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KERYGMA

No. 275 Vol. 23

April 2013

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Paths to Spiritual Maturity

A Parish Worker's Spiritual Journey Led to Her Inner Healing

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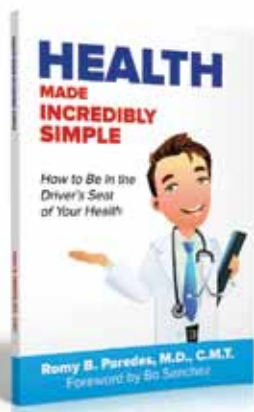
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Incredibly Simple and Affordable Health Habits That Will Protect Thousands of People from Dreaded Illnesses



Do you want to be healthy? Are you sick and losing hope that you will ever be cured? Are you looking for medical advice that actually works, that have been proven effective by others who have overcome even terminal diseases? There are essential steps that do not involve invasive treatments, expensive surgery, and huge hospital bills that you can take to improve your health.

In his book, *Health Made Incredibly Simple*, Dr. Romy Paredes teaches simple but highly effective habits that can turn your health around, as proven by testimonies of patients who followed his wise advice.

This book is not for everyone, but it should be! You don't have to suffer from illnesses or die young because of poor lifestyle habits. You can start your journey to wellness today.

Imagine yourself in the peak of health during your twilight years inhaling the fresh breeze coming from the ocean, walking barefoot in the sand, and enjoying the warm hugs of your grandchildren.

Imagine yourself happy, healthy and whole in your old age, jumping for your joy, still serving actively in your ministry, tending to your garden, dancing to music with your loved ones without the burden of disease.

Today, that may seem like a far-fetched dream for many, what with all the diseases we hear about every day. But it is possible to be happy and healthy, well into your old age, if you only know the things that work and do not work.

In this very down-to-earth but eye-opening book, you can read about the experiences of Dr. Romy's patients who took the journey out of their illnesses into wellness by employing very simple but effective natural healing methods prescribed by the good doctor.

Health Made Incredibly Simple addresses the root causes of illnesses and will teach you how to help your body heal itself, by empowering your immune system through the simple but very effective means available in nature, as God provided for us from the very beginning.

- ✓ You will learn to improve your health through simple habits that you normally don't hear in a doctor's clinic.
- ✓ These simple tips will make you feel better and healthier without the side effects and burdensome expense associated with maintenance medicines.
- ✓ You won't have to go through painful and expensive surgery if you change your unhealthy lifestyle and follow the simple, healthy habits which Dr. Romy recommends and has proven successful for his patients.
- ✓ You will learn from the experiences of those who have been healed from dreaded diseases and protect yourself from getting sick. Yes, you can heal yourself with the guidance of your doctor.
- ✓ Prevention is always better than the cure. This book will help you do just that.



Romy Paredes, M.D., C.M.T., is a product of the UP College of Medicine and UP-PGH Medical Center. He trained in Integrative Medicine in Reno, Nevada, USA. He is also a clinical medical toxicologist. He was given the Honorary Recognition Award by Dr. Rath International Health Alliance for his outstanding achievement in the fight for health freedom. He is the founder

of Bio-integrative Healthlink Center, Inc., a leading exponent in integrative medical systems, and Wellnessland Health Institute, a leader in the field of natural and complementary health care and education. He actively practices Integrative Medicine in Cebu City, where he resides with his wife, Dr. Mila, and their son, Michael Randell. (Visit www.wellnessland-ph.com or email support@wellnessland-ph.com for inquiries.)

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Are you looking for ways to unlock the amazing power of God in your life?

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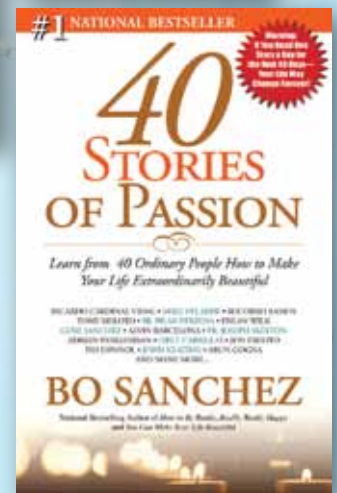
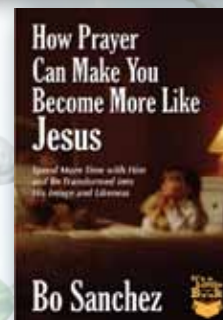
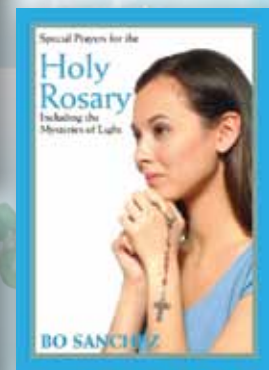
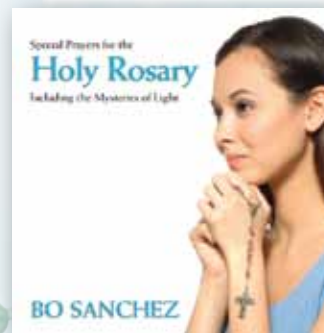
Do you believe that God has a purpose for your life and that He wants you to live it out with utmost passion?

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*Did you know? In the Catholic Church, we actually celebrate Easter for 50 Days, not just on Easter Sunday! Happy

This promo is valid from March-April 2013.

By Bo Sanchez

Once upon a time, on one of the islands of the Philippines, there was a young tree. It was the only tree on that island and it had long branches with leaves too many to count.

It was a happy tree. It liked looking at the green plains around it and the blue sea surrounding the island.

But one day, the tree noticed that one of its leaves was turning brown. What was going on? This was the first time it had happened. The tree began to panic.

Soon, more leaves became brown.

Then the impossible happened: One brown leaf snapped off its twig and fell to the ground. The horror!

Soon, more leaves fell. He counted them. Gasp! In one day, six leaves fell from his branches. The next day, another nine fell. The day after that, 12 more fell. On and on, they kept falling.

He was losing so many leaves each day, he blurted out, "I'm dying!" Every day, with great anxiety, he stared at the growing mound of brown leaves gathering around his roots.

He began to lose hope and wanted to end his life.

That was when a bird flew by. The feathered creature perched on one of the tree's branches. The bird asked, "What's wrong? Why are you so sad?"

The tree said, "I'm dying."

"Why do you say that?" the bird asked.

"I'm losing all my leaves! I've lost 94 already."

The bird was taken aback. "You don't know, do you?" He looked around and realized why. "You haven't seen another tree in your life. You're all alone here. My dear friend, what you're experiencing is something that every other tree in the world experiences."

"Huh?"

The bird smiled and said, "I want to give you three messages today."

"I'm listening," the tree answered.

More Blessings Than Problems

"First, you say you've already lost 94 leaves. You count the number of leaves that you've lost. Count now the number of leaves that are still on your branches."

The tree went about counting. "1, 2, 3, 4..." When he reached 300, he said, "I can't count them. I have too many leaves!" The tree wasn't crying anymore.

"Then you're learning a very important truth. *Remember that you'll always have more blessings than problems.* Problems seem more because you count them, you measure them, and you analyze them every day. But when you count your blessings, you'll realize that your blessings will outnumber your problems. Always!"

More Space for New Blessings

The bird said, "Here's my second message. I want you to look at your branches, specifically at the empty space, where your leaves fell from. Do you see them?"

"Yes."

"Are they really empty?"

"Yes, they're empty. A leaf was there before."

"Look closer," said the bird, "because they're not really empty."

That was when the tree said, "Well, I see tiny leaves sprouting in the same places where my old leaves fell from."

The bird nodded, "If your old leaves hadn't fallen, there wouldn't have been space for new leaves to sprout in your branches. If you want better things to happen in your life, some older things will have to go first."

"I now understand," the tree smiled.

More Nourishment for Your Growth

The bird chirped, "And now for my last message. Do you notice what happens to your brown leaves?" the bird asked.

"They rot," the tree shrugged, looking at the mound of brown leaves around its roots.


"Yes, they do, but for a purpose," said the bird, "because in due time, these rotting leaves will become part of the soil. These leaves will enrich you. Your roots will drink their nourishment, causing you to grow and sprout more leaves."

When I look back at the years that have passed, I realize something very important — that I grew the most *not* during the times when everything was smooth, or when everything was going my way. I realized that I grew the most during the times when there was intense trouble, intense pain. I grew the most when I was attacked from all directions and I couldn't breathe anymore.

That's when God stretched me.

I have one word for you about trouble: Get used to it.

Because trouble is the birthplace of your greatest growth.

Be grateful for the blessings behind your trials. 

May your dreams come true,



BE
GRATEFUL
EVEN
WHEN IT'S
DIFFICULT



The first time I encountered Kerygma was when I celebrated my birthday in the Correctional Institute for Women on May 9, 2009. Since then I've always been eager to read it. Your stories are so inspiring, heartwarming and faith-strengthening. You bring me closer to God. I learn many lessons from your magazine. You give me hope, especially because I am imprisoned. A million thanks to Bo, my idol, and to Sis. Yam of the Light of Jesus Prison Ministry.

More power and God bless!

Thelma Erediano
CIW, Mandaluyong City

Every month, I try to buy a copy of Kerygma. I always feel excited to read it. Although I am already active in our parish and have had lots of experiences in life as a mother, wife and teacher, I still need good mentors. And Kerygma is one of them. Reading the magazine inspires me and keeps me going.

Thanks, Bro. Bo. I hope I can listen to one of your talks. God bless you, your family and your staff.

Filomena M. Robles
Iloilo City

I can't think of anything more precious than saying "Thank you" to Bro. Bo and to all his staff. I got my first copy of Kerygma when I attended The Feast at PICC. I was very excited to read all the articles inside, and up to now I still love to read even

the past issues. It became an addiction that made me look for a copy every week. You guys have changed my life since then. You helped me gain and sustain my faith in God and that is what I am very thankful for.

Reading your magazine is like talking to God. Your articles became my guide, my inspiration and my source of strength every time I'm in a tough situation.

I also shared some copies to my friends because I wanted them to feel how delighted I am to have Kerygma and The Feast family in my life now. My only wish, and this is what I'm always praying for, is for you to continue inspiring many people.

Maica Czarina P. Bisaya
Via Email

My sister, who's now based in Vancouver, Canada, introduced Kerygma to me. I love reading its contents and consider it as food for my soul. Kerygma is not only spiritual but educational as well. More power!

Armie Tolang P.
San Juan, Southern Leyte

We Want to HEAR from YOU!

Send your message via email to editsvp@shepherdsvoice.com.ph, through text to 0923-378-4941, or by snail mail to The Editor at 60 Chicago St., Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines 1109.

You can also reach us through KERYGMA Family. Log on to www.kerygmfamily.com.

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The raffle draw was held on January 13, 2013 at The Feast PICC in the presence of a DTI representative.

By Rissa Singson-Kawpeng

How to Kill an Ant Colony



A spiritual lesson from my experience of exterminating those pesky pests

The year is 2009. My firstborn is a few months old and I develop an obsession. It doesn't matter if it's 4:30 in the morning or 8 o'clock at night. As often as I enter our bathroom, I bend down and take a look at a small cup filled with a concoction of gooey peanut butter, brown sugar and poisonous boric acid.

It all started when I didn't have enough milk to feed my baby. We had to resort to formula, which you scoop from a can. Before long, ants from the garden outside found their way into our room, particularly the tabletop where I kept all the milk and the baby bottles.

In my younger, more ignorant days, I would have just pulled out an insecticide spray and blasted those insects away. That would have eliminated them quickly but not permanently. Before long, new drones would pick up the trail and continue feasting on the infant formula.

But now, I was more conscious of the harmful effects those chemicals would have on me and my baby. So I scoured the Internet for a safe and natural remedy and found that peanut butter recipe.

But this concoction is not an instant solution. In fact, it will draw in more ants before it eliminates them. So I checked my bait almost obsessively. Yes, there were a number of ants that had died right there in my sweet, lethal ant feast. But that's not what this bait was for. I was counting on the other ants that had taken a morsel of my deadly treat and diligently carried it back to their colony.

It took only a few days before the ant trail began to thin out. Before long, they came few and far between. And then there were none. Since then, I've never had ants on my milk table again.

Why do I tell you this story? Because I've learned — through my many years of seeking to follow the Lord — that the Enemy of our souls doesn't use insecticide spray when he wants to destroy us. He understands that if he lays out a deadly trap for us, we savvy, church-going, Bible-reading Christians would easily see it for what it is — and avoid it. So the devil does his due diligence. He studies not our weakness, but our strength.

And he's a master when it comes to disguising the most lethal of poisons

to make it appear luscious, appealing to the eye and downright irresistible.

So he will not tempt the righteous businessman with a lucrative but sleazy deal. Maybe the devil will tempt him with cheating on his taxes so he can give more to charity.

He won't seduce a passionate preacher into having a steamy affair with a sexy member of his congregation. Maybe the devil will tempt him with cybersex, which is clandestine and seems harmless.

The scary thing with falling for the devil's trap is what made my ant bait so effective. We don't know we've fallen because we don't keel over and die instantly. Our soul dies slowly, one little sin after another, until we become so calloused, we're no longer bothered by wrongdoing.

In this world of greys, we can only pray, "Lord, lead us not into temptation."

Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. (Jude 1:24)

Email me at justbreatherissa@gmail.com, subscribe to my Facebook updates or visit my website rissasingsonkawpeng.com.

What to Expect This Month:

Wanna know how you can make money out of doing things you love to do? *How to Turn Your Passion into Profit: 8 Keys to Having a Truly Rich Business* by Bo Sanchez and Dean Pax Lapid will show you how!

When I was editing this book, I felt like I was getting a crash course on entrepreneurship. It's a page turner that will inspire you and hold your hand as you start off on your business. Order now at (02) 725-9999 or email sales@shepherdsvoice.com.ph and we'll deliver it to your doorstep (Metro Manila only) for FREE! Shipping charges apply for provincial orders.

Rissa's outfit courtesy of Elite Garments/Ensemble.

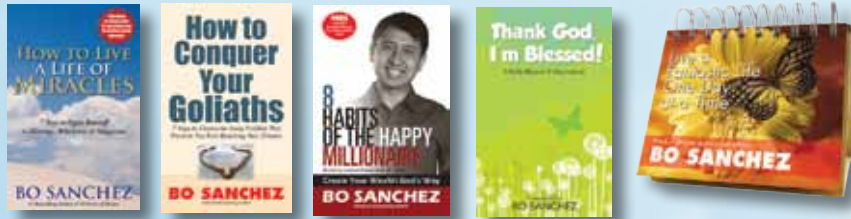
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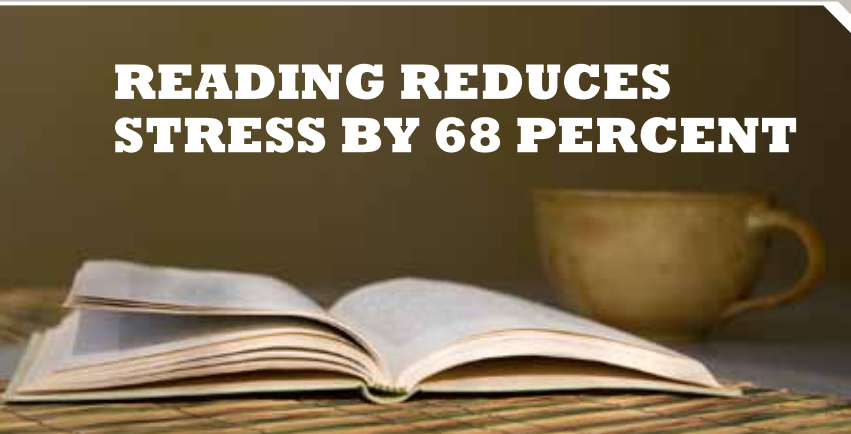
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KERYGMA. A Greek word meaning Proclamation of the Gospel. It is a Catholic inspirational magazine. It aims to be an evangelistic tool to all nations, providing Scriptural, practical and orthodox teachings to Catholics, particularly those in the Catholic Renewal, as an alternative to present-day magazines. It is also committed to fostering the renewal and unity of the whole Christian people. Philippine copyright Shepherd's Voice Publications, Inc. 2013. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without permission. KERYGMA is published monthly by Shepherd's Voice Publications, Inc., whose editorial and business offices are located at 60 Chicago St., Cubao, 1109 Quezon City. Tel. Nos.: 725-9999, 411-7874, 725-1190. Fax: 727-5615. Email: editsvp@shepherdsvoice.com.ph. Website: www.shepherdsvoice.com.ph

New You

Tips for personal development

READING REDUCES STRESS BY 68 PERCENT



A research conducted by Mindlab International at the University of Sussex revealed that reading is the best way to relax.

Volunteers who went through a range of tests and exercises were given the following ways to de-stress: reading, listening to music, going for a walk or sitting down with a cup of tea.

According to cognitive neuropsychologist Dr. David Lewis, reading reduced the participants' stress levels by 68 percent.

Psychologists believe that this is because the human mind has to concentrate on reading and escaping into the literary world eases the tensions in the muscles and heart.

Subjects only needed to read quietly for six minutes to slow down the heart rate and ease tension in the muscles, Dr. Lewis found. Listening to music reduced stress levels in the volunteers by 61 percent, a cup of tea by 54 percent, and taking a walk by 42 percent.

"Losing yourself in a book is the ultimate relaxation," Dr. Lewis said. "This is more than merely a distraction but an active engaging of the imagination as the words on the printed page stimulate your creativity and cause you to enter what is essentially an altered state of consciousness," he concludes.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk>



Here are some ways you can earn extra money this summer and save for the rainy days.

Jobs for Kids Under 12:

- Lemonade/Juice stand
- Cookies sale
- Garage sale
- Summer chores around your home

Jobs for Tweens:

- Babysitting, mother's helper, junior camp counselor
- Pet sitting or dog walking
- Selling outgrown toys and video games

Jobs for Teenagers:

- Fast food employee
- Restaurant wait staff
- Paper delivery person
- House cleaner
- Telemarketer
- Administrative assistant

Source: <http://www.wisebread.com>

The star apple, *chrysophyllum cainito*, is a tropical fruit. Its sweet inner flesh is purple and white and has a star shape formed by seeds through the middle of the fruit. In the Philippines, it is called **caimito**.

Star apples are a good source of calcium, providing 10 percent of the amount required by the body daily. Calcium strengthens your bones and teeth and can also lessen symptoms of premenstrual syndrome, such as cramping and abdominal bloating. One serving of star apple provides two percent of the iron mineral vital for oxygenating your body, which you need every day. Some people also eat this fruit to reduce inflammation associated with laryngitis and pneumonia.

Source: <http://www.livestrong.com>

Quick Health Tip: STAR APPLE





PHILIPPINES IMPROVES ITS ECONOMIC FREEDOM RANKING

The Philippines ranked 97th in the 2013 Index of World Economic Freedom, a global survey of 177 countries rated on economic freedom — up 10 notches from its 107th ranking in 2012. Out of 41 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, the Philippines ranked 17th. This year, its economic freedom ranking was the highest since 2006 when it ranked 96th.

On January 10, 2013, the 2013 Index of Economic Freedom, an annual guide released by Washington’s Heritage Foundation and *The Wall Street Journal*, noted improvements in Philippine investment freedom and the stable growth of the Philippine economy over the past five years. It also cited legislative reforms that boost the entrepreneurial environment and public-private partnerships that encourage job creation.

The Index rates countries on 10 benchmarks — namely property rights, fiscal freedom, government spending, business freedom, labor freedom, monetary freedom, trade freedom, investment freedom and financial freedom — using statistics from the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Economist Intelligence Unit.

According to the 2013 Index, the top 10 freest economies are Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Canada, Chile, Mauritius, Denmark and the United States.

Source: <http://www.mb.com.ph>

CATHOLIC CHURCH DECLARES MT. CARMEL SHRINE AS PILGRIMAGE SITE

The Diocese of Cubao has declared Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Shrine in New Manila, Quezon City, as a pilgrimage church for the Year of Faith, which started on October 11, 2012 and ends on November 24, 2013.



According to CBCP News, the official news service of the Philippine Church hierarchy, Cubao Bishop Honesto Ongtioco chose the well-known church as a pilgrimage site.

Fr. Ransom Rapirap, assistant parish priest of Mt. Carmel, says Catholics who visit the church and go on a “spiritual journey” on their own may gain plenary indulgence.

To do so, he suggests that visitors to the shrine “take part in some sacred function or at least pause for an apt time of recollection with pious meditations.” The reflection must conclude with the recitation of the “Our Father,” the profession of Faith, invocations to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to the Holy Apostles or Patrons.

A plenary indulgence would also require a person to be “in a state of grace, to be completely detached from sin and to pray for the Holy Father’s intentions.” In addition, he or she must go to confession and receive Holy Communion up to 20 days before or after doing the other deeds.

Source: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net>

St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen

Born and Died: 1577, Sigmaringen, Germany — 1622, Seewis im Prättigau (now part of Switzerland)

St. Fidelis was a Franciscan Capuchin martyr. He was born Mark Rey in Sigmaringen, Germany, in 1577. He was a practicing lawyer and traveled across Europe as a tutor to aristocrats. However, he started defending the poor, and in 1612, he became a Franciscan Capuchin monk, adopting Fidelis as his new name. He served as a missionary to Grisons, Switzerland, and became so successful that local Protestants accused him of being a spy for the Austrian Emperor. On April 24, 1622, he was stabbed to death by Calvinist soldiers in a church in Seewis. Pope Benedict XIV canonized him in 1746. His feast day is on April 24.

Source: <http://www.catholic.org>

Saints at a Glance



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Alabang 3	2nd Floor, Festival Mall, (Near X-Site Entrance), Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Sunday	2:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Arun Gogna
Alabang 4	2nd Floor, Festival Mall, (Near X-Site Entrance), Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Sunday	5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.	Jonathan Yogawin
Alabang 5	2nd Floor, Festival Mall, (Near X-Site Entrance), Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Wednesday	7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Jonathan Yogawin
Alabang 6	2nd Floor, Festival Mall, (Near X-Site Entrance), Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Saturday	6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.	James Nicolas
Baliwag	Cinema 4, SM Baliwag, Bulacan	Saturday	6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.	Marvin Tan
BGC	5th Floor of Fully Booked, Bonifacio High Street, Bonifacio Global City	Saturday	5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.	George Gabriel
Cardona	Mary Help of Christians Hospital, National Road, Barangay Calahan, Cardona, Rizal	Saturday	5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.	Nap Col-long
Dasmariñas Imus	Cinema 5, Robinsons Dasmariñas, Cavite Cinema 5, Robinsons Imus, Aguinaldo Highway, Imus, Cavite	Saturday Sunday	5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. 10:30 a.m. - 12:30p.m.	Boggs Burbos Rex Robillos
Laguna 1	Feast Laguna Family Center, 3/F Central Mall, Binan City, Laguna	Sunday	9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Jon Escoto
Laguna 2	Feast Laguna Family Center, 3/F Central Mall, Binan City, Laguna	Saturday	10:00 a.m. - 11:15a.m.	Jon Escoto
Makati 1	AIM Conference Center, Benavidez corner Paseo de Roxas, Makati City	Thursday	7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.	Randy Borromeo
Makati 2	Cinema 3, Glorietta 4, Ayala Center, Makati City	Sunday	9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Randy Borromeo
Makati 3	Mondragon House, 2/F Ballroom, H.V. Dela Costa St. (near Tordesillas Street), Salcedo Village	Tuesday	7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.	Jan Silan
Malolos	The Cabanas Pavillon, Longos, Malolos, Bulacan	Friday	5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	John Cruz
Manila 1	Cinema 4, SM Manila	Friday	4:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.	Obet Cabrillas
Manila 2	Cinema 4, SM Manila	Friday	7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.	Obet Cabrillas
Marikina	Bluewave Marikina's Activity Center, Marikina City	Sunday	5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.	Pio Español
Marilao 1	Barcelona Academy, Metrogate Complex, Marilao, Bulacan	Thursday	7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Alvin Barcelona
Marilao 2	Cinema 2, SM Marilao	Saturday	6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	Alvin Barcelona
Marilao 3	Cinema 2, SM Marilao	Saturday	7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Alvin Barcelona
Meycauayan Ortigas 1	Supima Square (Save More), Malhacan, Meycauayan Cinema 3, Robinsons Galleria, Ortigas	Friday Monday	6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. 7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Alvin Barcelona Vic Español
Ortigas 2	Cinema 3, Robinsons Galleria, Ortigas	Sunday	10:00 a.m. - 12:00p.m.	Vic Español
Pasig 1	Valle Verde Country Club	Sunday	10:00 a.m. - 12:00p.m.	Obet Cabrillas
Pasig 2	Valle Verde Country Club	Sunday	1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Obet Cabrillas
PICC 1	Philippine International Convention Center, Pasay City	Sunday	8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Bo Sanchez
PICC 2	Philippine International Convention Center, Pasay City	Sunday	9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Bo Sanchez
PICC 3 PICC 4	Philippine International Convention Center, Pasay City Philippine International Convention Center, Pasay City	Sunday Sunday	10:45 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. 3:45 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Bo Sanchez Alvin Barcelona
QC	Bureau of Soils and Water Management, Visayas Ave., QC	Sunday	9:00 p.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Eng Si
QC	Bureau of Soils and Water Management, Visayas Ave., QC	Sunday	8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Eng Si
Sucot	Cinema 4, SM Sucot, Parañaque	Friday	7:30 p.m. - 10:30 p.m.	Adrian Panganiban
Taytay	Valley Fair, Taytay, Rizal	Sunday	9:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.	Pio Español
Valenzuela	Cinema 1, SM Valenzuela	Sunday	1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Eng Si



GOD'S ARMY

**ARMED
AND
DANGEROUS**

T

his is the biggest gathering this gym has ever seen." Retired Philippine Air Force (PAF) General Oscar Ravena couldn't have said it any better when he described the crowd of more than 1,700 servant-leaders of The Feast, a.k.a. soldiers of God's Army, before him.

Clad in their Type-C uniforms, servant-leaders from different Feasts here and abroad reported for duty last

January 19 at the PAF Gymnasium, Villamor Air Base, for the annual Light of Jesus (LOJ) Leaders Assembly.

Ready for Battle

Makati Feast builder Randy Borromeo interviewed Retired PAF General Ravena on how to lead the best soldiers. To train the best of the best, his guidepost is faith, values and relationships. He affirms faith in God, self, family and friends. He advocates values, respect to towards subordinates and strong spirituality. He believes that relationships give meaning to life and that everything comes from God.

With the wisdom that Gen. Ravena imparted to the soldiers in attendance, everyone was ready for battle.

The Chosen Weapon

"God chose us to be His soldiers. We are in the same army as Abraham, Elijah, Elisha, Moses, David, St. Francis, St. John Bosco, St. Paul, and all the saints," said Bo Sanchez, LOJ Founder, as he assigned to the




*Text by Osy Erica
Photos by IC de Guzman
and Marlon Collado*

soldiers their weapon: dirty hands and their combat manual, the Bible.

Bo proceeded to describe how armed and dangerous LOJ soldiers are. They are armed and dangerous because they choose to dirty their hands. They are ready to serve, forgive and give unconditional love. They know the weaknesses of others yet continue to accept and love them. They choose to serve God in the mess: breaking barriers, infiltrating unfamiliar territories and bringing the unchurched to Him.

Armed and Dangerous

Remarkable troops, who personified “Armed and Dangerous for God,” were recognized. Jun Alde, The Feast Singapore builder, and Arun Gogna, The Feast Alabang builder, received the Nehemiah Leadership Award. Hermie Morelos and Roy Pasimio were commended for their exemplary service to the Lord with the Moses Leadership Award. The highest award a woman servant-leader can achieve, the Sarah Faithfulness Award, was bestowed upon Pilar Sanchez, mother of Bo Sanchez.

The day’s mission ended with powerful worship led by The Feast BGC builder George Gabriel. The mighty soldiers of God’s Army left the gym energized by God’s grace, ready for battle — armed and dangerous. 





How Do I Raise My Autistic Son?

I'm a young parent with a child who has special needs. My husband and I are anxious about what the future holds for our child. Thoughts on our mind abound, such as, will he be able to fend for himself when we are gone and will he be able to have his own family, too?

How do we make him feel loved and not feel different from his other siblings? He is at the age when most kids enter preschool. We are wondering if we should send him to a regular school or to a special one. We just want him to grow up like a regular boy where he can blossom and be what God wants him to be. How do we become good parents to an autistic child?

Worried Mom

Dear Worried Mom,

I affirm your concern for your son and your dedication to his welfare. It would be best to use your anxiety as a springboard for the direction in raising up your child well. I do not know the severity of his ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), but whatever case it may be, your primary goal is to help him develop optimally, obtain self-help skills, and raise him to be independent.

At this point, your major concern is your child's education and training. Having his own family is something you can gauge eventually and may be put off for now. Consider seeking the help of specialists (developmental pediatrician or special child specialist) to help you plan and manage your child's condition. The expert can gauge his condition if he is fit for a regular or special school. While you're at it, try to look for a school that offers IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) that would help address your child's needs and enhance his talents and abilities. This may be complemented with skill enrichment activities.

Your love as parents will be the saving grace. His self-esteem is an important gift you can train in him. Be consistent in giving affirmation, encouragement and spending time with your child. At the same time, be firm and consistent in setting boundaries and abiding by the rules and recommendations needed to help train him well. Look for support groups of parents with kids having the same condition so you can learn more and have the needed education to raise your son.

Autism is a life-long condition. You may give him a regular "less restricted" environment and a loving home, but you have to accept his circumstance, including his limitations. Accepting him and early intervention will help him to become self-reliant and develop himself to the fullest, in the most loving way you as parents can offer.

Michele

Michele S. Alignay is a registered guidance counselor and is currently taking up her Ph.D. in Family Studies at Miriam College. For 12 years, she worked as a guidance counselor handling grade school children for premier exclusive schools. Today, she is an associate counselor at the Love Institute and also holds consultancy and counseling work for schools on guidance and child-parenting programs. Michele is happily married and a fulfilled mom to two growing children.





Does God Seek Revenge?

Some people attribute the recent defeat of a sports champ to turning his back on the Catholic Church. Even his own mother believes so.

Does God seek revenge on those who turn their backs on Him? Is He as immature as we are? Didn't He die even for those who did not believe in Him?

I am a high school student and I get confused by all the things I read about this matter.

Gwen

Dear Gwen,

I have heard the same argument about the defeat of Pacquiao from several people. Some also said that recent devastating typhoons were God's punishment for voting the RH Bill into law. And so your question is very valid: Does God seek revenge on those who turn their backs on Him?

My answer is no. God is above revenge. God is Love and all-good, and therefore so different from us. It is a pity that some of us project our immature and sinful attitudes on God. He might allow, once in a while, bad things to happen to wake us up from our sinful ways, but God is neither a punishing God nor a revengeful God. When you read, especially in the Old Testament, about an angry or punishing God, it is because people projected their attitudes on God since they did not yet know the God whom Jesus proclaimed.

So, don't get confused but believe in God who is Love and — as you correctly wrote — “died even for those who did not believe in Him.”

May the God who is Love bless and guide you always!

Fr. Rudy

When Fr. Rudy Horst came to the Philippines in 1984, he was first assigned to the Immaculate Conception Parish in Cubao. It was where he came in contact with the still young Light of Jesus Family. In 1990, he moved to Christ the King Mission Seminary, where he still serves as one of the spiritual directors of the seminarians and teaches Religious Education. He also teaches Holy Scriptures at the Maryhill School of Theology and the Divine Word School of Theology in Tagaytay.

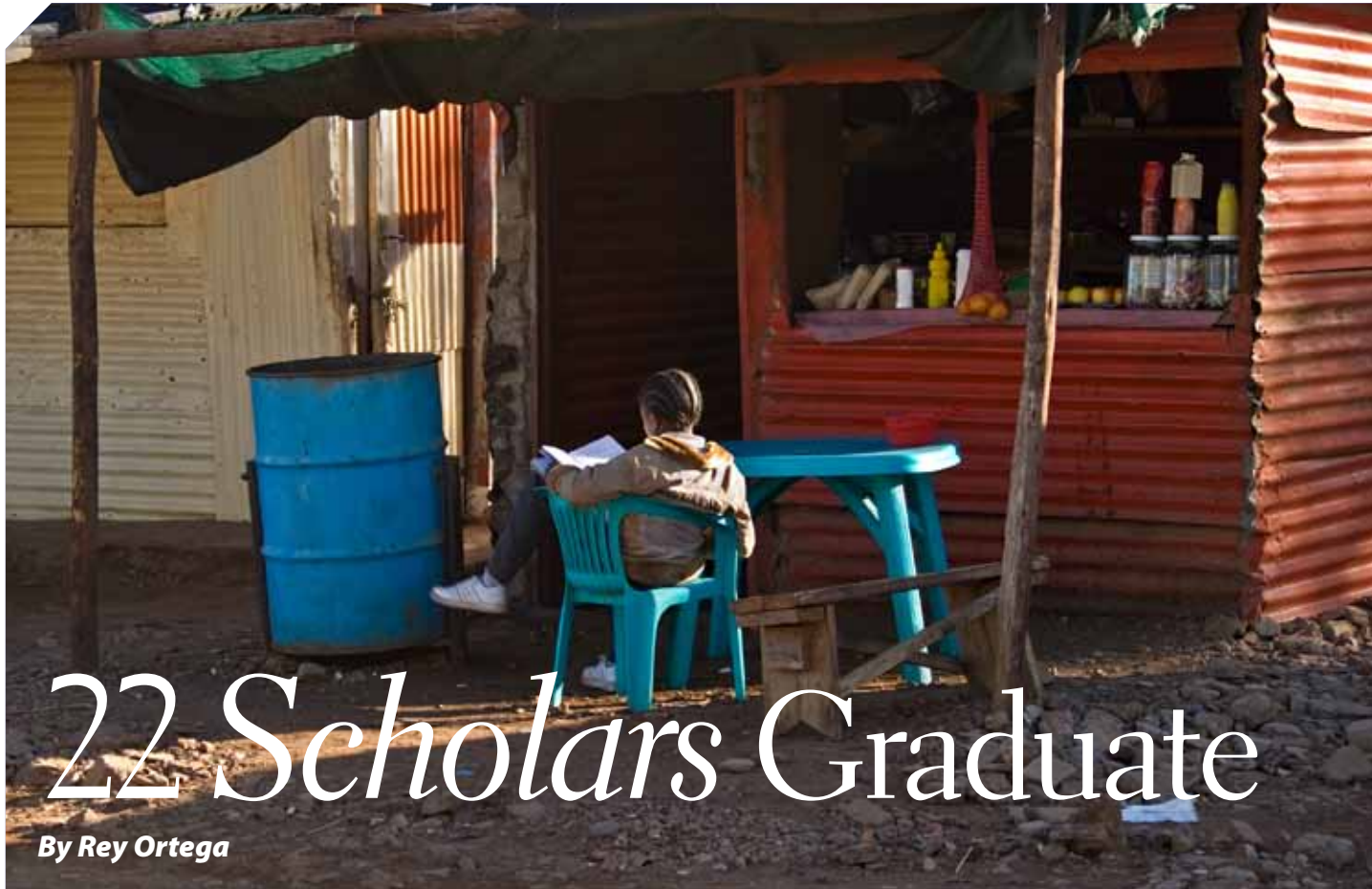


Email your questions to editsvp@shepherdsvoice.com. Or if you need to talk to someone, call (632) 726-4709 or 726-6728 to contact a Light of Jesus counselor. Telephone counseling is 24 hours from Monday to Friday, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays. Face-to-face counseling is by appointment. For correspondence counseling, email lojcounseling@yahoo.com or go to www.kerygmfamily.com.

Or Call **(632) 725-9999**

Pregnant? Confused? Abortion is not the answer. Contact Grace to Be Born at 0917-816-4700 or email reylindo.ortega@gmail.com.

You may also contact Pro-life Philippines at (632) 733-7027.



22 Scholars Graduate

By Rey Ortega

Tito Rey, paano po b q maka22long sa fndatn natin? Kahit po 1 schlr lang hehe kz maliit pa lang sueldo q eh." (Tito Rey, how can I help our foundation? Even one scholar only, as my salary is still small.)

I received that text message from a former scholar more than a year ago, but up to now, I feel so blessed remembering that wonderful message.

"Fndatn" means foundation, and she was referring to Pag-asa ng Pamilya Scholarship Foundation, our mercy ministry reaching out to poor but persevering students whose parents cannot afford to send them to school without outside financial assistance.

The texter was an elementary school teacher, a former Pag-asa scholar who finished with a degree in Education and soon after passed the licensure exams for teachers. She was promptly hired by a school to join its faculty and began teaching in June 2012.

March to April 2013 saw an outpouring of blessings for the Pag-asa Foundation. These are months of students' happiness, of tear-filled realization of parents' dreams, of joyful marching up the stage to receive diplomas, medals of honor and certificates of recognition.

These two months saw the following Pag-asa scholars, now ex-scholars, graduate with university degrees.

Most people think of graduates as "successful" only when they start working in big-time companies or start their own businesses. But in my book, some of these graduates are already "successful" as I recall the enormous difficulties and challenges many of them had to go through before reaching that landmark in life.

PAG-ASA NG PAMILYA SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION GRADUATES IN 2013

1. Jessa Astoveza, BSBA, Infanta, Quezon
2. Stella Marie Bastasa, BSEEd, Davao City
3. Alexis Batalon, BSBA, Binangonan, Rizal
4. Jonathan Besmonte, BSEEd, Infanta, Quezon
5. Julen Bingayan, BS Nursing, Bangued, Abra
6. Elizabeth Cerillo, Accountancy, Antipolo
7. Sarah Jane Cruz, BSBA, Pandi, Bulacan
8. Ana Maria Docog, BS Social Work, Anawim in Montalban
9. Sherlyn Galapon, Hotel and Restaurant Mgt., Guimba, Nueva Ecija
10. Cherielyn Gondraneos, Accountancy, Binangonan, Rizal
11. Angelle Jose, Accountancy, Bulacan
12. Jeana Marie Jose, Fine Arts (UP Diliman), Laguna
13. Michael Loza, Philosophy (seminarian), Laguna
14. Patrick Lloyd Mabao, Banking & Finance, Taguig
15. Jeffrey Magallanes, BSEEd, Antipolo
16. Marjorie Malibiran, Accountancy (UP Diliman), Batangas
17. Joshua Manoharan, Physical Therapy (UP Manila), Cavite
18. Arvy Keith Matematiko, HRM, Manila
19. Julien Tanada, BS Info Technology, Taguig
20. John Windell Vengco, Civil Engineering, Nueva Ecija
21. Lovely Mae Ventura, Accountancy, Bulacan
22. Mari Faye Khiara Villo, Tourism Management, Nueva Ecija


poverty. One of Pag-asa Foundation's policies is to encourage its scholars to do volunteer work during summer vacation and semestral or Christmas breaks.

Our scholars serve in their local churches and *barangays* as volunteers. They sing in the choir, serve as sacristans or ushers, join medical and dental outreach missions, participate in tree-planting projects and other ecological programs.

One of our scholars, Ana Maria Docog, is about to make a 180-degree turnaround in her life. This petite girl grew up in Anawim, Bo Sanchez's ministry caring for the poorest of the poor, specifically abandoned elderly, in Barangay San Isidro, Montalban, Rizal.

For almost two decades, Ana Maria, her *nanay* and siblings survived purely on the generosity of Anawim donors and benefactors. Undaunted by her background, she persevered with a big dream in her heart and an even bigger trust in God's love.

Instead of taking up a fancy business course or any other university degree that offers tempting guideposts to wealth and fame and foreign travel, Ana Maria took up Bachelor of Science in Social Work — a course that leads to working for the marginalized sectors of our society.

Ana Maria will now be serving, instead of being served, in Anawim. 

Two of these graduates are children of totally blind parents who eke out a living working as masseuse or rondalla players. Their parents barely finished elementary studies but they "saw" the potential of having their children obtain university degrees. So, both parents and children dreamed big dreams, and Pag-asa Foundation journeyed with them.

Two of these graduates are survivors of the worst flood and landslides in the history of their province, a tragedy of unspeakable horrors that saw hundreds of their relatives and neighbors, and even family members, washed away to the sea. Hundreds of houses were totally destroyed during that flood some eight years ago.

One of these graduates' family barely survived the onslaught of Typhoon Ondoy in 2009 and again the fury of Habagat in 2012, forcing their evacuation to a refugees' shelter and living miserably for several months.

Eight of these scholars are without fathers or mothers, or both, and it is only by the grace of God, shown through the kindness of relatives and friends, that they are able to make both ends meet.

Many of our scholars had routinely experienced going to school on an empty stomach, walking several kilometers due to lack of jeepney fare, and making do with just photocopies of textbooks borrowed from the school library as the price of expensive books are beyond their means.

And yet, it is so heartwarming to know that many of these scholars found time to give of themselves despite their

Classes will again open in two months' time and if you hear God's call to help support one, just one, financially challenged scholar, please consider making a donation to Pag-asa ng Pamilya Scholarship Foundation with Banco de Oro account 397-005-9458. For details or inquiries, please contact our servant, Rey Ortega at 0922-859-7035 or reylindo.ortega@gmail.com.

Checks payable to Pag-asa ng Pamilya Scholarship Foundation may also be sent to 60 Chicago St., Cubao, Quezon City (Attention: Weng Cequeña).

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Mikki and Nina Cuenca, 30
with daughter Maya, 2



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Ivy used her past to define a better future for her and her family.



**Former SM Saleslady
Is Now
a Millionaire Missionary**

By Ivy Carissa dela Cruz as told to Marjorie Ann Duterte

We heard loud screaming and cursing. We saw one of our neighbors out in the streets, half-naked and, with a knife in hand, running after another neighbor. He was already drunk even though it was still early in the morning. This was a common sight in Balut, Tondo, where I was born. We lived among neighbors who were drug addicts and drunkards who were as smelly as the canals in our street.

What It Means to Be Poor

We lived in a squatters' area. My mother was a public school teacher while my father was an electrician with no regular source of income. Because we were always short on money, my mother had to borrow from her friend, a janitor who sold snacks on the side.

We would fill our hungry stomachs with a pack of crackers shared among a family of five, or we'd buy junk food and eat it with rice. Growing up with my siblings, we learned to fetch water and carry heavy pails since we had no water inside the house.

When I was in Grade 2 at T. Paez Elementary School, a Japanese sponsor under My Share International Scholarship program chose me as her scholar. Early on, I learned to treasure my education because it was the only thing that I could call my own.

We transferred to a better area in Tondo when I was in Grade 5. We shared a house with two other families but because of a misunderstanding between them, they all left and we had to shoulder the entire rent. Since we could not afford it, my parents decided that we move in with my maternal grandmother in Caloocan. But my *lola* (grandmother) did not approve of my father, who depended on my mother in providing for our family. We lived with our *lola* while our father separated from us and lived with friends who were not a good influence on him. One day, he got so jealous of my mother's friendship with a lesbian that he attacked and killed the latter.

Because of this, my family left for Pampanga. I stayed with my grandmother because I did not want to forfeit my high school scholarship. Eventually, my father was arrested and is now serving a life sentence in prison. During this time, I immersed myself in my studies in order to forget our family problems. I would only see my mother and siblings during the summer or Christmas break. That is, if they had money for bus fare to go to Manila.

My Saving Grace

I focused on my studies, studied hard at Torres High School, and graduated salutatorian. While I was reading my speech during our graduation rehearsals, tears fell from my eyes when I saw the parents of my other classmates watching their children. No one was there for me. My teachers raised funds so that my mother could come to my graduation. In the absence of my father, I would turn to God and say, "*Buti na lang nandyan Ka.*" (Good thing You're here.)

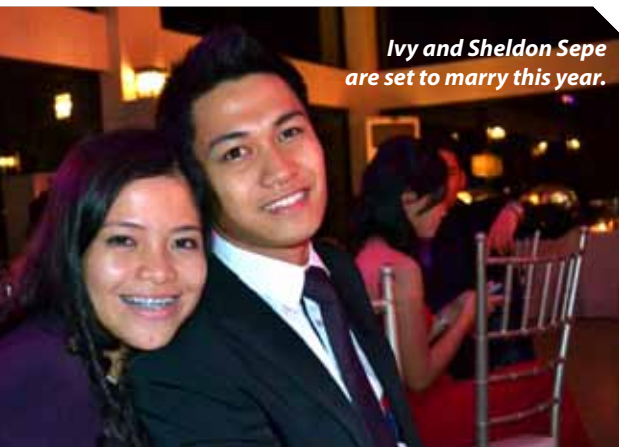
My scholarship from my Japanese sponsor had ended and I was worried that I wouldn't be able to go to college. But I did not want to stop; I knew that my education was our way out of poverty. I did not even have P500 to take the expensive exams in schools, so I took those that were given for free. I searched and applied for scholarships until I discovered SM Foundation. I got accepted and was happy to know that their scholarship covered tuition and miscellaneous fees. I was also going to receive a stipend of P2,000 for eight months in a given school year. But my course, Computer Engineering at FEU-East Asia College, lasted for over 10 months and I needed to save for the days that weren't going to be covered by my allowance.

When Time Stood Still

Just when my classmates would go on their vacation during Christmas and summer break, I would be wearing my stockings inside the bus to prepare for my work as a saleslady in SM.

I would stand for eight hours every day. We were not allowed to lean or sit when we are at work. I took on a positive attitude and often motivated myself, "*Kaya ko ito*" (I can do this). When there was no customer, the hours felt longer when one had to wait. Sometimes, I would feel envious when parents would buy presents for their children. But I would continue to serve them with a smile. Throughout those months of working at SM, I invested in only one uniform. I would wash it every night so I could use it again the next day. The hard work and perseverance taught me to value every centavo that I earned. I would reward myself with a Triple Choco Boom that cost P20 when I got my salary and would save the rest for the coming term.

I remember being culture shocked when I saw my rich classmates drink expensive coffee, which was already worth one week of my food. I was OK with eating outside where a meal would cost only P20, or partake of the buy-one-take-one burger joint.



Ivy and Sheldon Sepe are set to marry this year.



After a decade of prioritizing food over leisure, Ivy and her siblings can now go on out-of-town trips.

All Hard Work Pays Off

At school, I would only have lunch for 15 minutes and spend most of my time in the library — studying, reading and doing advanced work. I would also augment my allowance by volunteering to photocopy materials for my classmates. I would charge a few centavos for services rendered and earn P20, which was good enough for my transportation.

I felt that I had to give my best because my education was the only treasure I had in my life. I did not want to lose it and so I studied hard. Even when I was elected and served as president of our student council, I still gave first priority to my academics. In 2008, I graduated from college with *magna cum laude* honors.

Two months after graduation, I was hired by Chevron. It was one of the happiest days of my life. When I was asked to sign the contract, I couldn't believe what was before my eyes. The salary was so much more than what I, a fresh graduate, expected to receive. All my hard work, sacrifices and efforts flashed back in my mind. I immediately called my mother in Pampanga and told her, "Nanay, mayaman na tayoy!" (Mom, we are now rich!)

What It Means to Be Truly Rich

But God had something more in store for me. Two years into my new job, I started feeling restless. I was earning a lot but I didn't feel fulfilled. Something was missing. During this time, a colleague of mine invited me to a career talk in our company, which turned out to be Bo Sanchez's seminar on financial literacy.

I was struck by what Bo said about the wrong theology about money. At the time, I was still embracing a poverty mindset, feeling like I did not deserve certain things and it was as far as I could go. Even though I had big dreams, my poverty mindset was stopping me from becoming all that God wanted me to be.

So I started joining Bo's Truly Rich seminars and began reading his books. I invested on knowledge, believing in the value of education. Bo's books, *How to Be Really, Really, Really Happy* and *How You Can Make Your Life Beautiful*, had a great impact on me. My mind started to expand and I experienced a paradigm shift.

During this time, I was also buying and selling gadgets to augment my income so I could support my siblings who had just gotten married and were having babies. I took care of their hospital bills and the first needs of their children. I felt that I needed to earn more so I could help more.

As they say, the teacher will appear when the student is ready. My boyfriend, Don, and I started to become curious about The Feast (the Light of Jesus Family's weekly gathering in different locations). We first attended it in March 2010 at Valle Verde Country Club in Pasig City. Bo was giving a talk series on how to prosper and I completed the entire teaching series over several Sundays. I realized that I did not only need to grow financially but most importantly, spiritually. Through The Feast, I grew closer to the Lord. I let go of my insecurities and I learned to forgive my father.

I followed Bo when he transferred to The Feast PICC and I joined a caring group. Through the sharings, prayers and support of fellow brothers and sisters, I was healed of the wounds of my past.

I also resigned from my first job and joined a direct selling company. Because I had learned the value of hard work, patience and perseverance early on, working for the networking company was not too difficult for me. Through selling health care products and building teams, I earned my first million in just eight and a half months.

I have achieved the goals I wrote down and, with God's grace, bought my own car and condo unit where my family now lives. I helped my mother retire last year and I invested in her own *sari-sari* store that would give her a regular income. My dream is to build a house in Pampanga that she could call her own. In all her 25 years working as a public school teacher, she had not experienced a better life until now. She is my inspiration and I want to thank her for all the years that she sacrificed and worked hard for us.

I was also able to go on many travels sponsored by my company. Last year, I joined Bo's Holy Week pilgrimage. I also brought my mother with me to Fiji Island for free. It was her first time to ride a plane.

I continue to strive to be the best that I can be so I can serve more people. I want to give of myself, now as a leader and trainer in our company — coaching others, sharing my knowledge and experience to help them get out of the rat race. Above all, to help them become truly rich in all areas of their lives, but especially spiritually — the same way God has helped me.

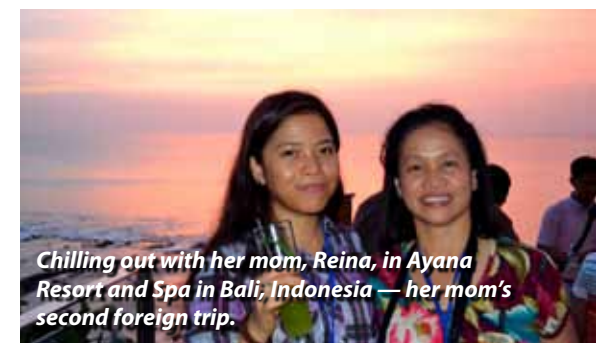
I am now 25 years old and, looking back at my journey, I am amazed at how my life has turned around. It is by God's grace that everything became possible. And I count on the same grace as my fiancé, Don, and I start our married life soon and together build a happy family. 📷



During their first visit to Ivy's condo, where her mother and sister now live with her.



Happy pilgrims in Holy Land, with Bo Sanchez and Ivy's roommate, Vanessa Lalap.

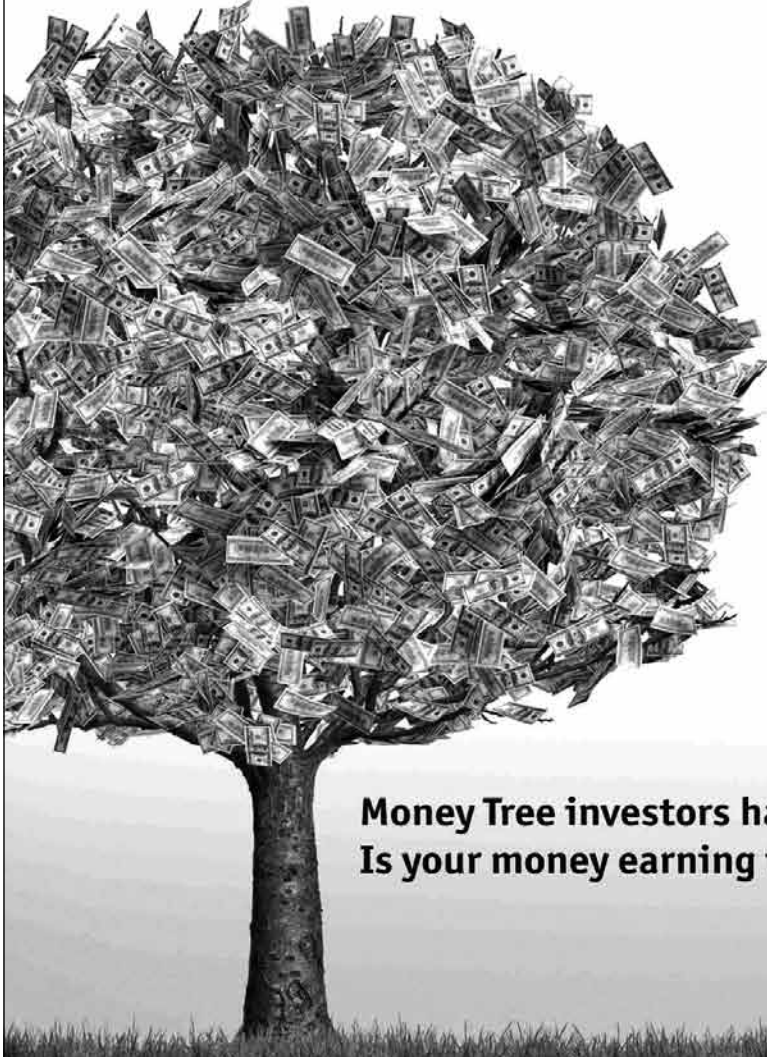


Chilling out with her mom, Reina, in Ayana Resort and Spa in Bali, Indonesia — her mom's second foreign trip.

(To read more about Ivy's inspiring life story, visit www.ivydelacruz.com.)

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¹Annualized returns of Money Tree funds since launch until September 28, 2012; past performance is not indicative of future results
²Investment rates of the top 3 banks as of October 18, 2012

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Waaaahhhh!” cries a baby when he is born. He doesn’t say, “Hi, Mom! I love you!” does he? I bet you’d be afraid if you hear an infant speak from birth!

Growth is a fact of life. We go through different stages of human development.

In the spiritual realm, the same is true. First, we are spiritual babies, then spiritual children, then spiritual teenagers, until we become spiritually mature.

People define spiritual maturity in different ways. And it is so important that you know what spiritual maturity means to you. Because if you think that spiritual maturity means one thing, you will gauge and evaluate yourself according to that definition.

For example, in the physical realm, if my definition of being physically mature is having the body of Arnold Schwarzenegger, then I will be disappointed if I don’t achieve it even after spending eight hours a day in a gym and taking all bodybuilding supplements.

What’s our common image of a spiritually mature person? One who is knowledgeable about spiritual matters, prays a lot, attends

prayer meetings regularly, is a morally upright person, kind, helpful, gentle and a friend of all.

But what most people don’t know is that there is another definition.

Knowing the Bible and other matters of our faith aren’t enough.

Praying 24 hours a day isn’t enough.

A spiritually mature person is also emotionally mature.

A person may possess

all theological knowledge, but he could be escaping from a reality of adultery, cheating or other addictions.

Motive is very important in the Christian life.

And an emotionally mature Christian is one who is in touch with his deeper core. He knows and accepts the truth about why he is doing something. His mind and heart are one.

We are not one mind here, one spirit there, one soul here, one heart there. We’re one.

Spiritual maturity takes a lifetime.

And emotional maturity is one path that will bring us there.

Friend, start your journey now! **(K)**

**ARE
YOU
GROWING?**

**Paths to
Spiritual
Maturity**

By Bo Sanchez

Special Section

You Cannot Be Spiritually Mature If You Are Not Emotionally Mature

By Bo Sanchez



When I was 13 years old, I saw for the first time one of the most fantastic evangelists I've ever heard or seen on TV. He was so wonderful. As he preached, the camera would get a closeup shot of him and I could even see his tears falling down his cheeks. And then the camera would pan to the audience. People in the audience were also crying. That's how powerful he was.

That preacher was Jimmy Swaggart. He was so big and popular. He was known to be a very strict and holy person. In 1986, he appeared on TV and condemned another pastor by the name of Marvin Gorman. He told his audience and his church leaders in the Assemblies of God that Marvin had a mistress. So Marvin was defrocked and was not allowed to preach anymore.

But in 1988, Jimmy Swaggart hogged the headlines with a photo of him leaving a motel room with a prostitute. Guess who sent his photos to the newspapers? Marvin Gorman!

In February 1988, Jimmy went on television and delivered his now infamous speech, "I Have Sinned." His church leaders told him to stop appearing on TV. After a few months, Jimmy went back on TV, saying that if he didn't, so many millions of people would go to hell. He disobeyed his leaders and just kept on preaching.

In 1991, Jimmy was apprehended for driving on the wrong side of the road, but what was worse was he was with a prostitute in the car. When asked by the patrolman why she was with Jimmy, the prostitute said, "He asked for sex."

I don't know what has happened to him since then. I do not pass judgment on him, but I say this one thing: Jimmy Swaggart is one person who knows the Bible. He probably serves God every day. He preaches about God every day. He probably prays and worships like we do. But he is not spiritually mature. Why? Because he is not emotionally mature.

You're probably thinking that I am attacking the evangelical preachers because I'm a Catholic. To be frank, when I went to the United States a few years ago, I saw firsthand the crisis happening in the Catholic Church. Do you know that there are 188 dioceses in the US? And do you know how many dioceses have a pending sex abuse court case against their priests? One hundred eighty-eight! Now, do you know how much the American Catholic Church has already paid in settlement for these victims and for these accusers? One billion dollars!

You might ask, don't those priests pray? Don't they celebrate the Eucharist? Don't they receive the Body of Christ? Of course they do! But why are they involved in such cases? Aren't they spiritually mature? I tell you, there is no spiritual maturity without emotional maturity.

Again, you might say I'm criticizing American priests. OK, let's not go very far. One time, a lady approached me. She's a member of a prayer group. She asked me, "Bo,

why do we fight in our prayer group? We pray together. We worship together. We serve together. We have our individual prayer times. But why is there so much intrigue in our prayer group?"

You know why? Ninety percent of the reason why people fight is envy. People are so emotionally immature, that no matter how long we pray, no matter how much we read the Bible, or how many meetings we attend, we still fight.

Even a Spiritual Giant Becomes Afraid and Depressed

Let me share with you the story of Elijah. He just had a showdown with 450 prophets of Baal. I don't know if you remember this. Elijah told the prophets of Baal, "OK, let's prove who the real God is. You put an altar, you sacrifice an animal, and then you call on your gods, and then you pray that fire will come. And I will pray that the God of Israel will come and bring fire."

What happened? These 450 prophets of Baal danced around the altar, they prayed, they cried and shouted, "Let fire come!" But no fire came after many, many hours. Now, what did Elijah do? He built an altar and with a snap of a finger, he said, "Fire please!" Boom! Fire came.

When Queen Jezebel learned about this (she was a Baal worshiper), she was so angry she sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "May the gods do thus to me and more, if by this time tomorrow I have not done with your life what was done to each of them."

What was Elijah's reaction? He was so afraid.

I could not understand why Elijah reacted that way. It was clear that God was on his side, and yet he was afraid of Queen Jezebel. He was so depressed he became suicidal. He thought he was all alone, and God had to tell him, "There are eleven thousand other people who do not worship Baal and who worship Me only."

Friend, do you sometimes get depressed? Afraid? Lonely?

I don't care how spiritual you are, how much time you pray, how much Scripture you read, how much you know and serve God. There will be times when you will be depressed, lonely and afraid. It has nothing to do with your relationship with God, or how holy you are, or how close you are with God. It has everything to do with being a human being.

It's normal to feel lonely, to be depressed, to be afraid. Don't panic when you feel these feelings.

When a friend comes to you and tells you, "Brother, I am depressed." Do you say, "Oh, you lack faith! Let me pray over you!"

Not All Problems Have Spiritual Solutions

Many people think that there is only one solution to all problems: a spiritual solution.

Hey, some problems are not spiritual. Some problems are emotional. And for an emotional problem, a spiritual solution won't work. A person feels depressed, afraid or lonely sometimes, not because he lacks prayer or he lacks the Word

of God, but because he's going through something.

This is my point: To be spiritually mature, you have to be emotionally mature. You cannot be one or the other. You have to be both.

Let me share with you the five signs of emotional maturity.

1. You live in self-knowledge.

When you don't know yourself, you cannot be emotionally mature.

Do you know someone who just loves to criticize? Scrutinize that person's heart and you'll discover someone who doesn't like himself.

Why? Because for that person, the people that he sees around are a projection of himself.

Every person you look at are mirrors. When you're so angry at another person, many times it's a projection of yourself.

You're angry at him but, in reality, you're angry at yourself. And you do not know this because you do not know yourself.

Why did Jimmy Swaggart hate sexual offenders, especially preachers and pastors? Because he saw himself in them. But he didn't know that it was because he was angry at himself for being like them.

2. You live in vulnerability.

You have to admit that you have weaknesses. If you do not, there is no emotional maturity in you.

Some years ago, I was invited to talk at a Charismatic Renewal leaders conference in San Francisco. There were around 700 leaders from different countries and they had high expectations of me.

That conference was my last stop in a 10-day trip. I was sleeping about three hours a day for seven days. I was changing time zones. It was really a hectic, back-breaking trip.

This is how I began my talk: "Brothers and sisters, last night, I turned on the television in my room and I discovered that there was pornography. I want to confess to you that I was so tempted to watch. The remote control was in my hand and it would have been so easy to watch. I was so exhausted. You know, when you're physically tired, you are spiritually weak. Your mind, your body, your spirit — they're all connected. I had not

watched pornography for such a long, long time and I was alone in the room. I could have watched all by myself."

And then I proceeded with my talk. I didn't know what was going to happen afterwards. The organizer, who was my friend, could simply tell me to go home and skip the other three talks that I was supposed to give, and I would do so. But you know, one of the most wonderful things happened. As I stepped down from the stage, so many people approached me and hugged me, crying. They were saying, "Bro. Bo, you're not alone. I have felt that way myself."

By the way, I didn't tell them that I chose to watch *Batman* instead. Why? Because I wanted people to understand that if you're a leader, one of the most wonderful things you can do is to tell people that you are just like them. Because the moment a leader stands up and says, either verbally or non-verbally, "I am better than you are, I don't have spiritual struggles, I am not tempted the way you are," he is cursing you to discouragement and saying that you're all alone in your problems.

Someone who is vulnerable is able to tell people, "I'm human just like you are. We can grow together." You need to have one, two or three people in your life with whom you can share everything, and that can make you grow towards emotional maturity.

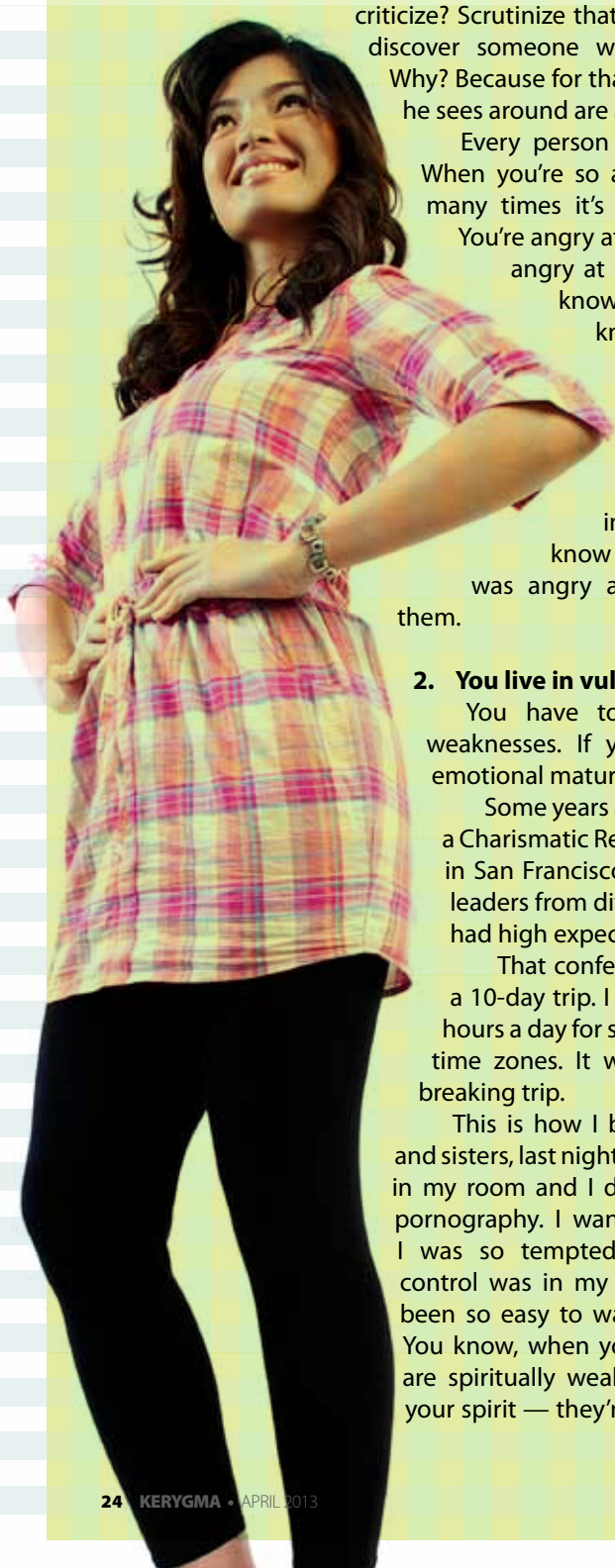
3. You are in touch with your feelings.

I remember a friend who told me, "Bro. Bo, I have a problem. I have pain in my body that doesn't go away. Sometimes it's in my lower back, then it transfers to my neck. Other times, the pain is in my stomach, then it moves to my chest. I've been to a lot of doctors and I've had a lot of tests, but they're all negative. The doctors say there's nothing wrong with me, but why do I experience a lot of pain?"

Because he was my friend, I knew what he was going through. He was having a difficult time at his job. He hated his job so much that he wanted to leave. In other words, he was depressed, but he didn't know it. His depression was manifesting in his body.

When we do not accept and admit our feelings, it sometimes comes out in the form of allergy, arthritis, ulcer, cancer, hypertension and so on. (I'm not saying that cancer and other forms of diseases are due to this. There are other causes, and not letting go of deep-seated resentments is one of them.)

You need to be in touch with your feelings.



Feel the fear. Feel the anger. Feel the depression. Feel the loneliness. Do not run away. Do not escape. But take it, hold it, grasp it, go through it.

This is what I noticed. We learn how to be out of touch with our emotions as early as childhood. We teach our children not to be in touch with their emotions. Parents, listen well. When a toddler falls down and cries, what do you do? You tell your child, "Ssshhh, here's a toy, baby! Don't cry anymore!"

What are we telling them? Don't feel the pain. We do something worse. When the child is crying, we tell him, "Stop crying! Stop now or else..." You teach your child to distrust his emotions.

I'm not saying that you should let your child cry for two hours. If he's throwing a tantrum, you discipline him. But if your child is crying because he got hurt, let him cry. Or if he's afraid to go to the bathroom because it's dark, then just go with him and hold his hand.

To be in touch with their emotions, teach your children that it's OK to feel these feelings.

4. You live within your limits.

Is there someone in your life who once asked for your help and then became dependent on you? In the beginning it could have been a request for help for an emergency situation. But later on, this person asks for assistance with just about anything he needs. And when you don't give it, he'd even make you feel guilty.

If you're emotionally immature, you can be easily manipulated by this kind of people. Because you always want approval, you have no boundaries.

An emotionally mature person is able to say, "No, I do not accept the responsibility for your life. You hold your life and I'm giving it back to you."

We need to do this so that they can stand on their own two feet.

An emotionally mature person lives within his limits and does not allow anyone to put the responsibility for their lives on his shoulders.

5. You possess incarnational love.

Do you know the most important sign of emotional maturity? It's incarnational love — acts of love. You are emotionally mature when other people see and feel the love of God through you. That is emotional maturity.


Many times, in our Christianity and in our righteousness and in our holiness, we do not give the love of God.

One of St. Benedict's rules is this: If you want to correct someone, and you will enjoy correcting that person, do not correct. Why? Because it's possible that the person being corrected would not feel the love of God.

When Jesus corrects, the person feels the love of God. Remember the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well and the adulterous woman in John 8? The only people that Jesus would correct and who would take offense are the religious leaders, those who were legalists and self-righteous. But the ordinary sinner would always feel the love of God. And that's your goal — to go all over the world and show the love of Jesus.

You want to grow emotionally so you'd grow spiritually?

Find out your blind spots and the areas of your life where you need the touch and the healing miracle of God.

It may take a long time, but start acting now. 

Bo's Action Steps:

1. Examine yourself. What type of persons or behavior usually evokes strong negative feelings in you? What could these negative feelings be saying to you about yourself?

2. List down your weaknesses and character flaws. Do you tend to hide your weaknesses from others or are you comfortable showing them?

3. Do you have difficulty saying no to other people's requests or offers? Next time someone approaches you, try saying you'll think about it first if you cannot outrightly say no yet.



Email me at bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com.

Connie is more at peace now with herself, with God and with her co-servants.



HOW MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY LED TO MY INNER HEALING

By Connie Gabriel as told to Tess V. Atienza

was a little nervous as I approached him. But I knew it was the right thing to do. I had prayed hard and asked God for the grace to be able to talk to him one-on-one on an issue affecting our group.

Sitting in front of him, I told him, "Father, this is all coming from me, not from my husband or from anybody. I have processed this myself and I knew I had to let you know about this." Then I proceeded to tell him about the issue.

And so when he replied, "How bold and honest you are for telling me this," I heaved a sigh of relief. After that dialogue, his relationship with our group improved.

What I did was something I wasn't used to doing. Before, when I had a conflict with anybody, I'd just retreat or withdraw and busy myself with other things. I didn't know I was reacting that way because of an inner wound that started when I was in my mother's womb.

A Thirst I Could Not Quench

I had just graduated from high school and was deciding on what school to enter for college. Because I studied in a Catholic school in elementary and high school, I wanted my college years to be spent in a non-sectarian university. I wanted to study at

the University of the Philippines, but I didn't make it to their deadline. So I entered another university and enjoyed my college life until I graduated. I didn't pay much attention to my spiritual life. But a certain thirst soon caught up with me despite a level of success in my studies and career.

Early in our marriage, my husband and I experienced minor problems, just like any normal couple would. I was an orphan and so I had no one to turn to except God and Mama Mary. Thus, I began to take my spiritual life more seriously.

When we transferred to our present home, we felt God was blessing us so much. Our marriage turned for the better. But in spite of the blessings, I felt a certain hunger and emptiness inside.

It was at that time that the mother of our partner in our bakery business began inviting us to Opus Dei — first to become cooperators and then later to their formation activities. I felt somehow that my thirst was being quenched through their monthly recollections, weekly formation sessions, and so on. It was like going back to the religion that I sort of “left” when I was in college. I felt a deeper hunger for theology — for God.

The Path That Led to My Self-Discovery

One time, we heard that there was going to be a Life in the Spirit seminar in our parish. We had no idea what it was all about, but we registered and found out that it was the entry point to a Charismatic renewal community. It was a struggle for me to go on with it because I had close encounters with Charismatics who were just Charismatic in lingo but not in how they lived or treated other people.

But I felt I was being called to it when I had a mysterious experience before the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I didn't want to confess because I felt it was something I had to voluntarily do and not forced on me by the “shepherds” in the community.

One night, a bright light from our TV monitor awakened me. I thought we had left it on. The light hit my eyes, and when I looked out the window, all I could see were crucifixes on the lampposts. I felt it was the Holy Spirit telling me I should confess in preparation to receiving Him in baptism. So I made an examination of conscience and resolved to go to confession the following day. I slept peacefully afterwards.

Eventually, my husband and I got involved in the Charismatic renewal and also in the Marriage Encounter movement. But deep inside, I was doubting whether we were in the right place. Admittedly, there was too much politics even in church organizations. That saddened us, because all we wanted was to know, love and serve God in the Church. We even wanted to serve in the background, like cleaning the toilets or preparing the food.

But the time came when we were thrust in leadership positions, and all the more we witnessed envy, bickering and conflicts among servants. I didn't like what was happening and I wanted to get out. But we continued our service, and later, I realized that it was probably God's way of bringing out what was wrong with me. It was not really about the people we were working with but about me and what was happening in my heart.

I also got involved in the intercessory healing ministry. Through one of our seminars, an inner wound surfaced, but it took another God-given opportunity to address it more fully.

When we were tasked to head the family life ministry, I got introduced to counseling. One time, I brought a counselee to a counselor-friend at the Center for Family Ministries (CEFAM) for further assessment. My counselee was invited to attend the Reparenting the Child Weekend workshop. But when we went there for the workshop,

my counselee didn't want to join the sessions. So I was forced to use her slot, which turned out to be a blessing for me.

Through that workshop, and the other programs in CEFAM that I later attended, I discovered that I felt rejected when I was still in my mother's womb. I was the youngest of 12 children. My mom was already 46 when I was conceived. She didn't know she was pregnant; she thought she had cancer of the uterus, so I received no care at all for several months. Then when she realized that she was pregnant, she became anxious because she knew of premenopausal pregnancies where the children were born with abnormalities. She feared that possibility, and I also absorbed her fear. Add to that the fact that she had a heart problem, so she was afraid of what would happen to me in case she died. I absorbed everything that she felt.

I also discovered that my fear of anything related to death — funeral parlors, caskets, flowers — was rooted to my childhood experience of seeing my mother die in front of me.

God eventually showed me that the rejection I felt was not true — that my mother loved me, and that He is there for me. He led me to forgive my mother for leaving me behind.


This healing experience brought tremendous impact in the way I related to the people around me and in my service to God. I became more aware of my feelings and learned how to process myself whenever I react negatively to someone's behavior. I began to realize that how I react to other people is a projection of what's happening inside me.

God also led me to a Jesuit priest, Fr. Junjun Borres, whom my husband and I helped in putting up a bakery in Bilibid Prison. As a token of appreciation and gratitude for our generosity, he gave us formation through the Retreat in Daily Life of St. Ignatius. Here, I learned to listen better to God.

My Journey Continues

In my present community, which is more contemplative in nature, we were introduced to journaling. We pray with Scripture and then through journaling, we open ourselves to what the Lord wants to say to us. Many times, He'd convict me and lead me to bare myself to Him.

It's true what they say, that as one gets closer to God, to His Light, he sees more the ugly parts of himself that had for so long remained in the dark. Our human ways cannot heal us alone; it is God who leads and changes us so that every part of us becomes like Jesus.

No matter what roads I've taken in my journey, God has used them all to put order in my relationship with Him. My journey continues, and so does my healing. I still serve in an environment that is full of imperfect and wounded people, but the love of God in my Heart and my daily yeses to Him make me still think, “What a wonderful world...” As long as I am determined to follow God, His grace just keeps flowing — leading me closer to Him and to the real me. 

Signs of Spiritual Maturity

Special Section

By Bo Sanchez

Do You Have Them?



Little Johnny watched his mother spread cold cream on her face. "Why do you put that stuff on your face, Mommy?" he asked.

"To make myself beautiful," said his mother. She then began removing the cream with a tissue.

Little Johnny stared intently at her face. "That's OK, Mommy," he said. "You can try again tomorrow."

Spiritual maturity, or growth in general, is something that doesn't happen overnight. It's a daily process that takes years — your entire lifetime!

There was a time when I thought that a spiritually mature person does all these things: prays daily; reads the Bible daily; attends a weekly prayer meeting; evangelizes and brings others closer to the Lord; actively serves in a ministry; reads spiritual books regularly; goes to confession at least monthly; goes to Mass more often than Sunday; and prays the rosary daily.

How did I realize that these are not the signs of spiritual maturity?

When I was 13 years old, my religious leader molested me. He was a layman who tried his best to look like a priest. He always wore a white or blue barong tagalog and a huge cross around his neck, a Bible or breviary in his hand. To me then, he looked spiritually mature. He prayed every morning. He read the Bible every day. He went to Mass. But for years, he molested young boys.

I have a friend who does all these nine things — and much more — that I thought a spiritually mature person does. Jim goes to Mass every day. He goes to confession once a week. I admired him so much. But one day, I heard that his marriage was falling apart. I talked to his wife and she said, "Bo, I'm separating from my husband. I hate his guts." She had never felt loved, honored or respected by her husband. She said that his children hate him as well. Now tell me: Is this person spiritually mature?

I met a man who didn't even go to Mass on Sundays. But sometimes, when I'm in his presence, I'm moved to tears because he is such a loving person. Meeting people like these have shaken me to the core, have caused me to question my list of signs of spiritually mature people.

Now, I'm realizing it's not true. These are signs of "religious" maturity. I realized that religious maturity is not the same as spiritual maturity.

Don't get me wrong. The three people I mentioned above are exceptions. Generally, people who are religiously mature are also spiritually mature — but not always. They're not synonymous or equal or identical.

So how do we know we are growing in spiritual maturity?

The Nine Signs of Spiritual Maturity

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.

— 1 Corinthians 13:11

1. You're growing in receiving love.

Spiritually mature people know how to receive God's love, while spiritually immature people don't know how to receive God's love.

The deepest wound in the human heart is the wound of not being loved for who you are. And the greatest hunger in the human soul is the hunger of being loved the way you are.

The root cause of all the neurosis in the world is this: People worship a God who needs to be bribed in order to love them.

And that's why Christianity is very different from any other religion in the world.

In other religions, people go to God.

In Christianity, God comes to us.

In other religions, you court God, serenade God, and try to win His heart.

In Christianity, God courts you, serenades you, and tries to win your heart.

We love because He first loved us. — 1 John 4:19

When I was still single, there were a few single women who got attracted to me. But when they realized that I was only offering friendship and nothing more, their like became dislike. Thank God, I'm no longer in that stage of my life. I'm married and stable. But those days were crazy.

One of those women friends of mine came up to me and said something I will never forget. She said, "Thank God, I'm so over you. I don't like you anymore. But of course, I have to love you because I'm a Christian."

There's a difference between loving and liking.

Think of a person in your life that you don't like — maybe a coworker who's so irritating. It's OK. That's normal. But you still have to love that person, right?

I have good news for you: God doesn't have that problem.

God loves you. And He really, really, really likes you!

And you know what? You don't have to do anything to be liked by God.

He loves thinking about you.

He enjoys being with you.

I repeat. The root cause of all neurosis is this: People worship a God who doesn't like them and who needs to be bribed in order to like them.

2. You're growing in gratitude.

Be thankful in all circumstances. — 1 Thessalonians 5:18

The husband says to his wife, "You always carry my photo in your handbag to the office. Why?"

She replies, "When there is a problem, no matter how impossible, I look at your picture and the problem disappears."

He smirks and replies, "So now you see how miraculous and powerful I am for you?"

She calmly says, "Yes, I look at your picture and say to myself, 'What other problem can be greater than this one?'"

It's easy to be grateful when you've received a bonus.
It's easy to be grateful when you're promoted at work.
It's easy to be grateful when your child comes home with a nice report card.

But can you be grateful when you have a big problem in your life?

The spiritually mature person sees blessing in the midst of problems and is grateful.

What's the difference between reaction and response?

Reaction is spontaneous. It's not deliberate. It's not a result of reflection.

Response is deliberate. It's well chosen.

One time, I was in the airport to go to Cebu but my flight was delayed for five hours.

Everyone around me got up from their seats and proceeded to the counter. They were like enraged volcanoes erupting and spewing lava.

I closed my eyes, smiled, took a deep breath, and instantly felt peace. I said, "Lord, I know You have a special surprise in store for me."

Later, I'll share with you the surprise I received from God that day.

So, even if I was in the airport for six hours, I was grateful.

I love confessing, "Life is beautiful!"

Show me a grateful person and I'll show you a happy person.

Show me a happy person and I'll show you a grateful person.

If you tell me, "That person is very holy," but if I discover that he's not happy, I will doubt that he's holy.

3. You're growing in a healthy love for yourself.

Some religious people don't love themselves.

They hate themselves. They don't respect themselves. They don't honor their own needs.

I've met some religious people who are always angry because deep within them, they're angry at themselves.

Why? Remember what I told you about receiving God's love — that the root of all neurosis is that we worship a God who needs to be bribed in order to love us?

Well, you see, we become the God that we worship.

So there are people who need to be bribed in order to love themselves. They need to do something really fantastic before they can love and like themselves.

When you don't love yourself, you have so many hang-ups.

When you don't love yourself, you can't love God or anyone else.

When you receive God's love, you'll be able to love yourself.

When God calls you His beloved, the apple of His eye, how can you not love yourself?

Love your neighbor as you love yourself. — Mark 12:31

4. You're growing in freedom.

The spiritually mature person takes responsibility for his life.

The efficiency expert concluded his lecture with a

note of caution. "You don't want to try these techniques at home."

"Why not?" asked someone from the back of the audience.

"I watched my wife's routine at breakfast for years," the expert explained. "She made lots of trips to the refrigerator, stove, table and cabinets, often carrying just a single item at a time. 'Hon, I suggested, 'Why don't you try carrying several things at once?'"

The voice from the back asked, "Did it save time?"

The expert replied, "Actually, yes. It used to take her 20 minutes to get breakfast ready. Now I do it in seven."

Life is about choices.

A spiritually mature person takes charge of his life. He knows that his life is the way it is because of the choices he makes.

Remember this story?

The father says to the son, "Please give me a soft drink."

Son: Coke or Pepsi?

Father: Coke.

Son: Diet or regular?

Father: Diet.

Son: 8 oz. or 12 oz.?

Father: 8 oz.

Son: Can or bottle?

Father: Oh, for crying out loud, just give me water!

Son: Mineral or distilled?

Father: Mineral!

Son: With or without ice?

Father: I will hit you!

Son: With a broom or with a mop?

A spiritually mature person is free from addictions. Not because he focused on his addictions and tried to be free from them, but by focusing on his dream and loving himself.

I had many addictions because I didn't love myself.

Remember: All addiction is a hunger for love.

But when I began to receive God's love and began loving myself, my addictions went away.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners.

— Luke 4:18

5. You're growing in trust.

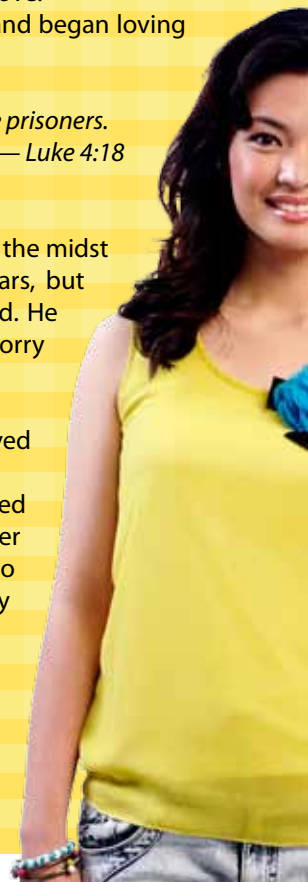
A spiritually mature person is at peace in the midst of his problems. Yes, he has worries and fears, but he chooses to surrender his problems to God. He sleeps well at night because he knows that worry doesn't solve any problem.

Only God can solve a problem.

Remember my story about my delayed flight to Cebu?

My talk was scheduled at 7:30 p.m. I arrived at 10 p.m. But the people in the church never left. I ended at 11 p.m. Until the last song, no one left. People were so blessed. We had a very powerful prayer meeting.

On that night, the leader in Cebu led them to worship, and because I was late, gave them a talk, and because I still hadn't come, showed one of my video talks, and finally, I



came and gave a talk. So that night, they had three talks!

Talk about unexpected blessings. I could have been totally worried in the airport for five hours. But I chose to trust.

You, too, have your own delays right now.

The money isn't coming yet.

The conversion of your daughter hasn't happened.

The reconciliation of that relationship is still in the distance.

Make a decision today to trust in God. He knows what He is doing. Everything will work out.

When I am afraid, I will trust in you. — Psalms 56:3

6. You're growing in giving love.

I have met people who are not even Christians. But they love others in such a profound way. They love like Jesus — willing to forgive, to die to themselves, to serve.

Your goal is not to be religious. Your goal is not even to be spiritual. Your goal is to live each day in love. And when you do, you are truly religious and spiritual.

You will be judged not by how many verses you read in the Bible but by how much you live the Bible every day.

You will be judged not by how many Masses you attended but by whether your life is a Mass — an offering of love to the people around you.

A spiritually mature person does everything because of love. He wakes up every morning because of love. He does his work because of love. He gets married and raises his kids because of love.

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

— John 15:12

If I want to know if a person is holy, I look at his relationships. I also look at how he relates to the poor.

7. You're growing in humility.

A spiritually mature person is a humble person.

When I came to know God, I felt I had something others didn't have. And I looked down at anyone who wasn't Charismatic.

When we met a nun or a priest, we would ask them, "Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit? Are you Charismatic?" If they said, "No," inwardly we would look down on them. We felt they were far away from God and in need of salvation.

Today, I see this spiritual arrogance among young Christians — and older Christians who have not matured spiritually.

I remember talking to one of them and he asked me, "Do you think the Pope has accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior? Do you think he has been baptized in the Holy Spirit?"

But if you become spiritually mature, you realize how arrogant you were. You're more respectful of other expressions of spirituality.

I now deeply respect various expressions of spirituality. Focolare. Opus Dei. Couples for Christ. Neo-Catechumenate. Contemplatives. I deeply respect non-Catholics, Born-Again Christians, and so on. There are many models and forms of holiness.

Spirituality is a life-long journey with many phases.

When a community is new, they feel the three Es: elitist, exclusive and entitled. We feel totally separate and great and fantastic. Our leaders are better. Our teaching is better. Our culture is better. Our training is better. Our ministries are better. Our building is better. Our music is better. After many years, we find out we were but one of many communities and we weren't that special. In fact, we have so many weaknesses!

Humility comes when one matures in the spirit.

8. You're following the spirit rather than the letter of the law.

When it came to the Sabbath, Jesus followed the spirit of the law instead of the letter of the law. It's true, you can't work on the Sabbath. But how about salvific work? Loving work? Isn't that the spirit of the Sabbath Law?

A woman told me, "Bo, I can't receive communion. I forgot that it was so near Mass, I chewed on candy."

I told her, "Stop being so scrupulous. Receive communion. Please. God is waiting for you to receive Him."

9. You're finding God in the ordinary.

The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

— 1 Kings 19:11-13

Someone who meets God in prayer but doesn't meet God in his job is still a child spiritually. One must meet God everywhere.

The Presence of God must be with you when you're not praying. Or another way of putting it: Everything you do must be prayer.


Remember that there are two types of prayer: formal prayer and life prayer. Both are essential. If you pray "formally" but not pray in your "life," you lack something.

Formal prayer is necessary but life prayer is more necessary.

When you find God in every person you meet, you're no longer just a religious person. You're now a loving person. And a religious person is good but a loving person is better.

I don't believe anymore that you have to be deliberately aware of God's Presence to be aware of God's Presence. I'm now discovering that when you live your life in love, you are godly.

I no longer believe that you need to be spiritual to be spiritual.

Friends, which would you rather be, a religious person or a spiritual person? 

Email me at bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com.



W



Tempered by God's Grace

*How I Overcame
My Bad Temper
and Became a More
Loving Person*

**By Levie Peñas as told to Judith Concepcion
Photo Credits: Cris Legaspi**

ho is Levie?"

"She's friendly, always with a ready smile, a happy person, warm, sweet" and the list goes on. This is how people regard me now. But if you went back in time and asked the same question, you'd get a totally different response. You may even wonder if they were describing another person.

I had many character flaws but the one that I struggled with the most was my bad temper. Even though I was already in the renewal, my bad attitude persisted. Many times, I had prayed to the Lord to liberate me from my temper problem. And He indeed heard my prayer. Little did I know that this journey toward my freedom would be a long, arduous and painful one.

A Showcase of Bad Attitude

I became fully aware of my bad temper when I started working. I was hired as a pharmacy clerk in a big hospital in Quezon City and rose from the ranks. It was here that my bad attitude reared its ugly head, which led me to unpleasant encounters with the hospital office staff. I easily got irritated with the slightest provocation or when I encountered people who were slow to understand and take action. I was tactless. At times I embarrassed some staff in front of patients. Though nobody confronted me about my attitude, I could sense that they didn't like me.

If I disagreed with or didn't like what someone said, I would definitely speak my mind. I didn't care who got offended. There were times when this escalated to heated arguments. Because of this, my relationships with my coworkers, elder siblings and in-laws were strained.

I worked in the office from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Even though I had young kids, I continued to work overtime and left my duties as a mother to their nanny, the household help and the tutor. The only time I had for my kids was Sunday, my only day off from work. Their nanny would report to me about my kids' school activities. If the report was not good, like when they got low grades, I would beat them up with whatever object I could get my hands on — a book, a notebook or a broom — while I yelled at them, "Bobo! Bobo!" I continued beating them until I had extinguished all the fire of anger within me. Because of this, my children feared me and distanced themselves from me. My two sons even attempted to run away from home when they were only seven and five years old.

Our maids and my kids' nanny also got a taste of my cruelty. I yelled and cursed them when they made mistakes or misunderstood

my instructions. I even pulled their hair when I flew into a rage. It wasn't surprising that we had a fast turnover of household help except for the nanny who stayed with us for 13 years for the sake of my children.

Baby Steps Toward Change

In 1989, my husband and I joined The Lord's Flock and served in its healing ministry. I noticed some positive changes in me: the cursing and shouting were minimized. But I still had small fights with my husband, and my children still received my beatings.

After three years, we joined Yahweh Me Rapha (a breakaway ministry) for a year and then the Marriage Encounter (ME). In ME, we joined a Family Encounter weekend. Here, one of the activities was for the children to list down the things they liked or disliked in their parents. My two sons (eldest and the second), who were already teenagers then, were with us. They wrote good things about their dad, but when it came to me, they pointed out my wrongdoings. Tears flowed as I asked forgiveness from them and from the Lord for all the hurt I had caused them. Everything changed after that. There was more laughter in the house. The beatings ceased. We established a family rosary prayer time. I learned to praise the work of my children. My two younger sons received words of encouragement from me. Because of this, they did well in school and had many achievements. But the journey didn't end there. God still dealt with my other character flaws.

The Big Blow

In 1997, my husband became ill and passed away. My eldest then was only 17 and my youngest 7; all were studying in private schools. Two years later, all the savings my husband left were used up and my earnings from my pre-need business, where I was a group manager, were consumed. I stopped attending prayer meetings to save on transportation cost. I sold our car and my children's college educational plans, and pawned most of my jewelry but never redeemed them. I resigned from the company because it was on the brink of folding up.

The years 1999 to 2007 were torture for me. God allowed me to pass through the crucible of fire to purify the areas of my life that were not pleasing to Him. During this period, I felt the Lord was deaf to my prayers, only to realize later that I was the one who wasn't listening. He stripped me of the things I held on to dearly: my wealth and my pride. He brought me low; I fell flat on my face.

The Lord allowed me to experience the things that I did to other people before. If someone asked me for financial help, I lied through my teeth that I didn't have money. For the street beggars, instead of sparing them change, I gave them a lecture. The tables were turned and I became the one in need. I had no choice but to swallow my pride and borrow from friends, and later from my in-laws. I had to bear with their sermons though. Even if my mind and heart were rebelling, I took everything in and didn't answer them back. But God was so good to my children. He provided for their educational needs and more, through the generosity of my in-laws, nephews, niece and my sisters.


Abounding Graces

In 2008 when my life felt so empty, God led me to the Kerygma Feast, which became instrumental in the healing of my relationships with

my siblings, my mother-in-law and others whom I had hurt before. I also received the grace to forgive those who had hurt me. I was choosy with friends before and didn't care about mingling with others. But now, I am more open and accepting of people. At times, when my patience is put to the test, I just invoke the Holy Spirit and all would be well.

I now have a deeper faith in God. I maintain a regular prayer time, read the Scriptures and other spiritual books. And the fruits of the Holy Spirit like love, joy, peace, etc. are now evident in my life.

God is now fixing the financial aspect of my life. Two years ago, God provided me with a source of livelihood through my networking businesses. Now, I am confident I'd be able to support the schooling of my youngest son, who will resume his studies this June. I pray that I become a good steward of His blessings and be more generous.

If you ask me, "Who is the new Levie now?" I would say, "I am God's beloved, forgiven and renewed by the grace and mercy of God." 



Levie, second from left, with her siblings.



Levie with her in-laws.

The Peñases usually spend their Sundays at The Feast PICC.



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PRAY

Faith Is Trust

Faith is belief. Faith has a truth content, which we come to know by accepting God's word for what it is. But faith is not only believing. It is also trusting and having confidence in Him.

Those who were praised for their faith in the Bible put their trust in God and in Jesus Christ. Jesus praised the centurion, whose servant He healed from a distance. He told the woman with a hemorrhage that her faith had saved her.

We trust a person if we perceive these two qualities in him: he can, and he cares. He is capable of helping us and he cares enough for us to help us.

God is all-powerful. He can do all things. More importantly, God is love and cares for us more than anybody does. Jesus showed Himself powerful over the forces of nature, over sicknesses, over the devil, over sin, and over death itself. What He saw the Father doing, Jesus also did. Hence, God and Jesus are supremely worthy of our trust and confidence.

Trusting God and Jesus means that we put ourselves into their hands, confident that in doing so we shall attain our true happiness. Hence, trusting God also means that we obey what He wills for us because He wants and does only what is good for us.

Trusting God does not mean no trials will befall us. Bad things happen to good people, experience shows us. But trusting God does mean that, no matter what evils befall us, God will not leave us alone and, with the trial, will also give us a way out so that we may prevail.

We cannot live our ordinary human lives without exercising trust. We trust the taxi driver who brings us to our destination. We trust the cook who prepares our food. We trust the doctors who operate on us and prescribe medicine for us.

But we need to trust God even more. We entrust our whole selves and lives (and not only a particular need) to God, and we have absolute confidence that God will not fail us if we follow His will. We may not always be able to figure out His ways but we are confident that He will arrange things for our benefit. Hence, the person of faith can endure trials, and even death, with a serene confidence in the God of love who is also all-powerful.

In modern times two saints have emphasized this absolute trust and confidence in God: St. Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, and St. Faustina Kowalska. St. Therese taught us her little way of humility and confident love. Jesus taught us through St. Faustina to say, "Jesus, I trust in You."


Those who trust in God become recipients and channels of His power. If it is true that nothing is impossible to God, it is also true that "everything is possible to Him who has faith" (Mark 9:23). Many people have experienced the power of a trusting faith, either of their own or of others who pray for them.

Our trust is best shown not when all goes well with us, but when we cannot understand what is happening to us or when God seems to be indifferent to us.

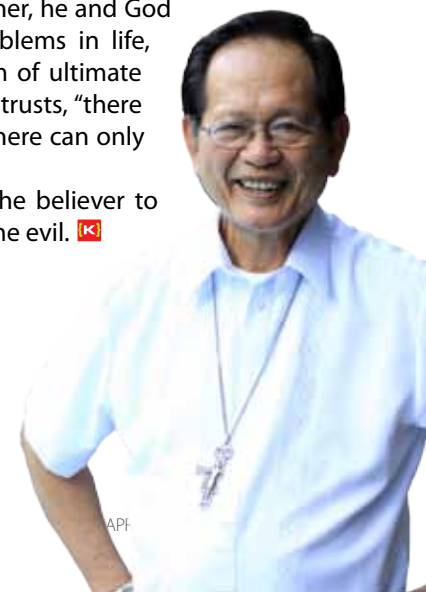
Trust in God should not beget recklessness, which would amount to putting God to the test. However, trust in God and His Son should help dispel our fear and embolden us when our faith is put to the test. The Apostles, threatened with punishment, refused to stop preaching the name of Christ, boldly saying, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Trust should not reduce the believer to passivity and resignation to adverse forces in life. Because he trusts that God is with him, and that this God cares for him and is all-powerful, the believer dares "to dream the impossible dream" and hopes "to beat the unbeatable foe."

To trust is not to submit to fatalistic resignation with a "Bahala na!" but it is rather to be confident that, together, he and God can beat all the problems in life, or at least assure him of ultimate victory. For one who trusts, "there is never any failure; there can only be delayed success."

Trust energizes the believer to do good and overcome evil. 

For feedback, email me at ted.bishopsmove@gmail.com.



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LIFE STINKS!

(Let's Celebrate!)

By Jon Escoto

K Preacher

Jane held in her hand a letter coming from her daughter who's taking up Industrial Engineering in one of the prominent universities in the city. Why suddenly a letter from Dana? She told her husband, "She's not the kind who's into writing these days. Yes, she calls me once in a while and sends SMS time and again, but why a letter now?"

The letter felt as heavy as a 40-foot cargo container. With a pounding heart, she carefully tore it open. Her face froze and turned pale. The letter read:

Dear Mommy,

Three months ago, there was a huge student demonstration across the street of my boarding house. The gathering of students didn't take long to turn into a nasty, extremely violent riot. My boarding house was hit by a Molotov bomb, instantly starting a fire that gobbled up the colony of houses in the entire area. Fortunately, my friends and I were rescued, but not quickly enough.

I was in the hospital for two months. The doctor said I had inhaled too much smoke and my lungs were severely damaged. While in the hospital, I fell in love with the janitor who cleaned my room every day and smothered me with flowers (left by the discharged patients from the other rooms). I am now three months pregnant.

As you read this letter, I'm already far down here in Dumaguete. Edgar, the father of my baby, and I decided that we settle here. I dropped out of school. We will pick up the pieces from here. I didn't have the heart to say these to you earlier because I know the indescribable hurt it will bring you and Daddy. I know the dreams that you have for me have been shattered to irreparable broken pieces. I just still hope that you can forgive me someday. I hope you can still believe me when I say I love you.

Dana

Nothing in this world could console Jane. She was weeping and wailing uncontrollably. She handed the letter to her husband, who

then shook with both anger and pity for his daughter.

But just before both of them could sink into permanent despair, the husband noticed a second page. He read it, and it said:

Dear Mommy,

What I wrote on the first page is "joke only!" The truth is, I just failed in Chemistry. It's bad, but it's not that bad. Please don't get mad at me. I promise to study better next semester. I wrote the first page just to set everything in proper perspective.

I love you.

Dana

The husband then turned to Jane and handed her the second page. After two minutes, and with both of them already smiling, the husband piped up, "Can you ask Dana to come home next weekend? Let's just celebrate!"


"Celebrate what?" Jane asked.

Shrugging his shoulders, her husband said, "Whatever!"

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

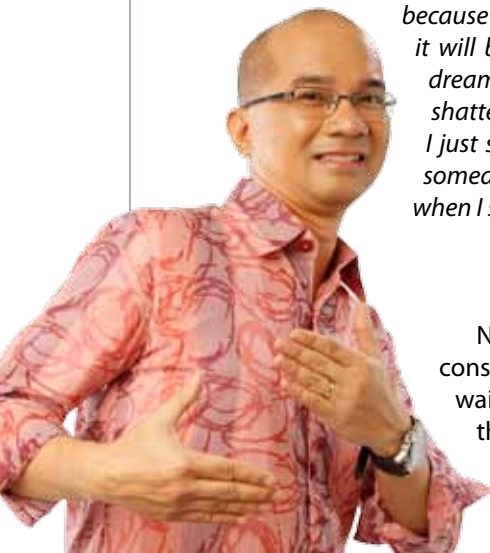
— *Philippians 4:4-7*

There's always reason to celebrate in the family — a lot of reasons. Let's celebrate in our families, and in our other important relationships, as often as we can. Healthy relationships are characterized by celebration.

We'd better practice here now. In heaven, that's what we will do in our entire unending life. 

Email Jon at faithatworkjon@gmail.com.

Jon is the Feast Builder of the Feast Laguna, which happens every Sunday, 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., at the Feast Laguna Family Center, 3rd Floor, Central Mall, Biñan, Laguna.





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15 DECEMBER 2012 - 15 APRIL 2013

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Her Relics will be at the Shrine of St. Thérèse, Newport Blvd., Pasay City
on these dates:

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Arrival Honors

April 12, 2013 (Friday)
Vigil and Veneration

April 13, 2013 (Saturday)
6:00 pm

Anticipated Mass
and Candlelight Procession

April 14, 2013 (Sunday)
12:00 nn
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Birthing Madoy

God Answered Our Prayer for a Normal Delivery

By Jenny Medina



Playtime is bonding time for Jenny and Madoy.

The birth of our first son, Jaden Mandarin, was not exactly what I had hoped for. He was delivered through Caesarean section. Though I was thankful for modern medicine that made the birth safe, I longed to have a different experience for my future children. My emotions were scarred and this left me searching for a way to have a natural vaginal birth next time around.

One key to my next pregnancy was prayer. Before we planned to have another baby, I asked God for a natural birth this time. My husband, Maxi, and I also did a lot of research on medical interventions and hospital policies, and talked extensively with each other about possible scenarios and what we hoped to experience.

At first, I really wanted a home birth, but at the latter part of my pregnancy, I submitted to my husband's decision to deliver in a hospital. My obstetrician saw that there was a double cord coil around the baby's neck that might require me to be on constant monitor. We asked God to give us faith and remove my fears of going through another C-section.


God answered our prayer mightily. When my contractions came on October 30, 2010, my pregnancy was exactly on its 40th week. My wonderful husband massaged me all throughout the day to ease the labor pains. After 22 hours of laboring at home, I decided to go to the hospital. Because all I felt throughout the day were my contractions, I was afraid that I could no longer feel my baby moving. I was worried that the double cord coil around his neck might harm him. Even though I was only four centimeters dilated (as examined internally by my midwife), I told God that I was surrendering to whatever His plan was for this birth.

We arrived in the hospital and after a total of four hours of pushing, Manilla Jadyen was born vaginally and all natural on October 31. I was thrilled to have a Vaginal Birth After C-section (VBAC) and have my healthy baby boy with me — with no vaccines or a bath — directly latching to my breast. My husband and I both enjoyed experiencing the beautiful, fascinating process of “the birth pains” that Jesus mentions in Matthew 24. The recovery was far better than my C-section delivery and I saw the benefits for my baby's health and mine. My milk also started to flow the day after the delivery and I was so thrilled that my baby was able to get all the milk he wanted.

God has awesomely and wonderfully designed us. He has created women with a phenomenal uterus. That we are able to conceive, carry a new life, and then give birth is entirely according to His beautiful design.

It was a very empowering experience to give birth to a baby the way God intended — without surgery or human intervention.

Looking back, it was a blessing that I had a C-section with my first baby. Because of that, I relentlessly pursued, prayed and hoped for a vaginal birth after C-section, which, for me, is both healing and wonderful!

Each birth has definitely stretched my faith in God. I faced such huge obstacles during each of my deliveries that I felt God could never get me out of them. But of course He always did! Praise Jesus that we have a God who knows us intimately and loves us more than we can ever comprehend. 



Jenny and Maxi with their two boys, Manilla Jadyen (left) and Jaden Mandarin (right).

I pray that you receive your miracles in Jesus' name!

By **Bo Sanchez**

I pray that God lift your trials, heal your diseases, bless your problems and direct you to the path He wants you to take. I pray that God remove your fears and give you the courage to surrender your burdens to Him.

So place your hand over my hand, and let's pray with trust, together with our prayer team of intercessors praying for you right now...

This page is our Point of Contact, our spiritual connection.

Say after me...

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

Lord, I surrender to You my worries and anxieties. I surrender to You my needs, my problems, my trials. I place them all in Your big hands. And I open myself to all that You want to give to me. On this day, I say yes to Your love, to Your blessings, to Your healing, to Your miracles. And Lord, specifically, I ask for the following miracles for my life...

I believe that You answer my prayer in the best way possible! And I thank You in advance for the perfect answers to my prayers. I also ask for the special intercession of Mama Mary. I pray all this in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen!

SPECIAL INTENTION FOR THIS MONTH:

Bless the readers of *Kerygma*, Lord. I thank You that You want us to grow in our relationship with You. You want us to be spiritually mature. I ask You, Lord, to continue to challenge us so that we would wake up and grow. Make us grow in love for other people. Prosper every area of our lives, but not only for our sake but for other people as well. Make us a people of justice so that we can share our wealth with others. Soften our hearts to the cry of the people around us who long to see Your face in us. Come and use us to fill the world with Your love. Amen.

Praying for you,



Email your prayer requests to me at bosanchez@kerygmfamily.com or write to me at Shepherd's Voice Publications, 60 Chicago St., Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines 1109.