



***Don't Make 2025 Resolutions***

BY the time you're reading this, you may be just about done with your Christmas parties and you're about to move to 2025-- and thinking about your New Year Resolutions.

Do you still make them? Or have you given up on making resolutions-- because they don't get fulfilled anyway?

Okay. This is my gift to you:

Don't make Resolutions. Make Great Decisions.

I discussed this in my recent podcast *Full Tank*:

Making great decisions is so crucial if you want to live a great life. The quality of your life is determined by the quality of your decisions-- or the resolutions you're making for 2025.

My nephew Joseph, who's a chef, said good food boils down to good ingredients, the style the chef will use, his creativity. But the most important is how fresh the vegetables, the spices are, how fresh the meat is.

I agree. In the same way, I believe that your life, it boils down to ingredients. And the ingredients are your decisions. The decisions you make every day: Where will you live? How do you respond in the midst of a stressful situation? What job will you take?

And also, by those little ingredients of our life: How will you spend your life today? Will you exercise? What show will you watch? How many minutes will you scroll social media?

In John 18:36, Jesus says that His Kingdom is not of this world.

The root word of *kingdom* is *king*. Jesus is King.

Questions: Is your life part of His Kingdom? And do you report to the king named Jesus?

If so, your decisions you submit to Him.

You tell Him: *"Lord, I want to follow You in all my decisions-- because You're my King now."*

But you need not ask daily: "Lord, what dress or shirt will I wear today?"

You make a decision and say: "What kind of clothes will give glory to God?"

And those are the clothes you buy.

I've made decisions like pray and read Scripture, exercise every day-- because those are what's going to help me love God, serve God. Love my wife, care for her. Love my kids, spend time with them. Give to those in need generously. Serve God in Ministry.

I know those decisions are of the Lord. I know those decisions will glorify God.

I'm obeying God my King.

My Friend, I invite you to come before the Lord and allow Him to empower you and to bless you. Oh, follow Jesus, and make your decisions under the King of your life.

*Lord, Thank You for this beautiful moment where we can just report to our King, submit our decisions to Him. We pray for Your anointing because we want to follow You all the days of our life. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

May your dreams come true,

**Bo Sanchez**

## *Not Just Merry... Really Rejoicing!*

“If there is one word that would tie up all our Liturgical Readings for today, it would be *Rejoice*.”

Thus Rev. Fr. Cris Cellan began his Homily during our Grand Christmas Feast last Sunday (December 15, 2024).

All Readings, including the Gospel, focused on one best reason for us to rejoice: *Emmanuel-- God is with us, page 3*.



Bro. Bo Sanchez also dwells on what really can make us happy. It depends on how we make our decisions-- the theme of his Special Talk, *page 1*.

Bro. Alvin Barcelona (*right*) introducing the Special Talk, points out not what makes us happy but what makes us fall into *SAD*-- acronym for *Seasonal Affective Disorder, page 14*.



Bro. Audee Villaraza says key to rejoicing is avoiding distractions to our journey to following the Lord, *page 27*.

Bro. Didoy Lubaton says we become happy when our giving is not a *transaction* but a *transformation, page 9*.



Bro. John Ben Rodriguez and Bro. JC Libiran close the Grand Christmas Feast waving Hi-5s to tell everyone to rejoice because The Feast resumes on January 5, 2025!, *page 30*.



Yes, it's the season of rejoicing. Read on and learn how to really rejoice!

We greet you not *Merry Christmas*.

We greet you *Christmas Rejoicing!*

Because Jesus' birthday means *God is with us*.

All for God's Glory,

**Randy Borromeo**  
Media Ministry  
Executive Director





**FLASHBACK!**

DECEMBER 15, 2024

**GRAND CHRISTMAS FEAST**

## Holy Mass



**Lighting the Candle of Joy**  
*Father, at the height of our Advent walk,  
we relight the Candles of Hope and Peace,  
and we light the Candle of Joy.  
Grant us the courage to experience joy  
in the hope of the Savior's coming.  
Joy in the face of apathy, joy in the face of sorrow,  
joy in the face of uncertainty  
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

## Homily

**REV. FR. CRIS CELLAN, SSP**  
on the Gospel Luke 3:10-18

Excerpts:

If there is one word that would tie up all our Liturgical Readings for today, it would be *Rejoice*.

As you have seen, we have lighted the Third Candle -- the Candle of Joy. Because we are now on the Third Sunday of our 40-day penitential journey. Tonight, we are going to start our *Simbang Gabi (Midnight Mass)*, or *Misa De Gallo* to journey with the Blessed Virgin Mary as we worthily welcome the Lord this Christmas.

As we slow down and pause for a while from our busy schedules, we are reminded to take stock of our lives, to reflect, and to meditate. We should not forget that the primary theme of the Advent season is our expectant joy and hope for the coming of the Lord.

The color of the candle is **pink** or **rose** to remind us that our Savior is coming. He has come. He's going to come. He comes every day in our lives.

Pope Benedict the 16th once said that the Liturgy of this Sunday, known as *Gaudete* (Latin for *Rejoice*) Sunday, is a special invitation to be joyful, to a vigilance that is happy.

The FEAST FAMILY December 22, 2024 3

### **Three Readings on *Rejoice!***

I like that-- a vigilance that is happy. Still, we are rooted in our Advent.

Take note that during the first two Sundays of our Advent preparation, we were hearing more and more about the eschaton (the final event in the Divine Plan), the Parousia (Greek word for *coming* or a *presence*), the apocalypse (*revelation*, forecasting the ultimate destiny of the world), and the end times, the Second Coming of Christ. Not to scare us. But they are actually messages of hope and consolation that the time of our liberation has come.

Take note that when these Gospels were written, the early Christian community was being persecuted. So, they were looking forward to that moment of liberation when, finally, Jesus is going to come again so that they (we) can come home.

After all, Advent is also a homecoming. But the Third Week and the Fourth Week of Advent are more festive, more joyful. Why?

Because the *Simbang Gabi* has begun. This time around, it is an intense reflection of the coming of our Savior in our lives, and for humanity.

**That one word that binds all our Liturgical Readings for today is *Rejoice*.**

**First:** Our First Reading from the book of the Prophet Zephaniah challenges us to ask: "Why do we rejoice?"

The book of the Prophet Zephaniah points out that the Israelites were guilty of idolatry. They were guilty of lack of trust in God. They were guilty of pride and rebellious spirit.

Prophet Zephaniah tells them: "Look, you had been unfaithful to the Lord. But this time around, there will be a moment of a general amnesty. You will be forgiven. You need to rejoice because you have been forgiven."



#### **First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18**

*14 Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! 15 The Lord has removed the judgment against you, he has turned away your enemies; the King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst, you have no further misfortune to fear. 16 On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem: Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged! 17 The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior; he will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, he will sing joyfully because of you, 18 as one sings at festivals.*

## God Is Among Us

Last Saturday, I conducted a *Kumpisalang Bayan* (Community Confession) in our parish, Our Lady of Sorrows.

I invited seven priests to join me in hearing the confessions of our parishioners. But lo and behold, few came for confession.

One greeter asked, "Father, why is it that only a few went to Confession but many took the Communion?"

I answered, "Maybe, they never sinned. So, they did not need to go to Confession."

The call of John the Baptist was to prepare the way of the Lord and make straight His paths. We need to rejoice because we have been forgiven. We have been given a fresh start.

**Second Reading on *Rejoice!*:** In our Responsorial Psalm, we respond, "Cry out with joy and gladness for among you is the Great and the Holy One of Israel."

The core message of the Mystery of Incarnation is that God is not watching us from a distance. He came down among us, born of the Virgin Mary, and He bent to tell us that we are not alone.



### Responsorial Psalm (Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6)

**R: Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.**

*2 God indeed is my savior; I am confident and unafraid. My strength and my courage is the Lord, and he has been my savior. 3 With joy you will draw water at the fountain of salvation. (R)*

*4 Give thanks to the Lord, acclaim his name; among the nations make known his deeds, proclaim how exalted is his name. (R)*

*5 Sing praise to the Lord for his glorious achievement; let this be known throughout all the earth. 6 Shout with exultation, O city of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel! (R)*



## Reconciling Spirit

### Third Reading on *Rejoice!*:

From the Second Reading, the Letter of Paul to the Philippians.

It was quite funny-- the original context of why St. Paul, who was imprisoned, was writing this particular letter and he was asking the intended persons to *Rejoice!* He was directing his letter to two prominent women in the community of Macedonia.

They were prominent in a sense that they were active collaborators of St. Paul. But those two had a misunderstanding. Their names were Euodia and Syntyche.

St. Paul was like telling, in effect, "Life is too short. Don't spend it in needless conflicts. Concentrate your energies in what really matters."

Let go of all those petty quarrels. Concentrate on what is truly important. Be magnanimous and understanding.

Be *kind* more than being *right*. It helps to be always kind. You need to *rejoice* because your focus on one thing that is truly important.

Sadly, jealousy and competition happen even among church servants.

When I was newly ordained as a parish priest, I already received a text message *prior* to my being transferred to the parish. I didn't know how my number was known.

The message said: "Father Cris, we learned that you will be our new parish priest. We hope that you won't be a snob and grumpy. Be friends with us, your parishioners-- so we'll understand each other."

I hadn't even started my duty as a parish priest, I was already receiving threats. I wanted to back out.

Thankfully, The Feast is here. The Feasters are always happy. I hope that if ever misunderstandings happen, it is for the service of the Lord.

At the end of the day, we have a reconciling spirit.



### Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

*4 Brothers and sisters: Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! 5 Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. 6 Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. 7 Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.(R)*

## New Way of Life

The Gospel Reading is the context. It's the concrete and practical application what all we need to do.

The Gospel tells us you need to adopt a new way of life just like our Advent preparation. It is a renewal in spirit and the mind for the coming of the Lord. It calls for repentance-- which is not just being sorry for your sins but a call for interior conversion that would demand a moral behavior which is concretized in acts of charity and acts of love.

The Gospel concretely says whoever has two cloaks, share some of it. If you're a policeman, do not extort. If you're a tax collector, charge the right amount. Learn to share your resources, time and again.

I remember Fr. Jerry Orbos. He said that every Christmas, make it a habit to look at your closets. If you see clothes that are still inside a plastic bag, it only means one thing: you don't need it. Share it with others. Accept the truth that you'll never get back to medium size again. You're now an extra-large size.

Normally, our churches are full from December 16-18, the first three days of *Simbang Gabi*. After a while, the number of attendees lessens.

From December 22-24, it'll be back to full house again. We would normally complete the *Simbang Gabi* but we would always ask the Lord to grant us something in return.

Yes, the Lord will grant your petition. But He also says: "How can I give you something when you are already full of yourself?"

Empty yourselves. Declutter from unforgiveness and bitterness. Prepare the way of the Lord.

Always remember that if Jesus, Mary, and Joseph would knock at the door of your heart, will they find a place to stay there?

That should be the primary question in our Advent preparation in worthily welcoming the Lord this Christmas.



# Welcome!

## BRO. DIDOY LUBATON:

Good Morning , Feast Family! All the grateful, rejoicing people in the house, make some noise for the Lord. Let's applaud the Lord.

Welcome to the last PICC Feast for the year.

Thank you, Fr. Cris Cellan, parish priest of Our Lady of Sorrows, where Feast PICC belongs. We're so grateful we have

his full support , and also the support of all the servants. The Feast cannot stand without all the people in the kitchen. So, let's give a big hand to all our servants in the house. Thank you, for your love and humility.



## Announcements

**EXPERIENCE GOD'S MERCY**  
*The Sacrament of Confession* is available today.  
11AM - 1PM  
2F Hall Lobby

*Your daily date with God.*  
Know how deep God's love for you is through our prayer devotionals.  
Buy your copies now at [feastbooks.ph](http://feastbooks.ph)

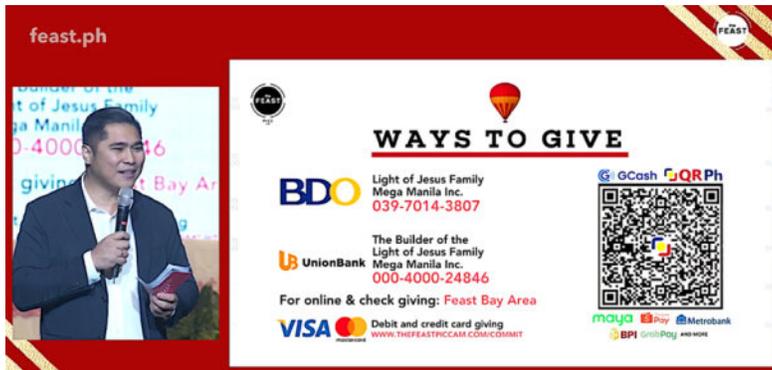
**HELP US HAVE A BETTER FEAST FOR YOU**  
Scan the QR code to give us the gift of feedback  
*Thank you!*  
*May you and your loved ones have a most blessed Christmas and a beautiful 2025!*

**December 15**  
VENUE: PICC Plenary Hall  
Time: 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM  
**GRAND CHRISTMAS FEAST**

**December 22 & 29**  
**NO FEAST**  
WE WILL RESUME ON JANUARY 5, 2025

# Love Offering

I'd like to invite you to our Love Offering.



We have two ways to give.

The white envelope is for the usual offering.

There are those called by the Lord to give a sacrificial offering.

Once in a while, or even once a year, we offer this **Red** envelope.

*Red* means *blood*-- so, it's painful because your Offering is over and above and beyond what you usually give.

In our Feast and in our Feast Family, we want to give not because it's just a *transaction*. We give because we believe that there's an ongoing *transformation* in you and with the people around you.

I remember when I was training as a doctor in one of the big hospitals in Makati. During the Christmas season, there are company-wide parties but there are also department parties -- there's no budget for those. Members just give contributions.

I remember we were a group of doctors, nurses, staff in our department and we said, "Let's have a department party. Let's just have fun together."

And they listed on the screen all our names and our designations or positions and opposite each name are the words *paid* plus the amount each one paid.

It was funny and at the same time embarrassing because we would know who are the doctors, or the nurses, or nursing aides. And we would see that the doctors who have the highest salary are the ones late in paying.

So, even as we were already nearing the day of the event, the organizers could not prepare for it because they still didn't have the payments.



## Give It Full

Then, we saw-- let's just call her Ate Mitch-- our nursing aide. Nursing aides are the ones changing the beddings, cleaning our Mercy homes, changing diapers, sort of the dirty work.

The organizers announced that Ate Mitch paid not only P1K, not just P2K-- but P3K. When we heard that, each of the doctors and nurses promptly shelled out not only P1K, not only P2K, but P3.45 and more.

What I'm trying to say, again, that it wasn't just a sign of transaction. We don't want to get things paid here. We want transformation.

We give because No. 1: We believe that we do not own anything and everything comes from the Lord. And we give even sacrificially. Why?

Because since we know that everything belongs to God, we know that everything that we need will be given to us by the Lord.

Your sacrifice shows how much you trust and how well you surrender to His will -- in perfect time and perfect way.

This is my invitation: *Move from transaction toward transformation.*

A giving Feast is a loving Feast. A giving church is a sign of a transforming church. I do hope that you heed the call today, just like Ate Mitch did. God doesn't look at the number. He looks at your heart how much transformation is there. Give it full-- as best as we can. And we believe it will come back to us more -- *siksik, liglig, at umaapaw. Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full-- pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, turning over, poured into your lap.-- Luke 6:36 NLT* <https://www.biblegateway.com>

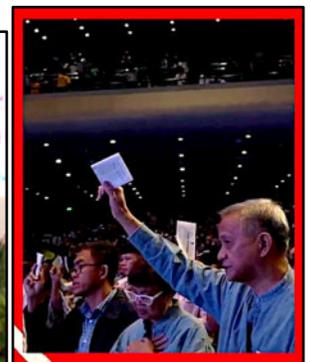
This is the last time to give this year and thank you for your generosity in the past months. And as we end here, this way, let's make sure that we give to God all the best that we can.

Lift your Love Offerings to the Lord, and say this with me:

*Dear God, Thank You for blessing me. Thank You for Your faithfulness. I give this to You with so much faith as well. Thanking You for what you've given to me, for what You continually giving me, and what You will provide faithfully in the future. Bless me. Bless my family. And bless our Feast. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.*

Give to the Lord joyfully.

Everybody, Maligayang Pasko po. Merry Christmas.



# Worship!

**SIS. MHADZ PAMAONG:**

Good Morning! Merry Christmas!

Come on, turn to the person beside you  
and just greet him or her with a smile:

“Merry, Merry Christmas!”

Who’s ready to rejoice and celebrate  
with us today?

This morning, we’re going to sing about  
the joy and the true reason for the season  
and the joy that comes only from Him--  
and because of Him.

So, if you’re ready, sing with us:



## Glory!

The Bible says: <sup>6</sup> *For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor,<sup>[a]</sup> Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

--Isaiah 9:6 [https://www.biblegateway.com/passage NLT](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/NLT)

Brothers and Sisters, this truth says that God desires to be near to us. And He sent His only Son Jesus to the world to become our Savior.

So, this morning, I invite you to sing and glorify the Lord through this song and through our lives.

And let us be reminded of His promise and the truth of His Words: That He is always with us.

So, we sing:



*Magnify*

Feast Worship

<https://www.feastworship.com>

## NOVENA TO GOD'S LOVE DECLARATION OF ABUNDANCE

### **BRO. ALVIN BARCELONA:**

Welcome to our Christmas Grand Feast!

This is our last Feast for 2024. We'll see each other again on January 5, 2025.

As we give to you our special talk for this Christmas Grand Feast, let's all pray our favorite prayer:



**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 that I become more like Jesus everyday.**

**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.**



# Special Talk

## INTRODUCTION

### **BRO. ALVIN BARCELONA:**

Research says that not all are happy during Christmas. Perhaps because some feel pressured to give gifts. To some, they need to think of what food to put on the table for the Noche Buena.

Indeed, it can be stressful.



What is Christmas to you?

It has been said that Christmas has three stages with Santa Claus.

On the first stage, we are excited because we all believe in Santa Claus.



On the second stage, we feel pressured because we have become the Santa already -- because we feel the need to give gifts.



On the third stage, you now look like Santa -- you're already old, stressed.

In other countries, Christmas is a *SAD* season. *SAD* is an acronym for *Seasonal Affective Disorder*. This is true in countries that are cold-- because they have snow-- and gloomy because the nights are longer than the days. When you're alone in a cold and gloomy place, it can really be depressing.

But in the Philippines, we don't have snow. We set up bright Christmas lights-- that's why in January we have higher electric bills☺.

But how come during the Christmas season, many of us experience *SAD* or *Seasonal Affective Disorder*?

## Why *SAD*?

Here are some observations:

- **Christmas heightens your expectations.**

Especially in the Philippines-- because we have a long Christmas season.

In September, we're already excited for Jose Mari Chan to come out (in the media with his Christmas songs). Actually, he's completely Christmas: Jose (Joseph), Mari (Mary), and Chan (sounds *tiyan* in Tagalog or *tummy* where Jesus is being conceived)☺

But they say the Christmas season heightens your expectations. Once Christmas season steps in, we expect to have more money and more food. If we don't, we feel miserable.

We are used to family members not being around at all times. But when Christmas comes, we feel the need to be complete. If the family is incomplete, we feel sad.

In addition, the hectic schedule of successive parties and heavy traffic just makes the season worse.

And since we eat more and sleep less, our health also suffers.

- **Merry, Happy**

It seems that we are more concerned with the less essential and we're less busy with what's truly essential.

I love it when we play with words. Say: *Christmas*.

If you remove *Christ*, what's left is just *mas*. So, you become focused on other things, not on the birthday celebrator.

The word *Christmas* begins with *Christ*. He is the birthday celebrator but more often than not, He is not being celebrated...

In our school (Barcelona Academy) we teach children that the most important greeting during Christmas is "Happy Birthday, Jesus."



- Merry *Christmas!*

In other countries like the United States, the *Merry Christmas* greeting has been prohibited especially in government offices because they deem that it's promoting a religion of Christianity that tends to discriminate other religions that are non-Christian.

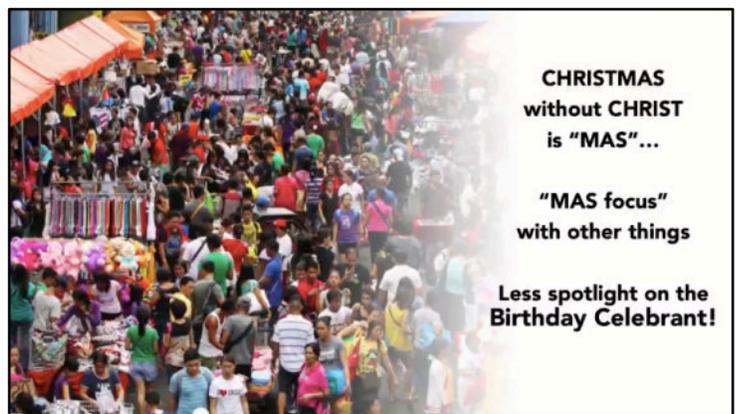
To be safe, they say, "Happy Holidays!" or "Season's Greetings!"

It's ridiculous if you take away the reason for the celebration.

That's why, I want us to pronounce *Merry Christmas* as Merry*Christmas*.

We cannot remove *Christ* in Christmas.

That's why I am happy with this meme:



Meanwhile, an advertisement says: "We hope to have less *Ho-hos!* and more *Hallelujahs!* every Christmas."

Of course, Santa Claus is also a saint. He is Saint Nicholas.

But he's not the reason for Christmas.



The reason for the season is Jesus.

- **The Main Star**

On the first Christmas, the angels sang:

“Glory to God in the highest;  
and on earth peace to men of good will.”

(Luke 2:7 DRB/CPDV)



*“Glory to God in the highest and on earth  
peace to men of good will.”*

It was a holy night, a peaceful night. A far cry from how we do Christmas today -- although it's not exactly a bad thing.

That's why in our family, during Noche Buena, we put an image of Jesus in the center of our table.

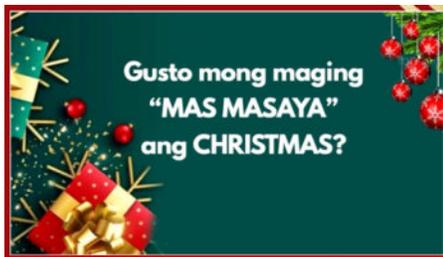
I suggest you put His image up in your house. It'll serve as a reminder for us, especially for the kids, that the reason for the season is Jesus.

The food for Christmas is Jesus. After all, He was born in a manger where horses or cattle eat from.

Jesus is the main star of Christmas.

It should continue to be a season of peace, joy, and love.

That's why if you want your Christmas more merry don't forget **Christ** on Christmas.



*He is Christmas.*

## God Is with Us

Our higher expectations may not come. But Christ already came a long time ago and He has always been with us since then.

So, those who are sad because they don't have their daddy or mommy or loved ones with them... Wait...

Yes, family is important. But more than just a family celebration Christmas is a celebration of Jesus. The food and the money you receive this Christmas are blessings-- but they are limited.

But when you focus on Jesus, He is limitless. The Christmas season will end but Jesus remains.

If Christ is in your Christmas, there will be more joy, more peace, and more love.

As we continue our special Grand Feast, may I just remind you that Christmas is about the Virgin who conceived and gave birth to a Son called *Emmanuel*-- God is with us. *This* is Christmas. A blessed Christmas and a hopeful New Year to all of us!



Kapag si CHRIST ang nasa CHRISTMAS mo...

MAS may JOY,  
MAS may PEACE,  
MAS may HOPE,  
MAS may LOVE!



# Special Talk

**BRO. BO SANCHEZ:**

Give Him praise, Everybody! Worship Him, Everyone!

I want you to put  
your arms around  
somebody beside you.  
Tell that person,  
"God is with us."

Let's extend our  
hands towards the Word:

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



I want you to believe that Jesus is here and He wants to speak to us.

Let's read together:

**"So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."**

**(Luke 2:6-7 NKJV)**

Put your hand over your chest and say:

*"Jesus, unpack to me the events  
of the past so that I may receive light  
for the present and the future.*

*You are with me.*

*I pray that right now, my heart becomes the manger, my life becomes Bethlehem.  
Be born into my mess. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

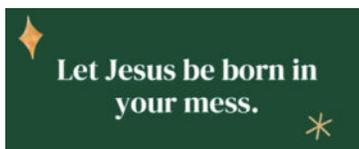
One more time:

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

Give Him praise and worship.

Tell somebody beside you:

"Let Jesus be born in your mess."





## Christmas Pageant

When I was a kid, I was part of a Christmas pageant in school. I was really tiny.

How many of you were chosen to be Mary? How many of you were chosen to be Joseph? How many of you were chosen to be part of the Three Kings? How many of you were the sheep and the whole time you were on your knees?

In a Christmas pageant in class, it's usually the prettiest girl that is chosen for Mary.

I was chosen to be Joseph.

You know why they chose me to play Joseph?

There were only two boys in the class and the other one was huge and he was the bully of the class. They could not make him Joseph. So, they had to choose me. *He* got the role of the innkeeper.

Two memorable experiences from that play:

1. I was able to hold the hand of the prettiest girl in class because I was Joseph and she was Mary. While they were singing the song, I was holding her hand and I was so happy.
2. We knocked on the inn and then the door -- made of cartolina and brown paint-- was opened. The guy who got the role as the innkeeper was in character. He was a bully. He was holding a broom and he hit me on the head.

He said, "Shoo! Go away, go away!"

I was there and I was trying to protect Mary from this guy who was bullying me.

That's some people think how the Christmas story happened.





## The True Story

Every year, I go to Israel and I go to Bethlehem > to lead pilgrimages.

*Below* is the picture of the church. Inside it was where Jesus was born.

But every time I'm there, there would be Christian Arabs who would come up to me and say, "Brother Bo, your Christmas story is wrong. We are from here. My family has been living here for centuries. Our great, great, great grandfather passed the story to us: "We-- my ancestors-- would never reject Mary and Joseph! Impossible. We welcomed them."

But in my mind, that's what the Bible says. So, I dug deep. Do you know what I found out? They were telling the truth. The Greek word for *inn* is *kataluma*.

We imagine the inn to be a 28-bedroom hotel or motel. But Bethlehem was a barrio or a provincial village.

*Kataluma* is more accurately translated as a *guest room*. So, you've got a private house and then they have a guest room.

There was no more room in the guest room.



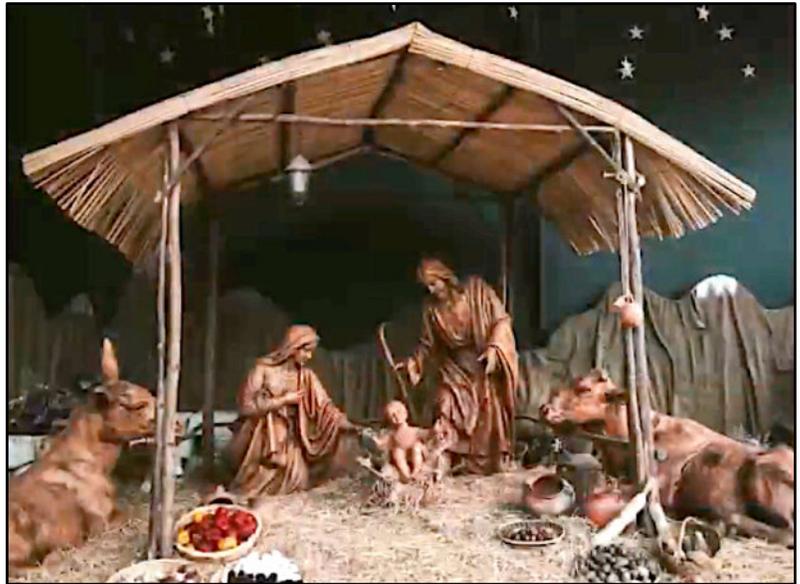
**Inn = Kataluma**

**Kataluma = Guest Room**



## The *Belen*

My wife collects *belens* (nativity settings).  
Most of the *belens* look like this:



The *belen* is in a stable.  
The reason we think of the *belen* as a stable is we're thinking there was no room in the inn.

So, the innkeeper said, "You're pregnant. You're going to give birth. There's a stable for the animals. It's about 80 meters away down the road. Go there."

That's where Jesus would be born.

Think of your *nipa* hut in the province. Underneath the bamboo slats are chickens, the goat, and the pig.

We live with our animals and so did the people in Bethlehem. The people there had a house usually attached to a cave. There was a guest room and that was the best room. But at the time, it was full because there was a census (so people from other towns, like Mary and Joseph, were obliged to go back to their hometown to be registered).

There were so many people in Bethlehem. When Joseph and Mary came, there was no room in the guest room. They had to stay in the living room.

We think of a stable because of the word *manger*. *Manger* is the food box of animals.

That's where Jesus was placed.

Imagine a typical family who lived with their animals and there was a manger in the living room.

Those Christian Arabs were telling me,  
"We welcomed Mary. When Mary gave birth, there were women there."

Do you know why we believe in that?





## They Were Busy

Read again:

"So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a *manger*, because there was no room for them in the inn."

(Luke 2:6-7 NKJV)

This is our assumption: Mary and Joseph came to Bethlehem on December 24. But according to this verse, they were already in Bethlehem weeks before because of the census.

Why is it important to understand what happened there?

I invite you to think about our life in the province. No hospitals. You're giving birth in the house and the aunties, sisters, and women cousins are there to take care of the one giving birth. Some are washing clothes, some are preparing the diapers, and some are heating water. It's messy. It's dirty-- but that was what was offered.

The people in Bethlehem were not able to give the guest room because it was already occupied. I want to be dramatic here:

If this year, you had problems-- pain, loneliness, and anxiety-- and if those problems forced you to turn to the Lord, please stand.

Most of us, we go through pain. We went through 2024 with struggles and storms-- but those made us turn to the Lord.

Do you think you would pray to the Lord when things are comfortable? Maybe not. It is in our emptiness that we would turn to the Lord.

Turn to the person beside you. Is that person good? Is that person busy?

This is what happened to the people of Bethlehem. I really think they couldn't give to Jesus their best, the guest room-- not because they were bad, not because they were like my classmate with a broom hitting me on the head. It's just that the people of Bethlehem were probably busy. There were so many people and they could not give the best.

They couldn't give their best to Jesus because they gave their best to someone else already.

**They couldn't give their *best* to Jesus because they gave their *best* to someone else.**

## The Enemy

For most of us, the enemy is not the devil but the distraction. We're just too busy doing too many things.

**For most people, the enemy isn't the *devil* but *distraction*.**

I believe what wake us up are the problems, trials, storms, and the struggles and they shake us to turn to the Lord. To make Him our priority.

My questions to you this Christmas: Have you given your best to Jesus? Have you given your best to someone else other than Jesus?

How many of you are working?

What, if one day, the CEO of your company, not your direct boss, sends you a text message: "May I talk to you tomorrow at 7:00 a.m.? Let's have breakfast together."

Will you say *no* because you're busy? Of course, not! You will cancel everything for your CEO, the guy who pays your salary every month.

Hello! It's important. But how many of us said "I'm busy" to God this 2024? How many times did you tell God that you can't accommodate Him-- not because you're bad but because you're busy?

Why can we say "I'm busy" to God?

Think of your father.

What if your father is the one who says, "My child, let's spend time together."

We say, "I'm busy" to our dad.

When I was growing up, and my mom would call me and say, "Bo, please visit me."

I would tell her, "Yes, mom. I'll go there when I'm less busy."

Why is it that we will cancel everything for our CEO but for our parents, we are busy?

Two reasons: One is familiarity. The second is availability.

You get to see the CEO once in a while but your parents are always there.

I've got news for you. My mom and my dad, they're gone. They're in Heaven but I talk to them every day.



**Have you given your best to someone else other than Jesus?**



## What They Could Only Give

This is my main point: The people of Bethlehem could not give their guest room but they gave what they could give-- their second best. They gave to Jesus their second best-- their messy second best.

Jesus was born into that messy second best and transformed it to be the greatest story ever told.

**Jesus was born in their *messy second best* and transformed it to the greatest story ever told.**

My dear Friends, let's be realistic. We live busy, distracted lives.

I'm going to call you to open your heart and give Him your second best.

You cannot give your best anymore because that was given to all sorts of things and distractions. Even your phone is such a distraction. According to statistics, 3 hours and 36 minutes a day is our social media consumption. That's 25 hours a week.

But it's so easy to say, "I don't have time to pray. I don't have time to spend with the Word of God. I don't have time to go to The Feast."

Let's stop doing that right now. This is what we do:

Embarrassing it may be, let's give our second best to God and let Him be the one to transform our second best-- so that in 2025, we're going to give our best to the Lord. Amen.

Tell somebody again:

"Let Jesus be born in your mess."

Do you want to make God happy today and in 2025?

Stop saying to God, "I'm busy for you."

He is your CEO. He is your father.

He is the one who gave you Life. He is the one who gave you strength.

**Let Jesus be born in your mess.**

## What We Can Give

I end with this story that I fondly remember.  
I always remember this story.

My youngest son Francis and I attended a father-and-son event in our homeschooling organization. He was still small then.

We played a game. We stood back-to-back. They gave us a piece of paper and Pentel pens (markers). They asked us the same question and we're supposed to write our answer.

If we are close, then we would have the same answer. One question was like, "What's the first thing your dad does when he wakes up?"

I can never forget the answer of one of the boys: "He sleeps again."

But there was this one question: "What is the one thing that your son likes to do?"

Francis likes watching the movie *Jurassic Park*.

So, I wrote: "Watching movies."

But my son wrote: "Spending time with Dad."

We lost that game because we didn't have the same answer.

But I won in my heart. When I heard his answer, I felt like I won the Lotto.

Do you want to make God happy? Tell Him that the best part of your day is spending time with Him. Being here at The Feast is your best time of the week.



File family photo: Bo and wife Marowe and kids-- eldest Bene and youngest Francis during the visit of Pope Francis in 2015.



Say this prayer with me:

*"Jesus, I'm giving You my messy second best because in 2024, I was distracted and I was busy. Jesus, please be born in my mess and in my weaknesses. Be present in my life. Jesus, transform me so that one day, I will give You my best. Help me to never say, "I'm busy for You." Help me to say that the best time of my life is being in Your Presence. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

## **Distraction**

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

Speaking of distractions, may I distract you for a few moments--if you could look in this direction where the spotlight is?

It's so fitting that Bro. Bo spoke about how we are distracted as a society, about our greatest struggle right now: our fully presence to God, and the many things. I'm almost assuming that right now you've got a million and one things running around in your head-- about all the chores and the tasks that you still need to finish before the year ends.

Luke spoke to us a story in his Gospel about a person who was distracted. Her name was Martha. Jesus visited the home of Mary and Martha. And Luke says that Martha is distracted by all the preparations that needed to be made because Jesus was in their home.

So, she comes up to Jesus and says, "Lord, do you not care that I'm doing the work by myself? Will you tell my sister Mary to come help me?"

Then, Jesus says, "Martha, Martha, you are upset and worried about many things. But only a few things are needed. In fact, only one. And Mary chose better. And I will not take that away from her."

You know, many of us, whenever we would hear that story, we would give Martha a hard time, and we would burn her first and say that Martha was wrong. She was preoccupied and distracted by many things.

But until you study the text, you will never really know what Jesus was saying. Because I found out about this only recently. That when Jesus was addressing Martha, He used the Greek term *diakonia* which means *to serve somebody, to wait upon somebody*.

And Jesus used this term many times.

In his now famous Scripture verse, where the apostle Mark says: "*For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many* (Mark 10:45 NLT -- Bible Gateway <https://www.biblegateway.com>) he was using *diakonia* to say that service is good. Waiting upon people is very good.

That's why I know that Jesus was not rebuking Martha. He was lovingly correcting her.

You will be surprised that when Jesus turns to Martha and says, "Mary chose what is better," it simply tells all of us that what Martha chose was good. Except that there was something better. And Mary chose that.



## The Good News

What is my point? My point is having distractions in your life, it's normal. It's good. Families may distract you, and it's good. Work may distract you, it's good. Ministry may distract you, but it's good.

Jesus is saying to us that even though these distractions are good, there is something better. There's a better choice. There's a better option, my dear Friends.

Jesus is trying to tell us that right now, it's not a problem that you have a busy schedule. The problem is you've got a busy soul. And if your soul is always busy, you might not have time for God.

In the hustle and bustle of living your life, what is the state of your heart? Because until you open your eyes and you open your heart, you will miss the greatest story ever told. Until you realize that Jesus is always here with us, you might miss that great miracle.

But my dear Friends, the Good News is this: that He is always with us. because the greatest story ever told is about a God who took the form of man and He became flesh and blood and He dwelt among us. And we call Him Jesus. We call Him wonderful counselor, the Prince of Peace, mighty God, everlasting Father, and we named Him Emmanuel which means our God is with us.

So, the Good News is Jesus is with us.  
He is always with us.  
He will always be with us this season.

Let's put the spotlight back to Jesus.

Let's worship the Lord and sing *Emmanuel*,  
*Our God, He is with Us!*  
Amen.



# Commitment

## BRO. BO SANCHEZ:

May I I invite you to say a prayer of renewing your commitment to Jesus?

For some of you, it might be the first time you're saying that you're going to give and turn over your life to the Lord.

I love to lead you in this prayer to finally say: "Lord, from now on until the rest of my life, I'm yours."

But for most of us here, it's a renewal of your commitment. Let's do that together.

If you want to lift your hands, you can do so a symbol of openness and welcoming Jesus in your messy life. It might not be perfect or the best but let's give what we can and He'll take it from there.

Everybody, say:

*"Jesus I open my heart to You. Come, take Your place, Be the center. I receive You as my Lord and as my King. From now on, You will be the center of my life. My life will revolve around you. I will love You with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my strength. Help me to be Your Presence in this world. Forgive me for all my sins. Wash me. Purify me. Change me. Make me another Jesus in this world. In Jesus' Name. Amen."*



## Come and See!



**BRO. JOHN BEN RODRIGUEZ** (*left*) and **BRO. JC LIBIRAN** thank the Worship Team and all Feast servants and attendees, and close the Grand Christmas Feast with a merry announcement: The Feast resumes on January 5, 2025! See you all!



FEAST WORSHIP  
WORDS & MUSIC BY: ADRIEL ZACHARY YOKINGCO, HANNAH MARIE DELA ROSA, REY JEROME SI  
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COME AND SEE



## **Thank You!**

The Feast Family, now organized as the Feast Mercy Ministries, is a spin-off ministry of the Light of Jesus Family founded by Bro. Bo Sanchez. Earlier named as Kerygma Family, The Feast Family is a unique online, non-physical, borderless, international community of friends who support each other's personal growth.

Partner beneficiaries of the Feast Mercy Ministries flourish because of your generous support.

Thank you for being with us. We pray that you find your daily source of inspiration from the resources that we send to you. We pray too that you may consider giving to The Feast Mercy Ministries. No gift is too small.

Thank you very much in advance for your gift. Our prayer is that God will continue to reward you as you give.

### **FOR EXISTING DONORS:**

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

Be a Feast Family member. Write or call us. Now.

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is a halfway home for pregnant women in crisis.



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**The Light of Jesus Disaster Recovery Ministry**  
provides evacuation assistance, relief goods, financial aid, and other needs of calamity victims.

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



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# **FAMILY ONLINE NEWSMAGAZINE**

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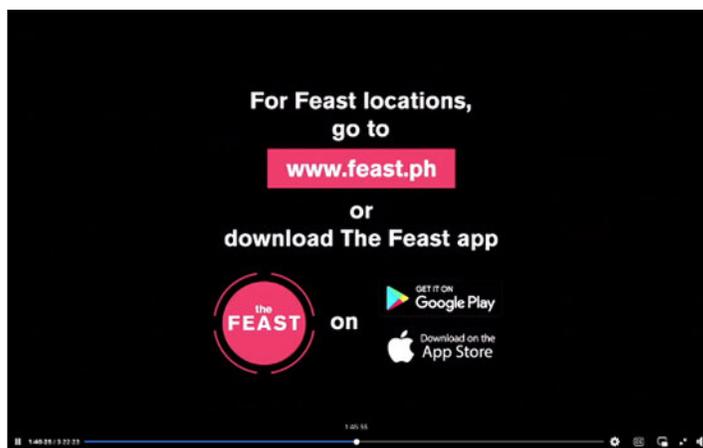
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***Go and make disciples of all men.***  
— Matthew 28:19

