, no. I want you to *preach* to seven persons around you: "You can start over. You can start over. You can start over."



How many of you want to start over a specific area in your life?

Raise your hand.

You want to start over! Wave at me! Wave at me!

Wave at God! Wave at God and say, “I want to start over!”



Now, I need to warn you: Before you start over an external reality, God will first of all start over an internal reality. You cannot change anything on the outside if you do not first change something in the inside.

You see, your spiritual life is the foundation of any other area of your life. And that’s what God will start over first.

So, if you are ready, we begin...

A Tech Problem

Two weeks ago, my brand-new phone died. Yeah, brand-new, fully charged. When I pressed the *on* button, didn't want to work.

At that time, I was in a Holy Land pilgrimage. Okay. I was imagining that when I come back here, I'm going to a repair shop, have it fixed—hoping it will be fixed... Unless they say it's dead, I have to replace it.

Then, my son called up, using my wife's phone. And I told him about my tech problem...

By the way, imagine that you're making a phone call...



If you did this,
you're old...



Look at how a young person
pretends he is holding a phone...

So, I was talking with my son,
and my son asked me:

“Dad, did you reset your phone?”

Boom! Why didn't I think of that?

I'm supposed to be an intelligent guy...

Somewhat, right?

Immediately, I felt our 33-year gap.

Because old people, we don't *think*...
well, that's me...

So, I googled how to reset a phone
—three steps.

In 20 seconds, my problem was solved.

Now, I'm going to ask you this question:

***Wouldn't it be wonderful
if life has a reset button?***





Two Problems

I just talked with two persons that had two different problems—and they wanted the same thing. They wanted to start over.

The first one was a woman who had a heartbreak.

She said, “Bro. Bo, when my Ex was courting me, I saw all the red flags you would write in your books. But I did not want to see them because I was in love

Very wise words, right? If you see a person in love with love, you tell that person, “Mag-ingat ka.—Be careful.”

So, this woman was telling me that it was a toxic relationship. It was eating her up. And it was killing her day by day.

Until finally, she said, “Natanggal yung helmet ko. – My helmet was removed.” She woke up. Finally, she broke up with the guy.

She said these words: “Bro. Bo, I am swimming in an ocean of pain. But I’m not going back to him. I want to start over.”

The second person I talked with—totally different problem... She said she’s in debt... Started very small... And then it ballooned to P800,000.

And here was the problem: “Bro. Bo, my husband does not know about it.”

Oh, my gosh...

So, I told her, “This is what you have to do: you have to talk to your husband...”

“He’s gonna kill me!”

“No, he’s not. He’s going to be very angry... But you need help. You need to tell him.”

So, I was telling her that, and she said, “I wish I could turn the hands of time, go back to the day before I borrowed money... If only I could do that...”

What was she asking for? If she could *start over*.

My dear friends, God is a God who wants to help you start over. Not yet in the external reality as I said, but first of all in the spiritual reality—because this is what God wants you to do.



General Cleaning

My dear friends, what we just read was something that happened in the book of *Leviticus*. And this was the *reset button* in *Leviticus*.

It is called the *Day of Atonement*.

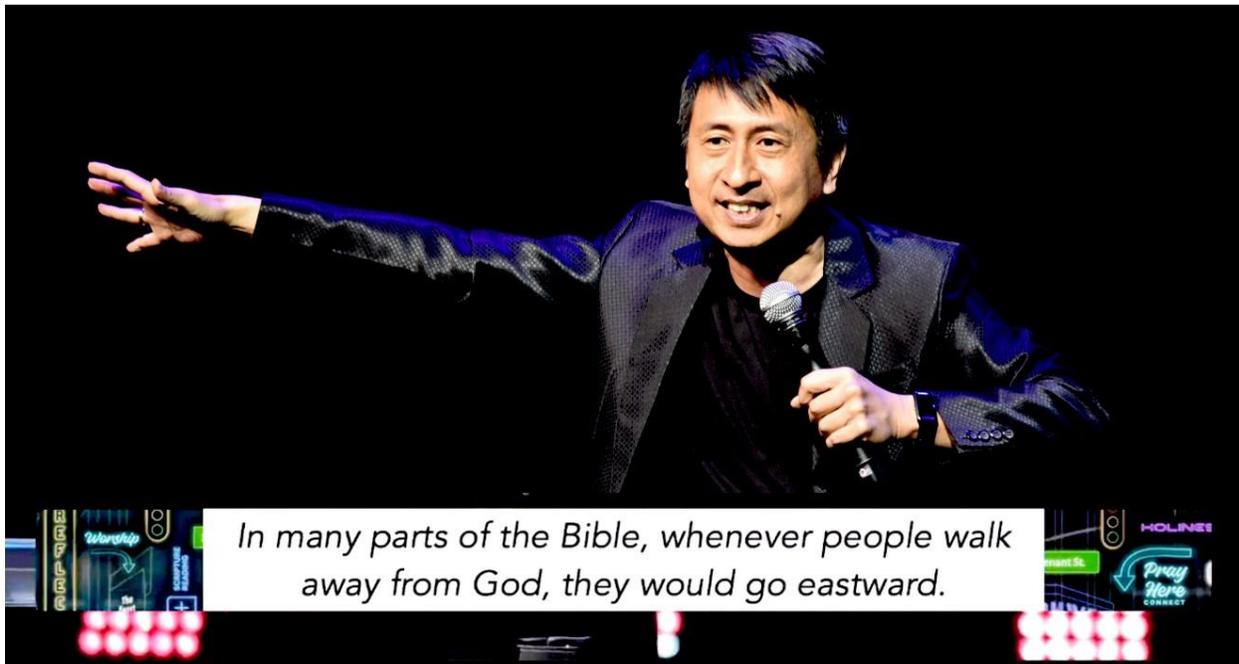
The Day of Atonement was God's reset button.

In the past two weeks, we were talking about an incident about Nadab and Abihu—where they polluted God's House. And what happened was that God had to do something because it was the worst impurity-- there were two dead persons in God's house.

Now, last week, we were telling you—we made it graphic—imagine that a neighbor, a drunk neighbor, entered your house, with muddy shoes, and his untrained dog pooped on your carpet. And every square inch of your house filled up with revolting stench. What do you do?

You do a general cleaning—a day of general cleaning.

This was what God did. He had to do a Day of Atonement. This was God's general cleaning day for His House and for Israel.



Design Patterns

Now, we shared a few talks ago, that if you read the Bible, you have to look for two words: *design patterns*-- that have been woven into Scripture.

You know, I read books by atheists—very popular atheists--and they would basically lambast the Bible and say, “How could there be, you know, these stories about God being angry?”

I was just reading those books, and I said, “Hello, this is ancient literature. You don’t read it on surface level. There are very deep symbols here. So, that’s what we are trying to teach you now: *Design Patterns*.”

One of the Design Patterns in the Bible is something very subtle: Where a person goes could actually be a Design Pattern and could symbolize something.

For example: Anywhere in the Bible, when a person departs from God, in the story, it says he is moving *east*.

It starts with Adam and Eve—when they fell.





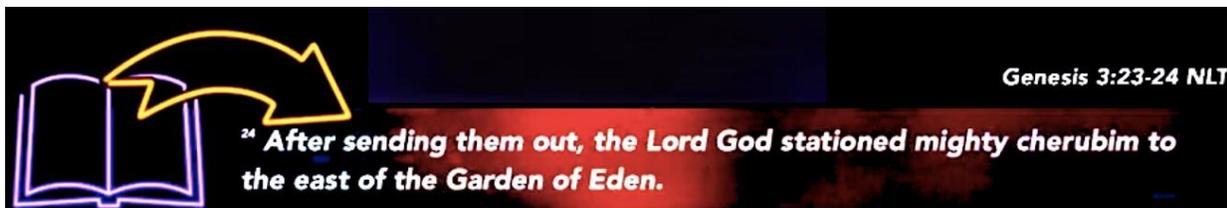
Let's read Genesis 3:23-24



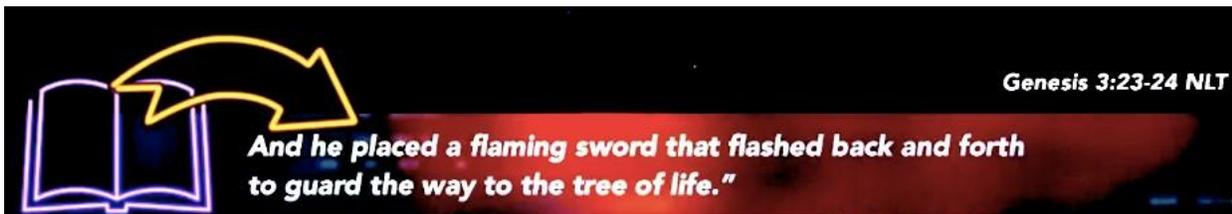
By the way, before I go on: "Bro. Bo, kumain lang sila ng mansanas, nagalit na si Lord? – They just ate apple, God already got angry?"

Hello? This is symbolic. And basically, what Adam and Eve were doing was they wanted to be God. That's it.

Let's continue:



"... to the *east* of the Garden of Eden."





Surprise, Surprise!

Okay. No.1: The next time *east* appears is when Cain, the son of Adam and Eve, killed his brother Abel.

Now, let's read Genesis 4:



“... in the land of Nod, *east* of Eden.”

Do you see a pattern?

I'll give you another example... Generations later, there was the Tower of Babel. And again, it was not just building a tower. It was all symbolic. Again, it was about revolting against God – wanting to be God.

Where did they build the Tower of Babel? Surprise, surprise! Genesis 11:



“...people migrated to the *east*...”



God at the Door

I'll give you a last example.

Have you heard the story of Sodom and Gomorrah?

These are two cities very wicked, very evil. And Lot, he left Abraham and he was going to live in Sodom and Gomorrah. And guess where he went?

To the *east*.

Genesis 13:11:



So, *east* was a symbol of exile. *East* was a symbol of people who: You don't want God anymore, you want to be God, you go out to the *east*.

Now, here's the thing: Do you know that the Temple of Jerusalem, which was patterned after the Tabernacle, in Mt Sinai and the journey to the desert, guess where the gate was?

The door of the Tabernacle—where was it facing? *East*.

Why? Because God is there, at the door, waiting for His people to come back home.

Everybody say, "Ahhh."



Atonement Ritual

So, when I talk about the Day of Atonement now, *east* will be very prominent. Why? Because that's the symbol.

And when you think about Rituals... How many of you like Rituals? (Only one raised hand).

I don't like Rituals, either. As a modern person, I like spontaneity. But you know what? I have grown so much in my appreciation of Rituals.

Rituals are prayers in the form of drama. Rituals are longings of the heart that are expressed through theater-- movements and gestures. Symbolic. They are powerful.

And so, on the Day of Atonement, this is how it is done:

Aaron, the High Priest, enters through the East Door. Just by walking through the East Door of the Tabernacle, what was that? It was a symbol—It was like Israel. Aaron as High Priest is representative of the people of Israel. The Israelites are returning from being banished, returning from exile. They are going through the cherubim, and the flaming sword, entering back into Eden.

That's the Ritual. It starts with the High Priest going through the East Door: "I'm coming back, Lord! I'm coming home! Yeah! God is welcoming me!"



Back to Ground Zero

Then, the High Priest goes to the very place where Adam and Eve sinned against God. He goes to Ground Zero – where also Nadab and Abihu made that scandalous, blasphemous sin, polluting the Tabernacle. He goes to that very place.

And the High Priest gets the blood of a bull. Blood for them is cleansing. For us, it's dirty, right? But it's cleansing for ancient people. He cleanses. And then what he does, he goes eastward again and he traces the steps of exile, of departing from the Lord. He is tracing those steps. But the entire time, he is sprinkling blood.

Why? I'll give you a fresher course. For them blood equals life. What he is doing is every step he takes, he's sprinkling blood.

He is saying, "God's life is defeating death. God's life is defeating death. God's life is defeating death."

Rituals are incredible. And if you understand rituals in this way, you're going to look at the Mass in a totally different way. You're going to look at it as theater. Very unique part of your going to look at it as prayers in the form of drama. They are so deep because they are all prayers. But they're prayers that are done in very beautiful symbols.

Now, after that, there's going to be another ritual—which I am not going to preach about. Audee will preach about that.

Before I leave the stage, I want you to understand that this is the God we worship. The God who puts the door of His heart facing the east.

Because He says, "You can start over."

The main man: Bro. Audee!



AUDEE VILLARAZA: Tell your neighbor: *You can start over.*
We continue with our study. We are on Genesis 16:7-10:

Leviticus 16:7-10 NIV
"Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

Leviticus 16:7-10 NIV
' He is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the Lord and the other for the scapegoat.

Leviticus 16:7-10 NIV
' Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the Lord and sacrifice it for a sin offering.

Leviticus 16:7-10 NIV
¹⁰ But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord....

Leviticus 16:7-10 NIV
to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat."



A Preview

Now, I want you to highlight that phrase *Aaron shall*. This phrase is repeated at least more than 20 times in this Chapter alone. So, the author is emphasizing to his readers that *Aaron shall*, or *he shall*. What the author is trying to say is that it's Aaron himself who will do this and nobody else. He has no help, no assistant, nobody there with him.

And what's interesting is that on the days leading to the Day of Atonement, the Tabernacle was always a very busy place. You know, there were priests, and Levites (members of the tribe of Levi, assisting priests), and people making their offerings. But on the Day of Atonement—check this out—the Tabernacle was empty—except for one man who was doing all the work.

Now, I'm trying to highlight this for somebody here today because this is an amazing preview of the perfect work of Atonement that would be done by Jesus on the Cross one day.

Think about it: There would be disciples together with Jesus, right? He would have his followers, yes? But isn't it true that it would only be Jesus, by Himself, who would do the actual work of salvation on that Cross?

One Man, and one Man alone—Jesus by Himself would stand in front of Death—for you and me.

I mean, I think that deserves a little credit, don't you think? Can we all clap for seven seconds and praise Jesus for standing in your behalf so that you can receive salvation?

The work of one Man, to save all of mankind.



Two Goats

But you know what? The Bible says this: there were two goats. And according to the Bible scholars, those two goats, although different in nature, they needed to be the same in terms of size, value, and color.

Now, I found this amazing when I was studying this: the first goat was meant to be a sin offering—so that God would forgive the sins of man.

So, the priest would kill the goat, slice it up, and then he would sprinkle the blood all over the Tabernacle. Which kind of make you think how bloody that place must had been. That place must had been filled with blood.

Now, the second goat was a bit different. The second goat was called the scapegoat. This is different because what the priest would do was instead of killing the second goat, he would actually place his both hands on the goat and then confess all the sins of the entire community onto that goat.

He won't kill that goat. Instead, he would open the door, and send out the goat into the wilderness, heading *eastward*--there's that term again: *eastward*—never to return.

So, the second goat is the scapegoat-- in the sense that it escapes Death, and the goat gets to start over.

Now, when I was reading this, I was like, “OMG!”

The first goat was Jesus—in the sense that Jesus was the Lamb that was slain to take away the sins of the world.

God of Chances

Remember that scene in that brutal movie, *The Passion of the Christ*? That was one of the most violent films we've ever watched. Remember that scene, *Scourging at the Pillar*, where they were tearing up the flesh of Jesus?

I wonder if that was the interpretation of the director, signifying that this was the first goat whose blood would be sprinkled all over the place, on that altar.

And if you think about it, the second goat was actually a representation of you and me. Why? Because you're the goat that was saved, the goat that could start over-- simply because the first goat was sacrificed. You were led into the wilderness. What is that called? That's called a *restart*.

You get to *start over*.

They used to say God is a God of second chances. But you know what I believe? I believe that God is not very good at counting. Why do I say that?

Because in my life alone, God did not give me only a second chance. He gave me a third chance, a fourth chance, a fifth chance, a sixth chance...

So, I believe that God is not a God of second chances. He's a God of *many* chances. And He'll continue to give you a chance. You want to know why? Because with every chance that God will give you, it's a chance for you to change and to become a better person. And I want you to believe that today. That you have the power to change. You have the power to do it. You *can*.

You have the power to *choose* to change. You can quit smoking today if you want to.. You can quit cheating if you want to. You can quit lying if you want to. The choice is yours. And God will continue to give you that choice again and again.

But make no mistake, my friend. A time will come when you will run out of chances.

That happened to the Pharaoh. Remember our study on *Exodus*? God gave the Pharaoh so many chances to repent. But what did he do? He refused to go to the Lord. And the Bible says that his heart was hardened.

So, I want you to think about that for a moment... Time will come when your heart will harden as well. So, make no mistake.

But God will continue to give you your chance to change. That's the Gospel for today. You can repent. You can change your ways.





You know what the Jews called the Day of Atonement? They called it the Sabbath of Sabbaths.

SABBATH OF SABBATHS

That was their main event. And they looked forward to that event—once a year. Why? Because they believed in the Sabbath of Sabbaths. That even if their external situation hadn't changed, they already believed that they were already dwelling in the Garden of Eden. They already believed that God had saved them.

I wonder if you and I can behave that way. That when you come before Jesus and when you receive Him in your life, I want you to behave like that.

You know that you can trust that God is already making a way for you to have your restart. You can start over. You can have a better chance.

The Day of Atonement was just once a year.

My question is: Was it enough that it happened just once a year? Is it enough that you guys get to go to church just once a week? Is it enough that you get to church only on your birthday? Or only on Holy Week? Is it enough that you get to go to church only on Christmas?

It's not enough that the Jews would hold the Day of Atonement only once a year. Because we know we have to come to the Lord again, and again, and again.



The Permanent Solution

Just like if you bandage your wound and not tend to the wound, what happens? Sometimes, you see that there's still an infection underneath that bandage. It's just a bandage solution. A *band aid* solution.

That's why you realize sometimes, God would cut off something in your life-- it's not to harm you but to cut away the spread of the infection. So, praise God for what He is cutting off in your life. God wants to cut the infection.

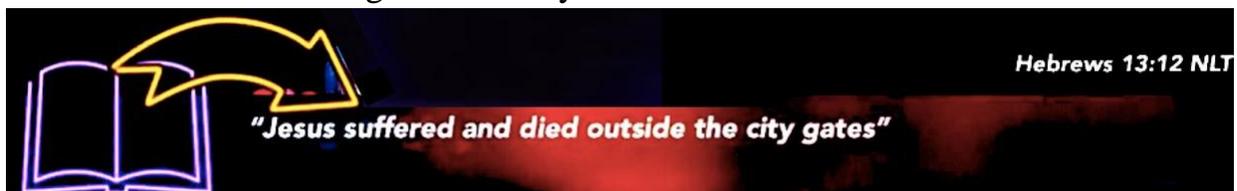
And I believe that's what He did—He had a permanent solution to cut away the spread of the infection and the solution is not a *thing*. It's a Person. His Name is Jesus.

The book of *Leviticus* is particular in saying that the two goats, although different in nature, different in how they looked like, they were considered just One Offering.

And when you go to the Gospels, when you read through the Gospels, they are very careful in saying that actually, the two goats were both Jesus.

The first goat was Jesus in the sense that He was slain for the sins of humanity.

But the second goat was also Jesus because Jesus was the scapegoat when they led Him outside to be slaughtered. It says in Hebrews 13:12:



So, the author was making this assumption that the readers could find that connection that Jesus was the second goat.

A Perfect Sacrifice

To this day, Jesus is the scapegoat. He's that spiritual garbage that takes away the sins of man.

So, it means that when you come to Jesus, He is taking away your sins from you. And that's really what it is. Jesus is the scapegoat. Jesus would let all our sins die with Him.

And if you're not convinced, Hebrews 9:12-14 says:



Hebrews 9:12-14 NIV
"With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever.

Hebrews 9:12-14 NIV
¹³ Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity.

Hebrews 9:12-14 NIV
For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Thank You, Jesus.

Some of you might be thinking: "But you know, Bro. Audee, ang tanda ko na.—I'm already old. Can I start over? My restart had already passed me up. I'm senior, I'm in my exit season. I've had my habits already in place. Or, I've been working for that same company for 35 years. It's hard to start over."

But I want to close with a story that I borrowed from a very good friend, George Gabriel.

A Restart Story

Not too long ago, George Gabriel was here leading us to Worship, preaching the Word of the Lord.

When you're at a certain age—at the age of 40—some of us think that 40 is the half-way point of life, in the sense that the average senior age of a Filipino is 71 years old. At the age of 40, that's more or less you're over the half point of your life. At the age of 40, some of us have already grown roots—we've gotten our systems down.

But at the age of 40, you know what George did? God called Him to a different place—to migrate to Australia. So, George uprooted his family -- his wife Dinah and son Anton--they had only one child back then. *At right*, picture grabbed from his Facebook: George, Dinah, Anton, and Andrea.

When you ask him was migrating hard?

He'd say, "Absolutely!"

"Was it difficult?"

"You bet."

After four months, I called up George and I asked him, "How are things? Do you have work already?"

You know, for some reason George could not find a job. But there was this distinct feeling-- and I remember it today-- that when I was talking with George, I was the one panicking for him. I was the one stressed out. I was the one anxious.

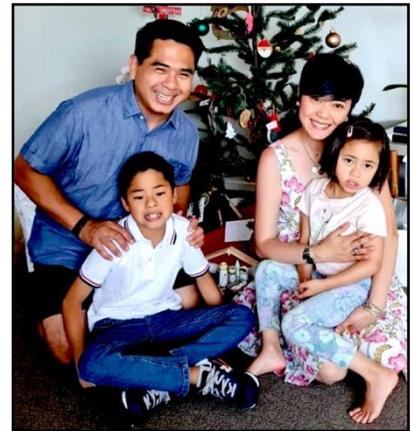
I asked, "Aren't you scared that you don't have work? It's been four months... and you guys are alone there."

But for some reason, there was this deep sense of calm in George that I could not understand-- until a few weeks later, George finally landed a job. You know the job that he landed?

I'll tell you the background of George first...

Before he left for Australia, George was working for the Shepherd's Voice Radio and Television (SVRTV) Foundation. He was the creative director for the entire Light of Jesus Family. He was the Worship director-- he directed all events such as the Kerygma Conference (now called Feast Conference).

George was working in a Ministry. You know the job he landed in Australia? Somebody hired him as Ministry consultant for small gatherings in Australia.





Start from the Cross

You know what I realized? The reason migrating was not scary for George was he was not starting from scratch. He was actually starting from experience. He was not starting from *nothing*. He was starting from *something*.

So, what is my point? My point is this: You're not starting from nothing. When you start over, I want you to look at the Cross right now. The Cross is the finished work of Jesus.

The world likes to say: Finish what you started.

But today, Jesus says to you: Start from the work that I finished. It is finished. The finished work of Jesus is our starting point. His finished line is our starting point.

So, guess what? You're not starting from *defeat*. You're starting from *victory*! You're coming from the finished work of Jesus. Yes, Lord!

So, you can start again—with Jesus. Come before the Lord and ask Him:

*Jesus, cleanse me. Forgive me.
Renew me. Make me brand-new.
I'm ready for a restart.
In Your Name. Amen.*





MERCY MINISTRIES

So, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

—Matthew 7:12, Luke 6:31

ANAWIM HOME for ABANDONED ELDERLY PART 1

Counting My Blessings

By ANA MARIA D. NAVAL



I'M ANA. I've been through life's ups and downs. I've survived as I've received from our good God a number of blessings which, also by His grace, I've been able to pay forward to those in dire need— as I was before.

This is my story.

I'm one of five children growing in a family I'd call dysfunctional— to say the least. That's because my mother was a battered wife.

But God has not abandoned us, showering us instead with blessings after blessings.

Blessing No. 1. My very first blessing was my mother was able to find relief for us. She consulted a priest-- I forgot his name-- who helped my mother meet Bro. Bo Sanchez, founder of the Light of Jesus Family (LOJ) and its faith gathering called The Feast.

Knowing our ordeal, Bro. Bo kindly extended to us the benefits of LOJ's Mercy Ministries.

Promptly, he arranged that we live in Anawim-- Home for Abandoned Elderly -- which also provides shelter for other indigents should the need arise.



Trials and Triumphs

We started living in Anawim in 1995 and we stayed there for almost five years.

Here is an old photo taken in 1996 or 1997 when volunteers of The Feast and Fr. Steve Tynan (*back row, in blue shirt*), LOJ's spiritual adviser, visited Anawim with Bro. Bo (*back row, extreme right*). My mother is the one wearing white beside my brother Gilbert, (*in striped yellow*). I am that little girl, *front row, in pink*.



But, tried as she must, my mother could not adjust to life in a sheltered home. She decided to look for a job so we could move and live on our own.

Blessing No. 2. So, second blessing, Mom found a job as a caretaker in a resort. At the same time, she worked part-time as a house cleaner for us to be able to survive day by day.

Blessing No. 3. Third blessing, Mom was able to send us to school.

But yes, we've not been spared from life's *downs*.

Alas, when I was in my first year of high school, my mother got sick and she had to be confined in hospital. She could no longer afford to send us kids to school. So, again, she asked Bro. Bo for help.

Blessing No. 4. Again, Bro. Bo came to our rescue. He arranged that I stay in Anawim together with my brother Albert, and Anawim also hired him as a maintenance worker.

Here we are in 2014, *from left:* Bro. Bo; yours truly; my brother's daughter Angelica; and my brother, Kuya Albert.



Blessing No. 5. Anawim's executive director, Bro. Caloy Dimson, knowing Mom could no longer afford to send me to school, introduced me to Pag-asa ng Pamilya, established by Bro. Reylando Ortega to provide scholarships for out-of-school youth.

So, as a fifth blessing, I became a Pag-asa scholar and I was able to go on to second year high school.

Blessing No. 6. I stayed in Anawim while I was studying in high school-- at San Isidro National High School. I still stayed in Anawim up to my college days at the University of Rizal System, Rodriguez Campus, where I finally earned a degree as Bachelor of Science in Social Work. Sixth blessing!

Blessing No. 7. After I graduated, as seventh blessing, I became a social worker for our Jeremiah Foundation for abused girls. I was happy as I felt I'd begun "paying forward" the many blessings I've received.



But still, I needed more experience as a social worker. After one year and six months at Jeremiah, I decided to resign and try a job outside the LOJ Community.

Blessing No. 8. I got a good enough job not only to help me improve my social work profession. I also got enough income to be able to help provide for our family. I was even able to extend help to my sister for her children's needs— until I had my own family.

Blessing No. 9. I met and married Arvin Naval and I got pregnant last year, 2022.

Problem: I could not mix being a wife and mother with my very demanding job. So, I was forced to resign.

Blessing No. 10. Then, I found out from one of Jeremiah's staff that they needed a part-time social worker. So, tenth blessing, I started working for Jeremiah again.

Blessing No. 11. With my income, I've been able to help hubby Arvin to finish the construction of our house.



Blessing No. 12. I've also been able to extend support to my Mom and sibs.

Yes, it's been a roller-coaster life. But as you can see, I'm counting the blessings, more than the challenges.

What I love now is, yes, I am continuing to pay forward those blessings to the girls of Jeremiah.

And what I am deeply grateful for is this steadfast *faith* which I've received since at LOJ and its Mercy Ministries I've found our Lord Jesus-- or by His amazing grace, He has found me!

All Glory to God!



FAMILY

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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is a shelter for girls particularly victims of sexual abuse.

Grace To Be Born is a halfway home for pregnant women in crisis.



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gives scholarships to poor students.



Jesus Christ Cares for Cancer

provides financial assistance and pastoral care for indigent cancer patients.

The Light of Jesus Pastoral Care Center ministers to those who are emotionally and spiritually wounded.



H.A.I.L. MARY is acronym for Healthcare Assistance for Indigents and Lepers of Mary, adopting the Blessed Mother as the patroness of its mission to eradicate leprosy in Abra within 8–10 years.



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

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LIGHT OF JESUS FAMILY
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**FAMILY
ONLINE
NEWSMAGAZINE**

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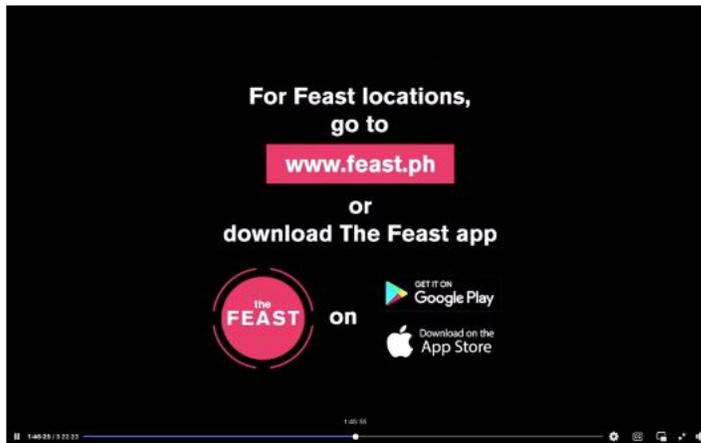
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Go and make disciples of all men.

— Matthew 28:19

