



Seeds OF FAITH

BINHI SANG PAGTUO

VOLUME 2

Francis Neil Gico Jalando-on

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Seeds of Faith Vol. 2
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Francis Neil Gico Jalando-on
University Church
Central Philippine University

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FOREWORD

Many writers write their reflections on their daily walk with God for self-edification. I occasionally write journals of my travels, reflections, and prayers but only for my own perusal. Rev. Francis Neil G. Jalando-on, however, has been consistently writing and sharing his reflections through email and Facebook to thousands of recipients across the globe.

I really admire his dedication in this special area of ministry. His reflections have benefited pastors and lay leaders through the years. The first edition of *Seeds of Faith* (2015) was published and copies of which were distributed to the different departments of Central Philippine University to be used in their weekly devotionals. We intend to do the same with this second volume.

I would like to express my gratitude to Teodoro C. Robles, Ph.D, President of Central Philippine University, for approving our request to fund the printing of the second volume.

It is my prayer that this book will be a source of encouragement and inspiration to many who want to apprehend God in their own respective context. To those who have the gift in writing, I hope you will be encouraged to write your own reflections. God has His own way of meeting us even in the most trivial of circumstances. When that moment arrives and when you feel that you are standing on holy ground, may you capture everything in your own human language and scribble it down.

Who knows, that personal reflection might be part of our future publications. Your personal reflections might someday be part of a powerful witness of God's presence in the world.

Rev. Cris Amorsolo V. Sian
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God's Promises for the NEW Year

There are many promises in the Bible that God has given us. Here are three for the NEW Year:

God's promise of **N** - Never leaving us

People will leave us but God will always be there. When Moses was about to leave them and die, he left the Israelites these words found in Deuteronomy 31:6 "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you."

God's promise of **E** - Energy

Human activities have increased in the last decade due to the demands of work. As a result, lifestyle diseases have become prevalent. God has promised that He will restore our energy:

Isaiah 40:29-31: "He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint."

God's promise of a **W** - Way out from temptations

Our world has so many temptations that can lead you astray. Oftentimes people would blame the situation or another person that caused them to succumb to temptation. They forgot that there is always a way out:

1 Corinthians 10:13. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

Commitments for the New Year

Let us be reminded of our commitments as Christians every New Year:

First, let us live a life that is not imprisoned by our past.

Paul said, “Forgetting what is behind and straining forward to what lies ahead...” Phil 3:13

We cannot erase the past but we can change our attitude towards what happened in the past. This is what Paul meant by “forgetting” -- the painful past does not have a foothold in our present lives.

Second, let us let go of our grievances and release forgiveness to those who have hurt us.

Paul wrote, “Bear with each other and forgive each other whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. “ Col 3:13

A grievance is a deep-seated resentment towards someone we hate. It is a grudge. We have developed an unforgiving spirit towards that person and in some cases, plan for a revenge.

Harboring a grievance is destructive to us and to our relationships. Let us give up our grudges, commit these persons to God and forgive them.

A New YEAR Resolution

Each one of us, most probably, has a New Year resolution of some sort. If this were true, then we should also make some resolutions in our spiritual life.

What would this YEAR be?

Y - Yearn to know God deeper. Have you finished already reading the Bible? We believe that the Bible is God's Word yet we do not make an effort to read it. Many have finished reading so many books yet the Bible remains in the "to be read" list.

E - Engage in spiritual activities. We should go to church frequently. We should attend retreats, Bible study meetings and devotional. A meaningful worship experience will surely fuel our desire to do God's will in our lives.

A - Accept the mission that God has entrusted to us. Each one is given a mission by God. Have you found yours? Ask God what it is and He will surely reveal it to you. On top of this individual mission is the mission to spread the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

R - Repent from our wicked ways. We often regret the sins that we have done yet we sometimes fail to ask God for forgiveness and to repent. Regret is not the same with repentance. To repent is to turn away from those sins; to regret is just to feel sorry and the first stop toward repentance.

What is God Calling You to Do?

Last January 2016 I had an exciting and meaningful conversations with friends coming from the American Baptist Churches USA during their visit with the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches for a Round Table discussion held at Central Philippine University. These conversations led to a question, which I felt was very important to be answered: “What is God calling you to do?”

God’s call for me is a CALL to be/to:

CHRIST-centered. As Christians, we should never lose our focus, our center. Individually, this Christ centeredness should find expressions through our God-given gifts.

ALWAYS seeking God’s will. As Christians, we need to connect ourselves to God. The temptation is to start “trusting” our own will. When we are tempted to do that, just remember the words of Jesus “apart from me you are nothing.”

LOVE God with all my being, to love others, and to love myself. To love God with our everything means that there should be no area in our life that is not surrendered to God. Loving others is a great expression that we love God, and loving ourselves means that we are taking care of ourselves.

LOOK towards a better tomorrow. When we start looking for a brighter future, we also start to hope. And when we start hoping, we also start working. Let our hopes be an inspiration to do more for the glory of God.

What is God calling you to do?

Let us be Disciples of Jesus

Pastors from all over the country came to CPU for the Convention Baptist Ministers Association (CBMA) National Assembly last January 19-21, 2016. The main topic of discussion was discipleship.

“To make disciples” is an imperative given by Jesus Christ in the Great Commission. What does it mean to be a disciple and to make disciples?

“To make disciples” means that we will make disciples of Jesus and not disciples of ourselves. This is an important distinction that we must remember.

A disciple is a learner. A disciple in ancient times meant someone who had even learned to copy the penmanship of the master. This means that it is not enough to learn the teachings of Jesus but more importantly to consistently put those teachings into actions.

We must be disciples of Jesus first because in being so we are actually doing discipleship.

Transitions

The Christ Emphasis Week Celebration of Central Philippine University on January 2015 tackled the theme “Transitions” with the text found in 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Life is full of transitions. We cannot do away with it. Transitions can be two things: it can be painful, and it can be exciting.

When we are in our comfort zone and then all of a sudden we are transferred to something unfamiliar, oftentimes we do not want to leave the comfortable and the familiar. But when we do not allow transitions to happen we will miss some opportunities that God has in store for us.

The transition of the Israelites from Egypt as slaves to free people was painful. Many times they asked Moses to go back. If they had gone back, then they would have missed the Promised Land.

Transitions can also be exciting. One of the statements that I always like is: “The best is yet to come.”

Reading through history we can see some exciting events -- the transition to a better situation than before.

Jesus reminds us of the mustard seed -- it is very small but eventually it can grow bigger.

We cannot actually change the past but the future is another story -- we can actually change it.

God is in the Transitions

Transitions worry us because we do not know what will happen. What should we do when we are feeling anxious about transition?

First, be conscious that you're in a transition. Do not deny it. Denying it would just be delaying the inevitable. Acceptance of changes will help us acclimatize to it.

Second, remember your previous transitions. Reflect on it. Draw positive things from it. We have actually been to many transitions. We just need to learn from our history.

Thirds, get support. Ask for help. Do not be embarrassed in asking for help. Find a mentor. Pray.

Fourth, be positive. Believe that God has a plan in your transition. Commit your life to God and listen to His voice while you are in a transition. God is directing you to something greater.

Second Chances

The Christ Emphasis Week on February 2016 at Central Philippine University wrestled with the theme “Second Chances” based on the biblical stories of Esau and Jacob, and the prodigal son and his loving father.

We deliberately made the word “chance” into a plural term because we believe that our God is a God of many chances. Our God is gracious but it does not give us the license to abuse the grace of God.

What does it mean for us to be given a second chance? It means that we owe our life to God. Our life then should be lived in accordance to the will of God who gave us that second chance in life.

Here’s an acrostic of the word CHANCES:

C - Christ Jesus

H - Helps us

A - All to have

N - New

C - Chances to

E - Enjoy life and to

S - Serve God and others

Back to BASIC

While playing in a table tennis championship game when I was in high school, my father would always yell the instruction, “Double B” every time my game would veer away from the plan. “Double B” was my father’s code for “Back to Basic.”

What would be the BASIC of Christianity?

B - Bible is the Word of God. The Bible is where we can find the commandments of God, our guide and direction for life, and the assurance of God’s love for all of us.

A - Accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and we shall receive salvation. Our liberation will lead us to a meaningful life.

S - Share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people is a mandate that is given to all His followers. Our beliefs should be integrated in our daily lives. Our faith should not be in words only but more importantly in deeds.

I - Increase our faith through the ministry of the church, and personal Bible study and meditation. We should not forsake our assembly and fellowship in the church.

C - Christ is coming again to judge all of us. We will all be held accountable for our actions. We must be ready to meet our Creator.

Let us not lose sight of what is basic!

In the ROAD with Jesus

Every weekend I travel with my wife to churches that invite me to preach. I have learned many things when I decided to travel the ROAD with Jesus.

R – Re-assurance

With Jesus Christ by our side, we will be re-assured time and again that God is there for us.

What makes us lose our faith? Those whose faith were shaken said that they first doubted their faith when they saw bad things happen to good people. They asked why and blamed God for everything. Perhaps the question should be, as one author suggested: what should good people do when bad things happen to them? Good people will have faith in God.

O – Open eyes

With Jesus Christ as our traveling companion, we will see things that we have not previously seen.

If we were willing to be God-conscious, then God can use everything around us to talk to us. God can open our eyes to new things.

A – Accompaniment

Accompaniment is not just an instrument that accompanies a singer. It also means a partner that is perfectly suited for you.

Jesus is our perfect partner.

In the story of the two disciples in the road to Emmaus we can see that Jesus accompanied them. The company of Jesus resulted

into a more lively discussion while they traveled. It brought joy into their hearts.

D – Discovery of truths

These two disciples in the Emmaus story were discussing. Jesus joined their discussion. Jesus made them discover many truths. Later they testified -- “our hearts were burning while he talked with us.”

Just imagine a 7-mile trip with Jesus. More or less it was 4 hours of travel. They spent many hours talking to Jesus.

How about us? Christians need to talk to God in prayer, fellowship with one another, discuss our faith and share the truths that we have learned.

WALK with Jesus

In this age of busyness, we seldom find time to exercise. We need to remember that exercise is vital to our overall well-being. Do you know that Jesus also exercised? Yes, he was always walking. He had a good appetite as evidenced by the many dinners he went to. He kept his body fit by always walking.

When we WALK with Jesus we:

W - Walk with confidence

Who can be against us if Jesus is on our side? -- No one and nothing.

A - Always hope for something good

Even though our journey might be arduous, we can be assured that Jesus will find a way of turning “lemons into lemonade.”

L - Live a meaningful life

To have a life with meaning is the highest goal of each person. We can only achieve it if Jesus is walking with us.

K - Know that your life has a direction

Google Maps or GPS can sometimes make mistakes. But if Jesus is walking with us, then we are certain that he will lead us to the right direction.

Let us WALK with Jesus!

Casting a VISION

Having a vision is critical to a church. Proverbs 29:18 reminds us that “Where there is no vision, the people perish...” It is very clear in the Bible that a vision starts with the leader. The leader leads in casting the vision together with the people.

As you cast a VISION for a church in where you are in, remember the following. A VISION...

That can be:

V - Visualized in our minds. A vision is not something that is abstract, rather it points to something that is tangible.

I - Internalized in our hearts. A vision is easy to be grasped and understood. Thus, it can be incorporated in our daily lives.

That we can

S - Show to others and catch their attention. A vision excites us to share it to others. It is something that other may want to be part of.

I - Inspire the congregation to grow in faith and hope for a better future. A vision is bigger than ourselves. It becomes a rallying point that will unite the people.

O - Organize the church for action. A vision challenges us to do something. It even gives us the courage to do something we have not done before.

That is

N - Never far from the Great Commission that Jesus commanded us to do. The core of the church’s vision is the last command of Jesus. As the evangelist John Edmund Haggai wrote, “His last command, our first concern.”

Love is a VERB

Love without any action will just remain a word. Love requires our involvement and active participation. 1 John 3:18 reminds us "...not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

Love is a VERB:

V - Value the life of the one you love

To value is to give importance. How do you affirm the value of someone you love?

We value them by giving attention, affection and appreciation.

E - Enjoy the company of the one you love

It is looking forward to be with the one you love. Their presence makes you complete.

R - Reach out to the one you love

We must cultivate our relationship. The grass is greener where you water it. It is very easy to break a relationship -- just start neglecting it.

B - Believe that you and the one you love are created for a purpose

Our greatest fulfillment lies when we know our true calling and start living it. It is what will give us a meaningful life.

Lessons from Dr. Rex D. Drilon

CPU celebrates Dr. Rex D. Drilon Day every year in honor of the First Filipino President of CPU (1966-1971).

What lessons can we learn from this erudite man?

First, *be different from the world.*

In a meeting, Pres. Drilon told the college presidents:

“Let’s abolish the school administration that is bossy, that erects a gap between the administrator and the administered, that does not encourage student demonstrations, that doesn’t see to it that the faculty is adequately paid by failing to recognize that the human mind cannot thrive on an empty stomach, that doesn’t allow dissent and discussion, that has enslaved itself with a mockery of a grading system that, more often than not, could be even repugnant to learning and to the whole personality of an individual.” (The Cebu Advocate, September 8, 1967)

In the same manner, Jesus reminded the disciples that they are not of this world (system) although they are in this world (Earth).

Second, *be open to new ideas.*

In the same speech, Pres. Drilon challenged the college presidents how universities should be:

“Beware of campuses with uniform thinking, for uniform thinking leads to intellectual stagnation and eventually to intellectual decadence, then to death...for thought must be sharpened through the constant clash of diametrical ideas...and presidents must guide teaching away from propaganda and indoctrination and catechistic memorization...the classroom must be a forum of variegated thinking and viewpoints...for these alone

do make the university...” (The Cebu Advocate, September 8, 1967)

Jesus once reprimanded the disciples by having an exclusivist mindset. He told his disciples that those who are not against them is for them.

May we be different yet continually open to new things.

How Do We Want to be Remembered?

Central Philippine University honors the life and legacy of its first Filipino President Dr. Rex D. Drilon by celebrating an annual Drilon Day in February. Two questions would always come to mind when there is a memorial celebration: How do we want to be remembered? Will anybody remember us when we die?

Hebrews 11:4 reminds us that although Abel is already long dead his faith still speaks to us as if he is still alive.

Abel lived a short life because he was murdered by his brother Cain. But why did the writer mentioned him as someone who is still speaking to us? What can we learn from him?

First, live a life that always seeks to please God. God was pleased with the offerings of Abel. What about us? What are we offering God?

Second, live a righteous life. Abel did what was right. He knew what was right and wrong, and pursued what was right. What about us? Do we pursue what is right?

Dr. Rex D. Drilon once wrote, "... with your training at CPU, you are theoretically armed with the weapons of Christian character and Christian liberal-minded intellect that can make the difference in the eternal contest between the forces of darkness and the forces of light."

Let us live a life that though we will die our legacies will continue to speak to the next generation.

A Few Reminders to Those who Want to LEAD

Every election time, our country is bombarded with advertisement of politicians who want to lead the country. We, too, are called to lead in our organizations, offices and churches.

Here are a few reminders to those who want to LEAD:

L - Love the work of leadership. Love your role as a leader. When you love it, you start thinking about it, talk to people about it, dream about it, and eventually you become passionate about it.

E - Energize the people around you. Electrify them with your passion. Your enthusiasm can infect others. Be the person that draw people because they are inspired by your presence.

A - Activate the talents of the people. Leadership is not about one person doing it alone. The peak of leadership is when the leader has tapped the gifts of the people, and they contribute it for the betterment of the organization.

D - Develop the next leaders. Jesus had a very short leadership in terms of number of years but he made a great impact. Why? Because He developed the people next in line. It was intentional discipleship. The disciples were then empowered to make more disciples because it was what they learned from Jesus.

The JOY of Being with Friends

It is a joy every time you are with your friends. You always long to be with them because you enjoy their company.

Paul wrote his letters and expressed his joy when he remembered the times that he was with the members of the church. In 2 Timothy he wrote to Timothy, “Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy.”

It is always a JOY when you are with:

J - Jesus’ followers. When you are with fellow believers you would feel the warmth of the fellowship and the joy of serving God together.

O - Overcomers of life’s challenges. Life is full of difficulties. When you are together with those who are struggling, and have the courage to go on, your faith is being strengthened.

Y - Young people who are eager to learn. Young people today need to be nurtured in their faith. Our faith is enriched when we share it. It should always be a joy when you impart your experience to the next generation.

Until next time!

Keep on MARCHing!

Every time we see the month of March in the calendar, we think of graduation time in the Philippines.

As the students march out of their schools, let me challenge them to MARCH.

M - Move in the direction that God leads you.

Graduates are always in the crossroads. The only way to march forward is to consult God and ask for His directions.

A - Accept the difficulties that are along the way.

The reality is that life is full of difficulties. We cannot march forward if we cannot accept that reality. Accept it. Deal with it.

R - Remember to be grateful.

Thanksgiving should be a lifestyle. We need to always say thanks to God and the people around us,, because without them we cannot march forward with our lives.

C - Challenge yourself to always give your best.

Do not accept mediocrity. Excel for your sake and for God's glory. Marching forward with excellence is one of our greatest contributions to the world.

H - Help those who need you.

We were once helped by others. Let us also help someone so they, too, can march forward with us.

How Jesus Looked at Women?

March 8 is declared by UN as International Women's Day. In Iloilo City there is a ritual during the celebration of women's month. Started by the organizers, the ritual involves men, especially government and top ranking officials, and they wear high-heeled shoes for a few hours so that they may know and feel the situation of women. The high-heeled shoes in this context are understood as an oppressive male-directive object.

How about Jesus? How did He treat women?

First, Jesus broke the patriarchal tradition and talked to women in public.

The women that Jesus talked to publicly were with dubious reputations -- prostitute, adulterer, sick, foreigner.

Jesus showed us that the love of God is inclusive – regardless of race, gender or economic condition. God offers the same kind of love to everyone, whoever may that be.

Second, Jesus elevated the status of women by making them his disciples.

Mark 15:40-41 named these women disciples -- Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and Joses, Salome, and many other women.

These women showed up during the crucifixion and up to the time that Jesus was buried. The two Mary's and Salome were the first to visit Jesus in the tomb to bring spices, and became the first three persons to know that Jesus had risen from the dead.

May we be like Jesus who treated women equally and compassionately.

Lessons for LIFE

Last March 8, 2015 a sad news was relayed -- Rev. Dr. Edwin I. Lariza passed away due to leukemia. He was more than a President Emeritus of the Convention Baptist Ministers Association, one of the ten outstanding Social Workers of the Philippines, Director of the Outreach Center of CPU, Department Head of Social Work Department of CPU, President of the coalition of NGOs; he was a mentor, godfather, and a friend.

Rev. Lariza was one of the firsts who taught me how to use acrostics for my messages. As a tribute, here are some lessons for LIFE that he taught me:

L - Live a life with a cause

Have you found a cause greater than yourself? Jesus Christ died for a cause. We need to find something to commit ourselves. When we find it, a deeper meaning and fulfillment will come to us.

I - Integrate your life with the people you serve

Life is meant to be shared to others. Be with the people -- cry with them, laugh with them. Do not be a leader who is in an ivory tower looking down on people. People are not machines to be used but living souls that are ready to start a relationship.

F - Fill your life with friends

Jesus filled his life with friends. Jesus called the disciples his friends. The friendship of Jesus was not limited to the 12 disciples. He had other friends outside the "fold". Jesus had two nameless friends who I really admire -- the owner of the donkey that he borrowed, and the owner of the upper room where they had their Last Supper.

E - Exercise your faith

Let it not be said that our faith is dead. Our faith should result to service. Serve God by Serving the people.

Rev. Lariza once made a satire of a famous JFK quote -- our service should not be Far the people, Off the people, and Buy the people.

Final Exam

March is the time for final exams. We experience different feelings in facing exam questions -- some are confident, and some are nervous.

Will there be some final questions when we meet God on judgment day?

Here are some of the questions that can be found in the Gospels:

Question 1: Did you feed the hungry, clothe the naked, welcome a stranger, visit the sick? (Matthew 25:35ff)

Question 2: Did you deny yourself, pick up the cross and follow Jesus? (Luke 9:23ff)

Question 3: What have you done with the talents that were entrusted to you? (Matthew 25:14ff)

Question 4: Did you sell everything that hindered you in following God? (Mark 10:17ff)

Question 5: Were you born again? (John 3:1ff)

These are difficult questions, but are imperatives to be answered. Let us hope that by the grace of God we can answer these questions with faith.

How to Succeed in spite of the Circumstances?

Graduation ceremonies are now going on left and right. Most of the topics of the speakers are about success. Here is one success story from the Bible -- the story of Joseph the dreamer.

Joseph succeeded in spite of the circumstances that he faced. He was rejected at home. His brothers did not like him because he was favored by their father, Jacob. His brothers attempted to murder him. He also became a commodity for sale. He was sold to merchants and again to Potiphar. He became a slave. Later, he was falsely accused of rape and was thrown into prison.

How did Joseph survive these circumstances? What lessons can we learn from the life of Joseph?

First, like Joseph we need to trust God in spite of the circumstances.

Joseph was given a big dream by God. Joseph had all the right to question God -- his life was going downhill and his dreams were nowhere near its realization. In spite of this, Joseph trusted God. Later, when everything became clear, Joseph said, "God sent me ahead of you... to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God." (Gen 45:7-8)

Do we trust God in spite of the circumstances?

Second, like Joseph we need to fulfill our responsibilities in spite of the circumstances.

Joseph was faithful, reliable and dependable. He rose to the ranks to become the manager of all the properties of Potiphar. In the prison, he also became the assistant warden. Later, he became the second most powerful man in Egypt next to the Pharaoh. Egypt, during this time, was the most powerful empire of the whole world.

Are we doing our job in spite of the circumstances?

Third, like Joseph we need to maintain our integrity in spite of the circumstances.

Joseph was tempted everyday by Mrs. Potiphar to have an extra-marital relationship. He was handsome and well-built. Egyptian women were probably good in seduction. Remember Cleopatra who was able to seduce Julius Caesar, and after his assassination, also seduced the successor, Mark Anthony. Joseph maintained his purity and firmly stood his ground and said no.

Are we maintaining our integrity in spite of the circumstances?

The Faith of Joseph of Arimathea

There is one person that is often overlooked in the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This person is Joseph of Arimathea.

What lessons can we learn from this man described by Luke as “a good and righteous man”? What kind of faith did Joseph of Arimathea have?

First, a faith that has the courage to act.

Mark 15:43 “Joseph of Arimathea took a risk and went to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. (Joseph was an honored member of the high council, and he was waiting for the Kingdom of God to come.)”

Joseph risked his high religious and political status by coming out in the open and acknowledged that he is a disciple of Jesus. He also disregarded Sabbath Law by touching a dead body. He put into practice what Jesus taught -- the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

Second, a faith that cares.

John 19:39 “With him came Nicodemus, the man who had come to Jesus at night. He brought about seventy-five pounds of perfumed ointment made from myrrh and aloes.”

Joseph and Nicodemus took good care of Jesus. They carefully wrapped Jesus’ body and put 34 kilograms of spices -- the quantity of which was extraordinary and beyond normal proportions. It was a royal burial.

The disciples were not there. The women who were present during the crucifixion were not even there to take care of the body. These two friends were there.

Third, a faith that believed in the resurrection.

The disciples were nowhere to be found. They were hopeless, scared and hiding. They could not believe that Jesus was dead. Their actions showed that they did not believe that Jesus will rise from the dead.

But think about this: why did Joseph of Arimathea let Jesus be buried in his tomb? Was it because he was rich and he can afford to build another one for himself? (It was a very expensive tomb because it was carved out of the rock). Or was it because he believed in the resurrection?

Let me make some assumptions. I believe that Joseph of Arimathea heard and believed the words of Jesus in the Temple when He said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” (John 2:18ff).

Joseph of Arimathea believed that Jesus will be resurrected. He willingly let Jesus borrowed his tomb because he believed that it was only borrowed in the truest sense of the word -- the tomb will be returned to him after three days.

What a faith!

Pick up a Cross and Carry it

There is an interesting incident in the journey of Jesus to Golgotha. Mark 15:21 records that “A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.”

The Roman soldiers saw Simon, a foreigner and they forced him to carry the cross. Simon of course protested because it was not his cross to carry.

Jesus let Simon from Cyrene carry the cross not because he could not carry it anymore but as a lesson for us that in life we need to carry each other’s burdens.

In life there are many things that we do not want to carry yet we do it because we need to make sacrifices for the sake of the Gospel. A Christian who does not want to carry the cross is not a true Christian.

Something happened to Simon from Cyrene, after he carried the cross. He became a follower of Jesus. This is evidenced by the description of Mark: Simon is the father of Alexander and Rufus. His two sons were leaders in the early church.

We, too, will encounter transformation when we obey the command of Jesus to carry the cross.

Jesus is CRYing

As Jesus approached Jerusalem he stopped by an area from which he could see the whole city. In this place he cried.

What can we reflect upon the action of Jesus? Why did he CRY?

When you CRY you show that you CARE. Jesus cared for what is happening in Jerusalem; for what is happening to us. He is crying every time we forsake his rule in our lives.

When you CRY you also RELEASE what you really feel. Jesus released his true feelings when he cried. He felt so sad that that the people would not accept the peace that He was offering. Because of this, as Jesus prophesied, there will come a time when Jerusalem will fall. Indeed it came later in 70 AD about 40 years after Jesus ascended to heaven.

When you CRY you YEARN for your loved ones to come back to you. Jesus yearned for the people to return under his wings as a hen gathers her chicks. Jesus wants to embrace all of us and put us under his care. He is yearning for it.

Thank you Lord for crying!

The Message of the Empty Tomb

What is the message of the empty tomb for us?

First, Jesus Christ gives us the assurance that we can conquer death.

Jesus promised us that we too will be resurrected from the dead in the end times.

But what about while we are still alive? There are many death-like situations that are killing us, and we are losing hope because of these things.

Jesus tells us that if we are with Him, we can conquer together these situations.

Second, Jesus calls us not to stay in the tomb.

What does the tomb symbolize? It symbolizes sin, hopelessness, darkness, and meaninglessness.

If you are in that kind of situation, then Jesus is calling you to get out of there. Do not stay in the tomb. Jesus is shouting outside the tomb: get out!

Remember the disciples? They were afraid, hiding and hopeless. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus transformed the disciples. They became courageous, started to preach in the open and were full of hope.

Third, Jesus tells us that we cannot put to death a good thing.

Jesus was put to death by the religious and political leaders. Why? Because Jesus exposed their wrongdoings.

The Temple was full of robbers. Jesus cleansed it amidst their protest. They planned to kill him and they eventually did. But death could not hold Jesus Christ.

Jesus reminds us that a good person, a good thing, a good deed, a good idea cannot be put down or put to death. God will resurrect it.

Jesus has RISEN

What are the results and challenges because Jesus has RISEN from the dead?

Jesus has **REDEEMED** us. The power of the cross lies on the empty tomb. Jesus bought us with a price and the resurrection validated it.

Jesus has given us the **INSTRUCTION** to tell others about the Good News of Salvation. Every Christian should be a missionary.

Jesus wants us to **SERVE** God through the Church. We should remember that the Church is on the offensive, and when the Church advances the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

Jesus invites us to **ENTER** into a new covenant with him. The covenant is making God the ruler of our lives, and we must live with love in our hearts.

He commands us to live a **NEW** life. When we are discouraged, disappointed, frustrated and is losing hope, let us just close our eyes and picture out the tomb of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is empty. This should give us hope that a new life is possible; that something great is still in store for us.

Hell is Hotter than this Heat

Everyone is complaining about the heat nowadays. There was a time when the sun scorched us with 39 degrees Celsius and the water supply was rationed in Iloilo. It was during the El Niño.

Somebody sarcastically joked to someone -- “Get used to it since you’re going to hell anyway.”

How hot is hell? Somebody made a scientific explanation on how hot is hell based on the description of Revelation 21:8 that Hell is a “... fiery lake of burning sulfur.”

If hell is a fiery lake of burning sulfur/brimstone, then hell’s temperature must be less than 444.6 degrees Celsius. A lake of molten brimstone means that its temperature must be below the boiling point which is at 444.6 degrees Celsius. Above that point it would be a vapor, not a lake.

My only experience with hot sulfur is at the Warm Sulfur Dipping Pool at Mambukal Mountain Resort in which the temperature is only up to 40 degrees Celsius. One can stay for an hour and feel so relaxed afterwards. Now, Hell is 11 times hotter than that pool and surely is a place of torment.

Nobody wants to go to Hell. But some of us still continue live lives that are destined to go to Hell. May the heat that we are experiencing right now remind us that Hell is hotter than this. Let us accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and be saved from the unending suffering in Hell.

The JOY of Discovery

One of the great joys of life is the discovery of something great -- it brings you an “aha” or a “eureka” moment.

One of the post-resurrection stories is that of two friends who experienced the joy of discovering Jesus in a journey towards Emmaus. What can we learn from their story?

First, talk about what is happening.

Luke 24:14 says “They were talking about everything that had happened.”

Are we talking about the situations around us and reflect about them in the light of our Christian faith? Or are we apathetic to what is happening?

Second, talk about Jesus.

Jesus asked the two friends what they were talking about in Luke 24:19. They said -- “about Jesus.”

Is Jesus part of our daily discussion?

One thing that we can learn from this story is that when you sincerely discuss about Jesus and invite Him in your discussion, He will surely be there in your midst. Jesus will make your hearts “burn with passion” and will surely “open your eyes” just like what He did to the two.

The two friends experienced great joy with what they had discovered. They even immediately shared the experience to others. We, too, can experience this great joy when we talk about current issues in the light of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Go...

“His last command... Our first concern” -- this statement is one of the sights that welcomed me in the Haggai Institute Mid-Pacific Center, Kihei, Maui. This statement reminds us that the Great Commission given by the Lord Jesus Christ is a command -- that we have to act and go.

The word “GO” is the starting point of many things. When Jesus said “Go into the whole world...” He told us to start something -- making disciples, baptizing people, and teaching them about the way of Christ.

When we “GO” to the whole world, let us remember two things:

G - Great Promise is attached to the Great Commission

The work of spreading the Gospel is very daunting. This is the reason why Jesus accompanied His command with a great promise -- “I will be with you even up to the ends of the world.” When the task seems difficult, we should just remember that Jesus is with us.

O - Obey the command of the Lord of lords and King of kings

If we doubt the command of Jesus, we must remember who commanded us to do it. Jesus is not just anybody that we can brush aside nor a king or a president that we sometimes follow. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and His words are imperative.

Somebody is Pleading for Your Life

My mother was overjoyed when I told her that I had accepted God's call to become a pastor. She revealed to me then that she was pleading to God to change the course of my life. God listened to her pleadings and so I have become a pastor.

Do you know that someone is also pleading for your life? This someone is pleading God for you to accept Jesus Christ as your own personal Lord and Savior. What is interesting is that this someone might not be even here on Earth but someone who is in Hell. Luke 16:27-28 tells us that the Rich Man pleaded to Abraham to send Lazarus to his house and warn his brothers that if they would not repent from their wicked ways, they will surely go to Hell. Abraham told him that there are people on Earth that are sharing the Good News of salvation and that they could listen to them.

My mother pleaded to God. God sent people to influence me and finally I answered God's call to become a pastor. Somebody is also pleading to God for your life to be saved. This somebody may even be in Hell. Are you listening to the promptings of God?

Be My Witnesses...

Christians celebrate Ascension Day which is 40 days after Resurrection Day.

Before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He left as a command -- "Be my witnesses...up to the ends of the Earth."

What can we learn from this command? One of the most important things is that there is a big difference between "be a witness of Jesus" and "doing witnessing for Jesus." We need to be a witness of Jesus first before we can do witnessing.

The word "witness" is both a noun and a verb.

In the context of the noun, to be a witness of Jesus is to be an observer. Are we observers of Jesus Christ?

In the context of the verb, to be a witness is to attest or to certify. Are we living a life as a living testimony of Jesus Christ?

Be a witness today my friends!

The Holy Spirit Empowers Us to Proclaim the Gospel

When I was in the Haggai Institute Advanced Leadership Training in Maui, Hawaii, I heard different languages among 60 people from 30 countries during my 20-day training there. When I read again Acts 2:9-11, I was happy to note that the Gospel has reached more people aside from the first hearers.

The first hearers of the Gospel apart from the Jews were the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, the district of Libya near Cyrene, Jewish and proselyte visitors from Rome, Cretans, and Arabs. Now, the Gospel has been proclaimed to more than the majority of the world's population.

It was the Holy Spirit that empowered the Apostles to speak in different languages to reach many nationalities in the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit has continued to empower many believers to preach the Gospel to many nations.

If you want to be empowered to spread the Gospel, then invite the Holy Spirit in your life. The Holy Spirit is waiting to unleash the power of God through your life.

Learning Does Not End

Every time classes start in June we are reminded that learning does not end.

If we want to cultivate an atmosphere of learning, then we must observe some principles of learning. Here are some of these that I have learned along the way:

First, make every situation a learning opportunity. Accept the truth that experience is the best teacher. We would be a wiser generation if we learn from the past.

Second, make it a habit to learn, re-learn, and unlearn. Continue to learn new things and try hard to unlearn old things. Try to think outside the box, break some barriers and shift your paradigms.

Third, apply what you have learned. Remember that what you have learned will come to nothing if you do not do anything about it. I recently learned from Coach Agus Gunario that “It is not what you know but what you do with what you know.”

Fourth, ask God for wisdom. Proverbs 2:6 says, “For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Who is Your Next in Line?

I recently sat in a conference room and saw the pictures of people who served as leaders of the institution throughout its history. I am also serving this institution as the youngest member of their corporation. A question came to my mind, “Who are/were the persons that these leaders trained to be the next in line?”

Paul addressed the issue of succession of leadership in the churches that he planted. For instance, Paul trained Timothy, who at first he called as a “son in the faith” but later as a “brother and a fellow worker.”

In 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul instructed Timothy to entrust to reliable people the things that he had learned in order that someday they too would teach it to others.

The challenge for us is this: Who are you intentionally training to be the next in line to you?

Retreat and Reflect

I was in a retreat one time with a group of young adults from Bacolod Bethany Church. It was filled with fun, fellowship and soul-searching reflections.

A Christian must always undergo self-reflection. Without reflection, there will be no spiritual growth. It is in your reflection that you evaluate yourself, your relationship with God, your family and friends.

Jesus teaches us that prayer and reflection are needed to refill our spiritual tank. He would always go to a mountainside to pray and to reflect.

In doing reflection, let us take note of the following things:

First, doing reflection must be intentional. You must set aside a time and a place free from disturbance. Your sole focus must only be for reflection.

Second, write your reflections. Did Jesus write his reflections? He did not. But why did his prayers and reflections appear in the Gospels? Was he overheard by the writers? No. Jesus shared what He prayed for and what He reflected upon with His disciples. In turn, the disciples wrote it. This was the reason why we got to read it.

Third, share your reflections. We have the Bible because people shared their reflections. Just pause for a while and think why we are reading the letters of Paul which are in the New Testament. Paul wrote it to churches and individuals. He did not probably think that his letters would be read 2,000 years later.

Mentor and Talk to Your Children

The New Testament tells us of a unique father and son relationship -- not biological but spiritual – between Paul and Timothy.

What can we learn from Paul as a spiritual father to Timothy?

First, Paul mentored Timothy. Paul taught Timothy how to be a pastor. Later, he would send Timothy to churches.

Fathers should find time to mentor their children.

Second, Paul found it important to communicate to Timothy. Paul wrote Timothy letters. He would always encourage Timothy not to lose faith, and to be an example in words and deeds.

Fathers should not neglect interacting with their children.

May God grant the fathers the attitude of a mentor, and the time to interact with their children.

Be a Part of the TEAM

When I visited Rev. Ronny Luces in the hospital, he challenged me to meditate on what it means to be part of a TEAM ministry.

You are part of a TEAM when you:

T - Think of the same goals. If you have a different goal from that of the team, then you probably belong to another. Make sure that everyone in the team subscribes to the same goals.

E - Expect that your back is covered by all the team members. We cannot always watch our backs. When you are in a team, you are assured that someone is looking out for you.

A - Allow the uniqueness of each team member. A great team is a team in which everyone contributes their own special way. Each team member is indispensable.

M - Move to serve God and the people. This is the ministry that God has entrusted to us. Let us check the impetus of our team -- is our team serving God and the people?

Let us all be part of TEAM Jesus!

SERVE God Alone

If you will be given the honor to deliver your last Will and Testament what would it be?

Joshua delivered his last Will and Testament to the people of Israel emphasizing the word SERVE.

S - Search whom you will serve and make a choice. Is it God or other gods?

E - Engage yourself and your family in serving God. Joshua said, “As for me and my household we will serve the Lord.”

R - Remember why you committed to serve God. The Israelites were reminded that it was God who rescued them from slavery. What about you? What are your reasons?

V - Verbalize your commitment to serve God. The public must know that you are a follower of Jesus Christ. Repeatedly in Joshua 24, the people verbalize their commitment.

E - Expect the people to follow you in serving God. Joshua started with himself, then his family. Later, the whole community followed him. One verse that should challenge us is Joshua 24:31 - “all of Israel served God in the lifetime of Joshua.” Will people follow us? Are we worthy to be emulated?

How should We Go through LIFE?

In 2015 in just a span of a few months, another good friend, mentor and a godfather passed away -- Rev. Ronny Luces. Indeed we cannot choose when we will die; we can only choose how well we will live.

How should we go through LIFE? Here are some things that I have learned:

L - Love God and love your neighbor as you love yourself.

It is with good reason that Jesus taught us this greatest commandment -- love is the greatest force on Earth and it should be demonstrated properly.

I - Integrate your faith and action.

Faith without works is indeed dead. We must show in our actions our faith in Jesus Christ.

F - Find time to fellowship with family and friends.

Life is short so do not forget to spend time with your loved ones.

E - Enjoy the wonderful creation of God.

Go around. See places and people. The beauty of God's creation is just waiting to be appreciated.

What does it Mean to be WITH the People?

Sharon Rose Ruiz-Duremdes preached in the Necrological Service in honor of Rev. Ronny Luces. She emphasized the word “with” -- that Jesus promised to be “with” us, and that Rev. Luces lived a life “with” God and “with” the people.

Here is a rejoinder to that reflection: What does it mean to WITH the people?

W - Walk with them in tough and good times

Our commitment to serve the people is tested during difficult times arrive. We also celebrate with them during good times.

I - Interact with each other on how to bring about a better world.

We should not stop talking about things that will make our lives better. We should stop bickering about petty things, and start dealing with serious issues.

T - Teach each other lessons for no one have the monopoly of wisdom.

We should learn from one another. Our experiences are very rich with lessons. All we need to do is to draw lessons from those experiences.

H - Help one another to conquer evil.

Evil lurks in every corner. We need the support of each other in confronting the many evils in our society.

May God be WITH us!

God's STORY... Where Transformation Happens

Central Philippine University celebrated Christ Emphasis Week on July 2016 with the theme: "God's STORY... Where transformation happens."

Why is there transformation in God's Story? In God's STORY there is:

S - Salvation from our sins. Jesus has redeemed us and we can live free from guilt and shame.

T - Transfer of identity from self to Christ. Those who are in Christ are called Christians -- Christ is in us and we live for Christ.

O - Overcoming of daily struggles. Jesus has already overcome the world -- this is the assurance that we have and gives us the confidence that we can overcome whatever the world throws at us.

R - Realization that we are in this world for a purpose. We will find our purpose in life if we are in Jesus Christ.

Y - Yearning to get closer to God rather than getting closer to the things of the world. When we are in Jesus Christ, we long to be more intimate to God every day.

Be a part of God's Story!

RAIN Blessings

God's blessings are like rain -- it falls from heaven. Malachi 3:10 talks about God opening the floodgates of heaven and pouring out so much blessings that we have no room for it.

What are our RAIN blessings?

R - Relationships

Relationships are blessings. Take time to nurture your family and friends -- you do not want to be alone facing life.

A - Abundant life

Abundant life does not necessarily mean being rich materially but essentially it means a "meaningful life."

I - Inner peace

God gives us the peace that surpasses understanding. The greetings of Jesus was always -- "Peace be with you."

N - Needs are being met

God is meeting our needs -- emotional, physical, spiritual. Our God really provides us with our "daily bread."

Let us thank God for these RAIN blessings!

Lessons from PAIN

In the past, I had some discomforts because of a back pain. From time to time I have to reposition my back, and massage it with some herbal oil.

All of us have one way or another experienced pain, either physical, or emotional.

What lessons can we get from PAIN?

P - Pray. Oftentimes we need to be in a painful situation to remember to pray.

A - Acknowledge your human frailty. We often overburden ourselves and think that we can do many things. When pain comes we remember that we are humans after all.

I - Initiate steps to find healing. Pain is a great reminder that something is wrong either in our bodies or in our relationships. We should find the solutions to start the healing process.

N - Never give up until you are at your feet again. Pain wakes us up to the reality that there are still more pains to come. So pain, in other words, forces us to choose to go on or just give up.

In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul talks about his pain -- a thorn in his flesh. He pleaded for God to take it away. God's answer to Paul is the same when we encounter pain -- God's grace is sufficient for us and God's power is made perfect in our weaknesses.

May God heal our pains!

Let us Value Planet Earth

The things that we value are the things that we hold important. We take care of those things that we consider valuable. Planet Earth is something that is very valuable but oftentimes we forget to take care of it.

What are the things that we should not take for granted in the planet Earth?

First, oxygen. We need oxygen to stay alive. More than four minutes without oxygen causes the human brain to suffer severe damage. After that we die.

We need trees to have oxygen. Here is the value of one adult tree: it breathes in about 21.7 kilograms of carbon dioxide on a yearly basis, and produces enough oxygen to keep two to three humans alive.

We should plant trees and save lives.

Second, water. We need water to stay alive. We can only survive for 3 days without water. After that, we perish. About 60% to 75% of our body is composed of water. Water flows through the blood and carries oxygen and nutrients to cells. Water also flushes the wastes out of our bodies. Without water, we cannot digest or absorb food.

We should take care of our water system.

Third, food. We need food to survive. Some accounts say that there are persons who can survive up to 21 days without food and just an occasional sip of water. Meaning, in under a month without food we will die.

We should take care of our food supplies.

In short, Earth is our only home.

Our universe is full of planets but so far Earth is the only planet that can support the life of human beings. Should we focus on finding an alternative planet or should we focus on taking care of our only home? The answer stares at our face – let us take care of Earth, the home that God gave us.

An OPEN Door

Another pillar of faith died in 2015-- Mrs. Ligaya “Mommy Liging” Agus Romarate. The life of Mommy Liging was an example of an OPEN door.

O - Obedient to the call of God. She obeyed the call of Jesus -- “The harvest is plenty but the laborers are few.” She became a pastor during the time when women pastors were not yet ordained. She was courageous enough to break tradition.

Are we obedient to the call of God?

P - Parental guidance that extended beyond blood relationship. Her life was a great reminder for all of us that we are related through our relationship with Jesus Christ. She opened her door for me because she said that my grandparents did the same thing to her.

Are we willing to mentor the next generation?

E - Enjoyed the company. She was true to her name -- Ligaya which means joy. Her life reminds me that telling stories should be part of our lives. The only link that we have with the past is by telling stories.

Our generation now is blest to have new technologies for capturing memories. Do not hesitate to take a picture or a video. It might be your last picture of your loved one.

Is your life a joy to be with?

N - Never said no to a deserving person in need. Proverbs 3:27 reminds us not to withhold good to those who deserve it when it is within our power to do it.

Are we extending a helping hand to those who need it?

iCARE

El Niño has visited us time and time again. Global Warming is indeed a global warning. Should I care? Should you CARE?

C - Check the situation. Our atmospheric blanket is now 37% thicker than 20 years ago. This is caused by pollutants.

A - Allow changes in our theological perspectives. “Subdue the Earth” does not mean we should abuse the Earth. There are 6 days of creation -- a reminder that all the creation of God is interconnected.

R - Repent from the sins that we have committed against the environment. The abuses that we have done like burning of plastics, throwing garbage everywhere, and cutting of trees without replacing them are sins that we need to ask forgiveness for.

E - Engage in actions that will make this world a better place. We owe it to our children and the future generations to leave them a world that is better than what we have inherited.

Table Fellowship

When our good friend Dr. Nestor Bunda from Texas visited us in Iloilo, we had a few table fellowships.

What happens on the table? Why were some of the best stories of Jesus happened on the table?

By sharing the same food, we should come to realize that we need to share the same resources.

By sharing stories, we should come to realize that stories are powerful in bridging the past and the present.

By sharing ideas, we should come to realize that we need to continue percolating ideas to make our world a better place.

By sharing hopes and dreams, we should come to realize that these keep us going.

Let us continue to have table fellowships.

The Faith of Two Grandmothers

What can we learn from grandparents? Let us learn from two grandparents in the Bible:

First, Ruth -- a grandmother who believed in a God who gives second chances. Ruth was the grandmother of Jesse, and the great grandmother of David. Ruth was one of the ancestress of Jesus Christ.

What if Ruth, a widow, did not accompany her mother in law, Naomi? What if Ruth was not courageous enough to find a way to make Boaz fall in love with her? She did all of these because she believed that God still had an unfinished purpose in her life.

Second, Lois -- a grandmother who passed on her faith to her daughter Eunice, and grandchild, Timothy.

When Timothy was struggling with the pastoral ministry, Paul reminded him of the faith of his grandmother. Timothy was encouraged and continued to become an exemplary pastor.

Everyday Temptations that we Face

The story of the encounter between Jesus and Satan is a great window for all of us to see the reality in our lives -- the reality that everyday we face temptations.

What are the three main temptations that we face in life?

First, turn the stones into bread. This is the temptation to misuse or abuse power.

Jesus could do it but he did not. Instead he said, “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4). This means that we should never abuse our power when we base the exercise of it in the Word of God.

Second, worship Satan and he will give you all the wealth of the world. This is the temptation to do “everything” just to attain wealth.

According to Transparency International 2014 index, the Philippines is number 15 in the list of most corrupt country out of 28 in Asia. Let us remember the admonition of Paul in 1 Tim 6:10 “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

Third, jump and the angels will not allow you to fall. This is the temptation to glorify ourselves. Oftentimes we want to put ourselves in a situation where we will come out more famous than the others.

Peter was grandstanding at times and Jesus took this opportunity to tell Peter and the disciples -- “Deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow me.” We must always say to Satan, “In Jesus’ name, go away!”

CPU @ 110: Honoring the Central Legacy

Central Philippine University celebrated its 110th year of Exemplary Christian Education for Life in 2015.

What is the legacy of my beloved university?

First, the legacy of education. CPU was established to provide education. The primary purpose of education is to know what is right and wrong.

Second, the legacy of Christian education. There is a difference between education and Christian education. The center of Christian education is Jesus Christ. In this sense, Christian education is not just knowing what is right and wrong but doing what is right and shunning what is wrong.

Third, the legacy of exemplary Christian education for life. CPU is not just giving education and Christian education, but more importantly, exemplary Christian education. Meaning, CPU's vision is to produce Christians who are examples and worthy to be emulated.

May Centralians live lives worthy of the legacy of Central Philippine University.

Come Let us Reason Together

The APEC Summit 2015 was held in the Philippines. Some of the meetings were in Iloilo City. World leaders came to discuss important matters and forge commitment to cooperate with one another.

When leaders and people come together what comes to mind is Isaiah 1:18. This verse reminds us what the Lord is saying to the people “Come, let us reason together.”

The preceding verses tell us of the matters that God would like us to reason with one another and take actions afterwards. What are these matters?

First, stop doing wrong, and learn to do what is right (v.16).

Are we an exemplary model for our fellow citizens of the world?

Second, seek justice, and encourage the oppressed (v.17).

Are we seeking to right what is wrong thereby helping the exploited and the marginalized?

Third, defend the cause of the fatherless, and plead the cause of the widows (v.17).

Are we helping the orphans, the refugees, and those who cannot help themselves?

May these things be in our agenda for surely they are in the agenda of God.

Jesus' Platform of Government

The campaign of politicians showed that some have a platform of government while others do not have. Some would just rely on their charm and personality.

Can you remember the first public appearance of Jesus in a synagogue? In the context of politics, let me call the words of Jesus as His Platform of Government (Luke 4:18-19). So in relation to this, we should choose among the many candidates who espouse the platform of the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, we should choose someone who brings good news to the poor.

Second, we should choose someone who proclaims release to the captives.

Third, we should choose someone who promotes recovery of sight to those who are in the dark.

Fourth, we should choose someone who gives freedom those who are oppressed.

Fifth, we should choose someone who proclaims the favorable year of the Lord.

May God bless the Philippines!

A Birthday is an Opportunity to Reflect on TIME

The progressive ticking of time reminds us that each moment is precious. How are we spending our time? Let me share the questions that I asked myself when I celebrated my birthday.

T - Talents and Treasures

Are you utilizing the talents that God has given you all throughout this time? What are the treasures that you have shared so far?

I - Investment

Where do you invest your time so far? Are you investing it to spread the Gospel? Are you investing on things that are eternal?

M - Management

Are you managing your time wisely? Are you giving passionate time to your family? Are you dedicating quality time to your work?

E - Energy

Where do you spend your energy? Are you taking care of yourself? What have you accomplished so far?

May these questions related on time make us pause for a moment to evaluate ourselves.

Life is like SPORTS

The annual National University Games in October brought numerous colleges and universities in the Philippines to compete in their chosen field of sports.

Life is like SPORTS:

S – Sparring. In sports you have an opponent that you need to overcome in order to win. Same is true with life. We need to identify our opponents or obstacles and hurdle them.

P – Preparing. There is a need for proper preparation in sports. Same is true with life. If you are not prepared, then you will surely not succeed.

O – Overcoming. There are many stories in sports about winning even against all odds. In life we need to have the attitude of overcoming difficulties despite all hardships.

R – Relentless. You need to be relentless if you want to win in sports. In life, we also need to have the unrelenting attitude, to have the “no retreat, no surrender” determination in order for us to face squarely the challenges of life.

T – Trusting. In sports you need to trust your teammates and your coach in order for you to have a good game. Same is true with life. We need to trust our family and friends, and most especially God.

S – Supporting. The support system in sports is the backbone of the athletes. Without the support group -- finances, training, medical -- the athletes cannot perform to the best of their ability. In life, we need our supporting cast in order for us to move forward.

Lessons from the Graves

Most of us would visit the graves of our dear departed loved on November 1. It is a tradition which most Filipinos keep.

What can we learn by revisiting the graves?

First, we can be inspired by the kind of lives that they once lived.

Second, we can learn from the mistakes that they did.

Third, we can build on with the successes that they had.

Fourth, we are reminded that our family is valuable, and that we must realign our priorities with that consideration.

Fifth, we are reassured that Jesus conquered the grave and we shall all be reunited with fellow believers someday.

Do not let Anger Ruin Your Life

One of our weaknesses is excessive anger -- a rage that cannot be controlled. Anger is a natural feeling but when it is unbridled, the Devil will have a foothold in our lives and it can lead to harsh words, abuse, physical violence, and worst, murder.

Paul in Ephesians 4:26-27 says “Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your anger: Neither give place to the devil.” This means that we should not hold anger for too long because it may lead to a dysfunctional life that is full of bitterness and plotting of revenge -- a life directed by the Devil.

Paul is encouraging us to confront the source of anger, forgive one another, and seek justice without compromise.

Thank You Lord for Simple Blessings

Every Thanksgiving Month in November we are reminded to give thanks to God, the Source of our blessings.

What are some of the simple things that we forget to thank God for? Here are some things that I sometimes forget to whisper a word of thanksgiving to God:

Thank you, Lord for the aroma of a freshly brewed coffee -- it certainly perks me up and gives me the hope that any issue can be discussed over a cup of coffee.

Thank you, Lord for the smile of loved ones -- it brightens my day and gives me the reason to continue living.

Thank you, Lord for the laughter brought about by jokes of friends -- it reaffirms the biblical truth that a merry heart doeth good like a medicine.

Thank you, Lord for stories and ideas brought by books and ebooks – they expand my imagination, and bring me joy through vicarious experiences.

Thank you, for these simple everyday blessings!

Remember to Thank God when You EAT

Every Thanksgiving Month of November, one that is constant in every celebration is eating. What reflection can we get when we EAT?

E - Enjoy eating together the blessings of God.

Eating is best enjoyed when you are with others. Jesus always ate with others. Several of his teachings were given during eating time.

A - Appreciate the diversity of God's blessings.

A thanksgiving feast is a parade of various menus. This only shows that God has prepared everything that we need on this Earth. We do not need to hoard. There is food for everyone if we just share.

T - Thank God as the source of blessings.

We always need to pray before eating. This is to acknowledge that God is the provider of our food. When we do not pray before eating, it is tantamount to insulting God.

A HERO after God's Own Heart

November 30 is Andres Bonifacio Day. Bonifacio is a hero during the revolution against Spain's occupation of the Philippines.

What is a HERO? Jesus is my hero. He is the epitome of what it means to be a hero after God's own heart. Let me share some important characteristics of a HERO.

H - Helps those who are downtrodden

A hero like Jesus should be there for people who have been marginalized by society, religion or politics. Jesus was there for the sick, widows, prostitutes, and foreigners.

E - Expects the best of people

A hero like Jesus should always try to give people a second chance. Jesus' encounter with people resulted to a transformation because he saw the good (the image of God), when others have only seen the sin.

R - Releases the captives

A hero like Jesus should break the barriers that imprison people. Jesus broke a lot of traditions. But in doing so, he freed the people from the burdens that imprisoned them.

O - Obedient to the will of God

A hero like Jesus should always pray for the will of God. Jesus struggled with his own will. Yet ultimately he prayed, "not my will but Thy will be done."

Are you a hero after God's own heart?

The Importance of Going Back Home

Have you ever wondered how many people traveled back to their hometowns because of the census decreed by Caesar Augustus for the whole Roman Empire? Probably thousands or even millions traveled back to their hometowns. The citizens of Roman Empire during that time might have been more than 4 million people.

Foremost in our minds during Christmas season is going home and spending time with family. This longing is rooted in the first Christmas in which Joseph and Mary traveled back to Bethlehem, their hometown.

What lessons can we learn from the hometown travel of Joseph and Mary?

First, we need to be reminded of the importance of home.

Joseph and Mary might have no plans of going back to their hometown but because of the census they were forced to go back. God used the events and other people to remind them of going back. This fulfilled the prophecy that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem.

Secondly, we need to reconnect with our families, and stay connected with our families.

I always questioned why there was no room in the inn. Joseph and Mary could have visited and stayed with their relatives. Most probably, they had not visited for a long time, and lost touch with their own families.

In light of this, we learn the importance of always getting in touch and connected with our families.

How about you? When are you going home?

Be a GIFT

What gift or gifts have you received or have given during Christmas season?

What can we give to people as a GIFT?

Let us give them the gift of **GUIDANCE**. In this world of many choices, let us guide others to Jesus Christ.

Many are also in need of the gift of **INSPIRATION**. There are several people who are desperate and consequently become depressed. We should inspire them to live a life with meaning and purpose that can only be found in Jesus Christ.

Another valuable gift is **FRIENDSHIP**. Many are lonely even with the availability of gadgets and social media. Let us open ourselves to others so that they can find someone they can share their life with.

Obviously another important gift is **TIME**. Time is so precious that we count it. How we spend our time should be intentional. We should spend our time meaningfully and with a purpose.

Let us be a GIFT not just this Christmas but the whole year round.

Admit Your Mistakes and Ask for Forgiveness

Most of us who followed the Miss Universe 2015 Pageant witnessed a “horrible mistake” when the host of the event announced that the Miss Universe 2015 was Miss Colombia instead of the real winner who was Miss Philippines. When pointed out, the host courageously admitted his mistake and apologized.

One of the great themes of Christmas, if not the greatest, is the admission of guilt and asking forgiveness -- the conditions in receiving the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ.

How many of us are still running away from our sins? How many of us are still refusing to admit that we are guilty? If we continue doing this, then we shall miss a life that is forgiven and free of guilt.

Every Christmas season, let us be reminded to admit our sins, ask for forgiveness, and receive the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Lessons from the Christmas Characters

What lessons can we learn from the characters in the Christmas story?

First, Joseph teaches us that we should still believe in miracles. Joseph, at first, cannot accept the reality of Mary's pregnancy. But the angel convinced him that nothing is impossible with God.

Second, Mary teaches us that God has a wonderful plan for us. Mary's plan was to prepare herself for the upcoming wedding but all of a sudden it was changed by God.

Third, the angels teach us to do all things for the glory of God. The angels' message in their song is a great reminder for us who often look after our own self-interests. They sang "Glory to God in the highest..."

Fourth, the shepherds teach us that everyone is special in the eyes of God. The shepherds were given the privilege to hear the announcement from the angels. This means that we are all equal in the eyes of God.

Fifth, the Wise Men are teach us that when we search God with all our heart, we will surely find God, or if we look at it in another way, God will surely find us if we let Him know that we are searching for Him.

Quotable Quotes from the #SeedsOfFaith

“Leadership is also for the young.”

- ❖ 2 Samuel 5 narrates about how David became king at the age of 30. Let us not discriminate qualified leaders because of their youth.

“Be a construction material that builds the Church.”

- ❖ 1 Corinthians 14 exhorts us to use our gifts should be used to build up the church.

“Be prepared because God will do something amazing in and through your life.”

“Strive to make your house a place where your family would love to say, 'I want to go home.'”

- ❖ Ezekiel 11 talks about the exile of Israelites and their longing to go back home to Israel.

“Accept your finitude so that you will change your attitude.”

- ❖ Psalm 49 declares that all human beings like animals will eventually die.

“There is no indispensable part in the body of Christ.”

- ❖ 1 Corinthians 12 reminds us that as part of the body of Christ, everyone is important.

“May we can sincerely say, 'Follow me as I follow Christ.'”

- ❖ 1 Corinthians 11:1 shows how Paul confidently wrote to the Corinthian church, “Imitate me as I imitate Christ.”

“Let it be that when people think of reliable they will think of you.”

- ❖ In 1 Samuel 29 David is described as someone “reliable as an angel of God.”

“A great father is someone who teaches his children how to have faith rather than leave everything to fate.”

“Combat indifference and make a difference.”

“Unless suppressed or denied, one's soul always seeks God.”

- ❖ Psalm 42 illustrates how our soul seeks for God like a deer longs for water.

“Compliment one another as you continue to complement each other.”

- ❖ 1 Corinthians 7 emphasizes the symbiotic relationship of husband and wife. It is a relationship that is not exploitative but rather complementary.

“God provides a way even though you are against all odds.”

- ❖ 1 Samuel 26 tells how King Saul and 3,000 soldiers hunted David. God hid David and protected him.

“A sign that you have lived a full life is when people shed real tears when you die.”

- ❖ 1 Samuel 25 narrates how the whole Israel assembled to mourn when Prophet Samuel died.

“Eating the Word of God daily will make you hungry for more.”

- ❖ Ezekiel 3 tells how God commanded Ezekiel to eat the scroll. Ezekiel said that the scroll was as sweet as honey.

“When in doubt, repeatedly inquire.”

- ❖ 1 Samuel 23 talks how David repeatedly inquired of the Lord -- whether he will do one thing or not.

“Listen attentively. God is always communicating.”

- ❖ Ezekiel 2 tells us how Ezekiel stood up and listened, thus, he received his commission from God to prophesy.

“We are free to do anything we want but it is not a license to do anything just because we want it.”

“Although cornered, tell the truth still.”

- ❖ 1 Samuel 22 tells how Ahimelech, the priest stood his ground and was courageous to tell the truth. He and the 85 priests paid for their lives for King Saul put them to death.

“Giving up a position to someone you believe deserves it is an act of great humility and courage. Only a few could do that.”

- ❖ 1 Samuel 20 shows how Jonathan gave up the demand of his father, King Saul to be the next king of Israel. Instead, he fought for David, the rightful king.

“Vindication comes only to those who are innocent of the accusation.”

- ❖ In Psalm 35 David enumerated the many accusations hurled against him. He was emotionally drained. He poured everything out to God and prayed for vindication.

“Be strong. The plot of the ungodly will be revealed someday.”

- ❖ 1 Samuel 19 talks about the evil plot of Saul against David. God did not permit it to happen. The plot was uncovered and David was able to escape.

“Turn-over your enemies to God for they too will have their judgment day.”

- ❖ Lamentations 3 stresses how brutal the gossip of other people is -- it has become an open feast and a never ending music.

“Greeting each other with a smile can change the whole world.”

- ❖ In Romans 16 Paul mentioned the names of his fellow ministers and also church members. He greeted them gladly and told them encouraging words.

“Do not grab nor force it but wait for your turn to become a leader. When the proper time comes nobody or nothing can stop it.”

- ❖ 1 Samuel 18 talks about how David patiently waited for his turn to become the king although Samuel already anointed him. David waited for Saul to relinquish the crown.

“To lament is to bare your soul to God. Pour it all out to God for He hears your cries.”

- ❖ Lamentations 1 talks how Israel cried to the Lord about their situation, and the Lord listened to their lament.

“Prepare your heart for leadership for God may choose you over several other leaders.”

- ❖ 1 Samuel 16 tells us that God chose David (the youngest) after Prophet Samuel tried to choose one of the seven sons of Jesse using his own standard for a leader.

“A persecutor of Christ can become a prosecutor for Christ. God can truly transform a nobody into somebody.”

- ❖ Galatians 1 tells how people were praising Jesus because of the transformation of Saul into Paul.

“Christian maturity can be of any age. The faith of a child can be greater than that of an adult.”

- ❖ In 2 Corinthians 13 Paul challenged the Corinthians to grow in maturity as Christians.

“Carefree is not the same with free of cares. To be carefree is to be irresponsible while being free of cares is to submit ourselves to the responsible arms of God.”

- ❖ Psalm 73 describes carefree people -- those who think that there is no judgment from God.

“False prophets are fools. You will be one of the fools if you follow their false teachings.”

- ❖ Paul is warning us in 2 Corinthians 11 to watch out for false prophets especially those who are teaching about another Jesus.

“When our bodies bog down, all the more that our faith should not slow down.”

“No one or nothing should come in between our service to God.”

- ❖ Luke 4 narrates the encounter of Jesus and Satan. Jesus was tempted but He came out victorious. We too can be victorious against Satan if Jesus was with us.

“Your ability to give is proven when you give beyond your ability.”

- ❖ 2 Corinthians 8 talks how the Macedonian churches gave more than what was required of them.

“Do not switch your loyalty for convenience sake.”

- ❖ 2 Samuel 15 recounts how people switched loyalty from King David to Absalom because they thought that Absalom will replace King David.

“Reconciliation takes time but let us not waste the time.”

- ❖ 2 Samuel 14 relates the reconciliation of King David and his son, Absalom.

“Future generations want to meet the past. They can do so if we write our stories now.”

- ❖ Nehemiah 3 writes down the names of people who helped repair the walls of Jerusalem.

“Leaders should lead in the reading of the Word of God.”

- ❖ Joshua 8 describes about how Joshua led Israel in the public reading of the Laws of Moses.

“The challenges that we receive are the tests of the genuineness of our faith.”

“The difficult exams are to test how genuine our faith is.”

“Test me so that my faith can be proven and tested.”

“Our faith is not yet tested until the actual tests come.”

- ❖ Psalm 66 describes how God purifies us into fine silver by testing us.

“Since we have been redeemed, we do not live for ourselves anymore but we now live for Christ forevermore.”

- ❖ 2 Corinthians 5 tells how we should live our lives for the one who died and rose for us.

“Confront evil, because if you don’t, evil will confront you.”

- ❖ 2 Samuel 12 recounts how Prophet Nathan confronted David with his sins.

“Ready or not Jesus will come again. So it is better to be ready.”

“Do not test the anger of the Lord.”

“Confess your sins now for the time will surely come when your unconfessed sins will be found out.”

“A promise is a promise -- fulfill it.”

- ❖ Joshua 6 narrates how Joshua kept his promise to Rahab and her family that they would be spared when Israel would take a siege of Jericho.

“Do not do things that will grieve God; rather do things that will grieve Satan.”

- ❖ 2 Samuel 11 recounts the adultery of King David and the plan to cover it up. It eventually led to murder. The actions of David grieved God.

“Breaking the covenant with God is like a breach of contract -- you're going to face the consequences.”

- ❖ Ezekiel 17 talks how the people suffered the consequences of breaking their covenant with God.

“It is good to write on any tablets, but is better is to write on the tablet of human hearts.”

- ❖ 2 Corinthians 3 talks about writing letters and writing in the hearts of people.

“Be receptive because the messengers of God come in unexpected appearances.”

- ❖ Joshua 5 tells how Joshua unexpectedly met the commander of the Lord's army -- an angel.

“You cannot choose when to die but you can choose how well you will live.”

“Make memorials to make memories alive.”

- ❖ Joshua 4 describes how the Israelites gathered twelve stones to commemorate their passing on the dry ground of the Jordan River.

“Keep on learning for God is handing out lessons every day.”

“Fix your heart on Jesus, and Jesus will fix your heart.”

- ❖ Psalm 57 talks about how King David fixed his heart to God.

“Fear turns into faith when you entrust your life to God.”

- ❖ Psalm 56 talks how David trusted God even though he was surrounded by his enemies.

“A turning point is when a point becomes a pointing arrow.”

“We dishonor God when we give him our leftovers.”

- ❖ 1 Corinthians 16 tells us how Paul encouraged the believers to set aside a portion of offering to God on the first day of the week.

“What we need to be spiritually healthy is a daily dose of prayer vitamins, eating a balance diet of Bible verses, and a vigorous exercise of faith.”

“Let us be brave enough to challenge old traditions if they do not work anymore.”

“Anybody can build a house but not everyone can build a home. The choice then is very simple -- build a home.”

“Learning from a previous mistake is a sure sign of growth. Repeating the wrong stroke will not change the result -- it will still continue to be the wrong result.”

“A leader must listen to all sides because all have a grain of truth. The majority is not always right. Sometimes the majority is a bully.”

- ❖ Nehemiah 6 relates the struggle of Nehemiah in listening to all sides of the argument.

“We are sometimes envious of what others have, and this envy will lead us to invade the space that is not ours. Let us submit to God our envious attitude.”

- ❖ Joshua 17 recounts how the Tribe of Joseph demanded more inheritance. This led them to conquer more areas, thus, the conflict in the region began.

“Looking at your children is looking at the future. May we prepare them to face the future armed with a faith in God, the courage to break traditions when they need to be broken, and to dream beyond our dreams.”

“God has in store for you an inheritance. In due time you will receive it.”

- ❖ Joshua 16 tells how the two clans from the Tribe of Joseph received the last inheritance after all the other Tribes and clans already had theirs.

“We encounter God every day and we often do not realize it.”

“We cannot change the past but we can use the lessons from the past to shape a better future.”

“Our bodies may get tired, but our faith should continue to draw strength from the promises of God.”

“Write down your family tree and see how the branches bear fruits.”

- ❖ In Joshua 15 the names of clans of the Tribe of Judah and their inheritances are listed down.

“My faith in Christ fuels me to hope for a better world, and act towards the realization of that hope.”

“Know your past so that you may understand your present and then proceed with your future.”

- ❖ In Joshua 14 Caleb talked about his past achievements before he presented himself as ready to take on the future.

“It is better to feel the wrath of a king than to make the King of kings burn with anger.”

- ❖ Psalm 79 describes the anger of God with His people that when they called upon Him, He could not be found. They needed to ask forgiveness first.

“A godly inheritance is always better than a worldly inheritance. Always seek to leave a godly inheritance.”

- ❖ Joshua 13 explains how the Tribe of Levi was not given any land inheritance. Their inheritance is the Lord, our God -- the best inheritance. Let us support the Levi's of today -- our pastors.

“Even with our latest technology we still cannot make a tree -- only God can make a tree.”

- ❖ Ezekiel 31 describes the beautiful trees in the Garden of Eden.

“Make a record of the circumstances when God intervened in your life -- it would be a long list.”

- ❖ Joshua 12 lists the victories that Israel had because God was with them.

“Be angry with oppression and exploitation for it is righteous anger.”

- ❖ In Nehemiah 5, Nehemiah was very angry with the exploitative practices of the people.

“Do not let your past define your future rather make a new definition today. Remember that God has given you a new beginning when you accepted Jesus Christ in your life.”

“Looking at the past from a faith perspective is realizing that history is really His Story.”

- ❖ The starting point of our calendar is A.D. - Anno Domini - in the year of our Lord. Every time we look at the calendar, let us look at it as “the day that the Lord has made.”

“The blessings of God are like rainfall -- when they drop they really pour.”

“My passion for Christ comes from the passion of Christ.”

“Turn-over your battles to God for He will surely fight for you – that is if your cause is for justice and righteousness.”

- ❖ Joshua 10 tells about how God fought for the Israelites.

“There is nothing surer than the prophecies in the Bible – they were and they will be fulfilled. So do not bet against the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

- ❖ Ezekiel 30 talks about the various prophecies against some nations. These prophecies were later fulfilled.

“Your eternity with Christ starts when you surrender your destiny to Christ now.”

“A tree for three -- one tree can support the oxygen supply of three persons.”

- ❖ Psalm 77 explains how God uses nature to talk to us -- we just have to be open. Thank God for a tree today, and then plan to plant a tree.

“Telling stories links the past to the present, and a preparation for the future.”

“Do not let the situation dictate your mood. With God we can rise above the situation.”

“On hindsight things always get clearer. Learn lessons from your hindsight.”

“There is an “i” in “win” -- meaning, I need to contribute myself for the team to win.”

“Pain reminds us that we cannot escape reality.”

“Grace giving is giving an offering more than what the Law requires for tithes. Grace giving is not an excuse to give whatever we just feel to give.”

“There is no place of refuge except in God.”

“Dwelling on past achievements is a temptation that we must conquer for us to move forward with new plans and actions.”

“Discovering and utilizing your God-given potential is a joy to behold.”

“We may break our promises but our faithful God will never break His promises.”

“God sometimes leads us to turn left even though we feel that we should turn right. This is so because God wants to lead us to another direction.”

“My name might not be in the Bible but with faith I believe that it will be in the Book of Life in heaven.”

“When your life is connected to God, the following phrase becomes true --'stressed when spelled backwards is desserts.“

“Life is like going to the grocery -- you are given many choices but it is up to you to make the final choice. Make a healthy choice.”

“At the end of the day all of us longs to be with our family.”

“Loving our enemies is the ultimate barometer that proves that we have accepted the teachings of Jesus Christ.”

“Non-believers also love their neighbors, friends and family, but real Christians love even their enemies. “

“God can melt a rock-hard heart and change it into a Spirit-sensitive heart.”

“Pay attention to the Word of God or else God will make you pay attention.”

“Releasing forgiveness is actually releasing one's self from the prison of bitterness and anger.”

“Faith in Christ is a voluntary surrender of one's will.”

“We should ask God to give us the wisdom to know what is right and wrong, and the courage to do what is right and shun what is wrong.”

“The best endorsement that you can have is to be called a man of integrity and who fears God.”

“Start writing because your words can be used by God to change the world.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Francis Neil Gico Jalando-on comes from a family of pastors.

He earned his Bachelor of Science in Accountancy at Central Philippine University. He did not become a Certified Public Accountant because he answered the call of God to become a pastor. He enrolled at the College of Theology, Central Philippine University and finished his Master of Divinity.

His masteral paper entitled “A History of Philippine Baptist Pastors from 1898-2002” was later published into a book by the Institute for Advanced Theological Studies.

During his college days, he was a two-time CPU Republic Senator and later was elected CPUR Vice President. He supported his studies with a scholarship as varsity of the CPU Table Tennis Team. He was also the first webmaster of CPU.

From 2002 to 2008, he served as Administrative Assistant of the Institute for Advanced Theological Studies. This organization helped in the continuing theological education of pastors and publication of theological journals.

During these years, he was a part-time teacher at the Convention Baptist Bible College in Bacolod City where he taught Church History, Contemporary Issues, Ecumenics and Systematic Theology.

In 2009 he became the Assistant Director of the Office for External Affairs and Public Relations of CPU. He hosted programs in Radio DYVS, DYSI, RMN, and TV programs in the CPU TV Channel. During his tenure he was also in-charge of the publication of the alumni newsletter, *The Centralian Link*, and the weekly online newsletter, “Letter from Central.”

Currently, he serves Central Philippine University in various capacities. He is an Assistant Chaplain, part-time teacher of the College of Theology and College of Business and Accountancy, and coach of the College Table Tennis Varsity Teams.

He writes a weekly reflection entitled *Seeds of Faith* (Binhi sang Pagtuo) published online with more than 8,000 recipients. Some of these reflections are included in this volume.

On weekends, he serves as Pulpit Pastor of Bacolod Bethany Church, and La Carlota Evangelical Church, Negros Occidental.

He also has involvements in national organizations. He serves the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches (CPBC), and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) as member of the Faith and Order Committee that decides matters on church doctrines, and practices.

He was also the National President of the Convention Baptist Ministers' Association (CBMA) from 2011-2013. This is the national organization of Baptist pastors serving the churches and institutions of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches.

He is married to Hermely Agriam, Purchasing Officer of CPU. They have two children: Kairos Rye and Francheska MJ.

It is with joy that I look forward to and recommend Volume 2 of *Seeds of Faith (Binhi sang Pagtuo)* to long-time followers of Jesus and to those who are just beginning their faith journeys. I anticipate in this second volume the same insightful and down-to-earth reflections that shone through Neil's first volume. It is my pleasure to commend this treasure-trove of spiritual gems from Neil, whose family and ministry journeys have intersected with mine in so many ways and at different times, I hear not only his voice but the many voices of our spiritual ancestors who first planted seeds of faith in our hearts.

Rev. Dr. Carla Agus Romarate-Knipel

*Senior Pastor, Central Baptist Church of Woodbury
American Baptist Churches of New Jersey, ABCUSA*

If the early followers of Jesus did not write, then we have no record of the Word of God in the form of the New Testament. The weekly reflections of Rev. Jalando-on are wonderful contribution to sustaining our Christian faith. I am glad that part of his insightful reflections is published. Certainly, it is a testimony for hundreds of years to come and it is a part of the written Christian witness to God's unending love. Moreover, Rev. Jalando-on's reflections stimulate the readers to be just, merciful, and humble in the eyes of God.

Rev. Dr. Nestor D. Bunda

*Manager Pastoral Care, Baylor University Medical Center, Dallas Texas, USA
Former Professor, College of Theology, Central Philippine University*

Seeds of Faith (Binhi sang Pagtuo) is a Devotional Book for Christians who are always on the go. The language is simple and the lessons are very practical and easy to remember that anyone who reads this book finds encouragement and inspiration. I am happy that Central Philippine University has decided to publish the second volume of Rev. Jalando-on's reflections so that many of those who have read these on various social media pages will have a printed copy they can keep and use for a long time, and even pass on to their children or friends.

Prof. Rea Angelica Faulan-Villeza

*Faculty, Religion and Ethics Department
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Rev. Jalando-on's biblical reflections are truly inspiring and spiritually edifying to the soul. His bifocal approach to interpreting the archaic expressions of Scripture makes the reader comfortable with the way he connects the truth from an ancient text into a meaningful, down-to-earth application to Christian living. The gem of truth that sparkles in the *Seeds of Faith (Binhi sang Pagtuo)* is a must reading not only for the "men and women of the cloth" who constantly feed other people's lives with God's word, but also for anyone who longs for green pastures in their walk with God.

Rev. Dr. Armando S. Kole

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