

A Moving Faith

*Life and Ministry of
Pastor Rodolfo Palmerola Acosta*

A volume
in honor of
Pastor Rudy P. Acosta
on the occasion of his 70th Birthday
on December 11, 2000

Nestor Distor Bunda
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Editors

A Moving Faith
Life and Ministries of Pastor Rodolfo Palmerola Acosta
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First Edition: 2000
2nd Edition: 2002
1st Printing: March 2003
2nd Printing: May 2003
Cover Design by FNeil G. Jalandon-on
Jaro, Iloilo City, Philippines

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Along the Road of Faith There is a Man

Taking it from the Seven Seas¹

I will be remiss if I did not acknowledge Sir Acosta's contribution to my ecumenical formation and awareness. Many years ago, he preached a sermon on the Seven Seas. He eloquently pointed out that the waters of the Pacific Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, and the other oceans spill into each other. The Pacific Ocean does not construct walls around it. The Atlantic Ocean does not bar the Indian Ocean waters from crossing over into the former's territory. The waters of the Seven Seas live with each other, causing a ship to reach its destination. "We must learn to peacefully exist with one another," Sir Acosta concluded his sermon.

How true! In a world where the forces of domination try to forcibly wrap their tentacles on the weak, the tenets of mutual respect must be reiterated and emphasized. In a world where evangelization means proselyting or sheep stealing, the Seven Seas teach us the enduring lesson of living together.

From Sir Acosta's sermon, I have come a long way in my understanding of the concept of ecumenism. With his Seven Seas at the back of my mind, I interpret ecumenism as simply "opening up the windows of the church to the world." It is discovering together what Jesus Christ lived and died for. Sir Acosta has reminded me time and time again that Jesus Christ is the bringer of truth, love, and power to our evil world. Therefore, if the evil world is characterized by injustice, oppression, and hypocrisy, Christians should be involved in the great mission of transforming the situation of injustice, oppression, and hypocrisy. And if we actually immerse ourselves in that situation, we will discover that we are not the only ones involved in the work of transformation. There are people and groups which are much more deeply involved than many Christians. This sobering fact should lead us to internalise the reality that "God's action for justice and liberation is not restricted to groups of people who declare their faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ."

The foremost theological basis for ecumenism is the

incarnation. God, in Jesus Christ, broke into the world and shattered the age-long belief that the Jews were the chosen people. The incarnation tore apart the exclusivity of the Jewish religion and moved people toward unity. But people move toward unity for a specific purpose. They just do not come together for the sake of being together. People unite because they are called to be engaged in the work of transformation.

Sir Acosta's Seven Seas teach that different churches and faiths and religious persuasions can come together for a common purpose. Even as the Seven Seas allow a ship to traverse their waters so that it may reach its destination, so also can denominations be united in a praxis of solidarity with the poor, the deprived, and the oppressed. At the Last Supper, Jesus told his disciples to drink from the cup and drink all of the wine. The cup was the symbol of suffering. To drink all of it was a call for total solidarity with the people's suffering.

From Sir Acosta's Seven Seas, I have come to realize that ecumenism is participating together in the movement for the genuine liberation of the poor. Such is the bottom line of ecumenism.

"The waters spill into each other's territory," Sir Acosta emphatically averred. I perceive this as a paradigm of deep dialogue between people from varying experiences and traditions. A dialogue that is carried on in the spirit of openness and humility. As we dialogue with other people, we find commonalities in our life situations. These commonalities point us to a common enemy. This profound dialogue can only happen when we immerse ourselves in the lives of those whom we are in solidarity with. Jesus' life, Sir Acosta insists, was a demonstration of that praxis. He constantly engaged people in dialogue and met them at the point of their deepest need. One of Jesus' temptations was to jump from the pinnacle of the temple in a daring feat to make people believe in him. He rejected this method because he believed that he had to enter the world of the people whom he came to help liberate. He did not want immunity from pain and suffering. In essence, he was saying: "How can I hope to minister to people if I do not struggle with them? How will I know what I should do unless I am

aware of their situation?”

I seldom saw Sir Acosta visible at high level ecumenical gatherings. I seldom heard him mention the word, ecumenism. But his sermon on the Seven Seas made him, for me, an ecumenical person.

A Moving Faith

The highly regarded Pastor Rudy P. Acosta knows that I have been asking for his sermons to be printed. But he did not accede to my request. He insisted that his sermons are intended for oral delivery and not for publication. Despite the refusal, a good friend Martha Mae Encila Lucas and I started to collect some of his thought-provoking sermons. As a neophyte church historian I felt that these are significant and helpful in many ways because they are part of our Christian heritage. Pastor Acosta himself affirmed that “history looks back to what is useful in the past to be used for the present and future.” In addition, I retrieved from my library important documents about him, which I wrote from my interviews with him in 1993, 1996 and 2000; and manuscripts I gathered from the library of the Board of International Ministries in Pennsylvania, U.S.A. I also requested friends to provide me their reflections on him or their collections of his writings.

Reading his hand-and-type-written sermons, I was surprised that they have no dates when they were written! They confirmed what Pastor Acosta had said: that his sermons are intended primarily for preaching. This may suggest that Pastor Acosta does not want to limit his interpretations of the Gospel on printed form because faith and theology are experienced, not published. He himself declared that faith and theology are essentially “personal”. They are not mainly the opinion of other theologians read from books but come from experiences with Jesus Christ. The way I see it, Pastor Acosta’s faith, as reflected in the title of this book in his honor is - *A Moving Faith*. “Moving” here has at least two meanings. It means that his faith is not static, it is alive. It is dynamic and constantly grows. Secondly, his faith influences others. It elicits action from people. It touches and challenges people’s lives. Pastor Acosta’s faith is a *moving* faith that *moves* people to *act now* and to struggle, individually and collectively, to

attain a *quality of life*.

Sir Acosta had something to do with my decision to become a pastor even though he would always insist that he could not remember influencing my decision. Anyway, this was what happened.

It was sometime in 1976. During a Capiz youth conference held at Libertad Baptist Church Sir Acosta was the Bible Study lecturer. He focused our attention on the story of the Prodigal Son. During his lecture he provoked us, "Who is to be blamed?" "The father, the prodigal son and the other son because the whole family system does not guarantee justice and fair treatment," was my quick answer. Sir Acosta seemed to doubt my judgment. So I further explained that in our context many young people go astray because our societal system does not offer good alternatives or creative activities for the youth. Somehow our discussion touched on structural problems and then Sir Acosta made a comment, a kind of *panambiton* that penetrated my *diwa*, "*Kon may lamoti gani, indi lang pagbutangi band-aid. Bulongon gid na ya ang lamoti tubtub maubos ang nana, tapos limpyohan kag dayon butangan bandage.*" This thought-provoking statement was to change my life. Less than one year after that conference I decided to study theology to become a pastor for life. Two months before I entered the seminary I left my promising job in the government. Since then, every time I reflect on a problem, big or small, personal or structural, I would recall Sir Acosta's pastoral counsel. If there is a demand to change something for progress, then the change should be thorough. If there is an urge to solve a problem, then the resolution should be holistic, reflecting on all possible angles before even starting to act on it.

Knowing Sir Acosta in the course of time, I learned that the final goal for any change, from a human perspective is the attainment of a meaningful life, a quality of character that transcends personal interest, a qualitative life that is meant for others. Sir Acosta reveals this claim in many of his lectures and sermons and in his character. I agree with him in many substantial aspects even if we have distinct styles and approaches.

I have been drawn to this project during the last few months. Yet I did not know how to outline the articles at hand. Then one

night I had a dream: I was exhausted walking along a rugged road. Down the hill, I saw a man blissfully walking. Was it Sir Acosta? Suddenly I woke up and could not sleep any longer. Inspired by that dream I used my time writing a poem which became the outline of content of this book.

A Man of Faith and Quality

Along the road of faith there is a man
A humble and approachable man
A church historian
A friend, pastor and theologian.
A devoted teacher
A creative composer and singer
A thought-provoking preacher
A man of prayer.
A seventy-year old man with a vision
Still on the road of faith with a mission
Joyfully struggling for a global transformation
Towards a quality of life in thought, in word and in action.
This man is Pastor Rudy P. Acosta.

This project was made possible through the voluntary help of the following: Ms. Elsa Baynosa provided the “Notes on Preparing Sermons,” a syllabus prepared by Pastor Acosta for his preaching course at the College of Theology, Central Philippine University (CPU); Ms. Martha Mae Encila Luces provided the written sermons of Pastor Acosta. She did errands, prepared food during our discussions and photo copied Pastor Acosta’s sermons; Mr. Marvin Quimpo provided the tape-recorded sermons of Pastor Acosta. One day I bumped into him without knowing that he knew about this project. He gladly offered his voluminous collections from which I could only transcribe a few. It needs another volume for those; The Jaro Evangelical Church (JEC) Council and Members had planned a surprise program on December 11, 2000, to celebrate his 70th birthday and to give this book not only as a gift to him but as a symbol of our gratitude and appreciation (*utang kag maayong kabubut-on*) for his untiring service to God and people; Pastor Samuel Talha and Prof. Edwin Lariza for their encouraging words and technical assistance; Francis Neil Jalando-on for the

technical assistance, lay-out and cover design. He assisted day and night in making this project possible; Ella and Oliver Fritz Bunda were supportive, respecting my privacy and exempting me from domestic jobs as I crammed to finish this project at their own expense.

Some friends, colleagues, students and parishioners of Pastor Acosta contributed to this volume: Ms Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines; Pastor Ronny Luces, Technical Assistant, Development Ministries, Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches (CPBC); Ms. Mona Lisa P. Siacor, Mathematics and Natural Science teacher, Central Philippine University (CPU); Ms. Esther “Takim” Carnaje, working in the U.S. and former student of Pastor Acosta; Mr. Christian Ervin C. Lozañes, member of JEC Baptist Youth Fellowship (BYF); Atty. Lino Lozañes, JEC member; Ms. Nola M. Hibionada, Chairperson, JEC Board of Stewards; Ms. Excelyn Celeste Landero, Head, Religion and Ethics Department, CPU; Mr. Dennis Delos Reyes, Theology student, CPU; Ms. Carla Gay Agus Romarate-Knipel, Faculty Member, CPU; Ms. Adele Grace Gicana Fegarido, Coordinator, Family Wellness Center, College of Theology, CPU; Ms. Hannah Joy Silencino Quanico, member of JEC and English teacher at Central Philippine University; and Ms. Argerie Blanche “Jingle” R. Gallos, President, JEC-BYF. To all of you *Salamat Gid Nga Madamo*. Most of all I thank my Church History Professor, Sir Acosta, for his faith and theology; for his views, ministries, friendship and inspiration. Without him, this project would not have come to fruition.

I have tried to faithfully copy and edit the documents and voice records at hand to the best I could. Errors and misinterpretations are mine alone. The materials in this volume, unless otherwise indicated, were delivered or written by Pastor Rudy P. Acosta.

This book has been improved with the help of my friend and colleague, Ms. Rea Angelica D. Faulan. She enthusiastically volunteered her time and skills in co-editing the second edition of this volume. My friend, Francis Neil Jaland-on, improved the form and lay-out of this volume.

Nestor D. Bunda

December 11, 2000

February 14, 2002

A Man for God and Others

One book is not enough to let us into the world of a person; but this book is more than enough to give us a glimpse of the life of a man who stands above the rest - Pastor Rodolfo P. Acosta.

“A Moving Faith” appropriately describes the life and ministry of Pastor Acosta. His is a faith and life that not only “move mountains” but move and touch the hearts of people who have encountered him, listened to his sermons and teachings, and been at the receiving end of his generosity and kindness. The life of Pastor Acosta has continually affirmed what Jesus has so desired for us - abundant life.

The life of Sir Acosta, as I fondly call him, indeed overflows with blessings, not only material but most of all spiritual. The reason is evident in his life. He is ever consistent with what he preaches and teaches. He walks what he talks, and talks what he walks. In short, the quality of life that Christ had so emphasized in His teachings is clearly manifested in the life of this faithful servant, Pastor Acosta.

This book is an honest witness to the invaluable contribution of Pastor Acosta to the lives of many people, the College of Theology of Central Philippine University, the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, and the Christian church and ministry, in general. Having been one of the students, and now co-worker of Pastor Acosta in the College of Theology, I can attest that definitely Pastor Acosta is (to borrow some of the words of the writers in this book) “a pebble dropped into a calm lake” causing ripples in the lives of many; devoted teacher; a profound and thought-provoking preacher; a dedicated and conscientious pastor; a loyal friend; a creative composer and singer. The list goes on, but only one thing is clear: the life that Pastor Acosta lives is so moving and touching that it is worth emulating and honoring.

This is one of the reasons for this book project. This is to honor the man who has brought joy, blessings, wisdom, love and even pain to many of us, and who has touched and challenged us to live a life worthy of God's calling. Moreover, this book aims to share wisdom and stories that will equip, encourage and inspire many to continue their own journey of faith.

Editing this book was both a delight and a learning experience. The stories of several people about Sir Acosta and his "salting effect" in their lives only affirmed my own conviction about this man - he is a man for God and others. His sermons and articles, occasionally seasoned with humor, are treasures of great wisdom and faith. As I was reading and checking them, I was filled with a kaleidoscope of reactions and feelings - laughter, wonder, amazement, encouragement and even discomfort. But foremost, I was deeply inspired by his life and work as a pastor, teacher and friend.

May this book truly move us to live out our faith and continue our ministry until the day the Lord comes.

Rea Angelica Dime Faulan
February 14, 2002

A Humble and Approachable Man

Pastor Rudy P. Acosta²

He sleeps at 12 midnight and wakes up at 4:00 in the morning to read. He reports to his office at Jaro Evangelical Church at exactly 8:00 in the morning to take on concerns and needs which require his attention. In between studies, counselling sessions, and preparing his many messages and lectures, he inspects the church's rooms and premises to ensure cleanliness; he supervises the garden, designs and cares, he inspects the altar decoration, makes suggestions on the painting of the church gates and walls, playfully pats the head of JEC learning center pupils and converses with JEC-LC parents and other office staff. After a short nap (after he has eaten a light lunch), he prepares to visit three or four church members in their homes. But before that, he passes by the office of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) or SM to conduct a Bible Study for the employees who are momentarily out for their lunch break.

After his rounds of visitation, he reports to his various Bible Study centers in different parts of the city. Monday evenings are spent at Duran St. for a Bible study with Lozañes family and neighbors. Tuesdays are spent with families at Gran Plains Subdivision for a Bible Study also. Wednesdays are for the church's prayer meeting. Thursdays are spent with the Young Professionals group at Bakhaw, Mandurriao. Fridays are with the Eslabon's family and neighbors in Jaro and the Young Family Circle of JEC. Saturdays are with baptismal candidates for their own biblical and theological orientations and studies. Sundays are reserved for two (2) church services, the morning and vesper worships. In between, he conducts Bible studies with the Young People, the Men, and when time allows, other auxiliary organizations. These are not all his activities. He also teaches classes at the CPU College of Theology. When different groups of church people come to discuss issues and topics which are very relevant to their situations, he is invited to provide inputs. Aside from these, he is also requested to dedicate children, officiate

marriages and officiate committals.

This schedule could easily tire a man in his prime. But not Pastor Rudy P. Acosta. At age 67, he is still doing this on a daily basis. Retirement? It is not in his vocabulary. Faith, service and commitment? It is his life. A driving force which sustains him throughout the day, weeks, months and years of ministering to different churches, institutions and groups. And in all of these ministries, he is giving and doing his BEST. Because if there is something which tries his patience, it is mediocrity. His life is a singular example of a man dedicated to serving God and his fellowmen.

Curriculum Vitae³

Name: Rodolfo Palmerola Acosta

Date of Birth: December 11, 1930

Place of Birth: Fabrica, Negros Occidental

Civil Status: Single

Family: Youngest of six children; both parents are deceased.

Educational Background:

High School, CPU

Associate of Arts, Central Philippine University, 1959 with highest honors.

Bachelor of Theology, CPU, 1963, summa cum laude.

Estimated average Grade: 1.25

Master of Arts (Church History), Andover Newton

Theological School, Newton Centre, Massachusetts, U.S.A.,

May 24, 1971. His adviser was John H. Scammon,

Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament.

Professional and Work Experience:

Pastor, Maa Central Evangelical Church, Negros Occidental, 1963-65.

Director, Baptist Student Center, La Paz, Iloilo City, 1966-68.

Pastor, Baptist Center Church, 1972-1992.

Pastor, New Testament Baptist Church, 1992-1995.

Pastor, Jaro Evangelical Church, 1996 - to the present.

Teacher, College of Theology, CPU.

Chairman Department of Religion and Ethics, CPU.

Taught Church History at an Institute, 1965.

Lecturer, Bible Study Leader, and Resource Person at circuits, camps, and conferences of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches.

Areas of Interest: Church History, Work with Youth and Students, Guidance and Counselling, Systematic Theology.

Delegate to National Conferences:

Workshop on Curriculum, National Council of Churches, Manila, 1966.

Agricultural-Industrial Life Conference, Cebu City, 1966,

Student Christian Movement Conference on

Ecumenical Strategy in Higher Education, Manila, 1968.

A Biography⁴

He was born on December 11, 1930, in a small town with 15,000 people. Here he spent the first twenty-six years of his life. Because of the presence of a foreign-owned lumber mill in Fabrica, his birthplace, he was exposed to various European and American cultures through his acquaintance with the families of foreign employees, the majority of whom were of European stock.

As a growing child he developed a deep consciousness of God through his mother. She never was a churchgoer but she made him aware of God's presence. Both his parents are now deceased. He had a sister who is also a graduate of the College of Theology, CPU. She had worked in Laos as a missionary under the EACC program. Except for one who is an Aglipayan (Philippine Catholic Independent Church) all his living sisters embrace the Protestant faith. A brother was baptized many years ago, the last in his family to be baptized. He himself was baptized at age sixteen.

From age five to age fifteen he had a series of "spiritual experiences"--experiences which he tells not in public but to close friends and counselees when really necessary--which was to climax in a strange encounter with God. His "experiences" or encounters were to finally lead him into full-time Christian ministry. He meant that when the *call* came his "experiences" were important factors that greatly helped in his decision to quit his job and, with barely enough money to support him for one month in school, went to

enrol at CPU for his last year in high school. At seventeen and still in high school he became the family breadwinner. He quit after finding employment with Insular Lumber Company, initially as an office boy. When he resigned from his job eight years later to go to CPU to study for the ministry he was already a clerk in the accounting department. His friends were pointing out to him the fact that people were quitting school to look for jobs, and here was a crazy young man who was quitting his job to go to school. He finished the secondary course at CPU, went on to college, and graduated in 1963 with the degree of Bachelor of Theology.

Maturity and a deeper commitment became avenues for the confirmation of his “experiences”. This was because as a growing adult and still greatly bothered by his “experiences” he was often, and with much anxiety, tempted to ask for a repetition of them in his adult years. Once or twice at Andover Newton where he went for his master’s degree in 1969 he joined a “spiritual pilgrimage” (not a regular activity of the school). One evening the participating members were asked to share their unusual religious experiences. The group was led by a professor of psychology who himself had had strange encounters with God. Because what were shared were very similar to his, he became convinced that his “experiences” were not just childhood fantasies.

At Baptist Center Church, besides delivering sermons, he taught the professional Sunday School class. He also played the piano (he can play hymns only) for their Visayan Women’s choir. He was adviser to the BYF and the Young Professionals group. He conducted the Wednesday prayer meeting and occasionally went out to visit people (he was not expected to do this), especially the shut-ins. He got invitations to give lectures and conducted Bible studies during circuit meetings and provincial and national conventions.

He intended to write articles relating to dialogues between the major religions of the world, particularly between Islam and Christianity, since in the Philippines there are strained relationships between Filipino Muslims and Filipino Christians. He wanted to write about the new biblical insights he would gain in his six months’ study.

He is committed to the reconciliation of people and peoples, of

churches and denominations, and of the major religions of the world. In short, he believes in ecumenism. He believes this is the ministry God has called him to. He believes it is God's purpose and intention to unite all the peoples of the world. Christianity, better informed, has a vital role to play here. He believed Jerusalem had something to offer him in this area of Christian service.

Studying in the United States of America: An Evaluation⁵

Pastor Acosta studied in the U.S. from September 1969 to June 1971. He was granted a scholarship from the World Council of Churches through the Theological Education Fund from September 1969 to December 1970 to finish his Master of Arts in Church History at the Andover-Newton Theological School. After his studies he taught Church History and other related subjects at the College of Theology, Central Philippine University. His impression of his U.S.A. study program was generally "good."

The school I went to is one of the best seminaries in the States. I liked the atmosphere there with its emphasis on academic freedom and ecumenical concern. My study program called for two years in which time I gained a lot in my field plus some appreciable knowledge in religious education and theological studies. Andover-Newton has an excellent faculty—experts in their chosen field. Let me add that I liked the community life in school and out of school.

As to difficulties in adapting his training in the U.S. to his work in the Philippines, he explained:

We are an English-speaking people and U.S. educational methods are not foreign to us. Our educational set-up is patterned after the U.S. set-up. Perhaps in the Philippines accessibility to books or good libraries is not enjoyed as much as it is in the U.S., a problem for both teachers and students.

Pastor Acosta recommended that others from the Philippines study in the U.S.A and some other countries:

As yet we cannot compare favourably with the U.S. and European countries in terms of Faculty and facilities, not that our professors are inferior but that not many of them have specialized in one area to be able to teach efficiently and with authority. We have very few professors who have a doctorate.

Values in his study experience in U.S.A. that have been of real help to him in his work included:

New methods and techniques and the openness to new truths; also respect for the opinion of others.

Pastor Acosta encountered financial problems while in the U.S. even if he was not married.

I had financial difficulty (This is understandable when one has no income and lives on \$25.00 a month plus board and lodging)...not with my study life if you mean books and tuition fees for these were taken care of. But this is not all of a man's life while he is studying. There are other things just as important which affect his stand: needs to go out to meet people; one needs relaxation and some recreation, otherwise he will go crazy. This involves money. A student has to spend, too, for toiletries, haircuts, etc.

A Church Historian

A Brief History of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches⁶

A few books have been written about the beginning of the work of the Baptists in the Philippines. When one is looking for a history of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, however, there does not seem to be much by way of an official written record that is available. What one gets are scanty verbal recollections of a few events here and there that happened in some remote past. This year the much-anticipated gathering of Baptist delegates at CPU has challenged the members of the program committee to attempt to capture, in a few written pages, what heretofore has been in a state of “hibernation” in the minds of those who witnessed the birth of the CPBC and the significant as well as the ordinary events that make up the foundation of what we have today. Our patient labor has been rewarded with scattered bits of valuable historical information pieced together in this present work to which more can be added later on as more people are inspired to reminisce.

Viewed against the backdrop of early developments in Baptist Mission in the Philippines, started in 1900 by Eric Lund and Braulio Manikan, our Convention is a latecomer. Three Kasapulanans precede it by a decade or two. These are the Kasapulanans of Iloilo, Negros, and Capiz. Granting, for the sake of Filipino pride, an absence of a conscious intent on the part of the early planners to duplicate the American experience, one cannot help but detect in our Convention set-up—in relation to the Kasapulanans and the churches—a close likeness to that of the American Baptist Convention; that is, participation or involvement spirals upward as member churches of state conventions, or smaller bodies, are automatically accepted constituent members of the National Convention. Thus, the local Philippine Baptist church is a member of the Circuit, the Union, the Kasapulan, and finally the Convention. This semblance should not be construed as an intention to idly imitate but as a necessity dictated by time and situation. In fact the same reason can be given for the creation of the CPBC itself.

Pre-Convention Years

As one begins to get a better perspective of the intricate Convention set-up today, one is led to ask the question, “How were things done in pre-Convention days?” We need not repeat here in detail what is recorded in the “Book of Remembrance” published by the Convention in 1950. Suffice it to say that above the major task of trailblazing, the early American missionaries took it upon themselves to implement what had been approved by the proper body guiding the Mission then as the norm that should govern in both promotion and coordination work. In time the missionaries were joined by several Filipinos as the latter became ready to assume leadership. It was always in the mind of the founding fathers to turn over the entire work to the Filipino people when the proper time came.

The first twenty-five years of mission work saw several conversions in the provinces constituting Western Visayas. As fast as the people responded to the evangelical challenge, so the number of organized churches grew. Consequently, by 1910 Baptists were represented in almost every major town. Since the missionaries believed salvation to be a holistic process involving the physical, social, intellectual and spiritual needs of man, it became a necessity to establish church-related institutions such as schools, student and community centers and hospitals. Through these institutions many people were introduced to the saving knowledge of the Gospel. It must be said here that the CPBC, if justification for its creation were sought, did more than what its proponents had expected. It has to its credit the gradual extrication of churches from a partly subsidized existence to that of self-support. The process was a painstakingly slow one involving the subsequent creation of committees, departments and organizations to take care of specific needs, and of positions and offices to establish liaison between the CPBC administration and the churches. Thus, the succeeding years saw what had begun as a small seed grow into a sturdy tree. The present generation will not be able to appreciate fully the significant contribution of the CPBC to the spiritual atmosphere in our country today unless we turn

back the hands of time, as it were, and take a glimpse at the events that led to the birth of the Convention.

The Earliest Pioneers

We begin with the providential team work and participation of Eric Lund and Braulio Manikan, which had started even before their arrival in Iloilo on May 3, 1900. While we are not told what specifically had been done by these two forerunners, we know they softened the ground for the first American Baptist missionaries that landed on our shores, starting in November of that year and thereafter. The earliest arrivals include Rev. Charles Briggs who came in November, 1900. He was followed a year later by Rev. S.S. Huse, Jr. and Rev. George Finlay, Rev. and Mrs. A.A. Forshee, Rev. and Mrs. J.C. Robbins, and Dr. and Mrs. P.H.J. Lerrigo followed in 1902. Miss Anna V. Johnson and Miss Celia Sainz joined the ranks in 1903. The arrival of Rev. and Mrs. W.O. Valentine, Rev. and Mrs. C.L. Maxfield, Rev. Henry W. Munger, and Rev. R.C. Thomas in 1904 ended the four-year pioneering period.

The First Churches

The first seven years crowned the efforts of the pioneering missionaries with encouraging results. Town converts by the tens and twenties, some of whom became preachers, organized themselves into small churches. In February 1901, Jaro Evangelical Church, reputedly the oldest Baptist Church in the Philippines, was organized. The church in Talisay, Negros Occidental, followed in November of the same year. The trend then in identifying the churches was to give them names according to their location. In Iloilo, churches were organized in Janiway (Calvario), Ito, Malublub, Banate, and Barotac Viejo. In Negros Occidental, three churches sprang up in the towns of Bacolod, Isabela, and Bago. In the province of Capiz, only the town of Capiz (now Roxas City) yielded to the compulsion to organize a church. After the first amazing decade, almost every capital town in Western Visayas had a Baptist church holding a Sunday worship service.

Establishment of Educational and Medical Institutions

The first decade likewise saw the establishment of educational and medical institutions. In 1905, Jaro Industrial School was established. Today its sprawling 24-hectare campus is dotted with imposing structures and the school is now known internationally as Central Philippine University. The Baptist Missionary Training School was also established in 1905 to train women for the Christian Ministry. Years later the school was absorbed by the College of Theology, which is presently one of the colleges of CPU and a very vital part of it. In the same year the third learning institution was established in Capiz – the Baptist Home School. Today it is one of the landmarks of Roxas City and bears the name, Filamer Christian Institute.

In 1907, the challenge to continue Jesus' healing ministry resulted in the establishment of Iloilo Mission Hospital in cooperation with the Presbyterians. This was followed in 1908 by the birth of another medical institution in Capiz known until today as Capiz Emmanuel Hospital.

Establishment of Dormitories and Centers

As evangelical Christians grew in number and as the challenge of secular education bore down upon them, the need to place many of them, especially their children, in decent homes while studying in faraway schools began to be felt. The succeeding years saw the construction of dormitories for boys and for girls in Iloilo and Bacolod. In these "homes away from home" the beautiful Christian atmosphere generated by the persons who ran them resulted in many transformed lives. Dormitories such as the ones set up in Iloilo, Negros, Capiz and Antique opened the way for the establishment of student and community centers and churches of which Bacolod Evangelical Church, Baptist Center Church and Capiz Evangelical Church are concrete and monumental examples. The combined work of the founding missionaries and their early

converts prepared the way for an evangelical stance as a way of relating to God.

How the Kasapulanans Began

At the outset, mention was made that the creation of Kasapulanans preceded that of the CPBC. The oldest of these is the Iloilo Kasapulan which was organized in a formal meeting at Calvario Evangelical Church, Janiuay in 1907. In the same year the Capiz Kasapulan was organized and it went by the name “Sociedad Misionera Filipina.” We have no record when the Negros Kasapulan was formally organized. It is a known fact, however, that before 1935 two Kasapulanans were operating in Negros Occidental, one in the North and another in the South. By the time the Convention was created, the two Kasapulanans had opted for a merger, and as one Kasapulan agreed to carry the name “Negros Kasapulan of Baptist Churches, Inc.”

The Antique Kasapulan was organized before World War II, but no record of a specific date is given. Its creation is the result of the combined effort of church leaders, promotional secretaries and American missionaries.

The first Kasapulan to be organized after World War II was the Romblon Kasapulan in 1950. It started with the first six churches of Romblon, but when the work was extended to Mindoro and a church was organized there, the Kasapulan decided to include Mindoro and changed its name to Romin Kasapulan. Just recently, the churches in Mindoro have decided to have a Kasapulan of their own.

The creation of the Aklan Kasapulan hinged upon a historical event dictated by circumstances that led to the division of Capiz into two provinces, one retaining the original name “Capiz” and the other going by the name “Aklan”. In May, 1968, the churches of Aklan decided to constitute themselves into the present Aklan Kasapulan of Baptist Churches.

The latest Kasapulanans to be organized are the Manila Kasapulan of Baptist Churches, the Mindanao Kasapulan of Baptist Churches and the Mindoro Kasapulan of Baptist Churches. Presently nine Kasapulanans constitute the Convention

of Philippine Baptist Churches.

How do we distinguish the child from the man that it has grown into? That is the problem one faces when one tries to distinguish between the original Baptist mission, begun at the turn of the century, and the present Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, Inc. in its intricate organizational set-up and ever-spreading involvements. The most that can be done is to look at the Convention from the time of its creation to the present. Its formal inception is not really its beginning but a distinguishing boundary line between child and adult.

The Birth of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, Inc.

The year 1935 saw the birth of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, Inc., a gift of history to Filipino Baptists, necessitated by the need to have the interests of the churches represented by a national body. It was also the first official step in the turnover process from American to Filipino leadership. Dr. Jorge Masa was the moving spirit and naturally became the first General Secretary. There were obstacles to be hurdled during the first few years, but the leaders' inclination towards unity prevailed. A provision in the By-laws called for the positions of Chairman of the Board of Trustees and President of the Convention to be held by two persons. Consequently, Dr. Lorenzo Porras and Dr. Feliciano Sombito were elected Board Chairman and CPBC President, respectively. Later, a constitutional amendment provided that the two positions be held by one person and it has been that way ever since.

These were the first officers of the Convention: Dr. Feliciano Sombito – President; Dr. Pedro Rio – Vice President; Dr. Jorge O. Masa – Geneneral Secretary; Dr. S.S. Feldman – Associate Geneneral Secretary; Dr. Lorenzo Porras – Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees had, as it does now, a membership of fifteen – ten Filipinos and five American Missionaries – as stipulated. Since the intention of the Mission Board was to turn over at some future date the leadership of the

Mission to the Nationals, the board membership gradually changed until it became wholly Filipino starting 1935.

National Involvement of the Convention

One of the early significant moves of the Convention was its acceptance of membership in the Philippine Federation of Christian Churches (now National Council of Churches in the Philippines). Through this involvement, Baptists were exposed to the nature and work of other denominations in the country. By virtue of this affiliation a few of our own people had had the opportunity to serve the Federation. These were Lydia Garrido Olson, who upon graduation from the College of Theology, CPU, had been offered the position of Youth Director. Dr. Jose A. Yap at one time had served as General Secretary. He was followed by Dr. Agustin E. Masa who had served as member of the Executive Committee. Later the Philippine Federation of Christian Churches changed its name to National Council of Churches in the Philippines. It was then that Dr. Cordelia Gobuyan left the Convention to accept the position of Director of the Youth Department of the NCCP. A few years later she was appointed Director of the Department of Christian Education. The last of our people to hold said positions with the NCCP were Mrs. Ruth C. Corvera as Director of the Department of Home and Family Life and Rev. Edwin I. Lopez as Youth Director. After 1965, the Convention became more deeply involved with the NCCP as more Baptist leaders were appointed members of standing committees and others represented our Convention in deliberations on issues of national concern. This year, Dr. Johnny V. Gumban, present President of our Convention was elected one of the Vice-Chairpersons of the NCCP.

A Place in the Sun

Since the end of World War II the dream of the Convention personnel had been to have a place of their own. In 1954, during Atty. Remitio's incumbency as President, a small lot in front of CPU was purchased as the site for the new Convention

headquarters. It was a two-storey semi-permanent building intended to house the offices of the General Secretary, promotional secretaries and department heads. It was also to serve as meeting place for the Board of Trustees and lodging quarters for visiting pastors and Convention officials. After a few years this property was sold to CPU and today a beautiful two-storey permanent house on Fajardo Street serves as the Convention headquarters.

Some Important Milestones

Not all that happened in the space of fifty years can be mentioned in this present work. Two outstanding events, however, should not be forgotten. The first of these is the establishment of a Bible Institute to train young men and women who felt called to full-time Christian ministry but who did not intend to pursue college training. The Institute was a boon to the Baptist ministry since it answered the great need for church workers throughout the Convention area. The Institute has grown into the present Convention Baptist Bible College situated at Bakyas, Bacolod City. It has a small campus with four permanent and semi-permanent buildings. Today another Bible School is operating in North Negros. The same need that led to the establishment of the CBBC gave rise to the North Negros Baptist Bible College in Sagay, the third training school for ministers to be established. The other significant event happened in 1981 at the height of a great controversy regarding the ordination of women pastors. The Convention was divided on the issue and for years it had been the “bone of contention” that kept bobbing up at various meetings. That year the Convention met at Bakyas, Bacolod City. After a long, heated debate, a vote was taken and the side favoring the ordination of qualified women pastors won. At this writing three women pastors have been ordained.

The Creation of Church Organizations

It was while the Convention was still in its infancy, or perhaps even before its creation, that the need for special ministries began to evolve. Since the local churches were growing in both numbers and quality and ministers were getting shorthanded, an emphasis on lay

ministry became a must. The idea was to create organizations to serve as arms of the local churches. Three organizations were envisioned – one for the youth, another for the women, and still another for the men. These organizations did two wonderful things. Through their well-planned and all-round programs, they helped the churches to be strong and creative local entities and placed the Convention in the limelight of national and international events. We shall not go into the particular histories of these organizations since they are treated separately in this souvenir program. However, we shall outline certain important developments that enabled the Convention through the years to reach out to more people.

Significant Development

The following are the significant developments that gave the work of the Convention a great boost since 1945.

- 1945 -- Arrival of old and new missionaries to rebuild what the war had destroyed.
- 1948 -- Creation of the Federation of Women's Societies of the CPBC.
 - Creation of the Department of Women's Work.
- 1952 -- Organization of the Fellowship of Pastors' and Ministers' Wives.
- 1954 -- Creation of the Home and Family Life Committee.
 - Camp Higher Ground established as a Campsite for Young People.
- 1957 – Organization of the Department of Home and Family Life.
- 1961 – Creation of the Department of Baptist Men.
- 1966 – Creation of the Department of Laity (under this department the Men, Women, Youth, and Home and Family Life functioned as separate commissions).
- 1962 – Setting up of a pilot project of community service at Veteran's Village.
- 1970 – Establishment of Health Aid to the Needy for Development.
- 1974 – Establishment of Guimbal Educational and Research

Center.

Turnover of Properties – A Decisive Move

In 1969 the American Baptist Foreign Mission (now Board of International Ministries), seeing that the national leadership had grown mature, made its first decisive move of turning over CPU to the nationals through the Convention. This was followed by the turnover of Iloilo Mission Hospital to the same recipient sometime later, until finally in 1974 all mission properties were turned over to the Convention. The event, though quietly observed, was a momentous one.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Through the years the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, Inc. has undergone considerable restructuring to enable it to respond to the demands of a rapidly changing world. Though operating now as an independent entity, the Convention continues to receive gifts and grants in aid from the BIM and from other world funding bodies.

A few years ago the Convention launched a four-pronged program of Evangelism, Christian Education, Stewardship, and New Frontiers. Serving as liaison between the churches and the Kasapulanans and the Convention are the Field Secretaries and Area Coordinating Ministers. Of the four prongs the New Frontier Ministries represents the newest and widest field and one which exposes the Convention to deeper social involvements. The question of funding has always been a nagging headache to the Convention leaders. Our churches have yet to be challenged to give not only emotionally but rationally, as well. A giving of this kind by the more or less than 500 member churches is the answer we seek to our financial handicap and certainly provides a more stable form of support.

Three things need to be mentioned as the Convention braces itself for the future. Firstly, it is important that we know what

“breed” of young people we are training to take over the leadership from this passing generation. In this day and age will they fill the shoes of Joshua who succeeded Moses and went on to take possession of the Promised Land? Secondly, we need to overcome the seeming “unwillingness” of the churches to go all out for Convention support by giving them a practical demonstration of the kind of help the Convention believes it has committed itself to on their behalf. Let’s give the churches no reason to say, “What has the Convention done for us?” (Who is the Convention, anyway?) Thirdly, nothing about missions has been treated in this essay, although in the past some semblance of it has been processed through the Convention by the Federation of Christian Women’s Missionary Societies when this organization through its “One-Centavo-A-Day-with-a-Prayer” program helped finance the transportation of our missionaries to Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, and the United States. This is a commendable beginning for such a big enterprise as missions, and since great things start from small things and with God nothing is impossible, we shall yet see the day when foreign missions shall have become a vital part of the Convention’s thrust.

In the meantime, we have a tremendous job to do and let’s do it well. Do we need encouragement? St. Paul gives it in 2 Corinthians 4:7-10.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

Finally Jesus said –

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have

*tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome
the world.” John 16:33*

A Friend, Pastor and Theologian

Rudy P. Acosta: A Pastor⁷

Mr. Acosta is a pastor who believes that the local church is where the action is – it is never dull, sometimes overwhelming, and always graced with God’s people.

Mr. Acosta baptized me in a very solemn and private celebration at Baptist Center Church while I was a student at the College of Theology. His sensitivity to my desire for privacy and his willingness to intentionally break away from the strict Baptist tradition of proclaiming one’s faith through public baptism, Mr. Acosta understood my struggles and celebrated with me in my baptism. He gave me the opportunity to look at my life: where I want to go and be. With my baptism, Mr. Acosta reminded me that I am not just “fulfilling” my goals but that I am also a participant in God’s plan for the purpose of God’s kingdom.

It is great honor to be baptized by you, Sir Acosta. Thanks for being a part of my spiritual journey. Happy, Happy, Happy Birthday!

Setting an Example⁸

Pastor Acosta has been setting us an example on how to live our lives as Christians, the way the Bible tells us to do, and the way we should all act as Christians. He has expressed to us the ideas of what we should do and what we should say as Christians. And he has been reminding us of what he taught us all this time.

I think Pastor Acosta has lived an idealistic life that we should follow. He has been dedicating his life to the ministry and has assumed the responsibility of a father, a big brother and a friend to all of us. This is not because it is his job to do so, but because he has the heart to guide us in living our lives. In him is the pure concern towards his fellow Christians and other people as well. He has not been torn to the facts of the social distribution of this society. Whoever they are - a maid, a beggar, a driver or a wealthy businessman, he has been persistent in spreading God’s ministry to them. He has placed in his heart the responsibility of a true

Christian, and all these years he has been following it, living it and spreading it to others. He has been doing it not for his selfish concerns but because he cares for other people. He always felt the guilt of not doing enough if one person has gone astray.

I think Pastor Acosta has been a contributing factor to the life of many. He has loved us all these years. He does not want us to go astray. I think everyone has to thank him for doing so. Without his persistence, maybe some of us could have gone astray but because he is that persistent even at his age he has inspired us to live our lives as God wants us to do.

An Idealist⁹

Pastor Acosta is an idealist. He expects that those who call themselves Christians should act and love by following the example of the life of Jesus Christ. He feels bad and frustrated when he learns that a church member does not act or behave as a Christian should under the circumstances and he blames himself for not doing enough as a pastor.

Pastor Rudy P. Acosta as I See Him¹⁰

I came to know Pastor Rudy P. Acosta many years back as pastor of Baptist Center Church.

In the past it was only the Baptist Center Church which held vesper services in the afternoons and there were times that we were not able to worship in the morning due to unavoidable circumstances. I never tire of listening to the sermons of Pastor Acosta because most often his sermons are simple, factual and soul-searching and sometimes will jolt you to your right senses. They contribute to the deepening and fortitude of a Christian believer.

Sometime in 1996-1997 Pastor Acosta accepted the pastoral invitation of Jaro Evangelical Church. I believe that indirectly I may have contributed in suggesting that we must get Pastor Acosta as pastor because he just resigned from NTBC. God has indeed a purpose for everything and for every one.

We came to know him better as pastor of our church. He shared

with us his in-depth studies and knowledge about theology, church history and ecumenism. As a Minister, he often emphasizes the importance of mission and the support thereof, what is a church and who compose the church. He gives emphasis to pastoral identity and pastoral care – the relationship between the pastor and the congregation and vice versa for the survival of the church. He finds it difficult to discharge his pastoral care and visits due to time constraints.

He strongly emphasizes Christian life as to its quality. Christians must do things for Christ and his fellowmen in thought, in word and most of all in deed and must live by it.

Christian education according to him should be given importance, most especially in dealing with children, young teens and young professionals in their commitment to Christian beliefs and church work.

Pastor Acosta is so much concerned about family relations of church members and their spiritual upliftment. He is so friendly and outgoing to people around him and even to those who come to him for monetary dole outs irrespective of who and what they are.

Pastor Rudy Acosta as a Minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, is therefore a very fine example of a committed, honest, sincere and dedicated servant of God. Young ministers should not only emulate but follow his example. We need more pastors like him. We hope and pray that God will give him more inspiration, zeal and good health so that he will dedicate all his time in the service of the Lord. God bless him and more power!

Pastor Acosta: An Impression¹¹

An “intense” Pastor. That is how I describe him personally. Being Pastor Acosta’s co-worker (I am the Christian Education Directress and he is the Pastor) means hardwork because he expects everyone to work and be like him. He is a pastor by heart. He hates lousy and “false prophets” among the pastoral circle. Although he readily extends help to pastors in need, he felt that they will never suffer in the ministry if they do the right things for the Lord. And I believe it.

Being “intense” describes the personality of Sir Acosta (that’s how I address him). He wants things done immediately and wants a project to be finished, ASAP! You will find him digging his own pocket if he wants to finish or purchase things for the church. Activities must be well-planned and implemented and must have good results. The moment his expectations fail, he blows-up, and regrets his outburst later. Church members and co-workers could easily feel his tension especially when things do not go right. Problems and broken relationships must be settled once and for all.

He is benevolent. Students, city beggars, relatives and friends could testify to this. He believes that in every act of giving there is divine action. He believes that nobody becomes poor by giving. He is sometimes fed up with the constant asking of the same persons with the same alibis but you can be sure that after he gets angry there is money for them.

As a theologian, Pastor Acosta gives life and beauty to the Bible. He systematizes his ideas of the Word of God. He seems to be an inborn preacher, who can preach all day without an inkling of exhaustion. He usually mentions Paul and Jesus as his reference points in his sermons.

You can never find a match for Pastor Acosta as a preacher especially in his interpretation of the church as a building and as a people. This is the reason why he gained respect from both children and adults. He is very sensitive yet very open about his feelings. His fears and insecurities, some of them due to “rise in blood sugar,” are mostly true and correct.

Sir Acosta, thank you for creating ripples in our lives especially in my life. I cannot do much but to become a “licensed thief” of your sermons late in the evening, to train myself to make alibis when you are around, in order to secretly plan and do something for your birthday. Please forgive me.

I know God will bless you because you have been a faithful steward for him. Happy Birthday! It is a blessing to work with you.

- R – Reasons out in obedience to the call of God and reverently committed his life to serving the Lord.
- U – Understands the undertakings of his students in terms of seminary life, academic struggle, spiritual reformation and emotional longings.
- D – Devoted and dedicated man of God, down to earth in the deliberation of the message of God and even in his pronouncements about the Kingdom of God.
- Y – Yearns for the best in God: the best of love, the best of gifts, the best of labor, and the best of loyalty.
- P – Preacher. Preaches mightily and enthusiastically. He can capture the bored, the uninterested, and the weary mind.
- A – Academically gained the highest honor (summa cum laude) in his Bachelor of Theology degree at Central Philippine University.
- C – Consecrated his life both to the College of Theology, Central Philippine University and in the Church Ministry.
- O – Outwardly has manifested the real essence of Pastoral Ministry and has established best his pastoral identity among churches.
- S – Servant of God. He lives a humble and dignified life in his relationship with people.
- T – Teacher. Teaches honestly his students by example - he lives up to what he preaches and teaches.
- A – Actively serving the Lord even in his retirement age. And so in the final day He will declare: “Rudy, well done! You are a good and faithful servant.”

Visions and Personal Matters

Nagaabot nga nagahinahina ang madumduman ko sa nagliligad. Pero madumduman ko pa ang childhood life ko. Ang mother kag father ko Aglipayan. Wala sila nagakadto sa simbahan; ang mother ko nagapangamuyo lang. Sa Fabrica, malapit kami sa Baptist church kag na-influence ako didto. Ako ang una nagpatugmaw, dayon nagsunod ang mother, father kag mga utod ko. Wala man ako magconvert sa ila pero nag-upod lang sila.

Ako may mga visions pero wala ko ini ginasugid ordinarily kay man madala mo ang tawo. The moment you tell something spiritual, miraculous or supernatural, maguba ang faith sang tawo, indi na ina siya magpati sa husto gid kundi nga madala na lang ina siya kay may ginsugid ka nga daw katilingalahan.

Ministry at the Baptist Center Church

Twenty (20) years ako sa Baptist Center Church (BCC). Sa akon ministry, I tried to follow the declarations and statements of Jesus. Jesus loves people. Pero sa karon may mga systems kag powers nga indi amo nga naga-oppress, halimbawa ang cause nga “human”. Of course, tani ang cause sang humanity, cause man sang God.

May nagasugid nga wala ako authority kay wala ako doctorate and yet ginagamit man sang Ginoo para sa hilikuton sang simbahan kag Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches. People tell me nga naka-intiende man sila kag nakahangop sang ginahambal ko. I feel that people love me.

Pero later, I think the Lord wants me to retire for another ministry. Of course, wala ako nagasiling nga tan-awon ko kon gamiton ako sang Ginoo sa iban nga ministry. Pero it just comes, kag wala lang ako kahibalo nga didto na ako, daw ginatulod nalang ako sa lain naman nga ministry.

Wala man gani ako sadto anay nagpanumdom nga sa BCC ako matupa, galing sang pagbalik ko halin sa pag-eskwela sa U.S. - nga sadto tani nagaplano pa ako nga magdoctorate sa Scotland –

natabo-an nga wala pastor sa BCC. Didto ako nagasimba, samtang nagateach sa CPU. Ginkuha ako sang primero nga ma fill-in lang sang vacuum - nga ma preach lang. After three months, ginkuha si Rev. Laurente nga full-time minister kag nagawali sa Ilonggo worship service. Then nagdamo ang nagsimba sa early morning kag vesper services kag ang BCC daw equivalent na sa tatlo ka churches - may time gani nga may taga CPU nga nagadalagan sa BCC agod magsimba. Siguro down to earth ang message kag daw mabuligan ang mga tawo sa ila practical life; kag siguro its about my life man and the way I see things nga daw lain bala. Siling gani sang isa ka membro, ginabantayan gid niya kuno ako: "You say the same things, but your way of saying them and your emphasis can make people focus on something. Ang tawo kon makapamati sa imo daw nagalain." Pero indi man ako aware sina until people tell me.

I love the people at BCC even if there are misunderstandings sometimes. I love them but I am sad that some people cannot see other truths because they think they are right. Duha lang man ina ka butang: abi mo husto ka, ti kon husto ka kundi excusable ka; pero kon nahibalo-an mo nga indi ka husto kag ma insist ka pa lain na ina. I am telling the truth as I perceive it.

Theological Thinking

In Africa there is black theology. People go back to their experiences to reflect theologically. Sa aton kalabanan wala pa kalambot sa sina. Nakabati lang kita sang contextualism. Personally I cannot pinpoint what it is. It comes to me only when I preach. My Christ as a human is not a Filipino or American. Ang aton longings indi lang nasandig sa longings sang Filipino kundi sang tanan. Wala gid ako sang isiling nga Filipino gid. I am not a patriot like Rizal nga Filipino gid lang ang sa akon. Ang pagka-patriot para sa whole human kind. Sa balay wala ako naga-apin sa mga utod ko, ang naapinan ko ang humanity itself - ang "man" nga makalolooy.

General Problems

Ang problema sang Filipino in general amo ini: we do not care about the Philippines, we care about ourselves. It is personal, gani nagakaguba kita. Sa aton Convention, there are people nga nagapangakig kay abi nila self-righteous magpreach ang pastor. Tapos kon mag meeting sa Convention may mga speaker kag lecturer nga nagatudlo kag may biblico-theological studies, pero pagkahalin naton daw nadula lang ang aton gintun-an. Kon kis-a mga “green jokes” nalang ang nabilin; ukon mga estorya bahin sa kon manami ang pangabuhi sang pastor nga ini ukon indi.

Mabaskog ang crab mentality. Daw wala kita naga build up. Pero ang jealousy ara pirme – pirme lang “in terms of me.” “What is this in terms of me.” “What about me?” Daw may mga leaders nga dalok - indi nila pag-ihambal ang mga ideas nga manami kon indi pa sila leader. Gani ang ila himoon nga kon paano anay sila mapili-an. Tapos ang ila ideas gali statements lang kag words, wala nila ini ginapangabuhi.

Sad to say daw kahuloya ang aton kag ang Philippines. Kulang kita sacrificial spirit. Makalolooy kita, daw maintenance lang - daw indi kita sang theological, kundi kon ano ang ipakaon ta sa panimalay.

Ang Filipino naga-utang, tapos indi anay magbayad sang utang kay mabakal anay singsing, aritos kag kulentas. Amo ini ang aton value. Kag indi kita mabinuligon. Pero sa imnanay, dira kita mabulig. Pero parehas abi, mangita kita sang bata nga buloligan gid para paeskwelahon, daw kulang. May mga pastors nga nag-ayo pangabuhi, nga daw wala nagapanumdum sa buloligan nga mga pastors. Manami ang ila pangabuhi, pero ang iban nga mga pastors kalolooy.

Pastors and Production

It seems that there is something wrong with our ministers, dala na ako sini, nga daw makapastor kag may ihambal lang OK na. Pero within our souls daw wala vision. Kag ang nakita ko nga batasan nga daw nahuya kita. Ang akon mga apo kag hinablos, singanan mo gani nga taason ang grade, indi sila magcommit,

nahuya kag nahadlok kay basi mapaslawan sila. Nagapanago sila sa siling nga “maayo gani ma-fail nga wala magtuon tudo.” Nahadlok sila magcommit nga magtuon gid, nga kon ma-fail makasiling bala “ti anhon ko, anhon mo, kay todo man tani tuon ko.” Nahuya sila singganon nga “gintun-an mo, na-fail ka pa.”

It is not really intelligence kag maalam ka gid, it is on being pisan ka sa research. Man ang pagsulat sang thesis, indi na paalam-alam kundi kapisan sa pagconduct research, ina kon mapisan ka. Sang sa Israel kami ang mga Japanese hat-on gani maghambal English kag ang iban nami maghambal kag mag diskusyon. Sang ulihi ang isa ka Japanese nakaproduce libro kay mapisan, kay may determination. Once may determination ka kag sundan sang kapisan may maproduce ka, kay indi paalam-alam ang reasearch. Kon abi mo paalam-alam, you will be frustrated. Didto sa iban nga lugar, wala sila nagatan-aw sa alam kundi sa production. Kon may nahimo ka tan-awon nila ina kag basahon.

Local Churches, Pastors, Cultures and Attitudes

Sang una (1930s) ang mga churches self reliant. Pero nagkaladula ina bangod sang two factors. First, certain section sang Americans nga nagakadto diri indi gusto sang kwarta inegosyo bangod sang experience nila sa America nga nagcorrupt. So, gintago nila ini sa aton gani ang pastor ta asta lang dira. Nadugangan pa ini sang Spanish influence—nga kon professional ka indi ka mag-obra sa gasoline station, etc. Sa America ya mabaskog ang dignity of labor. Ako nagpanilhig sa simbahan, nagdecorate. Pero may mga nagasiling nga indi mag-amo sina ang pastor kay nagaguba sang dignity. Didto sa Rizal Fundacion, nagpanguha ako bato sa dalan kay nahuya ako magsugosugo. Ang manami lang kay ginbantayan nila ako kag pagkakita nila nga “ato si Manoy nagaobra,”nagsunod sila sang ginahimo mo.

Naguba ang aton gid - what we have - partly because of the missionaries. I think that is natural. If we go to a certain island in the Pacific, we will impose our Filipinism siguro. Ti, “That’s the way he cooks things.” “No that’s not the way.” Unconsciously, what we think is best. Amo ina, masami sa mission nagabase kita sa aton lang experience.

Ang nanamian ko sa Israel ang amon Jewess nga upod. Sang nagkadto kami sa isa ka lugar indi siya gusto maghatag sang chocolate sa mga tawo didto ukon anything nga wala sa sadto nga lugar, because she said, “You will just influence them in a negative sense.” Siling niya mas maayo nga patubuong sila sa ila kaugalingon bilang tumandok, kay the moment nga foreigner gani ang magdevelop sa ila, nagasalig. Siling ko gani, “Daw sa ka kill joy man sining Hudea,” pero husto siya.

Kita nagnami mag English sa baylo nga ang missionaries magtuon sang Binisaya. Kita na iya ang naghambal sa English. Ti nano pa ang kinahanglan. We did not have what it would take. Lain ang Hudeo. Sang bihag sila, ang ila pagkaclannish nakabulig sa ila kaluwasan. Sa aton kon nakapa-America, lain ka na, daw Americanized na. Ang Hudeo iya nadevelop gid sa ila kusog gani subong nami sila. Nakadumdum ka sang pagdakop sa ila sang una kag ginhambalan sila, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion.” Kag nagsiling sila, “How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land, maayo pa nga ang amon nga dila mag cleave sa roof sang amon tongue.” Daw wala kita sang subong sina, ukon kaangay abi sang sa Malaysia, Indonesia, kag Japan.

Of course, may ara man nga strong sa fanaticism kag ang ila nga ignorance nakabulig. Amo ini ang sa Korea - ang ka-intiende ang pastor lang. Kon ano ang ihambal sang pastor, pati lang man sila. Kon magluhod ang pastor sunod ang tanan. Sa aton Convention daw wala kita sini. Nagsobra kita sa alam nga indi amo. Indi ako ka intiende sa aton, kay wala kita sang ma-look back nga aton gid. Sang una, indi kita mga kawatan kay ibilin lang dira sang Chinese traders ang ginabaligya nila indi madula. Pero karon daw ka dishonest sa aton. Diin ini maghalin? Indi bala nadula ang aton gid kag naislan sang indi aton? Whatever the good intention was nga para sa aton, it was not enough to replace what we had in the beginning and which we lost because probably of colonialism. Basi sa location man ini. Tan-awa bala, kundi sa torrid zone kita, parehas kita sa Ecuador nga daw wala-wala gid. Daw lain ang pungsod nga may four seasons nga nagapressure sa ila. Halimbawa, kon tapos na ang autumn, maaman naman sila para sa winter. Sa aton, OK lang kay we have all the time. Pero nagsalig-

salig lang kita wala man damo nga nahimo.

Kadamo sang factors nga nag-amo kita sina. Ang strongest factor, we ourselves. May crisis of identity kita. We do not know what we are. We like hamburger. Joke sang isa ka tawo, “Chinese have chopsticks, what about Filipinos?” What do they have? Kamot. Magpanghilamon kamot, magkaon kamot. Wala kita nagdevelop tools. Nadala ini tubtub sa aton theological endeavors.

I think karon nga time ginatan-aw ko daw lain na -- huben pa kamo, kami indi na physically strong. Pero diin ka abi makakita sang ginatawag nga “sticking to your own field.” Diri sa aton, ang ginatudlo ko indi akon field, pero masiling lang dayon kita, “Basa ka lang kag itudlo mo bisan indi ina imo field.” Ang kulang sa aton ang daw “guro type” like that of Jesus and his disciples. Kaangay bala sang nagakarate, nga ginasunod nila ang ila teacher. Daw waay kita sini nga sahi sang “discipleship.” Indi gid man nga ang teacher masiling, “I will dominate the students,” kundi nga there is love, nga mapa-ubos man ang teacher bisan maalam siya. Ghandi said, “There go my people, I must follow them for I am their leader.” Kaangay man ina kay Christ and his disciples, kag kay Aristotle, Plato and their pupils. Sa nakita ko, sa nabasahan ko, kag sa movies bahin sa United States, daw nagdaku kita sa panghunahuna nga abi naton wala corruption sa U.S. Daw angelic ang paghangad sa nagkalatabo sa ila, pero damo man didto ang nagapinatyanay.

One more thing, bahin sa aton principle on local autonomy. It can work to our advantage and disadvantage. Bangod sang local autonomy nagapassive ka sa iya sang iban. “I exist here, no one dictates me, I do not dictate others.” So, if one church is in trouble, indi ka kabulig. Our churches and seminaries should be willing to help when others are in crisis. Maybe to ask, “Ano ang mabulig namon agod masolbar ang inyo problema?” Usually, nagahipos lang kita kag kon kis-a dayon ta lang condemn, halimbawa, sa mga naggwa sa simbahan kag nagtukod sang ila kaugalingon nga iglesia, wala pa kita gani kajibalo sang kabilogan nga natabo nagkondenar na kita.

History, Other Experiences, and Advice

Siguro sa amon nga mga tigulang na, matan-aw nalang kami sa grandstand. Malantaw na lang kami sa mga bata-on nga players nga nagahampang. We will be there to cheer, nagalantaw na lang sa inyo because we are not strong physically to play.

Ano ang theological impact sang time ni Manikan, Vafloor, Masa? Daw kabudlay sina sabton kay gagmay pa kami sadto. Pero madamo nga leaders sadto ang makalakat sa abroad. Kon General Secretary ka damo ang makadtoan mo nga lugar, makalagawlagaw ka.

I think it is good to focus on things that can help people. Look for something in the Filipino soul, basi may ara pa da, and build on it. Wala kita sang aton gid nga wala iban nga interpretation; but we cannot measure the intellect. Do you believe in serendipity? Serendipity means that “the truth will come by ‘accident’.”

Pasensyoso ako kag open man ang life ko. Pero at times, without analysing first, naga explode ako. Pero wala ako nagadumot. Nagabanggi man ang ideas ko sa ideas sang iban, pero I respect theirs.

Sa simbahan sa Molo daw nagcloser kami. May Domingo nga nagaalawas, pero wala pa building kay wala property. Dalagko man ang bulig. Ang sweldo ko 6,500 plus etc. Sa CPU 3,000 plus.

One more thing, it is good to be honest. It is good not to put others down. It is good to love people as we love ourselves. May illustration bahin sina. May isa ka manggaranon nga gusto mag honor sang iya engineer. Siling niya sa iya engineer, “Mapahimo ako mansion nga matahom gid nga ihatag ko sa tawo nga nahamutan ko.” Ti, ginhimo sang engineer ang mansion. Pero ang materials nga gingamit niya third class. Kag sa iya pensar, “Ang mahatagan sini nga mansion mahinulsol gid kay man dali ini maguba, ang iban nga reenforcement kawayan lang.” Sang adlaw nga ihatag na sang manggaranon ang balay, para gali sa sadto nga engineer.

Some tips on preaching and hearing sermons. Indi kita magpanero personal, but hold on to principles. We should be clear that with the Lord, people can change. Be aware of at least three reactions when you listen to a sermon.

First, you will feel elated because your life style is being

confirmed. So you say “Praise the Lord amo gid ako sina kanami no, ako gid ina.” Second, you will feel convicted, but you will thank the Lord because the pastor was used to touch the unpleasant (mapait) in you. Third, you will feel condemned. When you feel condemned you will hit the pastor; you will hit anyone who said it. May mga nagabatyag nga condemned. Pero tani kon ang balatyagon convicted lang, bisan indi lang elated kay man talagsa man lang ina, maganami ang simbahan ta, kay makasiling kita, “Lord thank you, daw ako ina, pero ginpakita mo sa akon nga kinahanglan mag-change ako.” Pero kon nagabatyag ka nga condemned ka, indi gid magnami ang simbahan. Indi maayo kon negative ang paghangop sang ginawali sang pastor.

A Formal Interview - 1996¹⁴

Name of Interviewee:	Rudy P. Acosta
Sex:	Male
Age:	66
Place of Birth:	Fabrica, Negros Occidental
Present Address:	Pueblo Concepcion, Mandurriao, Iloilo City
Languages learned:	English, Spanish.
Present Occupation:	Retired (in part-time ministry)
Highest Degree Earned:	Master of Arts (Church History), 1971, Andover Newton Theological School. Thesis: “From the Council of Trent to Vatican II: An Inquiry into Three Decisive Issues Faced by the Papacy and their Influence on Papal Behavior and Policy”
Important Leadership Position Held in the CPBC:	Member, Board of Trustees, CPBC Teacher, CPU College of Theology Pastor, Baptist Center Church

Could you please tell me why you joined the Baptist church?

Our house was near a Protestant church; I was influenced by the mission work and activities of that church.

At 6 I saw a vision – a transfiguration; also during the Second World War a person took me as a nephew and told me to run and go home. So I was saved from a possible Japanese assault.

Could you please tell something about the persons or factors that shaped your Christian views?

I was inspired as I listened to the messages of Filipino pastors like Benebes, Gumban, Buensuceso and many members of the Fabrica Evangelical Church.

In your experience, which features in a Baptist worship service do you appreciate the most and the less?

Appreciated most: climactic worship service, in which all parts are interrelated.

Appreciated less: routine and passivity of worshippers; and when music and singing drag and are out of tune.

Could you please tell me your personal knowledge about the beginnings of the Baptist churches in the Philippines?

Evangelicals from the U.S.A. came as a consequence of the American occupation. When American missionaries came they designated certain denominations in specific areas where they could work. Western Visayas was given to the Baptists. Our being Baptists (our beliefs) is then, in a sense, accidental. There was no other choice.

Would you say that the birth of CPBC in 1935 was significant or insignificant for the Philippine Baptists?

Very significant. As Philippine Baptists we were starting on our own – a chance to handle our own matters, although the Americans were still here. It was a beginning of the turnover of leadership and mission work to the Filipinos.

Do you know Philippine Baptists whom you think had played a major role in the CPBC?

Yes. Presidents, leaders, Sunday School and Christian Educators - they bolstered the work of CPBC, e.g. Miss Plasus trained Christian Educators and produced Sunday School materials.

In your opinion, what were the important program priorities of the CPBC?

New Frontier Ministries.

Before we had Evangelism as an important program. Now traditional evangelism is no longer the stress – but giving help (physical, emotional, financial support) is an important part of CPBC program because our members are poor (hard-up).

Has your involvement in the CPBC opened opportunities for ecumenical contact?

Yes. Through my sermons and speeches, I touch on ecumenical concerns. Probably on the part of the listeners, such ecumenical issues touch them.

What is your opinion about other denominations?

All denominations are of the Lord. Each has a place in the map. But some denominations – as they win members – are stealing members of other denominations. If our loyalty is to God and not to denomination, then we should not think that ours is the best.

How about your view of Roman Catholicism?

Roman Catholicism has done much in the conversion of the Filipinos. We became a Christian country because of Roman Catholicism. Some Roman Catholics are more loyal than Evangelicals. They stick to their own beliefs.

How about your view of other religions?

We were told that the Baptist denomination is the true religion. I learned later that it is not true. God reveals himself in different ways and religions.

Please comment on the present ecumenical concerns of the CPBC.

Our ecumenical work in CPBC is more on paper. Our effort is done in terms of our affiliation with the NCCP. There should be

more than this.

What do you think should be the ecumenical concern of CPBC in the next five years?

We should drop certain misconceptions (or bigotry) of our denomination. We may be proud of ourselves (i.e., Baptist denomination is the best for us) but be guided that salvation is not our monopoly. Salvation is personal not denominational.

How important is the concern of CPBC for social justice?

Important. Social justice is part of our mission. But usually social justice work benefits first those who are in the program. Some use the denomination for one's interest, position, or salary, and are not doing work for social justice for the interest of the people, so it became political. The work for social justice should not be overemphasized at the expense of spiritual work (vice versa).

The CPBC has projects generally geared toward uplifting the socio-economic situation of the poor in the rural and urban areas: Veterans Village Family and Community Center (VVFCC), Health Aid to the Needy for Development (HAND), Center for Education and Research (CER), and New Frontier Ministries (NFM).

How would you assess VVFCC?

Good. It helps the people in the project area. But as the project goes, it is watered down. Leaders were no longer moved, they became passive and worked primarily on routine activities.

How about HAND?

A good medical project. But the people who implemented it were in conflict because of different interests. So it stopped. Things could have been better or improved.

How about CER?

Good. The project did a lot to educate and raise the awareness of church people.

And NFM?

Good. It helps the livelihood of our people. This is a complex ministry (difficult job), however, I was not very involved in this project.

Do you think that the CPBC had contributed to the alleviation of the difficulties of its member churches who are mostly poor?

Yes, but minimal. It is benevolent, dole out, and not really giving the people the chance to live well. We need to think of permanent livelihood for our people.

What is your own assessment of the theological training of Filipino Baptist pastors?

Satisfactory. There are weaknesses, but things could be improved.

What is your assessment of the lay training program of CPBC?

Less satisfactory. Lay program is an off and on thing. We give time to teach, then stop it and nothing more. There is no regularity.

In your opinion, which language would be an appropriate medium of instruction in Philippine Baptist theological schools?

Combination of English and Mother language. One can only stand out in the city if one is a gifted English speaker.

What do you think should be the priority of CPBC in theological education in the next five years?

There is a need for improvement. Students cannot digest well because books are written in English. The question is how we can translate theological ideas in English into our language so that they could be well digested by students.

Would you say that Baptist women have greater or lesser opportunities than men?

About right. But we still have a strong idea that wives should give way to their husbands. Essentially, a woman's role is in the home.

What do you think are the contributions of Baptist women in the CPBC?

More on church programs and activities, and mission work.

What were the contributions of the American Baptist missionaries?

Missionaries trained and taught us in their own way, but part of our culture was not understood. What is our situation now? We are left with “nothing” but “slave mentality” to hold on. Unintentionally, they left us with their own theology and theological books in English.

What was the relationship between the Filipinos and the American missionaries?

Friendly. Filipinos are friendly. Filipinos are proud to have friends.

What do you think should be the priorities of the CPBC five years from now?

There should be more concern for the poor – they should not be left in a marginal life. We should provide them a chance, so that things could be different.

In your opinion, do you expect the financial situation of CPBC to get better or worse when the American Baptist financial support ceased?

It depends. I hope we could come out of working only for our own selves. We should be loyal not only to our family but to our church and nation as well.

Do you think that if CPBC pools her own resources and know-how she would be able to achieve financial self-reliance—that is, help herself by seeking local Baptist churches’ cooperation whenever possible?

To a large extent. Only if CPBC could give a challenge that could touch the local churches, then they would be more generous

to give. Our mission depends not on money but on generous people.

What do you think will be the greatest difficulty of CPBC five years from now?

Not enough qualified leaders and pastors to assume the over-all work of CPBC and local churches. We need people and leaders who could go beyond self-interest – to sacrifice for the work of our church.

What do you think will be the greatest achievement of CPBC five years from now?

I'm pessimistic. Realistically we will have difficulties but if we work hard so that our difficulties will become stepping stones – accept and exploit our failures – then we will find advantages.

Would you say that CPBC is truly rooted in a Philippine context?

No. We are still in the process. The success in contextualization depends on how enlightened we will be in the near future.

Theological Understanding - 2000¹⁵

Missions and Missionary Work

Our recent missionary work is fairly weak, “daw nagasablay.” If someone works somewhere, she/he is then commissioned as a missionary. I know of a pastor who was called to minister outside of the country, then he was asked to become a missionary there. I wish it could be more than that, I wish we did not support a mission work “nga daw sa ngalan lang.” We need to support missionary work, but where are we going? “Ano ang kadto-an naton?” Such a kind of missionary work without a clear direction is not strong.

Mission does not propagate denominations, because the mission of the Lord Jesus is not to “denominationalize.” Mission work should not be in a place where there are Christians already. I know of foreign missionary societies working in one area here in

the Philippines, “nga kon magkitaay gani ang ila missionaries naga-ilinaway.” I think there is a need for an agreement, e.g. comity agreement, where respect for one another is foremost.

In America, mission is connected with the politics of Manifest Destiny wherein the U.S.A as a nation claims to have a mandate as a chosen nation to preach the gospel all over the world. Of course with that kind of politics there was a chance for Protestantism to spread. Yet the understanding of Jesus’ mission is not grasped because there is a clear partisanship.

The mission of Christ was not partisan. Jesus’ missionary work was not to let people become Jews. Jesus released people from their sins. The woman from Samaria and Zaccheus were released from personal sin. Maybe this was the normal thing to do for Jesus because he had no ulterior motive. He had no loyalty to any Jewish group.

The Goal of Jesus’ mission is to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to recover the sight of the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim “abundant life” (Luke 4:18-19). The mandate, “To go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded...”, should not be interpreted as winning souls to the extent of proselyting or partisanship. To illustrate, there was a man who felt sorry for birds trapped in various cages. Because of his compassion he took the birds and put them in a cage of his own, not releasing them to be free. Mission is not letting people come into our own “cage”, but releasing them to be their own. They should be “born free as free as the grass grows.”

The motives of our missionary efforts should not be personal. To illustrate, there was a woman who pitied a young girl who could not go to school because she was poor. So she took the girl to her home and sent her to school. “Pero sa sulod balay ginhimo niya sulogoon ang bata, nga daw haloson na makatuon kay kadamo sang ginapa-obra sa sulod balay.” Clearly, her motive is not to serve or help the girl, but to let the child help her. The way I observe it, many missionaries are benefiting from their mission work more

than the people. In such a case, mission work is like “colonizing.” Missionaries are making colonies (“daw nagahimo hawla”). Yet Jesus’ perspective is to “release” people.

Ecumenical Movement

I believe in the ecumenical movement that is right (husto), not the facade. Biases should be left behind -- “kaangay kay Jesus nga daw wala siya sang ginaapinan”-- so that people can pursue their quest to understand what the Lord wanted them to be. I am a Baptist and I appreciate much the Baptist heritage including its weaknesses and errors. But my loyalty goes beyond, I see my loyalty in Jesus.

The ecumenical movement has its own limits but it should go beyond. It is not known what is beyond, but we should be open to it. Our mission and ecumenical participation should be “open-ended” not “close”, avoiding “isms” like “missionism.” Kay kon “ism” na gani, dogmatic ka na. Ikaw na lang ang husto. We should be open, working to “release” people until the whole world becomes beautiful.

History

History is not only written records but what is happening in the world, present and future. History is not only the past. Church history looks back to what is useful in the past to be used for the present and future. History is never yearning for the past but learning from the past for the sake of the present and the future. History is important. Maybe for many others, history is not important because the next life is not in history but in heaven.

The next life, however, is lived here on earth. Eternal life is the result of the way we live; it is decided here. Do your best what ever happens, “do or die”, because the Lord is with you.

Theology

My theology is primarily “personal”. It is not mainly the opinion of other theologians read from books but comes from experiences with Christ. It comes from me. Like Jesus, he was not

telling people about other's opinion. He asserts, "But I say unto you..."

Seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, one can explain the situation. Explaining the situation should not be based on the opinion of others or as read from books. To illustrate: a woman was caught in the act of adultery. The Pharisees were saying, "according to" Moses she is condemned. Jesus said, however, "Whoever has not sinned, let him cast the first stone." Jesus' perspective was not "according to" Moses but according to his "personal" experience. Through experience, theology is developed. But to "experience" is not only a process of contextualizing, it is beyond contextualization, "kay ang wala ko mahibalo-e, ginahatagan ko allowance."

The Pastor and His Flock

Text: 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20; 3:1-10

A look at the life of a local church with focus on the Pastor. The Pastor is St. Paul and his pastoral concern should be a pattern for today's pastors.

What is a pastor? A pastor is one who takes care of God's flock. His role is best described by the word "shepherd." Christ Himself referred to Himself as shepherd. Although not one of us can fit into the shoes of Christ, we are encouraged to make his life as our pattern. Today we shall look at one who patterned his role as shepherd after that of Christ's. We are speaking of St. Paul.

St. Paul was an itinerant preacher. When he arrived at a place he would immediately start a church. When a church was strong enough to take care of itself, Paul would leave for another place and there start another church. He periodically visited these churches and wrote them letters of encouragement.

Our scripture passage today is an excerpt from his first letter to the church at Thessalonika. Although the passage is a short one it bares Paul's heart and gives us an idea as to what kind of pastor he was.

- 1) First of all, Paul was a pastor with affection (tender feeling

or attachment). He had affection: a) for the people he had brought to the Lord; b) for those he had strengthened and encouraged; c) for those he had committed himself to.

We are not speaking here of love – but of love's outer garment. By outer garment we do not mean superficiality or even hypocrisy. Rather, affection as an outer garment honestly reveals that which is not immediately seen. It is an indicator – a sign – that there is more than meets your eye. Affection, therefore, which is explained simply as goodwill, tender attachment, fondness, liking – is the acid test of true love. People can never be won without a show of affection. Relationships which are not bound by affection cannot remain strong nor can they last. In church relationship it is essential that there is mutual affection between the pastor and the congregation

2) As pastor, Paul's ministry was characterized by anxiety. Don't misunderstand this. While anxiety is something that should be overcome, anxiety is a sign of concern.

When a man has put the best of himself into anything, he is anxious as to how his commitment will come out. When a parent has trained a child with love and sacrifice, he is anxious when that child is exposed to the difficulties and dangers of life in the world.

When a teacher has taught a child and put something of himself into that teaching, he is anxious to see how that training will stand the test of life.

When a pastor receives a young person into the church, after years of training in Sunday school and Bible class and prayer meetings, that pastor is anxious to know how that young person will fulfil the duties and obligations of church membership. It is so with our Lord Jesus Christ. He had staked so much on men and women and loved them with such a sacrificial love that He anxiously watches and waits to see how they will use that love.

Anxiety, though dangerous to one's being and health, is a sign of one's concern and care, and while it may kill him, he cannot avoid it.

3) There was in Paul a readiness and willingness to help. When Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonika it was not nearly so much to inspect the church there as it was to help it. When people are in

trouble especially one that affects us and our reputation the idea of help is never in our plan for a confrontation. It often escapes us that the person in trouble is in need of help.

It should be the aim of every parent, every teacher, and every preacher, not so much to criticize and condemn those in his charge of their faults and mistakes but to save them from these faults and mistakes. The Christian attitude to the sinner and the struggler must never be of condemnation but always of help. The pastor must never say – “I am sorry, there is nothing I can do.” He should say, “Is there anything or something else I can do?”

4) As Pastor, Paul had joy. As we have always pointed out, joy is superior to happiness. If happiness depends on material possession, positive events and sunny weather, joy exists even in the midst of suffering and negative situations. It is not receiving a substantial salary that gives the teacher joy. It is knowing that his students are performing well. So with a pastor, his greatest joy is in knowing that his flock is doing well and doing well does not necessarily mean financial success. Paul was glad that his converts were outstanding although a great many of them were poor. He had the joy of one who had created something which would stand the test of time.

5) Paul was a man of prayer. He carried his people on his heart to God’s mercy seat. We will never know from how much sin we have been saved and how much temptation we have conquered – but deep down we know that for all these – someone prayed for us.

It is told that once a servant-girl became a member of a church. She was asked what Christian work she did. She said that because her duties as a servant kept her within the confines of her master’s property, this was what she did – “When I go to bed I take the morning newspaper to my bed with me; and I read the notices of the births and I pray for all the babies; and I read the notices of marriages and I pray that those who have been married may be happy; and I read the announcements of death and I pray that the sorrowing may be comforted.” What do you think of that? It is not a far cry from Paul’s kind of life as a man of prayer. When we can serve people no other way, when, like Paul, we are unwillingly separated from them, there is one thing we can still do – we can

pray for them. And to think that prayer is our most powerful weapon.

If all our pastors were like Paul – in affection, in (positive) anxiety, in readiness to help, in joy, in prayer – and our churches had the same qualities, the church of Christ will be as strong as ever.

A Devoted Teacher

A Friendly, Disciplined and Sensitive Teacher¹⁶

Sir Acosta is friendly and has discipline. He told us that the attitude of a pastor must correspond with his action; a pastor must exert extra effort to practice his pastoral beliefs so that people will be able to identify him as a real pastor.

Sir Acosta is very conscious of God. He told us that wherever we go we should not forget God – in thought, in word and in deed. When man is conscious of God, his actions will be limited to what is good. His consciousness of God will hinder him from doing erroneous deeds.

Sir Acosta is very sensitive. When students are noisy, he is frustrated because he felt that students are not listening or not interested in the subject he teaches. One time we were noisy in the class. Then he got angry and said, “Abi ninyo class, sensitive bala ako. Daw ma resign na lang ako kay pamatyag ko daw indi kamo nanami-an sa akon kay nagasinabad kamo. Ginahimo nyo man ini sa iban nga teacher?”

Sir Acosta wants to put things in order. He wants students to have discipline; students should know that there is a time to be serious and there is a proper time to make jokes.

Rudy P. Acosta: A Teacher¹⁷

Rudy Acosta looks at theological education as a process to inspire people to exercise their faith through understanding and sharing the word of God.

Part of Mr. Acosta's commitment to theological education is his openness to diversity, to the values of doing things that are not Baptist, and not just to minister within the walls of Baptist traditions but go outside.

As a student of Rudy Acosta in Introduction to Old Testament, I found myself exposed to ideas I had never been exposed to before. The lively discussions that became heated at times showed Mr. Acosta's passion for theological discussions and debates.

Students were always around asking questions. Those questions and the willingness to hear unexpected answers were essential tools for students with faith. Students in his class came with strong commitment to their beliefs, while taking on an honest and risky search for the truth. That truth may not have always been what one expects, nor the ones which are most comfortable for us.

Preparing A Sermon¹⁸

How Sermons are Classified and When to Use Each Type

Sermons are most commonly classified as Topical, Textual, and Expository.

The Topical Sermon

The Topical Sermon takes from the text only a topic or subject. The divisions are invented by the preacher in accordance with the rhetorical possibilities of the subject and the preacher's knowledge of the subject as it is treated in the Bible.

Examples:

“Redemption” (1 Peter 1:18)

- I. The Meaning of Redemption
- II. The Necessity of Redemption
- III. The Method of Redemption
- IV. The Results of Redemption

“Evidences of God's Love”

- I. As Seen in the Bible
- II. As Seen in Nature
- III. As Seen in Providence

Topical sermons are recommended in the following conditions:
a) When the subject is not adequately treated by any one passage of Scripture; b) When one desires to treat a subject in a very general way, such as presenting a doctrine to an audience to which it is entirely unfamiliar; c) When one desires to present general evangelistic truth to an audience of unsaved persons who are not too familiar with the Bible; d) When treating social or moral problems not existing in Bible times or not treated by Bible writers.

The Textual Sermon

The Textual Sermon takes from the text a subject and the main divisions. The main points of the sermon are only the ones stated or clearly inferred by the passage of Scripture upon which the sermon is based. However, the subdivisions are invented in the same way that all the divisions are invented in the topical sermon.

Example:

“The Minister an Example” (1 Timothy 4:12)

Become an example of believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”

- I. An Example in Word.
- II. An Example in Conduct.
- III. An Example in Love.
- IV. An Example in Faith.
- V. An Example in Purity.

Textual sermons have the advantage in that they are more scriptural in design than the topical variety. They do not disappoint the hearers who expect something from the text which is announced. The textual method permits great variety in construction and selection. The textual sermon, seems to the hearer, more like a finished discourse because the number of divisions is determined by the material in the text. When each division has been treated no one expects anything more. In most cases the textual sermon will be remembered longer because when the hearer

follows the sermon with his Bible a connection is fixed in his mind between the passage and the preacher's admonitions, so that he can recall the message whenever he re-reads the passage.

The Expository Sermon

The Expository Sermon not only takes a subject and main-divisions from the text, but all the sub-divisions as well. It is usually based on a longer passage than the topical or textual sermon. Often the text is a whole paragraph, whole chapter or even a whole book. No idea can be introduced into the expository sermon which does not come from the passage of Scripture upon which it is based. It is an exposition of the given passage and that only.

Example:

“Temptation” (James 1:12-15)

- I. The Origin of Temptation, verses 13-14.
 - A. Not from God, verse 13.
 - B. From inward desire, verse 14.
- II. The Results of Yielding to Temptation, verse 15.
 - C. First sin, verse 15.
 - D. Then death, verse 15.
- III. The Reward for Enduring Temptation, verse 12
 - E. Blessedness, verse 12.
 - F. A Crown of Life, verse 12.

The text of the above example consists of four verses, a complete paragraph, and it should be clear that every heading and sub-heading is taken from the passage of Scripture used for the text.

Expository preaching has many noteworthy advantages. They are as follows: a) It is mostly like the preaching of the Apostles and early preachers; b) It leads both the preacher and the hearers to a wider and deeper knowledge of the Scripture; c) It promotes a greater respect for the Bible on the part of the laity; d) It restrains the tendency to loose interpretation and to accommodation; e) It

restrains any tendency to ride a hobby or to preach only pet doctrine; f) It prevents voice monotony in preaching in that the variety of material is likely to demand a flexibility in volume and pitch; and g) It is recommended where exposition is used in a series, for it makes easier the choice of admonitions and the preacher is less likely to be accused of preaching to individuals, for if the offensive injunction falls within the text no one can blame the preacher for making several remarks about it.

Planning the Sermon – Taking the Initial Steps

*“The pastor is not speaking about God
but God is speaking through the pastor.”*

The Idea

When one has to produce a sermon, the first thing he needs is an idea. This is the point where a sermon originates. Often, ideas come while they are not being sought, a process known as serendipity (after the Three Princes of Serendip, who were always discovering, by chance things they did not seek).

Ilion T. Jones says that many of the best sermon ideas are not sought after; they search out the preacher. Where do ideas come from? They come while one is reading, or when one is moving about, mixing and mingling with people, while one is looking up the derivation of words, etc.

The line of a poem or the title of a book suggests a subject. Sermon introductions also reveal how sermons were first suggested. It can be said that all preaching is “idea preaching”, since every sermon must contain an idea or truth. After an idea strikes a preacher he is to do three things:

1. Decide on the exact truth the idea contains. No matter how brilliant the idea it needs to be brought down to earth in the form of a specific truth that can be related closely to life.

2. State clearly in a brief sentence and in terms of definite human needs the purpose of the sermon intended to embody the idea. At the top of the first page of the sermon under preparation write the purpose of the sermon – “I am required in this sermon

to..."

3. Find a suitable passage from the Bible on which to base the sermon. Someone said, "Every sermon should begin in Jerusalem and end in Iloilo, or begin in Iloilo and end in Jerusalem." What is meant by this is that if a sermon begins with a Bible text, it should come quickly to the needs of the people in the parish; and if it begins with a human situation in the community, it should go quickly to a truth of the Bible. Examples:

A preacher read in the Reader's Digest that a mother said of her daughter, "She is a good girl, but she is constantly majoring in minors." Reflecting a moment or two upon the expression "Majoring in minors," he thought of what Jesus said to the Scribes and Pharisees, "You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel" (Matthew 23:24). In due time he developed a sermon on "Majoring in Minors," an appeal to give one's major attention to the primary rather than to the secondary things in life.

A preacher heard a president of a large state university gave the members of a graduating class the statistics showing what each of them had cost the state, and then asked, "Are you going to be worth what you cost?" The minister wrote on his program a possible sermon subject: "You are not your own; you were bought with a price" (1 Cor 6:19-20). This was the beginning of a future sermon.

Another minister heard the refrain of a popular song coming over the radio:

Accentuate the positive
Eliminate the negative
Latch on to the affirmative.

He recalled two chapters of a book –

1. The Everlasting No!
2. The Everlasting Yes!

At the same time he remembered Paul's words: "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ,...whom we preached among you...was not yes or no; but in Him it is always yes." (2 Corinthians 1:19). Out of this emerged a sermon on "Affirmative Living."

The Text

The ability to think of fitting texts develops from a careful, lifelong study of the Bible. The custom of using texts for sermons goes back to Jesus who used passages from the Jewish Scriptures as the basis of His sermons, as did Paul and other New Testament preachers. The text is the biblical passage on which the sermon is based.

There are important principles for using texts: 1) Make sure the text is a genuine passage of Scripture and properly translated; 2) Make the truth of the text the theme of the sermon. (Point of development not point of departure - attaching the text loosely to the sermon); and 3) Use the text in its original, natural meaning. Never be guilty of “accommodating Scripture” (The Scripture is adjusted to the meaning of the sermon).

The Subject

After the idea and the text for the sermon get together it is time to begin thinking of a subject. A subject has three main purposes: 1) To define and limit the discussion for the preacher; 2) To focus the attention of the hearer; and 3) To keep both the preacher and the hearer on the track.

The subject is spoken of as a “magnet”, as the “focus”, the “axis” or the “orbit” of the sermon – all to keep the preacher on the track. Some writers call the heading of a sermon a subject, while others call it the *topic* or the *title*. There are, however, technical distinctions which apply to these three terms.

Accommodating Scripture – the Scripture is adjusted to the meaning of the sermon instead of the sermon being adjusted to the meaning of the Scripture.

Off on a tangent – digression; an abrupt change of course.

Idea text – verses themselves provide ideas.

Subject -- the word for the broad, general field to be discussed.

Topic – indicates more specifically the particular phase to be discussed (narrowed down to something more specific).

Title – is a label intended primarily to arouse curiosity and

attract attention.

All of these are to be discussed from the “theme” or “thesis” or “proposition,” as it is variously called by different writers.

The theme – is the gist (the main point of a matter, the essence of an argument) of the sermon in one sentence.

Examples:

Text

Subject – “Fraternities”

Topic – “The abolition of Fraternities”

Thesis – “Fraternities should be abolished”

Title – “Out with the Greeks”

Text

Subject – “Scapegoats”

Topic – “The Modern Practice of Using Scapegoats”

Thesis – “You cannot get rid of your sins by making someone or something else a scapegoat for them.”

Title – “Passing the Buck”

Summary

The **Idea** is the exact point where the sermon originates often called the seed thought.

The **Text** is the biblical passage on which the sermon is based. It is also a verse of Scripture or a means of getting an idea.

The **Subject** is the broad, general field to be discussed (what is talked about or discussed).

The **Topic** is the more specific and particular phase to be discussed.

The **Title** is the label intended primarily to arouse curiosity and attract attention.

Theme, thesis or proposition is the gist (summary or purpose of the sermon in one sentence).

Main Steps in Sermon Preparation

1. Select the text and general subject or idea for the sermon.
2. Put the subconscious mind to work.
3. Browse in your library and gather material.
4. Brood over the material.
5. Settle upon specific subject, theme and exact purpose.
6. Make a tentative outline.
7. Prepare a complete, detailed outline.
8. Fill in the outline with ideas and illustrations.
9. Write the sermon in full.
10. Revise and reshape.
11. Get the sermon in your system.
12. Prepare yourself.
13. Delivery.

The preacher is pregnant for six days (gathering of ideas for preparation). Sunday – delivery. The congregation may like or not like the newborn baby (the sermon).

Preparing the Introduction and the Conclusion

1. Purposes of the Introduction:
 - a. To avoid abruptness for both preacher and people.
 - b. To gain the goodwill of the hearer.
 - c. To arouse the interest of the hearer.
 - d. To let the hearer know what the sermon is about.
2. Purposes of the Conclusion:
 - a. To bring the sermon to an effective close.
 - b. To apply the truth.
 - c. To lay the truth on the hearer's conscience.
 - d. To move to action.

The Weekly Routine

- First period – Get the mind started on the sermon.
- Second period – Browse and brood.
- Third period – Make the tentative outline.
- Fourth period – Write out the sermon in full at one setting.
- Sixth period – Give the sermon a final checking and prepare yourself for preaching it.

Outlining the Sermon: General Principles and Procedures

Points are the divisions of the discussion and are variously spoken of as *main heads*, *sub theses*, and *topical divisions* of the sermon.

Lack of proper structure: The major weakness of many modern sermons – thrown together loosely and carelessly – is the lack of sequence of thought. A sermon has three parts:

1. I tell them what I am going to tell them (Introduction).
2. I tell them (The discussion).
3. I tell them what I have told them (The conclusion).

Introduction – lets the congregation know what the sermon is about.

Discussion – develops the subject

Conclusion – drives home what has been said.

The Necessity of an Outline

Outlining a sermon – a way of organizing in an orderly manner; sequence what one wishes to say.

Advantages to the preacher:

1. An outline aids the preacher in development of thought.
2. Keeps the preacher on the track.
3. Enables the preacher to keep the points of the sermon in right proportion.
4. Assures the sermon of movement.

Advantages to the hearers:

1. Enables the hearers to understand what the preacher is

- saying and where he is headed.
- 2. Prevents the hearers from misunderstanding.
- 3. Provides the hearers with a needed emotional rhythm.
- 4. Aids the hearers in remembering what has been said.

Rules in Making an Outline

1. An outline should have unity.

First rule:

*To attain unity
each point should be
a sub thesis of the main thesis.*

Example:

Text: “What more are you doing than others?” – Matthew 5:47.

Subject: “Wherein are we (Christians) different?”

Points:

- a. Are we Christians superior in the matter of serenity?
- b. Are we Christians superior in the matter of behavior?
- c. Are we Christians superior in good will and social science?
- d. We Christians must be different if we are to convince the world of the validity of our faith.

The fourth point is not another stage in the unfolding of the thesis but constitutes the main thesis itself. It is a declarative statement while the first three statements are in the form of a question.

2. An outline should have order. Ideas should be arranged for best effects. Each point says one thing only and follows the others in a clear continuity of thought.

Second rule:

*To attain order the points of the outline
should be coordinated – equal in rank.*

Example:

Trees may properly be divided into deciduous trees and evergreens but not into deciduous trees and cedars.

3. An outline should have proportions. “Symmetrical arrangement of whole” or “balance” (proportionate weight and emphasis both as to *time* and *space*. This prevents throwing the sermon out of balance.

Third rule:

*To attain proportion,
all points should be of parallel construction –
if the first point is a declarative statement,
put all the others in that form.
If it is a question, put all the others in that form.
Sentences should be approximately of the same length.*

Example:

Texts: Luke 24:51-53; John 16:7; Ephesians 4:8

Subject: “The Gospel of the Ascension”

Points:

- a. It (Christ’s ascension) was expedient for the spiritualising of religion.
- b. It was expedient for the universalising of the Gospel.
- c. It was expedient for the energizing of evangelism.
- d. It was expedient for the fortifying of faith.

The above is a perfect example of parallel construction. The sentences are approximately the same in length, and the phrasing and words are similar in type.

4. An outline should have movement. The sermon should make progress as it moves to its conclusion. A sermon’s movement is interrupted when there is lack of plan and there is too much overwriting, repetition and digression. When the movement of a sermon is interrupted, interest lags.

Fourth rule:

*To attain movement, points should be distinct.
Materials under one point
should not be repeated under other points.*

5. An outline should have climax. A sermon should have cumulative (increasing by successive additions) effect. It should gather strength as it moves along toward the level when you hope to move the hearers to decision and action. “Don’t bring up the heaviest troops first.” The sermon should not lose but gain strength. It could have “intellectual” and “emotional” climaxes – the former could come first or last but without exception the latter should come near the close.

Fifth rule:

*To attain climax,
points should be arranged in an ascending scale.
The last point should be the major climax to the sermon.
Minor climaxes may occur at other places,
but the last point should crown what has gone before,
begin to bring everything to focus,
gather force and prepare for the final appeal for action.*

Examples:

Text: Luke 16:19 - “Make to yourselves friends of the
Mammon of unrighteousness”

Subject: “The Use of Money”

Points:

1. Gain all you can.
2. Save all you can.
3. Give all you can.

Text: Psalms 119:71 – “It is good for me to have been in
trouble”

Subject: “Fortunate Misfortune”

Points:

1. Misfortune serves to deepen life.
2. Misfortune is often the means of releasing undreamed of powers.
3. Misfortune brings enlarged capacity to understand and help other people.
4. Misfortune can make real and vital one’s relationship to God.

Miscellaneous Principles

1. The form of the points – for the preacher’s guidance, each point should be a complete sentence.
2. The number of main points – no standard number, but varied from time to time (only what’s necessary to treat the subject adequately). Three is often thought of.
3. Sub points – not too many like a law brief or an outline for a college debate.
4. Announcing the points – not recommended as a regular practice. However, the practice of announcing the points as one comes to them is good psychology.
5. Transitions – transitions from point to point keep the sermon moving. They are the glue which holds the parts of the sermon together. However, it is different when the sermon is given live and not read.

Types of Outline

1. Two-point Outline (Twin sermon)

One half of the sermon is devoted to one thrust, the other half to a contrasting or balancing thrusts:

- a. The beauty of Christian humbleness
- b. The danger of self-satisfaction

2. Question Outline

- a. What is it?
- b. Why is it?
- c. What of it?
- d. What are we going to do about it?

3. Ladder or Unfolding Telescope Outline

Each point grows out of or builds upon the previous point. Each point is based upon the previous point up to another level like the rungs of a ladder.

- a. True happiness is found only in obedience to God’s will.

- b. God's will is made known to us only in Christ.
- c. Knowledge of Christ is of value only as used.

4. Classification Outline

The several points divide people into different classes, or apply the thrusts to different areas of life.

- A. What to do with life today – Philippians 1:21 (Four things a man can do with his life)
 - 1. He can run away from it.
 - 2. He can run along with it.
 - 3. He can take hold of it firmly.
 - 4. He can put his life in the hands of one greater than himself and let Him run it.
- B. The highest help that can satisfy our needs (Those needs are):
 - 1. In Temptation.
 - 2. In sorrow.
 - 3. In doubt.
 - 4. In sin.

5. Series of Statement Outline

The points consist of a succession of statements or observations related to the truths under consideration.

Achieving an all-in victory

To achieve Victory

- a. I must confront myself
- b. I must consider myself
- c. I must choose myself
- d. I must control myself
- e. I must consecrate

6. Jewels Outline (Facets)

You can turn a truth all the way around to look at its various phases.

“Religion of the Incarnation”

To understand this religion we must:

- a. Look backward to the creation of man.

- b. Look upward to the nature of God.
- c. Look inward to the soul of man.

7. Hegelian Outline

Three ideas of thesis, antithesis, synthesis.

- a. This is the way things ought to be.
- b. This is the way things are.
- c. This is the way things may be with God's Help.

8. Guessing Game Outline

Like parlor game – Is it this?

Is it this? No.

Is it this? No.

Is it this other thing? Yes, that's it!

9. Life Situation or Problem Solution Sermon

- a. Where are we?
- b. How did we get here?
- c. Where do we want to go?
- d. How do we get there?

10. Problem-Solution Sermon

- a. Problem - this is the situation.
- b. Principle – this is the basis on which it may be solved.
- c. Programs – This is the way to go about solving it.

Methods of Delivery

1. Extemporaneous Preaching

Defined as “made or done without previous study or preparation” or “on the spur of the moment”(speaking off hand). But in current usage, extemporaneous applies to addresses of which the thought has been prepared but the language and incidental treatment are left to the suggestion of the moment.

2. Reading the Sermon from a Manuscript

Some congregations don’t like it, some do. But it depends on how well a speaker can manage it.

3. Reciting the Sermon from Memory

This method of delivery requires the sermon first to be written in complete form, then committed to memory, and finally delivered word for word just as it was originally composed.

4. Free Preaching

Sermons that have been more carefully prepared as to structure, content, and language than in extemporaneous preaching, but are delivered, as in extemporaneous preaching, without use of manuscript or notes (preaching without notes). It requires a great deal of thorough preparation beforehand. It makes use of “methodised thoughts” – memory can easily recall them.

5. Composite Method of Delivery

Composed of some aspects of each of the methods of delivery.

The Style of the Sermon

“When one has found out what to say and in what order,” wrote Cicero, “there still remains by far the greatest thing, namely, how to say it.” The “how” includes both style (the type of words and sentences used in composition) and delivery (actually saying it).

Factors that Determine Style

There are four important things to keep in mind while composing a sermon:

1. A sermon is composed for listeners. That fact should affect how it is done. Composing to be heard is to be distinguished from composing to be read. The hearer and the reader occupy different situations. The reader can stop to think about what he is reading, look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary, untangle long and involved sentences in order to get at their meaning, or retrace his steps if he discovers that his mind is wandering. The hearer can do none of these. He hears once and from that single hearing must grasp instantly the meaning of what he hears and simultaneously keep his ears open for the next sentence. He can ask no questions and make no comments. The reader sets his own pace. The preacher sets the pace for his listeners. If the reader gets tired he can rest a while and later pick up where he left off. If the listener tires and stops listening he cannot recover what he missed.

The writer's "center of gravity" is the written or printed page. The speaker's center of gravity is the listeners out in front. The writer can insert parenthetical statements and explanatory footnotes. The speaker uses devices only at the risk of switching his hearers completely off the track. The writer uses punctuation marks to stop or slow down the reader and get him to separate words and phrases, or, as the case may be, to tie them together. The writer uses italics and underscoring for emphasis. For these devices the speaker substitutes pauses, changes tones, and gestures. Both use words and sentences but use them somewhat differently. In short, the different situations of readers and listeners require the attitudes of writers and speakers to be different.

An effective speaking style may appear somewhat deficient when put in print and an effective writing style may seem heavy when spoken. The problem of the speaker is to produce a style with maximum "listenability," the problem of the writer is to produce a style with maximum readability. Perforce the speaker must use a briefer, more direct, and more easily understood way of expressing himself. Some ministers forget this and compose their sermons for a future reading public rather than the present listening public. Thus, they miss the primary objective of the sermon.

To avoid this temptation some ministers refuse to write their sermons until after they are delivered. Joseph Fort Newton said, "My sermons are seldom, if ever, written until after they have been preached—else I see or feel the flutter of a paper between me and my people."

I always prepare a sermon before writing. A sermon, being spoken address, ought to sound spoken. The minister who first prepares and preaches his sermon, then, writes it, is more likely to attain this end. Such a minister writes as he speaks instead of speaks as he writes. Thus, his sermon seems spoken even when read.

As we shall see later, it is not necessary to wait until after a sermon is preached to draft it in a speaking style. There are satisfactory ways of composing to be heard as surely as there are satisfactory ways of composing to be read. But the point here is: it is necessary to distinguish between the two (composing to be heard and composing to be read).

2. A sermon is composed for a mixed group of people. That fact also should affect how it is done. Normally a congregation will contain people of all ages, from all walks of life and from all levels of education. If the preacher wants all his hearers to understand his sermon he must present it in a style common to all. If he speaks in the terminology familiar only to one part of his audience the others will not know what he is talking about.

Some preachers address themselves primarily to the adults in their congregations. A vicar in Leeds, England solved the problem of his restless choirboys by providing them with juvenile thrillers to read while he preached. When some people objected and suggested he deals with the situation by making his sermons shorter and more interesting, he is reported to have said: "Our sermons are preached primarily for the benefit of adult members of our congregation. The faith is too large to be put over in five-minutes doses."

Some preachers act as though they are addressing a group of ministers. At least they talk in the specialized language of theological seminaries. The judge of the court of appeals in Kentucky censured the preachers of his denomination for talking to

their people in the technical terminology of their profession. He said: "If a lawyer or doctor or other professionals should address the average audience in terms of his profession, I doubt that even a preacher would understand much of it. So it is that many in your congregation do not understand. The fodder is placed too high for them to reach. It is certainly so for the casual attendant, for the 'man in the street'."

3. A sermon is composed for the people of the present generation. The style of communication prevailing in our age should affect our style of preaching. If one wishes to be heard he must speak in the contemporary vernacular. For a long time New Testament scholars were puzzled by the fact that the Greek of the New Testament was so different from classical Greek. Then by comparing it with some old papyri they discovered it was the common, not the literary language of that period, the vernacular. The gospel was taken to the people in their own tongue.

4. The document being composed is a sermon. Sermons have always been the most direct form of public speech. Genuine preachers who have the yearning heart do not speak to please literary critics but to please God. They do not try to entertain their hearers but to bring them face to face with God. All people in the congregation - young, old, literate or illiterate should feel that they are personally being addressed. All prophetic preachers symbolically point to their fingers at individuals saying, "Thou art the man." This requires a style that provides the most direct path to the minds, hearts, consciences and wills of the listeners.

The Aural Style

The style of speaking that best fulfills the functions of a sermon is now referred to as aural style. The word "aural" literally means "of or pertaining to the ear or the sense of hearing." Applied to a style of speaking it means speaking or writing that is tailored to the needs of the listener. It is different, personal, conversational.

An effectual aural style is achieved mainly in four ways:

1. By the use of simple words. These should be words commonly understood by all groups. Do not use big words when little words would do. ("Mother, I have imbibed an acephalous molluscosus." "I had eaten nothing but an ordinary oyster.")

2. By the use of a few words. Never use two words where one word will suffice. Leave off all empty, meaningless, unnecessary words.

3. By the use of expressive words. Specific words are always more expressive than general words - words that "walk and run."

4. By the use of simple, basic sentence structures. Simple subject and predicate sentences sound like conversation. Learn the basic rules of grammar. They are designed to help one express himself clearly and to assist the hearer in grasping what he hears. "Grammatical processes are the working tools of rhetoric; too useful, too necessary to be neglected."

Means of Achieving an Effective Preaching Style

1. Study. Make a study of words, grammar, composition, and rhetoric. Rhetoric has to do with speaking or writing, and the rules involved in it. Make use of dictionaries and books on the subject.

2. Practice. Once one gathers together a few suggestions, he should put them into practice a little at a time in his weekly sermonizing.

The Style and the Message

The style should never be confused with the message. Hard work on words and sentences will not in itself assure an effective sermon. "One must have something to say, something that grips his heart until he feels it must be said at all costs. Have something to say, and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret of style." Actually that is not the sole secret of style, but without that, style misses its mark. "Preach not because you have to say something, but because you have something to say." Style is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Words are not the message, they only convey the message.

What the preacher has to say is always more important than the

way he says it. Any style is defective that calls attention to itself and away from the sermon.

Preparing Illustrative Material

The use of illustrations is intended to make the sermon clear. They are like light in a darkened place. When you switch on the light there is a difference. The functions of illustrations are:

1. To make the truth concrete.
2. To make the truth interesting.
3. To make the truth impressive.
4. To make the truth practical.

Illustrations can be invented or borrowed but ethics of borrowing must be observed.

A Creative Composer and Singer

Asin¹⁹

(Tune: Lumabaylabay nga daw aso)

Daw ano kasubo kon ang asin madula
Ang tanan wala sing sabor sini nga duta
Linugaw, batchoy malas-ay
Kon wala asin, ahaay!
Tanan malas-ay, ahaay!
Kon sa bagay.

Ay, Ikaw kag Ako
Subong sang asin, huo
Iglesia nagasadya kon yarang presensya ta.
Ka hu-ol nagapalagyo
Kon ikaw man kag ako
Nagaalagad sa aton nga Ginoo.

The Cripple²⁰
(Tune: Top of the World)

Listen while I share my history,
Mine's a life that's plagued with endless tragedy,
I don't know where to start,
Just begin, says my heart,
With the time when you were born in misery.

Cripple was I when my life unfurled
That I felt I'd been forsaken by the Lord,
So I wept and I cursed
Till my heart almost burst,
Cursed the God who made me suffer in this world.

Then one day while begging for my food,
John and Peter with concern before me stood,
"Give me alms," so I said,
"and I'll buy me some bread."
They said, "Sorry man, that isn't what you need."

Chorus

And they said, "Silver or gold we have none,
But in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,
Rise up and walk!"
Miracle of miracles, unbelievable but true,
Now I walk! Hallelujah, praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem²¹
(A Favorite Song of Pastor Acosta)

Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem
Praise thy God, O Zion (2x)
Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem
Praise thy God, O Zion.

For He hath made fast the bars of thy gates
And hath blessed thy children within thee (2x)
Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem
Praise thy God, O Zion (2x).

The Lord is gracious and full of compassion
Slow to anger, and of great goodness
The Lord is good, is good to all
And His tender mercies are over-all his works.

All Thy works praise Thee
Praise Thee, O Lord
All Thy works praise thee, O Lord
Ang Thy servants give thanks
Give thanks unto Thee
All Thy works praise Thee
All Thy works.

The Valleys stand so thick with corn
That they laugh and sing (2x)
They laugh, they laugh and sing.

The Holy City
(A Favorite Song of Pastor Acosta)

Last night I lay asleeping
There came a dream, so fair
I stood in old Jerusalem
Beside the temple there
I heard the children singing
And ever as they sang
Me thought the voice of angels
From heav'n in answer rang

Jerusalem, Jerusalem
Lift up your voice and sing
Hosanna in the highest
Hosanna to your king

And then me thought my dream was changed
New earth there seemed to be
I saw the Holy City beside the tideless sea
No need of moon or stars by night
Nor sun to shine by day
It was the new Jerusalem
That shall not pass away
It was the new Jerusalem
That shall not pass away

Jerusalem, Jerusalem
Sing, for the night is o'er;
Hosanna in the highest
Hosanna forever more!
Hosanna forever more.

A Thought-Provoking Preacher

The Charm of an Acosta Sermon²²

How can anyone resist the charm of an Acosta sermon? In the inflection of the voice and the diction alone all other deliveries can be rendered null and void. But the man himself will be astute enough to immediately point out, “The delivery of the sermon is not the sermon!”

Anyone hurrying to a JEC worship service is understood to be really after what Pastor Acosta has to say. Aside from the Word through the man himself, it is also the way the man expounds Biblical truths that makes the difference. Oh what a rhetoric! Oh what a syntax! He makes an entire sermon into a poetry, into a dance!

The expositions he emphatically and thoroughly points out with his fingers can cause you to wriggle and giggle in your seats – either of its sheer impact, or of its silly frankness.

Therefore, how can any proper thinking member of the congregation conclude that the length of an Acosta sermon negates the delights she/he has gained from it? Try an Acosta sermon and you will come back for more.

Where are You in the Thanksgiving Cycle?²³

Text: Psalm 105:1-7

Is there such a thing as a thanksgiving cycle? I first learned about cycle when I was a little boy. It had to do with “kataro”. Siling nila kon ginakataro ka bisan indi mo ina pagbulongon. Pabay-an mo lang kay matapos gid ang cycle sina.

Where are we in the thanksgiving cycle? First let me explain what we mean by the word “cycle.” The dictionary defines it as a course or series of events or operations that recur regularly and usually lead back to the starting point, e.g. kataro, or church activities. In one year 52 cycles of activities are repeated in the church from Sunday to Sunday.

There is also a thanksgiving cycle. Kinahanglan mahibal-an ta gid ang thanksgiving cycle kay importante ini para sa aton nga mga mapinasalamaton. It begins with an act and followed by a response. The act is meant to help and the help elicits gratitude (nagahak-ad, nagakali kabalaslan). Sang ginhimo-an kita sang maayo ginakali ang aton kabalaslan kay ang kabalaslan nagahalin sa paghimo sa aton sang maayo. It is like the story of an American pilot who was saved by a fisherman in Dumangas during the Second World War. When in America the pilot always sent gifts to the fisherman in Dumangas as a symbol of gratitude for saving his life and even visited him once and offered to take him to the U.S.

Because we are Christians, the thanksgiving cycle we are talking about is one in a religious sense and has to do with God, the Creator, and us. Those who support the theory of evolution deny the role of a creator. For those who believe in evolution there is no thanksgiving for God, there is no role for the Creator. They teach that the various types of animals or plants have their origin in other pre-existing types and that the distinguishing differences are due to modifications in successive generations.

Gani kabay pa nga kita tanan makasulod sa sining thanksgiving cycle. Kon indi kita makatapos sang cycle indi gid husto ang aton gratitude.

How did the thanksgiving cycle come about? Well, God the Creator did an act. In a planned series of commands he brought into existence the heavens and the earth and everything in them. The light, the stars and planets, land and sea, creatures and man. Ulihi ang tawo.

In relation to thanksgiving we are going to single out man. Pero may mga tawo gid nga indi mapasinalamaton. Maayo gani ang Dios nagadumdum gihapon. So here we have a Creator in love having done three things: Creation, Provision, and Redemption.

There are three kinds of people where thanksgiving is concerned. The first of these are the atheists who deny the existence of God and have no one to be thankful to. Waay Dios. These are the people according to Psalm 14:1 – “The fool says in his heart there is no God.” The second are those who believe that God exists and are recipients of God’s kindness but are not

grateful. This is exemplified by the nine of the ten lepers who were healed by Jesus but never came back to say thank you. The third kind is represented by those who believe in God and are recipients of God's goodness and are grateful. This is exemplified by one of the ten lepers who came back to say thanks to Jesus.

Our focus today is on the third kind, those who are grateful. I believe there is not one here who is not grateful to God. The question is how grateful are we really? For that reason our sermon title says, "Where are You in the Thanksgiving Cycle." Our month's theme also says, "Thanksgiving in Thought, Word, and Deed." Mrs. Gabay made this remark yesterday, "Our theme reminds me of our Filipino patriotic pledge – *Ako ay magiging Pilipino sa isip, sa salita at sa gawa.*" Daw cycle man ang pagkapatriotic naton.

The bottom line is, it is never enough to be a Filipino only in thought and nothing is gained in words when words are not expressed in deeds. So James 1:15-16 explains this in a practical illustration: Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and they need food. If one of you say to him, "Go, I wish you well, keep warm and well fed, but does nothing about his physical needs what good is it?" There is a somewhat non-religious cycle here. Gratitude to one's country begins in thought, proceeds in words and ends in deeds. Nothing is gained if one thinks he is a Filipino but refuses to serve his country when it is in danger.

Where are we in the thanksgiving cycle? As we have said the thanksgiving cycle begins with God's kind act. What did God do to you? He created us, sustained us and provided for our needs, and when we fell in sin he died on the cross to save us from sin's punishment. Such act elicits gratitude from us (*nagakali sang aton kabalaslan*). So we say, I want to do something for the one who did this to me. Our gratitude is expressed in thanksgiving.

We come now to the cycle: First, in thought. To be grateful to God in thought is good. But if you are silent about it, if you do not tell people about it, no one will really know whether or not you are grateful.

If you are really grateful in thought, you realize the need to go

to the next point in the cycle and you begin to express your thought in words. You tell others about how thankful you are to God: "I want to tell you what God has done for me." You give your testimony about your gratitude and you touch people's heart. If this is not expressed others will not be touched.

Therefore there is a need for the church, for the Christian, to share not only in thought but in words. Then you make your transition to the last point to make the complete thanksgiving cycle. You express your gratitude or thanksgiving in deed (buhat).

There are times when thanksgiving in thought is not enough. It is good but you can do better. Then you express your thanksgiving in word that makes it better because people will know. But it is still not enough. In times of crisis thought and word are not enough. There is a need for deed. The time calls for action. When we have done that we have made the complete cycle of thanksgiving. God does a good deed to you so you express your thanksgiving in thought, in word and in deed. From good to better to best.

Let us talk about Jaro Evangelical Church. When people pass by our place what do they see and what do they say? "Oh, there are changes! There are developments!" Then later they come in. "I like the place! How do they manage to make it like this? Ngaa nag-amoni?" Kon sa hambal lang, kon sa pensar lang, ngaa nag amo ini? So they can say, "Ah, this is not only in thought and words, but in deeds." All our things here are from the members of the church. Ginbutang sa buhat ang pagkamapasinalamaton sang mga membro.

Silas Marner was a very thrifty person. One day he found out that his gold was stolen. He was so affected. Then one night he saw something glittering on the floor, he thought it was gold, but it was a child with a blond hair. He pitied the child so he adopted her. The child grew into a beautiful girl. In the course of time, the real father of the child, a rich man, wanted to take her back. He claimed, "You are my child." But the girl said: "When I became conscious of gratitude I had this old man who took care of me. Even if you are rich, I will choose this old man who cared for me. I will die for this old man."

Kon kaangay sina ang kabalaslan naton sa Dios wala sang

imposible sa aton mga alatubangon.

Pero ang pamangkot, diin ka nayon sa thanksgiving cycle?

Let us pray. Our heavenly Father we thank you for the challenge presented to us today. It is not a good challenge Lord, we do not like it. Our human limitations say “No Lord we do not like it.” But Lord help us complete the cycle so that however hard the cycle of thanksgiving is, because of our gratitude, we will go through the complete cycle. We know that you will bless us and take care of us and there will be really no difficulty when you are with us. So Lord we are opening our hearts to you and saying, “Lord we are grateful but help us make the transition from thought to word and to deed. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

A Good Man

Text: Psalm 112

Are you looking for a good man? Just what is a good man? A good man is hard to find these days. At least that is the impression you might get from a society that is having a tough time finding heroes.

Too often, though, we look in the wrong places when we are searching for role models. We look for someone who is a good athlete or who makes a lot of money or who commands respect because of leadership skills.

When we look only in these situations for good men, we fail to see that most of the godly men are not in the spotlight. They are just quietly and faithfully serving their families, their friends and God.

In Psalm 112 we see a clear set of guidelines for what makes a man good. According to the Psalmist, a good man 1) Fears the Lord (v.1); 2) Delights in God's commands (v.1); 3) Is gracious, compassionate and righteous (v.4); 4) Is generous and exercises discretion (v. 5); 5) Is unshakable in his faith, and he has no fear because his trust is in God (vv. 6-8).

The model of such a man is one whose life is strong and true, who loves the Lord with all his heart, and seeks His will to do.

To make a difference in the world, let Jesus make a difference in you!

The Five C's for Victorious Living

Text: Psalm 60:12

With God we will gain the victory and He will trample down our enemies (Ps.60:12). Tonight let us think of our enemies as our difficulties.

A certain preacher has discovered a formula for achieving victory or living a victorious life. We shall call it the Five C's for Victorious Living.

1. The first C. In order to achieve a victorious life – I must confront myself. To confront simply means to face boldly, especially in challenge, or to oppose. When there is a confrontation there is involved a meeting of opposing or conflicting views, ideas, opinions, etc. If the confrontation is healthy, and honest and truthful people are involved, the confrontation will result in enlightenment for all parties, and improvement in relations and eventual progress. In a confrontation there is always the fear of being exposed – especially our bad side. But this is necessary and must be accepted if we want obstacles to be removed.

In self confrontation, we face not anybody else but ourselves boldly, honestly and truthfully. This is a painful process and many of us avoid it if we can, for fear we will discover something we do not like about ourselves like selfish and negative traits and harmful vices that should be stopped. If this attitude of avoidance persists we will never come close to victorious living. Self-confrontation that is honest will help us see our weaknesses and our strengths and will give us the courage to do something about them.

2. The second C. I must consider myself. To consider is to reflect upon carefully or think about with care. For example, there is a choice of courses to take upon college entrance: – Should I take up Law, Theology, Education, Engineering, Nursing, etc.? When there is a job opening, “I must consider myself” means asking the questions: Am I cut out for the job? Is my preparation for it adequate? When there is a call to missions, and you consider yourself for it, ask yourself: Do I have what it takes to work in a foreign land?

When you consider yourself for anything – like a position, a job, or a career, there are two principles to consider:

- a. Be honest about it.
- b. Do not force yourself into it.

Anything that has to do with self has to be done in all honesty for nobody else is doing it for you. (Illustration – Cinderella’s glass slippers – the sisters forced their feet into them).

3. I must choose myself. To choose is to pick out, to select. Having confronted myself, having considered myself -- when an opportunity for service presents itself, can I choose myself for the job? Again the matter of honesty stands out and should apply here. This is hard to do in a country where we are expected to inhibit ourselves because of “*delicadeza*.” But “*delicadeza*” is not honesty. It smacks of pretense and hypocrisy, and in the end it destroys. Our society frowns upon self-appointment or self-choosing. “I must choose myself” can be construed as giving priority to yourself. We can escape the unfair judgment of others by committing ourselves to God. “I must choose myself for the Lord for in His own way and time He will work things out. And having chosen yourself, be ready when the time comes.”

Here is a case of Adoniram Judson, a missionary to Burma. He was struggling with “I must choose myself” but both God and the Missions Department supported him and he sailed with his family to Burma. It is said that had Judson hesitated to volunteer (after choosing himself) the door for missions would have been closed and anyone with less ability would have destroyed the work.

4. I must control myself. To control is to regulate, to check, to restrain. We are not free from weaknesses and negative tendencies which gain an upperhand in moments of stress and temptations. The great Bible personalities had moments of depression when their negative tendencies made them commit blunders – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, etc.

Our national and local problems have engulfed our nation because our people in authority have failed to control themselves, resulting in what we know today as scam. It is really a new name for graft and corruption.

The story of Ahab is a case in point. He coveted Naboth’s vineyard and the situation was worsened by the uncontrollable

Jezebel, his wife. We have many modern Ahabs today. If our tendency to be negative goes non-stop, there should be a time to put on the brakes.

5. I must consecrate myself. To consecrate is to set apart for sacred use, to dedicate. That is the basis of our baptism, child dedication, house blessing, dedication of property, and commissioning – to commit to God everything that we have to do. The English Monarchy is in danger of toppling down because the present heirs have forgotten the sacredness of their heritage, commitment and responsibility.

Moses had his exodus

David had his United Kingdom for his disunited people.

How about us? We cannot do what Moses did, we cannot duplicate David's feat, but we can do something. Let us commit ourselves to a cause within our range and within our reach, and within our ability to do.

Fastening Our Heavenly Desires to this New Millennium

Text: Ecclesiastes 2:4-11; Luke 12:21

Our theme indicates a change in our focus. There was a time when our thoughts were almost always beyond this planet. This was epitomized in a song the words of which I want to quote:

This world is not my home,
I'm just a passing through
My home is in the skies
Somewhere beyond the blue

O Lord, you know I have no friend like you
If heaven's not my home, then Lord what will I do?
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

As the dawn of the next millennium draws near and with the threat of the much talked-about Y2K or millennium bug hovers above us, more people turn heavenward hoping they will not be left behind in the event of the rapture.

At this point, let us consider what our theme is trying to say to us: "Fastening Our Heavenly Desires to this New Millennium". To fasten means to attach or join as if by pinning or tying or nailing. Desires have to do with our longings. Heavenly relates to heaven. New millennium refers to a time span of another 1,000 years from A.D. 2001 – 3000.

Our theme is saying that while our final goal is ultimately to live with God in heaven, we must see to it that our stay on earth is not an illusion but something real and meaningful. Until our translation to our home above we must make life on earth worth living and relationships with others harmonious and joyful. Until God takes us home we are to have "heaven on earth" and not to pine away precious years looking up into the sky.

One important Christian teaching that should be brought into focus here is the event of the rapture. If the rapture happens before or within the year two thousand, will that not render useless all our

preparations for the new millennium? Two things need to be said about the rapture. First, the church age is supposed to last two thousand years after which the rapture comes. Secondly, those who will be counted in the rapture will not be on earth to experience the new millennium that our theme encourages us to fasten our heavenly desires to.

I believe this is the position that God wants us to take: The rapture will come but in God's own good time, not according to our calculation. Our readiness for it is never to try to calculate the exact time of its coming by observing signs and force ourselves to become inactive, to neglect our God-given task as we wait for it. Real waiting is doing God's will and keeping on with our responsibilities as we live quality lives that please God. Then when the rapture comes without even our knowing it God will just snatch us away. If it takes another one thousand years so be it.

The important thing to remember is that our desires are heavenly. What does that mean? The Bible strictly warns us against the evil influence of the world. The world stands for power that corrupts, greed, graft and corruption, the love of money, a life without God. When desires are heavenly they pass God's quality test, meaning they conform to God's purpose and holy will. It does not matter where we live, on earth or in heaven; if our desires are heavenly, there is heaven on earth.

We are challenged by our theme to live heaven on earth as we fasten our heavenly desires to the coming millennium. After the end of history we are to live in the world but not to be of the world. Let us listen to John's advice (1 John 2:15ff) "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man (lust of the flesh), the lust of the eyes and the boasting of what he has and does (pride of life) – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desire pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." The world spoken of here does not mean people but the evil world system.

In Colossians 3:1 we have this message, "Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where

Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” The passage means that although we have heavenly values yet we should be serious about life on earth. We should make an effort to give our place an atmosphere of love and concern, hope, goodwill and compassion. In the words of Stephen Grellet, “I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good that I can do to my fellowman, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it for I shall not pass this way again.” And as someone else said, “I want to leave this world a better place than when I found it.” Here is a wonderful advice from Galatians 6:10, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” All these spell one thing: fastening our heavenly desires to this new millennium.

Our two Scripture passages give us valuable enlightenment on our desires, other than heavenly, and as to their consequences to us when we pursue them in this world. The first one is Ecclesiastes 2:4-11. Here King Solomon found that even great wisdom was ineffective in easing life’s frustrations. He ends up saying, “Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.” Solomon’s pursuit of fulfilment was through indulgence (2:1-3), achievements (2:4-6), possessions and wealth (2:7-8), and great fame. No wonder all his efforts failed to bring enduring satisfaction.

The second passage, Luke 12:21, completes the enlightenment started in the first passage – The Parable of the rich fool – “The ground of a certain rich man produced a crop. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ Then he said, ‘this is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry’.”

But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.”

When in our desires God is left out, life loses its meaning and everything we do ends up in frustration and defeat. This is a timely warning for even those of us who consider themselves working for God’s cause in the new millennium. 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 reminds us all that although we may not lose our salvation it is possible that we could lose our reward. The premise is that all of us who have become members of the body of Christ have each a ministry to perform. The foundation on which each member works is our Lord Jesus Christ. Each man’s work is evaluated for the purpose of reward. Every man’s work will be tried by fire. The Scriptures warn each one to be careful how he builds because fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one who escapes through the flames.

In answer to the challenge that we fasten our heavenly desires to this new millennium, here is something to think about. A certain preacher developed a formula to help himself out when facing a crisis. He called his formula “The Five C’s of Victorious Living. He said in order to achieve a victorious life –

1. I must confront myself.
2. I must consider myself.
3. I must choose myself.
4. I must control myself.
5. I must consecrate myself.

I would like to suggest that we adopt the formula as we ourselves expect to face obstacles when we finally move into the new millennium.

Wisdom – Our Guide to Readiness for the Second Coming

Text: Luke 12:35-40

The passage you have chosen has two senses. In its narrower sense it refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ; in its wider sense it refers to the time when God's summons enters a man's life, a call to prepare to meet God because his earthly life is over. In both senses the warning is that people should be ready. I have chosen to focus on the first sense which refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

When I read your invitation letter to be your speaker today as you celebrate your 8th anniversary as a church, I immediately sensed the urgency that is gripping your heartstrings. At whatever cost you want your people to be ready for the second coming of Christ.

If you have the right faith and the right attitude toward this greatly awaited event you will be able to maintain an alertness that will not leave you behind when the snatching begins.

Let me start by saying that the second coming of our Lord Jesus has two phases: secret and visible. The secret coming popularly known as the rapture of the saints will take place before the Great Tribulation. The second phase – the visible coming – will happen after the Great Tribulation.

We are more concerned about the secret coming of the Lord – the rapture. If we miss it the suffering that we will have to go through during the Great Tribulation is indescribable. The only recourse is to be counted among those who will be “raptured.”

How does one qualify for the coming rapture? First of all we need to understand what the rapture is. It is explained in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, “For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore comfort each other with these words.”

After our knowledge of the event we need to know who are qualified. There is no question about our qualification as long as all

of us have been through the experience of salvation in Christ, having truly repented of our sin, experiencing rebirth and transformation by the Holy Spirit, the old life having died and the new life in Christ taking over. The entire process is known as rebirth or born of the Spirit. If you have experienced rebirth there is no danger of your being left behind at Jesus' second coming. You have a faithfulness that is supported by what we call quality life – a life that is characterized by readiness.

For an important event like the rapture, there are two kinds of readiness: artificial readiness and natural readiness. Artificial readiness is not readiness at all. It is a deception. You think you are ready but you are not, so you keep watching for signs of the rapture when we are told by Jesus that the rapture will come like a thief in the night.

Natural readiness is an any-time readiness and does not depend on set dates. Whatever time the event comes the person with a natural readiness is ready. The rapture has been decreed by God as an end-time event with no set date.

As Jesus warned His disciples about readiness when he was with them, the same warning is given to us in our day. Luke 12:35-40 says, "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks you can immediately open the door for him...It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming he would not have let his house be broken into. You must also be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him."

The readiness that will pass the test of the rapture is the natural readiness that is spawned (brought forth) by a life that has experienced salvation in Jesus Christ resulting in transformation and rebirth. The readiness that God is looking for is the readiness of what we call quality life. It is only wisdom from God – the ability to discern inner quality and relations – that can make us see this kind of readiness and that will serve as the guide to our achieving it. Wisdom will tell us that readiness is not in terms of

cessation of work and waiting idly for signs of the second coming.

A life that has quality is dressed ready for service and its lamp is kept burning. These are the qualifications of the readiness that will make it to the rapture.

Dress indicates the kind of activity that one is engaged in. The uniforms of nurses and doctors tell us that they are involved in caring for the sick. Plumbers and electricians are so dressed so they can attend to their specific tasks with ease. Cooks don aprons and caps for kitchen work. But dress in biblical language really stands for one's positive attitude or character - a kind, helpful, thoughtful, generous, forgiving attitude toward others. It is not a matter of pretense but they all spring from what you are.

A life that has quality keeps a lamp burning. Natural readiness is not just for a short duration but lasting. For a lamp to continue burning, there must be reserve oil. The reserve oil was the difference between the wise virgins and the foolish virgins. We know that the foolish virgins did not make it to the wedding. Natural readiness always has reserve oil. We are warned that in the last days many of those who wait will go away. They will lose interest in spiritual things.

This is the Lord's warning to all of us who wait for the second coming, "It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when He returns."

Let me close with a 5-step formula that will find us doing so when Christ returns:

1. Philippians 1:6, "I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ." (Right start).
2. Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Right priority).
3. Philippians 4:8, "Finally beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (Right thought).
4. Phil 4:13 - "I can do all things through him who strengthens me. In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress." (Right source of strength).
5. Phil 4:19 - "And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Right source of provision). God bless.

Using Yesterday's Weapons for Today's Problems (Warfare)

Text: Hebrews 10:32-36; 37-39

Matthew 11:28-30, "Come to me, all of you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The word "obsolete" is something we never want to describe ourselves - the way we think, or the things we own. For anything that is declared "obsolete" is something no longer in use; outmoded. Sadly, that is how some politicians describe our navy and air force. They will not be able to put up a fight in the event of war. Our weapons are obsolete!

Our sermon title, however, implies that some things never become obsolete. They worked yesterday and they still work today. What are these?

What are the things we fight against today? I want to mention three things in the Christian warfare that take the air out of life's tires and leave us helpless in the thick of the fight.

1) The first of these is insecurity. There is not one here who at one time or another has not had insecurity nightmares. We are insecure about the value of the peso. Gaisano is insecure in the presence of SM. McDonald's is insecure about the growing popularity of Jollibee. Everybody is insecure about something. Somebody is about to tell us, "Pardon, your insecurity is showing." It seems that today the only reality is insecurity. Behind every account of our struggles is a feeling of insecurity. What weapon did God's children use to fight the feeling of insecurity in their time that is still effective today?

About 4,000 years ago, Abraham, Father of the Jewish faith and nation became terribly insecure. It happened this way: When the Lord gave Abraham the signal to leave his country for the Promised Land, he took Lot, his nephew, under his wing. But soon their families and herdsmen were expanding and they had to separate in order to survive. Abraham said to Lot, "If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left." Of

course, having been given the chance to choose first, Lot chose the best part of the land. Abraham had to settle for steppe or arid country.

When you give that kind of chance to one who thinks only of himself, you will regret that decision for the rest of your life. But your decision is unselfish and God supports that kind of decision. And so God came to Abraham with these words, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever." In essence God was saying, "Everything belongs to me and what I have is yours." God was practically saying to Abraham, "Some inherit land and some money, but you have inherited me." Our weapon against insecurity is still God's promise.

Let me tell you the case of three sisters who were workers for a very wealthy landlord. One sister was given a castle, another a large track of land. The third one was not given any. But three days later she was offered the landlord's hand in marriage. The story may not be true, but something like that happens to us when we "inherit" the Lord.

In today's warfare it is insecurity that is one of our biggest threats. But we should fight insecurity with yesterday's weapon, the one used by Abraham and translated today as, "Know the source of your need, the source of your help, the source of your strength. And when you find that source inexhaustible you will not feel insecure."

2) Insatiability means incapable of being satisfied; a condition just as bad as that of insecurity. This is not a problem of not having enough; it is a problem of not being satisfied with what is enough and so the demand for more.

- a. Someone has said that the root cause of insatiability is greed. Greed can never be satisfied. It is like drinking sea water. The more you drink of it the more thirsty you become.
- b. Others say that the cause of insatiability is that you cannot retain what you have. The Bible explains it as putting your money in a bag with holes. You cannot retain what you have because of your loose lifestyle. That kind of lifestyle has no staying or retention power and cannot appreciate what is

owned.

- c. Another has said that people who cannot be satisfied have this problem: they never experience what they long to have because they give emphasis to or think they can be satisfied with the things that money can buy.

For example, money can buy a bed, but not sleep; money can buy books, but not brains; money can buy food, but not appetite; money can buy finery, but not beauty; money can buy a house but not a home; money can buy medicine but not health; money can buy luxuries, but not culture; money can buy companions, but not friends; money can buy flattery but not respect.

The Samaritan woman's eyes were opened when Jesus said, "He who drinks of this water (from Jacob's well) will thirst again, but he who drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst again." All her life the Samaritan woman had been looking for things that could not satisfy. She only found satisfaction when she met Jesus who gave her the water of life. She was looking for happiness (dependent on the things we possess) but was given joy by Jesus; something internal and did not have to depend on things. (Sensible values versus the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control).

When Jesus was on earth He offered food for the spirit and food for the physical body. The people's preference was food for the physical body. Jesus warned: Labor not for the meat that perisheth but for the meat that endures unto everlasting life. (Ang problema sang mga tawo: wala kabulusgan).

3) Impenetrability. Of the three that we fight against this is the hardest to conquer. Because of this we cannot be released from insecurity and insatiability. It is impenetrability that makes us unwilling to change. For example our worship services and prayer sessions are occasions that can bring us enlightenment and a change of behavior. But if we remain impenetrable to the songs we hear, the Scripture passages we read, the sermons delivered there is no chance for us to change. There are two places where we are impenetrable – our hearts and our minds. That is why we often say, "There should be a change of heart and a change of mind." We can attend worship services and prayer meetings for years and not

budge or move an inch if we remain impenetrable in these two places. For twenty years an unkind man was listening to messages that advocated kindness, but he remained unkind.

An encounter with Jesus is what we need. We need to focus on what He did, what He said, and what he was. Jesus' parables were always directed to these two: the heart and the mind. For example, the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Yesterday's weapon has never become obsolete, if today you hear his voice harden not your hearts.

Matthew 11:28, in essence, is saying, "Come to me all of you who are insecure, insatiable and impenetrable, and I will give the cure."

What is needed is what the prophet Joel advocated, a rending of the heart and not our garments (the Old Testament process of showing repentance – a rending of one's garments). Joel 2:13, "Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love."

An encounter with Jesus is what is needed. Jesus does not just aim at the ears. He aims at the heart and the mind. Zaccheus' heart was touched when he encountered Jesus and he was transformed. The Prodigal son went back to his father when he came to his senses. The problem of impenetrability will be resolved when the three things that have to do with transformation are hit – the ears, the mind, and the heart. An encounter with Jesus is still the weapon that can penetrate the ears, the heart and the mind.

Jesus' invitation, "Come to me all of you who are insecure, insatiable and impenetrable, and I will release you from them all."

Knowing God Through Man – The Apex of His Creation

Text: Psalm 8:3-9; Genesis 1:26-27

This is the last of a series of sermons on “Knowing God through His creation”. This time we shall focus on man – the apex of God’s creation. “Apex” is explained as the highest or culminating point. When a person’s achievements are enumerated for recognition, it is done in ascending scale from the least important to the most important, from the lowest to the highest. For example, the famous inventor Thomas Alba Edison became renowned for inventing the incandescent lamp, the transmitter and receiver for the automatic telegraph, a stock ticker for printing stock-exchange quotations, the phonograph, and the movie projector. But what was considered his greatest contribution to society was his development of the world’s first central-electric-light-power station.

When we speak of God’s creations (and we can never count them one by one) from the least important to the most important – it is His creation of man that is the highest or culminating point. If you do not believe it concentrate on yourself right now. Think of the difference between you and a stone, between you and a plant, between you and a horse. You can feel, you can think, you can invent and imagine things. Horses and elephants can never build cities, ocean liners, bridges, and all inventions done so far. Why? The Bible gives the reason: Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

Our case today is not just knowing God, but knowing God better. Through what? 1) What happens to man and the help that he gets in time of crisis tells something about God. 2) When we help others, God is glorified.

This should not be understood in the physical sense for God is spirit. So what does God’s creation of man in His image and likeness mean? It is this: God created man in a natural and moral and spiritual likeness to Him. Our natural likeness to God is in the aspect of the intellect (instinct for the lower forms of life), the emotions and the will. The fact that God knows, that God loves,

that God wills – He put it in man to be able to know, to love, to will. We know the past, the present and we have ideas about the future. We love beautiful things, we love our family, we love our work, we love what we have. We will to stay, to go, to do something. We make decisions.

Our moral and spiritual likeness to God consists in this, God distinguishes between right and wrong. Having made us in His moral and spiritual likeness we are also able to know right from wrong. We get angry when our children do wrong and happy when they do right. When we read the newspapers we react to reports about people doing what is wrong and respond with nodding agreement when we read of people doing noble acts.

Since God is three-in-one – that is, He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are also three in one – that is, we are body, soul and spirit.

Our sermon title says, “Knowing God through Man, the Apex of His Creation.” How do people know about God when they observe us? Anyone who has no knowledge as to what God is like will be given an idea when he sees us doing and making things. When one sees that we know or have knowledge of things or exercise our intellect, one will say, “His creator must be like him. His creator knows.” When one sees us loving our family and friends, one will say, “His creator must also be loving.” When one sees us exercising our will – to go or stay, to work or rest - one will say, “His creator must be like that also; exercising a will.” In other words, what people observe about us whom they can see is reflected back to God whom they cannot see.

When people observe that we hate what is wrong and love what is right, they will say, “Their creator must be like that. He hates what is wrong and loves what is right. They have a moral creator.”

Let us pause here a bit. I would like us to go higher now and instead of saying, “Knowing God...,” we will say instead, “Knowing God better...” People will know God better by two things: 1) What happens to us and; 2) What we do.

What happens to us. There is a believer in Christ named Chuck who loves tandem biking, the one on the front is in control. He does the steering and sets the pace with his wife. He is a dynamic business executive, a man of action and decision.

Although Chuck had grown up in the church, he had held back from committing certain aspects of his life to the Lord. He always had to be in control. But the consequences of his stubborn pride and self-sufficiency were making his life miserable. His relationships with his business partners, with his family, and with God were breaking down.

One morning, unable to take it any longer, he went on a solitary bike ride to think things through. He was gone so long that his wife began to worry. When he returned, his face was tear – stained but he was smiling. He told his wife, “I put God on the front seat this morning.” What a great testimony.

His mistake was corrected and was given a chance to start anew. When people know something like this has happened to us, it will create a great impact on them and will lead them to inquire.

Here is another testimony. When Henry A. Ironside was just two years old, his father died of typhoid fever and left the family destitute. His mother was forced to take in sewing to provide for her little boys. Money was always tight and there were occasions when there was nothing to eat. Henry’s mother set the table and poured water. The two little boys and their mother sat down, and though there was no food on the table, they bowed their heads to give thanks to God for, at least, the water. No sooner had they finished their prayer when a loud knock at the door caught their attention.

A man who owed Mrs. Ironside some money was standing there with a basket of potatoes. He asked if she would accept the potatoes instead of the money. God used this to meet their immediate need.

These two stories when told give an occasion for people to know that through our experiences people will know that God corrects our mistakes, protects us and provides for our needs.

Finally, when we who believe in God live quality lives, that is, we help those who are in trouble, we pray for those who are in need, we understand people’s problems and do something about them, we come to the aid of the oppressed, the misunderstood, and the emotionally tired, and we forgive those who sin against us, what is written in Matthew 5:16 will come to fulfillment: “...Let

your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and praise your Father in heaven.”

What the World Needs is Changed People

Text: John 3:1-16

Someone ventured to say perhaps jokingly that if a visitor from planet mars (although the Bible does not tell that there are people in other planets) paid our planet earth a visit he would observe two things about the earthlings as we people on earth are called: that we are gradually destroying our two resources: natural (mountains, forests, lakes, rivers, seas) and human (people) resources. His observation is really an accusation. To this accusation we indignantly shout: “That’s a brazen lie. Besides there is no such thing as a Martian.” Then in his place will rise hundreds who will attest to the destruction of our virgin forest by indiscriminate cutting down of trees, denuding our mountains and hills and causing destructive floods! Another hundred will rise and denounce dynamite fishing! Another hundred will mourn in public the pollution of our rivers, lakes and seas. And another hundred will vehemently shout, “Away with air and noise pollution! We can’t stand it anymore.”

Then there is silence. And a still, small voice rings in the air. “If you do not believe that we are slowly and painfully killing our people, read the newspapers. Open your radios and T.V. sets. Listen to the moans and cries of thousands around you bereft of their loved ones who were murdered, butchered, poisoned and shot down in cold blood!”

Tonight we cannot deny that we are all witnesses to this wanton destruction of our natural and human resources. So what are we to do? Punish the guilty? Execute the perpetrators of crimes by lethal injection? Or death by firing squad? If we did that there would be no one left on this planet. For we are all guilty of some crime. How many of us have caused the downfall of others? The Bible says, “There is no difference for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Let me now take you to a man who, like us, was worried about what was going on in the world. This man’s name was Nicodemus.

He heard about Jesus who was making an impact on the lives of lowly people who came to Him for comfort. He felt in his heart that this Jesus held the answer to solve the problems of the world.

Here's the account from the Bible; "Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with you'."

Immediately Jesus knew what was bugging this man, Nicodemus. He was not only worried about the troubles of the world. He was worried about his own sin. His religion that was Judaism could not help him. And of course his sin was the sin of the world he was worried about multiplied a billion times over.

Jesus' answer was direct and to the point, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again." Jesus had to make it clear to him, "No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and Spirit." (The Word of God will be used by the Spirit). Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised of this saying, "You must be born again." The answer is not religion, it is not the promulgation of restraining laws to prevent one from doing wrong. The answer is a change of life, a transformation of character which only the Holy One can do.

In today's language, here is what Jesus was saying. He who is born once, dies twice; he who is born twice dies once.

Jesus continues, "But before the Holy Spirit can enter your life to cause transformation there is a price to pay." At this Nicodemus is shocked. "I must pay a price in order for the Holy Spirit to enter my life?" "I will pay the price," Jesus said. "I will take your place as a sinner and I will die on the cross for you." That is the meaning of John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Eternal life is not just duration; it is quality life – a Godlike life. It is easy to say "I believe." But what does believing (faith) mean? It means going through five steps: 1) Hearing; 2) Assent ; 3) Acceptance; 4) Internalization – to incorporate (as value) within

the self a conscious or subconscious guiding principle. 5) Action.

Being born again is more effective than all the preventive laws such as laws against stealing or killing.

A final advice: Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life."

There are two kinds of condemnation. The first kind is condemnation by God. But God is merciful so He offered us the gift of His Son as a way out. You need not be condemned. Salvation is offered as a gift. The second kind of condemnation is condemnation by you yourself. If you refuse God's gift of salvation, it is not God who condemns you but you, yourself. You condemn yourself when you reject God's offer of salvation in Jesus Christ, His son.

The Way of the Cross

Text: Luke 9:23-27

The “way of the cross” as understood by Roman Catholics refers to the stations of the cross. These are the stops that Jesus made as He carried the cross to Calvary. The stops were made because of interruptions each of which has been given significance. For our purpose today we shall look at the way of the cross not as stations but a choice of a lifestyle or a way of life that does not take the easy road.

To do that we will have to go back in point of time to more than two thousand years during the period of the Roman Empire and specifically to the time of Jesus. What was the cross then? It was an instrument of torture and death for criminals, the equivalent of our electric chair today. You will ask, why was Jesus nailed to the cross? He was not a criminal. This is how it happened. The Jews hated Jesus for correcting the errors of their religion. They charged him with treason and rebellion for declaring Himself king. Since they had no authority to put Him to death, they turned Him over to the Roman government for execution. Thus Jesus was crucified and died like a criminal on good Friday. But God vindicated Him and He rose from the dead on Easter Sunday. Jesus’ death on the cross was not a defeat but a triumph. Since then the image of the cross had changed. Today the cross is the major symbol of Christianity.

During the Middle Ages, worldliness plagued the church and a great many Christians became worldly and corrupt. In reaction many pious Christians left in seclusion living as hermits and some established monasteries and religious orders (Augustinian, Franciscan, Dominican). Two kinds of priesthood developed: secular and religious. To the Christians of the Middle Ages two options of lifestyles were open: the way of the world – the easy pleasure seeking compromising way; and the way of the cross, the Lord’s way, the nonconformist way – the way of sacrifice and suffering.

The way of the cross emphasized a lifestyle that according to the Bible is the lifestyle that is pleasing to God and is stipulated in I

John 2:15-17, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”

The Middle Ages which looked at the cross as the way of suffering produced two kinds of lifestyles, two kinds of people: the worldly, pleasure seeking and the devout. The worldly people preferred death to being deprived of pleasure. The devout preferred to please God and were willing to give up worldly happiness if it were the way to life.

In between were people who wanted to have what were offered by the two lifestyles – pleasures offered by the world in this life (patuyang) and eternal life in heaven when they die. Today we still have people like them.

Let us now come to our time. What is our understanding of the cross today? The cross is not a sign to be posted or printed on walls and doors to indicate Christian property or something to keep away evil spirits. The cross is not really a symbol of suffering otherwise Christianity would be a very sad and lonely faith. The cross is not what a frustrated mother refers to when in desperation she shouts at her wayward children, “Kamo ang akon krus nga ginapas-an.”

The cross today is understood more in the spirit and context of Luke 9:23, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” The cross here means the symbol of death to the old life of the one who has committed himself to Christ and has become a new person in Him and a symbol of his endeavor to fulfill the daily mission or task that such a life involves in fulfillment of God’s holy will through Jesus Christ. The cross represents the mission and missions given to us by God that need to be fulfilled.

We need to be conscious that everyday we have a mission to fulfill and that mission is pointed out to us by the Holy Spirit. That mission may be helping others who are in trouble, sharing Christ with a friend, accepting a position in church, teaching in a Sunday school, leading at worship services, or reconciling people who are

not on speaking terms. We can name more.

Let us pause and look back and do some reflection. The cross was once upon a time conceived as an instrument of death. But Christ's death and resurrection changed that. The cross was once upon a time a symbol of suffering and shame. But the Christian faith is not only pain and suffering. It is also joy and peace and dignity in the Holy Spirit. Today the cross is the symbol of the fulfillment of our daily task or mission. And for what purpose? To improve conditions in the world and to make it a better place to live in. God bless you.

Look Beyond the Temporal

Text: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Someone looking for a long lost friend finally located the friend's address. He knocked and when the door opened, the man inside answered his question with these words, "The person you are looking for does not live here anymore. He is there where you can no longer communicate with him."

These last few days, we have been confronted with the reality that our loved one and friend Mabini Quimpo does not live here anymore. Is this a time for grieving or rejoicing?

In one of his sermons, the late Dr. Peter Marshall, who remained in the memory of his friends as Chaplain of the U.S. Senate, described a very touching story about a Christian's last days on earth. In essence, he said that when the saint who is being called home lingers for the sake of the grieving family, the delay in his homegoing causes that loved one to go through a very painful experience – a state of indecision as to whether to go or stay. This pitiful sight so touches the heart of God that he quickly summons the angel of Death to go and take the dying saint in his arms, home into God's bosom. When this is accomplished, a change in heaven's scoreboard is registered showing a plus sign on heaven's side and a minus sign on earth's side.

The Apostle Paul who was familiar with this heavenly scoring scheme knew what a minus sign meant to the family and friends of the one being taken. In our Scripture text today, he painstakingly admonishes the ones who are left behind, and this time it is the loved ones of Mabini, not to grieve unnecessarily. The modifier "unnecessarily" is added to indicate that God understands and allows believers in their human weakness to give in to sorrow at the hour of trial; but not the kind of grief expressed by those who have no hope. St. Paul made this point crystal-clear to answer, once and for all, the persistent questions raised by the bereaved Christians of his day as one by one their loved ones were being claimed by death; questions like: "What happens when our loved ones die?" "Where do they go?" "Will we ever see them again?"

St Paul's time-honored reply is constituted in his first letter to

the Thessalonians, chapter 4:13-18, “Our brothers,” he says, “we want you to know the truth about those who have died, so that you will not be sad, as are those who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will take back with Jesus those who have died believing in Him.” He goes on, “What we are teaching you now is the Lord’s teaching, we who are alive on the day the Lord comes will not go ahead of those who have died. There will be the shout of command, the archangel’s voice, the sound of God’s trumpet, and the Lord Himself will come down from heaven. Those who have died believing in Christ will rise to life first (one of them is Mabini); then we who are living at that time will be gathered up along with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.” He concludes, “So then encourage one another with these words.”

As we gather here today looking at Mabini’s earthly remains, I am reminded of the story of Evangeline and Gabriel in “Tales of the Acadie.” There was a war and the two lovers had lost track of each other. Evangeline went from place to place looking for Gabriel, hoping she would find him alive. When at last she found him in an army hospital, Gabriel was on the brink of death. He died in her arms that day. For Evangeline it was the end of a long search. The line in the poem that struck me is this: “All is ended now – the hope and the fear and the sorrow, all the aching of heart, the restlessness, unsatisfied longing, all the dull, deep pain and constant anguish...”. The Quimpos could identify with this. Hopeless? By no means.

No one knows how many times hope of Mabini’s recovery flashed across the sky, but for the Quimpos and for all of us, the hope that Mabini will recover from his illness is ended now. For God has spoken. Does this mean that ours is a lost cause? No! For our hope is not for this life only, that is, life on earth. As King David answered his servants when they were surprised, aghast at his behavior, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, ‘who knows’? The Lord may be gracious to me, that the child may live. But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.”

This hope of David’s is echoed by the Apostle Paul when he

said, "If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most to be pitied. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep."

Mabini has four things in his favor: the promise of eternal life, the hope of the Resurrection, the assurance of an eternal home, and the reality of God's presence.

We are therefore "encouraged" to turn our eyes not upon the temporal but upon the eternal, to look beyond physical death to the Resurrection. From the physical or earthly point of view life maybe a slow but inevitable slipping down from the steps that lead to death. But from the spiritual point of view life is climbing up the hill that leads to the presence of God. No man need fear the unfolding of the years, for they bring him nearer not to death, but to God. The Bible says, "Whether we live or die we belong to the Lord," and no one who belongs to the Lord will ever be lost.

It is this hope that strengthens us against the pain of separation. It does not mean that we never must grieve, for in this life there is always the element of the earthly in us, and God knows how many times we have wept or foolishly blamed Him for taking our loved ones. So that we will not feel embarrassed or condemned when we give in to this human weakness, St. John did not fail to record for all to read that even Jesus wept, too, when Lazarus died. Jesus was the very one who brought to light the certainty that death is not the end. Because of Jesus we know that death is a gate on the skyline. In the most real sense, therefore, Mabini is not on his way to death but on his way to life; for he has put his hand in the hand of Him who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life."

A Prophet Called John

Text: Luke 7:24-26

“I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to my fellowman, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.” These immortal words were penned by Stephen Grellet after he had reviewed his life and found it wanting. How many times this disturbing thought had crossed the mind of the man we are honouring today; one called by many names: Johnny, John, Juan, Owa, Dr. Gumban or whatever he was to you, we do not know. Nevertheless, that the thought did cross Dr. Gumban’s mind we are certain, and certain still are we that it did make a great and significant difference in his life and ministry. We have been persistently attesting to the reality of that difference since last Tuesday, when we were informed of the sad news of his death. That difference is what had silently touched the lives of many. That difference is what makes us say at this point of our loss, “kanugon.”

To a crowd that gathered one day, Jesus addressed this question: “What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. But what did you go out to see? A Prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.” Jesus was here speaking of John the Baptist to whose faithful ministry he took the time to give due recognition and respect.

Today something like that will be repeated here. We have gathered for a last glimpse of the earthly remains of another John, likewise a prophet, and more than a prophet. For indeed that was what Dr. Gumban was to us who had encountered him—prophet, pastor, preacher, teacher, lecturer, leader, trouble-shooter, rebuker, counselor, husband, father, grandfather, and best of all, friend. If you knew Dr. Gumban, he was always punctual in his time schedule. If you are not in the habit of coming early, you will find him already in the middle of a celebration.

Johnny and I came from the same place, Fabrica, Negros Occidental. Although I am five years older than he was, we grew up and spent many happy times together there. That was in the 1940's. Between us we held one thing in common; something we had always treasured and looked back to. Fabrica Evangelical Church was famous for having produced the greatest number of pastors in the Convention (dala na dira si Rev. Edwin Lopez). Johnny's father, Ramon Gumban, a boxer-turned preacher, had served twice as pastor of that church. He was the one who taught Johnny the rudiments and techniques of boxing. Johnny may never have demonstrated it, but he could outpoint anyone bigger than his size in a boxing competition. It has been a long time ago that in this recollection tribute to the man we are honoring I have no choice but to mention events at random.

In Fabrica, we had the happy experience of childhood; running around the church premises, attending the BYF sessions, taking part in Bible contests and drills, singing in the choir, going to Sunday school, comforting patients at the nearby Ilco Hospital, going out caroling around Christmas time, playing table tennis, swimming in the river; you name it. We both went to Faraon Institute for our high school training until I quit and worked for the American-owned Insular Lumber Company for some eight years.

Then in 1950 we became separated only to meet again here at CPU; and of all places at the College of Theology pursuing the same dream, to serve the Lord as pastor. Before this I was enrolled in the CPU Development High School and I will never forget the time when at a singing contest one University Day Celebration, we were pitted against each other – he representing the College of Theology and I, the CPU High School. I sang "Over the Rainbow." Fortunately for him and unfortunately for me, I lost. He won first place and I came in second. But what was that between friends?

Time will not allow us to go into a detailed flashback, so let me now come to the highlights in Johnny's life. We were together in the College of Theology. It was the school year 1959-60 and he was graduating. It was also the year that the Lord gave him the chance of a lifetime to lead the University's largest and foremost student group, the CPUR. Campaigning for Johnny took us from

our classes and study hours but it was worth it. We saw it coming. Besides his eloquence and gift in speaking he captivated the student population by his powerful tenor as from room to room he sang “Ask me for the moon and if you really want the moon I’ll give it to you.” He won the presidential election in a close fight disproving the claim that candidates from small colleges had no chance to win. Johnny’s presidency was a success at several angles specifically in terms of wholesome and challenging physical and intellectual campus-life pursuits and program thrusts never tried before. His popularity with students which continues to this day also gave the College of Theology a big boost and removed from it the stigma that theologians belong to the low class.

The CPUR experience was only a prelude to a higher and more important leadership – that of the presidency of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches. The new position involved the supervision of Baptist churches nationwide and representing the Convention at both national and international levels of conferences and gatherings. As president of the Convention a privilege was automatically open to him to get involved with the highest national evangelical body, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. The Lord gave him another chance of a lifetime when he was voted into the office of Chairman of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, the highest position he ever attained.

However, it was as Dean of the College of Theology that brought Johnny closer to the hearts of the people – students, teachers, employees, security guards, parents, work students, etc. His wide experience with people from all walks of life in Negros, here and abroad, his wisdom and insight have earned for him the people’s esteem as counselor. He was noted for his witty remarks, insightful jokes, sense of humor and, when necessary, for his stern rebukes which caused some people to dislike him. When he disagreed with people on certain issues, he stood his ground without batting an eyelash but maintained friendly relations with his detractors.

Johnny’s greatest trials came just before and on the heels of his retirement. Because of his stand for what is right he lost some

friends and gained the ire of some colleagues who, like him, believed they were likewise in the right. We have no idea to what extent these unhappy developments affected him, but even before this time he had suffered a mild heart attack. But for his faithful wife Edna who is a doctor, Johnny's traveling days would have ended a long time ago.

Personally, I received one of the greatest shocks of my life when I learned last Tuesday morning that Johnny had been summoned home, he and I being the two oldest remaining members of the seminary faculty who maintain part-time teaching, I have never felt so alone and forsaken. Immediately my thoughts turned to the Lord. I said, "Why so premature, Lord? We are in the middle of a great recovery and Johnny could have been instrumental with your other Convention leaders joining hands with him in helping bring about the anticipated renewal of your people. What about his family? What about Cosmopolitan Evangelical Church and Bethany Baptist Church in Bacolod? What about us here in Iloilo City?" I was beginning to feel like Job trying to find fault with God. Then before my mind's eye there flashed this message, "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (John 12:24). Then I began to understand. Being human I see only the beginning. God sees both the beginning and the end. In life Johnny had touched the lives of many people. That fact is known to us. But what we do not know is what had transpired through the years. For reasons we may not have been aware of the enthusiasm and loyalty of some of these people may have waned. Some pastors may have left the ministry because of discouraging developments. Some Convention leaders may not be on speaking terms. Misunderstandings and frustrations in certain sectors of our Convention may be causing disunity. Seminary students may be losing interest in their studies and doubting their call. What will it take to bring back power and life? "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies..."

How Discouraged are You²⁴

Text: 1 Kings 19:13-18

I am a very vocal person and whatever I feel in my heart I let it out in words. You might think that I am a very strong person from the words I say on the pulpit. When you say a very strong person perhaps you might think that I never get discouraged. Frankly speaking, perhaps I get discouraged more than you do.

Ihambal ko lang anay ang sa politiko. Ang mga politiko kon mag-encourage sila sa mga tawo, sa sulod na nila often times discouraged na sila. Galing kay ginasingganan sila nga indi gid magpakita nga discouraged kay leader sila. So, kalabanan sang mga politiko sige gihapon ang pag encourage bisan down na sila. Pero kahibalo na sila nga pirde sila. Pero until they die indi gid sila mag-admit sang ila discouragement.

I have learned to be frank and to tell you how often I get discouraged. The officers of our church will probably not go along with me if I say this, because as pastors we also have to say, “Hoy, indi ka gid mag-una, kag indi ka gid magsagi hambal.” Pero abi ninyo, siling sang nagakatabo sa akon, the more I encourage you the more nga gina-attack ako sang discouragements agod indi madayon ang mga encouragements ko sa inyo.

If you read from Scriptures, the people who were often discouraged were the prophets because the Lord would tell them, “Tell the people this and this, and yet indi matabo.” Every time nga daw indi matabo ang ginsiling sang prophet, nahuya siya mag-atubang sa mga katawhan. So daw may labot ini sa aton karon sermon title, “How Discouraged Are You?” Ang nagapadiscouraged sa aton kahibalo kamo kon ano? Ang mga hindrances.

Last time we spoke about two kinds of hindrances: the outward and the inward. The outward hindrances we can easily remove but when the hindrance is within us, demoralized ka, paralysed, and you do not have any will to go on. Discouragement is one of the hindrances. Sometimes bala I wish nga ang aton congregation makahambal sa akon kon maggwa na kita sa panimbahon. Kay man ang mga ginapanghambal ko diri ka very inspiring. Kon kis-a as pastor I would like to have a dialogue with you. You know what,

talagsa lang ang congregation nagadialogue sa pastor so indi nila maintindihan ang pastor. Siguro from now on the office will be free para sa tanan. Just walk in and ask questions, especially sa akon nga daw mahuy-an man bala ako kay kon kis-a daw si sin-o gid ako magsagi challenge sa inyo, nga daw wala gid ko abi failures. So kanami kon makadialogue kita.

Our message today is still along the line of looking back in the hope that we can learn from the past and apply the lessons learned to our life in the year 2000. Kay siling naton last time, look back, to learn from your mistakes then look up so that you will be given help and then move forward because without looking up you cannot move and march forward boldly. As the sermon title suggests, the message is addressed to those who are discouraged. If you are not experiencing discouragement right now, it does not mean that the message is not for you. For there might come a time when it will be your turn to be discouraged. Therefore the message is also for all of us.

To begin with, there is no man or woman who at one time or the other his or her life has not experienced discouragement. Kag abi ninyo, kon wala ka gid dangpan, macommit ka gid suicide. Gani kinahanglan gid nga daw bisan ang Dios wala gid nakasabat sang aton pagpanawag, indi lang ta magbuhi sa iya, nga masiling kita, “Ang Ginoo wala gid magsabat, wala na gid ako kwarta, wala ako gihapon obra. Nagasiling man siya sa Biblia nga ‘magsalig lang kamo, ara gid ang tanan,’ ngaa nga waay?” Indi lang magdula sang paglaom, every one of you in this sanctuary. Right now, just think back to the time when you had your first experience of discouragement.

There are three kinds of discouragement. The first kind does not seriously affect us. We are in no danger with this kind of discouragement, it will just pass. Time is a great healer. The second kind of discouragement may never give us a chance to recover. We may not die, but our lives will lose their significance, their meaning. Amo ni ang mga disperado nga mga tawo - going through the motions of eating, and sleeping and drinking - wala na meaning ang kabuhi. The third kind is the most difficult discouragement to experience. Daw diri ang akon discouragement. From it we can

recover. However, not by human resources but by God's resources. The third kind of discouragement is one that can only be experienced by people who are very close to God. When God is so slow to respond, amo ni ang grabe nga discouragement. Meaning, the relationship with God is very personal. Kita tanan diri amo sina. Kay ngaa? Nagasimba kita, kag kon nagasimba ka nga indi personal ang relasyon mo sa Dios, you are wasting your time. Anyone who comes to worship without personal relationship with God, wala meaning ang mga kanta, bisan ano kanami sang choir indi ka matandog kag indi ka makakita nga tani mabuligan ka sang mga words nga ginakanta sang choir. Kon indi personal ang relationship sa Dios, entertainment ang gwa sang panimbahon. And so it is a waste of time. I would like to believe nga kita ini nga mga tawo nga madiscourage gid sa third discouragement because our hope is in God. Everything we want in this world comes from God. So masiling ka, "Kon wala ang Dios patay gid ko ya." Kon ang Dios mahinay magsabat sang aton ginapangayo ang aton discouragements tama gid ka daku. That is were the problem lies. Our closeness to God will make us expect that God will never fail us. We are entirely dependent on God. One who does not care about God will not be deeply affected when things do not turn out according to his expectations. Ang tawo ya nga wala nagasapak sa Dios kag wala siya nagapaabot sang bulig sang Dios kon indi mag-abot ang ginapaabot niya masiling man lang siya, "Ti, anhon ta swerte mo!" Pero kita, nagasiling gid kita "No, indi gid ina ya matabo. God will answer. God will help." Kay ang tawo ya nga nagakabig lang sa swerte, he will just simply leave it to fate and since he believes in himself and relies on his own power to accomplish his purposes he has no reason to blame God when things run counter to his plans. He cannot blame God because he has never depended on God. He is a man who says, "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul." Pero kon nagadepend ka sa Dios, madiscourage ka gid kon ang Dios daw mapaslawan pa.

Amo tani ina ang akon ginapangamuyo kag ginapangayo nga everytime we come to worship, let us come to worship because worship is a beautiful thing. Indi ta pag-uyangan ang pagsimba.

Now let us look at the man who leaves everything to God and completely trusts him for his needs, safety and protection. From Scriptures he has been taught to commit his life to God. He knows the value of prayer, the importance of worship, the strengthening effect of the Christian activities that he gave himself to - such as Sunday worship, midweek prayer meetings, cottage prayer meetings, evangelistic meetings, church-related organization meetings, Sunday school, opportunities of sharing the good news of salvation with others, reciprocal counselling sessions with other Christians, retreats, summer camps and conferences. What is the promise behind these activities for the faithful Christian?

To all of us, faithful Christians, who honestly and sincerely believe in the fulfillment of God's promises, what do you think will be the effect on us if these promises are not fulfilled? The effect will be devastating discouragement. In other words, between those who do not care about God and those who love God and are faithful to him, when things do not happen according to their expectations, the ones who will be discouraged are not those who do not care about God, but the ones who are faithful to him.

What we propose today is to look back and find out at least one person in biblical times who put his trust in God and who became so discouraged when God failed to fulfill his expectations. May arala? There are many but we will single out Elijah, the prophet. What was his experience? All his expectations from God were fulfilled except one - protection from the wicked queen Jezebel. The King was against him. The people themselves started to worship Baal. And so Elijah said, "Lord what are you trying to do? Are you punishing me?" God was silent about Elijah's appeal for help. Then at one time Elijah was so discouraged. Ginpadal-an siya sang message ni Jezebel, "May the gods strike me dead if by this time tomorrow I don't do the same thing to you that you did to the prophets." (I Kings 19:2). Jezebel was going to kill him and no word from God came to assure him of protection. Elijah's last resort was to run away. And under a tree after a mile of travel he sat down and prayed that he might die. "I want to die!" Thinking that he was alone, he alone was left of God's faithful prophets, he was discouraged that the only thought that came to him was to die.

At that precise moment, God came in a still small voice, “What are you doing here Elijah?” Elijah said, “Lord I am the only one left.” God said, “Go back, Elijah! Go back the way you came and go to the desert of Damascus. Anoint Hazael, King of Aram, anoint Jehu, son of Nimshe and anoint Elisha, son of Shaphat to succeed you as prophet. You think you are alone? Yet I have reserved 7,000 in Israel whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.” From then on, Elijah’s defeat turned to victory. And Ahab was rebuked and Jezebel who sought his life was killed.

What was wrong with Elijah before God came to him at the last hour of his discouragement? He had no patience to wait for God to act in His own good time. Remember this, *kon may ara ka ginapangayo sa Dios kag gusto sang Dios nga patawhayan anay pero ang gusto mo nga sabton niya dayon*, God may answer your prayer but it will not be beneficial to you. *Kon sabton ka sang Dios tungod sa imo expectation kag indi sa iya expectation his answer will destroy you*. Wait patiently for God.

Elijah had no perception of those who were on the side of God. *Abi ninyo, may tawo gali nga daw indi hayag ang ila pagsalig sa Ginoo, pero sa sulod dalam*. May mga tawo man nga palasimba pero wala depth. Elijah thought he was the only one left. He fell short of recognizing God’s hand in allowing small defeats.

Elijah failed to see God’s strategy. *Kon indi ka kaintiende sang strategy sang Ginoo malain gid madangatan mo*. When we do not see his strategy, we begin to question him but in the end kita ang pirde.

In the end God came to Elijah and said, “Go back,” balik ka kay nagsala ka Elijah. Tagai lang ti-on ang Dios mag-explain kay mabuligan ka gid. Amo na tani ang aton himoon sa sining year 2000.

Luyag ko magtapos sang aton discouragements. Ambot kon nahambal ko na diri ang story sang banag kag usa, nga ginhangkat sang usa ang banag palumba. Ambot ngaa kadasig na sang usa hangkaton pa niya ang banag palumba, nga ang banag, ahay, isa ka oras nga lakat daw one meter pa lang ang agi, ang usa ya, isa ka stride lang five meters na. Pero ginhangkat gid sang usa ang banag.

Abi ninyo nagdaog bala ang banag. Sang nagadalaganay na sila, siling sang usa, “Banag ara ka pa da?” - mga one kilometer na ang nadalagan sang usa. Tumumbo ang banag, “Yes I’m here.” Nakibot ang usa, “Ngaa nga one kilometer na ang dalagan ko, ara pa siya!” After 10 kilometers, “Banag ara ka pa da?” Tumumbo naman ang banag, “Ari ako!” Asta nga sang ulihi nga masinggit pa tani ang usa, didto na ang banag sa finish line, “Ari ako,” siling sang banag. Baw, pirde gid ang usa. Pero abi ninyo kon ano ang natabo? Amo gali ini ay, God will use others to help us. Ang tanan gali nga kabanagan naglinya halin sa puno asta sa punta. Tanan nagcooperate, nga kon magsinggit gani ang usa, may isa ka banag nga nagatumbo kag magsinggit. Nahuy-an ang usa.

Kita man tanan kon mag-unite kita, with God as our help, indi kita madiscourage. We can do many things. Kon sin-o diri ang discouraged, please indi gid madiscourage. Our God is a God who controls everything and he controls our lives. The past, the present and the future are in the hands of God.

Mangamuyo kita. Amay namon damo gid sa amon ang discouraged, Lord. Baw, buligi gid kami Ginoo kay kami nagtrust sa imo kag naghope. Ara lang gid sa imo ang amon paglaum Ginoo, nga kon indi mo kami pagsabton madula kami. Salamat nga sa sini nga aga Ginoo ginpasalig mo kami nga ang tanan manginkadalag-an upod sa imo. Ubayi ang diri sa JEC nga nagasimba, ang sa Baptist Center Church, sa University Church, kag tanan, bisan ano nga simbahan. O Dios namon ubayi man ang bisan sin-o basta nagatuo sa imo. Indi kami makasiling nga kami lang ang imo ubayan kay kadamo sang nagapalangga sa imo. Gani Ginoo sa sini nga aga, buligi kami, tudloi kami kon ano ang amon himoon. Kag kabay pa Ginoo nga ang amon discouragements maislan sang encouragements, tungod na lang sa ngalan ni Jesus ginaampo namon ini, Amen.

What Does God Say About Anger: Read Your Bible

Text: Colossians 3:8; Mathew 5:21-22; Ephesians 4:26-27;
1 John 3:15

Most of us here today have been angry about something or at someone during our lifetime. For some of us anger has continued unresolved to the point that we literally say that we hate the person who caused our anger. Friendships are sometimes destroyed by small misunderstandings, a hasty word or a misplaced comment. Or a thoughtless deed may wither the most beautiful flower of friendships.

I would like to begin with a story told by Robert Stevenson about the two sisters who were old but unmarried. Once upon a time there were two maiden sisters in Edinburgh. The sisters lived comfortably in a rather large one room apartment. One day they had a disagreement. As time passed their anger grew and they stopped speaking to each other. Instead of resolving their dispute or one of them moving out they both stubbornly stayed in the apartment, all the while refusing to communicate. According to Stevenson a chalk line drawn upon the floor separated their two domains. It bisected the doorway and fireplace so that each could go out and come in and do her cooking without violating the territory of the other. So for years they co-existed in a hateful silence. In the dark watches, each could hear the breathing of the enemy. Never did four walls look down upon an uglier spectacle.

Have you ever been angry? What were you angry about? How did you feel? These are three good questions when you want to describe anger. The dictionary defines anger as “a strong passion or emotion excited by injury.” Injury can mean a number of things. It can mean physical infirmity resulting from violence or accident. It can mean unjust or offensive treatment. It can mean an instance of physical or moral hurt. It can mean an actionable wrong. When a person is the object of these injuries his reaction is to get angry and in the process he could strike back and hurt or kill the person who caused the injury. Let me give you a line up of people, who in their anger, had killed people: Cain killed his brother Abel. Someone assassinated President Lincoln. About a few years ago there was a killing involving a parking space. Three days ago a man killed his

live-in partner.

These tragedies came from anger. If you observe closely, our Philippine laws have provisions against killing or taking the life of another man but it does not have anything against anger. It has nothing that says "Thou shalt not get angry." What if there is a law against getting angry? Our congressmen are often embarrassed, uneasy and unhappy when they review their track record and discover they have not sponsored a single bill in congress. So they try to crack their heads in an effort to come up with a good law. The result has been good. Today we have laws that require one to wear a helmet when driving a motorcycle. Laws that require the use of seatbelts. Laws against smoking in public conveyances. Laws against cruelty to animals. Laws protecting the endangered species.

But we have yet to come up with the best law for all time. And what is that law? "You shall not get angry." The best law up to this time is still "Thou shalt not kill." Nothing can be better than to preserve life. If you love your parents, your siblings, your husbands, your wives, your children, etc., there is no other law you must uphold and protect better than the law that says "Thou shalt not kill." If you hug your husband it is because of that law. If we still have our family intact it is because of that law, "Thou shalt not kill." The only thing that can take the crown from the current best law is the proposed law that has yet to be passed: "Thou shalt not get angry."

Why is the prevention of anger better than or superior to the prevention of killing? The reason is given by the best law giver, God through Jesus. Let us now listen to what he says in Matthew 5:21-22, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder or kill.' But listen, you are still in trouble even if you have not killed: 'And anyone who murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.'" The law, "Thou shalt not kill," does not touch the root of the problem of killing which is anger. Anger is the prelude to something destructive. The most effective way to get rid of killing is to get rid of the problem of anger.

We will finish the story of the two sisters. One of them killed the other. Among the things that we should get rid of according to

Colossians 3:8 are the following: first is anger. Get rid of anger! Second is rage, which means the same thing as anger. You must rid yourselves of such things as these: anger, rage, malice or slander (libak) and filthy languages from your lips (dinupak). All these mentioned in the passages can lead to the crime of killing. What God, therefore, is saying through the Bible is the prevention of anything that could make us commit the crime of taking another life.

We must not forget, however, that there are two kinds of anger: destructive and protective. If we stop “protective anger,” maguba man ang kalibutan kay wala ka na akigan. Destructive anger destroys, protective anger is righteous indignation against the commission of wrong. We are angry when traffic rules are violated. We are angry when the helpless are taken advantage of (ginapamintahaan). We are angry when people throw their garbage into the streams that are the sources of our drinking water. We are angry when wives are battered. I am angry because of what you did nga indi husto. The moment madula ini nga pangakig then the world will get worse. Our society will get worse if we do not demonstrate this kind of anger. Kabay pa bala nga ang mga pastors indi magkadto ang ila concern sa anger. Kay sa karon nga inadlaw nakita nila nga ang mga membro sang iglesia nga God-loving, daw wala nagahimo sang ila hilikuton, gani nga ang pastor daw mangakig gid. Kon kis-a nagagwa ini sa wali. Kinahanglan ang mga pastor magbantay gid. Kay kon wala nagahimo ang tawo sang husto maugtas ka lang.

Pero kon magpabaya ka na lang indi gid magnami ang aton kalibutan. Si Jesus naghimo gid sang iya puede mahimo agod indi maggamo ang sosyedad. Our society will get worse if we do not demonstrate the protective kind of anger - it is love and concern nga makapapati sa tawo. Ang makaappeal indi kay ang akig (destructive) kundi akig (protective) nga gintranslate sa manami nga pagpangakig (love and concern).

There is no fear that this protective anger will destroy for it springs from love. Care should be taken that this kind of anger does not turn destructive for it is possible that we could loose our temper even in our righteous indignation.

So what does God through the Bible say to us? Ephesians 4:26 says, “In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry and do not give the devil a foothold.” What does this mean? It means that we should be discerning when we are angry; nagatan-aw gid sang anger naton. Is it the right or the wrong kind? Is the devil using my righteous anger as his chance to get through to me? Once we have discerned our anger as the wrong kind, then we should not let the sun go down while we are still angry. Some people do not know how to apply this. Instead of adjusting themselves to the movement of the sun, they let the sun adjust to them, so they cannot change. They refuse to let the sun go down while they are still angry. But it is we who should change and not the sun.

Finally, if people are angry at us, for doing the right thing, there is always an opportunity to do something positive about it and cause their anger to fly away. President Lincoln asserted the human rights of all – black and white. He was against racism. He won in his fight. Afterwards he gave his opponents, those who were not against racism, positions. When those who supported him noticed his move, they told him: “Don’t you know that those people you appointed in your government were hating you? They put you down!” Lincoln told them, “Go and ask these people if I am their enemy.” So they went there and Lincoln waited for their feedback. And what was the feed back? “Mr. President, although we are sad because we were proved wrong, yet what is happening is a good thing. No one said that you are their enemy. The people said, ‘he is our friend’.” Those who hated Lincoln have changed, because Lincoln showed his enemies love and concern.

If you are angry for the right cause you follow it up with doing a good thing. In that way you erase hatred. The best way to get rid of your enemies is to make friends of them. “Who are my enemies? They have turned into my friends.”

Let us pray: Our Father, this is not an attractive kind of subject. No one wants to listen to this kind of thing Lord because it puts all of us to shame. No one wants to stop from getting angry. We always want to get angry, but it is not the answer to our problems Lord. So, Lord, having gone to the Bible to find out what your

advice is regarding our stand, position, or decision, open our eyes to what is the right thing to do today. After hearing this message, perhaps some of us have fallen asleep because it is not an attractive thing to us. Help us to be able to gain advantage from sermons that may not be good to our hearing but are really what we need in order to answer our problems. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Three Judgments Every Person Must Face

Text: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

If there is anything we are not clear about it is whether we should judge or not. We cannot deny the fact that we do make judgments everyday.

Our passage tonight also speaks of judgment. There are judgments based on careful weighing of evidence and testing of premises. There are judgments passed without the benefit of investigation and based only on hearsay (summary judgment). There are judgments passed by some on people they do not like.

It is easy to destroy people's reputation by passing what we call summary investigation, and without mercy.

For this reason, the Lord said, "Judge not, that you be not judged." The question comes to us then, "How can we even correct an individual or our society if we are not to judge?" The Bible says, "Judge not according to the appearance but judge righteous judgment." Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment (John 7:24).

If we should ever judge, it should be on the basis of God's judgment; without malice, and with mercy. Our judgment should always be to help and not to put down, and should be done with the consciousness that we are also sinners.

St. Paul speaks of three judgments that every man must face.

1. He must face the judgment of his fellowmen. In this case Paul says that that is nothing to him. It is like saying, "I don't care about your judgment," for the judgment he prefers is God's judgment. But there is a sense in which a man cannot disregard the judgment of his fellowman. For in spite of its occasional radical mistakes, the judgment of our fellowmen is often right. That is due to the fact that every man instinctively admires the basic qualities of honor, honesty, reliability, generosity, sacrifice and love.

A philosopher used to say, "There are only two people who can tell you the truth about yourself – an enemy who has lost his temper and a friend who loves you dearly." It is true that we should never let the judgment of men deflect us from what we believe to be right; but it is also true that the judgment of men is often more

accurate than we would like to think, because they instinctively admire lovely things.

2. He must face the judgment of himself (self-judgment). Again Paul disregards that. Why? He knew very well that a man's judgment of himself can be clouded by self-satisfaction, by pride, and by conceit. But in a very real sense every man must face his own judgment. "Man, know thyself" is a basic ethical law. One of the first characteristics of a real man is the ability to get on with himself. A man cannot get away from himself and if he loses his self-respect, life becomes an intolerable thing.

3. He must face the judgment of God. In the last analysis this is the only real judgment. For Paul this was the judgment he awaited. God's is the final judgment for two reasons:

a. Only God knows all the circumstances. He knows the secret that a man can tell to no one. He knows what a man might have sunk to and He knows what he might have climbed up to.

b. Only God knows all the motives. "Man sees the deed but God sees the intention." Many a deed that looks noble may have been done from the most selfish and ignoble motives; and many a deed which looks base may have been done from the highest motives. He who made the human heart alone knows it and can judge it.

We do well to remember two things: First, even if we escape all other judgments or shut our eyes to them, we cannot escape the judgment of God. Second, judgment belongs to God and we do well not to judge any man.

Wisdom Knows the Difference²⁵

Text: James 1:5; Mathew 7:24-25

Life is characterized by choices. We make choices everyday and we need a guide so that we make the right choices. Wisdom is the ability to discern inner qualities and relationships.

Kadasig sang tuig magbadbad. Sang una ginkulbaan pa kita kon mag-abot ang January 2000 tungod sang mga warnings nga indi ini maayo nga tuig. Pero karon, June, tunga-tunga na sang tuig. Ang aton nga month's theme nagasiling "Godly Wisdom" kag ang aton sermon title sa sini nga Domingo, second Sunday in June, "Wisdom Knows the Difference." Naga-igo gid ini sa aton mga kinahanglan kay kon inyo tan-awon ang aton kabuhi gina characterize sang one thing - making choices. From the time we are born to the day of our departure we make choices. May mga ginikanan nga nagalantaw gid kon ano ang pili-on sang ila bata bisan gamay pa siya. May ginikanan nga nagbutang sang stethoscope, slide rule kag Bible sa luyo sang iya bata nga one year and a half pa lang agod mahibal-an kon mangin ano siya magdaku. Makita gani sang bata ang mga objects daw damhagan niya. Ang primero nga gindamhagan niya amo ang Bible. Kag siling sang ginikanan "Our child will become a pastor when he grows up." Daw kanami kay man very religious ini nga panimalay. Nakita naman sang bata ang slide rule. Siling nila, "Ay mangin engineer ang aton bata." Tapos ginkadtoan pa gid sang bata ang stethoscope kag gintandog niya ini. Siling nila, "Ay mangin doctor ang aton bata." Sang ulihi daw gindamhagan sang bata ang tanan gani ginkulbaan sila. "Baw ang bata naton mangin politiko gali kon magdaku." Ambot, ngaa kon damo na gani ang ginatagaan sang tawo sang importansya ang panumduman ta dayon politics.

When we have to make choices we have to have a guide. Kinahanglan may tuytuy kita samtang nagahimo sang pagpili. Ang resulta bala sa aton kon magpili kita kag indi amo, daw pareho sang balatyagon sang nagaentra sa "kwarta kag kahon." Wala ko sini ka kita pero ara ini sa TV kag popular ini kay ang nagaentra nga tawo diri ginapapili kon ibaylo ang natipon na, abi 20,000 pesos, sa kahon nga indi mahibal-an kon ano ang unod. Baw ang

tawo bala espekulador gid kag ara gid sa aton ang pagkagambler. So masiling kita, “Anhon ko man ini ang 20,000. Atong kahon nano ayhan ang unod sadto man? Basi mga brilyante, damo nga mga singsing kag mga relo.” So iwahig ta ang 20,000 kag masiling kita, “Ang kahon na lang.” Pero sang ginaabrihan na ang kahon nagahawathawat ang balatyagon sang contestant. Waay gid gali unod ang kahon. Kalain batyagon nga ang kahon wala unod. In other words we made the wrong choice. Sala ang aton pagpili gani gakinahanglan gid kita sang tuytuy nga makasiling kon ano ang pili-on naton.

Are we not glad we live in a free country? Sa diin ka, kon papali-on ka, sa country nga dictatorial ukon sa country nga democratic; nga sa dictatorial country you have no freedom? No one can force us to do what we do not like. But strange as it may seem, it is harder to live in a free country than in a country where freedom is curbed and the important moves we make are decided for us by those who rule over us. Mas mabudlay gali ang magpuyo sa hilway nga nasyon. Sa dictatorship wala kita responsibility, everything is done for us, kay ginapilit ka gid nga magbaton ka lang sang ginatil-og sang nagadumala sa imo. Sa country iya nga masiling kita, “I am free to do anything I like” pero indi ka responsible nga tawo indi ka gid mag-ayohan. Indi ka mag-ayohan sa country where you have to do things yourself.

When President Lincoln of the United States of America convinced the American people to free the Negro slaves in 1863, it gave the emancipated slaves a survival problem. As slaves they did not have to worry about food since their masters fed them. As free men with free choices they were often hungry. Sa aton man mga pamilya kon maayo gani ang pangabuhi kag ang kabataan ta pulos may mga sulogoon kag wala gid sila ginapatrabaho, the moment magtaliwan ang ginikanan, ang mga bata nga wala maanad sang responsibilidad sa ila mga balay - nga pagmata abi maghimos katre, maghugas pinggan, magpanglampaso - waay gid gali namasngaan. Indi sila mabuhi kag ang ginbilin sa ila nga palanubli-on dali pa madula.

Here is an explanation nga natabo sa southern United States. A plantation owner who released all his slaves found to his great

surprise all of them back in his barn one night. Their leader said, “Master, we’ve been slaves all our lives that we find it hard to survive as free men.” Indi kami kahibalo kay naanad kami diri, therefore indi kami mabuhi sa free country, we need to be slaves again agod indi kami magutman.

As freemen they had two survival problems: 1) They were often left with no choice because there was nothing available to choose from; and 2) They did not have the knack or ability to make the right choice. They suffered from making a wrong choice kay kalabanan nga ginapili nila indi husto.

I believe you will agree with me that the second survival problem is the problem of every Christian today. Amo ini ang problem ta. We go through much pain and suffering because of a wrong choice.

The importance or significance of this truth stands out in an epitaph which reads, “Here lies a man who voted for the wrong candidate, married the wrong woman and gave himself to the wrong vocation.”

Pasalamat kita nga when God created us He gave one of His greatest gifts which was the ability and freedom to make a choice. Kanami gid sang Dios. Ginhatagan niya kita sang abilidad kag kahilwayan sa paghimo sang pagpili. My duha ka butang nga kon magamit naton sa husto kanami gid sang kabuhi ta. One of the marks of a free man is the freedom to make a choice. But freedom without the knowledge and ability to use results in unhappiness. Knowing the danger of making wrong choices under freedom the Lord gave his warning to Israel in Deuteronomy 30:19, “This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you, life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him. For the Lord is your life, and He will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” So wala kita nakulangan kay ginhatagan kita sang Ginoo sang responsibilidad. Siling sang Ginoo, pilia gid, gamita ulo mo, tagaan ta ka sang mga kahigayonan nga indi ka magsala sa imo pagpili. Pero kon magsala ka that means to say wala ka gid maggamit sang imo ulo.

God went a step higher than simply giving us the freedom to make a choice and the warning to make the right choice. He gave us wisdom – divine wisdom – to make sure that we make the right choice. May kaalam nga ginhatag ang Ginoo.

What is wisdom (kaalam)? It is “the ability to discern inner qualities and relationships.” Nga kon may gintan-aw ka nga tawo makita mo ang indi lang sa babaw ukon sa gwa sang kabuhi niya. Makita mo ang iya quality, kag kon may relasyon ka sa iya makita mo ang iya kadadalman. Kon makita mo ang kadadalman sang relasyon maiwat mag-abot ang misunderstanding. Man kon may ara lang kita sang wisdom kanami gid.

In other words without wisdom we are able to look at situations, problems, quarrels, and relationships only from the surface. Masiling ka, “Ari gid ang relationships,” pero pati ka sina panit lang. Natuslok-tuslok mo lang gani, masiling ka na, “Ay bal-an ko na, ini ang relationship!” Gali panit lang. Kon amo ini kag may problema gani ukon inaway siling mo, “Anay ka kay kadtoan ko sila kag i-reconcile.” Tapos tuslok-tuslokon mo sila pero hapaw, sa panit lang. Kuhaon mo lang ang kamot sang isa, “O, abi bala kuhaa bala ang kamot mo,” kag kuhaon mo man ang kamot sang isa, “O, sige kamusta kamo.” Hay, makakumustahanay man ang duha pero ang mata nila nagadulot nga daw maaway gid. Hapaw ina kay indi naintindihan ang kadadalman sang inaway, kay wala wisdom. Amo ni siguro nga ang kalabanan sang inaway sa aton mga balay, sa eskwelahan ukon sa gobyerno daw indi gid matabangan kay tama ka superficial sang aton paglantaw sang problema.

In other words, we look at situations, only on the surface. We have no grasp of the whole situation and our efforts at bringing about solutions will be of no effect and will even prove dangerous. Kon ikaw magpareconcile sang duha nga nagaaway kag indi ka kakita sang kadadalman sang problema, dangerous. Magagrabe pa ang inaway.

Luyag ko maggamit sang illustration sang Titanic. Ang Titanic dugay na ini nga sine, indi ini color sang una, ginliwat nila sini lang pero ang story amo man gihapon. Katahom sini nga estorya nga nakahimo sang bapor nga daw isla ka daku. Ang katawhan

wala makulbaan nga magcross sa Atlantic bangod tuman ka daku ang Titanic nga sakayan. Gani nakasiling ang kapitan sang barko, “Even God cannot sink this ship!” Sa maiden voyage niya, winter time, sang didto na sila sa tungatunga sang Atlantic may nakit-an nga iceberg nga nagalutawlutaw. Pero daw kagamay man lang sang iceberg. Siling sang pila ka tawo, “May iceberg! Sir may iceberg!” Siguro sadto kulang pa ang ila ihibalo sa iceberg. Siling sang kapitan, “Amo man lang ina ka daku nga iceberg? Kagamay sina! Kadaku sang aton salakyan, ang iceberg mapihak na!” Hapaw ang paglantaw sang kapitan. Superficial lang ang iya nakita.

Ang aton problem daw iceberg. Daku siya sa idalom pero gamay lang ang nagalutaw. Kon indi ka katulok sa kadadalman, abi nimo gamay lang siya.

Naguba gid ang Titanic kag madamo ang nagkalamatay kay kulang ang mga lifeboats nga available. Ang kinahanglan sa aton kada himo naton sang choice matulok kita sa kasudlan kag indi lang sa gwa. That is why ang Ginoo nagpahayag kon sin-o ang magabulos sa kay Saul, pero ang katawhan iya nagsiling, “Amo ni ang bata ni Jesse ang mabulos.” Pero indi na amo, because man looks at the outward, God looks at the inward.

Who is the source of wisdom? That is answered in James 1:5. Let us now concentrate on the three significant choices that we must make in our lifetime: the choice of a national leader, the choice of a life partner, and the choice of a vocation.

A man categorized things or situations into two: things that cannot be changed and things that can be changed. In essence this is his prayer: “Lord grant me the serenity to accept the things that cannot be changed, the courage to change the things that can be changed, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Our own prayer should be: “Lord grant us the wisdom to know the difference and to make the right choice.”

A) Our choice of a national leader. There are two things involved here: our system of electing our leaders, and voting for a leader who has quality and qualification. It is difficult to discuss the system of electing our leaders, so indi ta ini pagtandugon gid, although nagsuffer gid kita sini halin sang una. Since time immemorial, basta mag elect na gani ang mga tawo sang leader

nila, grabe gid ang resulta because may problema gid kag may unhappiness gid. Sa aton bala ilislan gid ang voting system kay indi ta mabutar ang husto nga tawo. Kay man kon mahamhaman kita, ang mga indi amo ang mabutar ta. Pero bisan wala hamham, indi man husto nga leader ang ara. Parehas abi may kabalaslan ka sa isa ka politiko, kag nakita mo nga indi siya bagay himoon leader, gani wala mo siya pagbotoha. Pagkahibalo niya nga wala ka magvote sa iya, sukmaan ka niya, “Ingrato ka, may kabalaslan ka, wala ka magbotar sa akon.” Ang manami tani sini nga sabat amo ini, “Siguro migs, ihatag ko ang kabuhi ko sa imo kon in danger ikaw, kon may ara may makuha sang kabuhi mo sanggon ko sang kabuhi ko, maunong ako sa imo. Pero nakita ko nga indi ka maayo magleader, therefore, I did not vote for you because the vote for you would be wrong.” Tani indi ta na pagtandogon kay mabudlay. We shall concentrate on the quality of choosing our leader.

There was an aging king who had three sons, pero indi siya kahibalo kon sin-o ang pili-on niya nga magbulos sa iya. He knew their qualifications – they were princes. His problem was to know their quality. So he sent them out into the world for two years to bring home what to them was the most important thing. One came home with a carload of gold, another with a chest of precious stones. The youngest came home with nothing in his hand. But he told his father that he had discovered vast lands waiting to be possessed. He had drawn out a plan as to how to make use of the unclaimed territory for the benefit of their people. Right on the spot the father said, “My son you have a vision, and I now proclaim you heir to my throne.” The son had a vision and the father had the wisdom to see the difference between his three sons.

That is the kind of leader we need – a man with vision and wisdom. Ang mga bulawan madula, pero ang vision indi gid makawat. Amo ini ang makahatag sang kaayohan sa nasyon. Kon may ara kita sina nga kaalam, ang aton choice of a leader magnami gid kag mag-untat ang aton pagsuffer as Filipinos.

B) Our choice of a life-partner. There should be a partnership between parents and children in this matter. Man kon wala partnership ang mga ginikanan kag kabataan maentra ang ginikanan kag magsiling, “Batonon mo ang luyag ko, ang akon ginrekomendar nga pamanahon ukon pangasaw-on mo!” Abi mo

ano kapait sina? Galing indi ka makasabat nga magsiling, “Tay, may luyag man ko ya nga akon mo, ngaa ikaw gid magpili? Indi ka man magpuyo sa pangasaw-on ko, ako man.” With proper guidance the parents should respect the choice of their children and not impose their own choice. May partnership. So makasiling ang ginikanan, “Toto, gingiyahan ta ka bala, kabay pa nga manami ang imo choice kay may freedom ikaw, gintuytuyan ko ikaw.”

On the part of the child who is looking for a life partner, wisdom says: the only reason why you should marry is love. “Indi ka magpamana kay laon ka na!” “Indi ka magpamana kay magpalamunggo ka.” Amo na nga ang kalabanan sang mga laon bala, mapilitan na lang magpamana nga waay love.

Love is the key to a happy marriage. In other words, marry only for love. But love should be supported by patience. Do not marry the first girl that catches your attention, although if it is the first girl that really catches your attention, puede gid man. Pero taga-i anay allowance ang iban. Kay kon wala ka patience masiling ka na lang, “Ari na lang ang pangasaw-on ko kay indi na ko kahulat.” Amo ini kon ngaa kalabanan nga mag-asawahay nagabulagay kay siling nila, “We were too young when we got married.”

For all you know the right girl for you is standing fifth in line. Do not forfeit her for the first in line who is not necessarily cut out for you. Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet. Marry the girl for her inner beauty because it is more lasting. Kon maghalad bala diri sang bata kag damo maninay kag maninoy may ginalahog ako. Siling ko, “Nano kamo, ngaa gin pili gid kamo sang mga ginikanan nga maninoy kag maninay? Tungod bala nga mga gwapa kag gwapo kamo?” Kadlaw-kadlaw sila kay man gwapa kag gwapo gid man sila. Pero siling ko nga “ginpili kamo bangod gwapa kag gwapo kamo sa sulod. Agod nga ini nga bata matatapan man ninyo sang husto upod sang iya ginikanan.”

With the passage of years, inner beauty gets more beautiful. Kon maalwan ang asawa, sa nagatigulang mas nagaalwan pa gid siya. Kon ang asawa mainintindihon, sa nagatigulang mas nagamainintindihon siya. Kon ang bana mapinalanggaon, sa nagatigulang mas nagamapinalanggaon gid siya. Ang inner beauty nagatam-is pa gid sa paglipas sang panahon. Outward beauty is

passing; at forty, it begins to develop wrinkles, something that not many men like.

Men who are married today and who ignored the advice of wisdom are secretly having regrets. The difference between falling in love and growing in love is – in the first case you could be broken when you hit bottom. Growing in love is giving a chance to adjust to each other and it is more lasting.

C) Our choice of a vocation. My years with the R.E. Department at CPU revealed something beautiful. Sang isa ka adlaw naglecture ako on values. Siling ko, “Ang trabaho hatagan naton kabilinggan (value). We should love our vocation because it is our choice.” Wala gani magdugay nagahibi na ang isa ka Nursing student kag ginkulbaan ako kay tudo gid nga ngoyngoy niya. Siling ko, “Day, nano, na hurt kita.” Siling niya, “Wala Sir, a! Nakamarasmas ako, na enlightened ako kay indi ko gusto magkuha Nursing, ginpilit lang ako ni Nanay kay man siya iya wala ka pasar sa Nursing. Gusto niya ako himoon nga extension niya agod ang wala niya maagoman, maagoman niya paagi sa akon.” Dugaydugay tudo naman ang wawaw niya. “Nano naman?” Siling niya, “Sir, nadumduman ko ang akon magulang. Ginpilit lang siya ni Tatay nga magkuha sang Engineering.”

There is only one important thing I want you to bear in mind when it comes to the choice of vocation. When your qualification, degree, attainment, ang imo honors, kon mag fall short below the jobs available, your quality will come in. Kon wala ka sang Doctor of Divinity or Doctor of Theology ukon Philosophy, ang character mo makatal-os sa imo qualification. Your character traits and your virtues will help you make adjustments to the kind of job available, be it below or above your qualification. But the best ingredient that will give you a big boost in the kind of vocation you hold is love. If you love your work you will excel in it and everyone will notice that with you there is a difference. Your love for your work is all the qualification that you need to earn you a promotion.

May ara da sa kilid naton nga advice or slogan, “Wisdom can produce gold, but gold can never produce wisdom.”

Shall we pray. Amay namon salamat gid sang natun-an namon karon nga gab-i nga kon amon lang ini bantayan wala kami Ginoo

problema sa amon pagpili sang butang nga kinahanglan namon labi na gid ang tatlo nga ginmentionar namon - ang pagpili sang amon leaders, ang pagpili sang amon palamanahon ukon palangasaw-on, kag ang pagpili sang amon trabaho. Ginoo salamat gid, kabay nga indi ini madula sa amon mga panghunahuna, sa ngalan ni Jesus, Amen.

Freedom to Listen and Act Accordingly²⁶

Text: Proverbs 1:33; Matthew 7:24-29

Our sermon title should stop at the word “listen;” Freedom to Listen. But then I thought that when we are invited to listen, there is something to do beyond listening and that is, doing what we hear. In other words what you hear, the message that tells you what to do, should be put to action. Many of our problems come because we do not put to action what we hear. When we stop at simply hearing, we do not get the answers to what we need. So, our sermon title is “Freedom to Listen and to Act Accordingly.”

This is the fourth Sunday of our meeting for worship under the theme “Freedom.” From the previous messages, we have seen and perceived that freedom is one of God’s wonderful gifts to us who are his creatures. If rightly understood and wisely used or exercised, freedom can bring about an ambiance of heaven on earth, ukon “langit sa duta.” Buot silingon nga ang kalipay nga wala naton makita diri, tungod sa Ginoo, nakita ta – heaven on earth. Kag daw indi manami kon indi ta maeksperyensyahan ang langit sa duta.

On the other hand, if life on earth has a semblance of hell, to what can we trace or attribute it? The answer is, we can trace or attribute it to none other than the absence of freedom.

In the final analysis, freedom can be absent only for two reasons. The first one is, when others deprive us of it. The second reason is, when we, ourselves, neglect, reject or refuse it. Which of these two reasons is the more difficult to overcome? If others deprive us of freedom, we can always fight them and in the process regain our freedom. But when we ourselves neglect, reject or refuse our freedom it is almost a hopeless case, we do not fight anymore. Let me explain it this way. If you are determined to get to your destination, you will overcome whatever obstacles that stand in your way as long as the obstacles are outside of yourself. But if you begin to develop some fear, or lose interest in your destination, it is a hopeless situation. Waay ka gid sang mahimo pa. You are yourself the obstacle to the fulfilment of your mission.

With that background, let us now look at today's sermon title "Freedom to Listen and Act accordingly." There are times and cases when the saving of our lives depends on our listening and doing what we are told to do. A telegraph operator who was applying for work was waiting outside together with other 100 applicants. The manager told them to wait outside. As they were waiting, they were chatting. But one applicant was so attentive and suddenly he went into the manager's room to the surprise of other applicants. Soon, he went out happily shouting, "I've been accepted." What happened was, the manager was observing which applicant was attentive and listening to the telegraph signals. The accepted applicant was silently listening while the others were not.

There are three cases to ponder upon. A man lost his life because one night, while he was driving fast for an important transaction, he refused to listen to the men along the road who were attempting to stop him to warn that the bridge ahead had been washed out. He plunged to his death. A woman patient died for not heeding and following her doctor's advice to refrain from eating animal entrails and fatty foods. A chain smoker finally succumbed to cancer of the lungs for laughing off his doctor's efforts to make him quit smoking.

These cases reflect on the warning given by our Lord in Proverbs 1:33, "But whoever listens to me will live in safety and at ease without fear of harm." In this first text, God is giving an important truth for our guidance in the living of the Christian life today. In this passage, God is also telling that he has given us the freedom to listen. In other aspects of freedom, such as freedom of speech, you might be prevented from saying what you want to say by the authorities and it might cause you to be imprisoned if you persist. But this is what the Lord is trying to emphasize here - with the freedom to listen, it is a different matter. No one can really prevent you from listening. But there is one who can do it - it is you alone who can prevent yourself from listening. In a passage the Lord says, "If you have responded to my rebuke I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you. But since you rejected me when I called, and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, since you ignored my advice and

you would not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh at your disaster.” In other words, God is saying, because I gave you the freedom to listen then you must listen because when I speak to you it is to tell you of two things that you need to hear. When I speak, I tell you the blessings that are yours to enjoy and I warn you of the danger that lies ahead to destroy you. Therefore, every time the Lord opens his mouth you better listen. We are the loser when we refuse to listen.

If I gave you the impression that as long as you are listening you are alright, this second passage, Matthew 7:24-29 will correct it – “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice, is like a wise man who built his house on the rock, the rain came down, the streams rose and the wind blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall because it had its foundation upon the rock.” Here the Lord is saying, it is not enough just to listen, you must put into practice what you hear, what you are told to do. When the Lord speaks it is not to entertain or amuse us. He does not waste words. Every word, every sentence, every paragraph has a purpose and pity the man who fails to see that purpose and so miss a blessing, or suffer from calamity all because he failed to practice what he heard. Here in JEC, it is not enough to listen to the preacher, you should put the message into practice so that you can say, “You know, I have been blessed by going to that church. I have always listened to what is being said on the pulpit; I have received something; I have tried to put it in practice; and it has helped me.”

Last night, I told the Lord, “Lord I have been preaching for a long time. Do people listen? Lord, If I do not have anything to offer to the people, and they just go there to be amused, to be entertained, then Lord kanugon sang time nga gingamit.” He gave hope, “No, Rudy, wala lang gasugid ang tawo sa imo.” I want to thank all of you for your response everytime we meet and I hope I have been able to help you. But you, you have been able to help me.

Listen, use your freedom to listen and after you have listened, act accordingly, put to action what you have heard and you will be blessed.

Mangamuyo kita. Amay namon wala sang perfecto sa amon. Tanan kami makasasala nga ginpatawad nimo. Kon nagabuligay kami katahom sang matabo sa sini nga kalibutan kag ang amon siling kaina, "It will be a case of heaven on earth." O, Ginoo, buligi gid kami. Salamat sang amon pagkitaay kada Domingo kag kabay pa Ginoo nga indi gid kami maghinulsol sang imo ginhimo sa amon paagi sa pagbinuligay namon tubtub mag-abot ang adlaw nga kami tanan magatipon sa imo atubangan. In the mean time Lord, help us to continue to listen and to put to action what we hear. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

God Will Give Us the Eyes to See

Text: 2 Kings 6:8-17; Mathew 13:16a

It is said that before the city of Iloilo came to exist, three men travelled this way and stopped to look at the place. "What do you see" said one. "I see grasses, shrubs, and a few trees," answered another. The third man said, "I see a city teeming with people." He had the eyes to see.

We sometimes find ourselves in one of three unwelcome situations which we want to change but cannot because we do not have "the eyes to see."

The first of these situations is a dangerous one and threatens to destroy us, if it is not corrected. The second situation poses no danger but only needs to be improved before it can give some benefit. The third situation requires an adjustment of focus before one can see something good. All three situations can be helped if the people who are in them have the eyes to see.

2 Kings 6:8-17 is a blessing to us today and so is Matthew 13:16. They tell us that unwelcome situations can indeed be changed if we have the eyes to see.

Let us find out what the two texts are telling us.

The first case. Israel was facing a crisis. She was at war with Syria and was under constant attack. But as long as the prophet Elisha who was in constant communication with God was with Israel, all the effort of the King of Syria to subjugate Israel proved useless. The only recourse left was to capture Elisha. The King of Syria sent horses and chariots and a strong force to Dothan where Elisha was staying. They surrounded the city and Elisha was trapped. When Elisha's servant got up and went out early the next morning, he saw enemy forces surrounding them and in despair he said to his master, "O my lord, what shall we do?" From the human standpoint they were in a hopeless situation.

Elisha said, "Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." He prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes so he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha

prayed to the Lord, "Strike these people with blindness." The Lord struck them with blindness. In that condition, Elisha led the enemy forces to the King of Israel who said, "Shall I kill them?"

Let us pause here a minute and analyze what would have happened had Elisha given in to the suggestion of the King to kill the enemy soldiers. There would have been another expedition from Syria and the war would have been prolonged. The King of Israel did not have the eyes to see. Elisha who had the eyes to see said, "No, set food and water before them so that they may eat and return to their master." So the King of Israel prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So the bands from Syria stopped raiding Israel's territory. Here is a case where a dangerous situation was corrected by Elisha who had the eyes to see.

This event took place some 2,800 years ago, but it can be repeated today if we have the eyes to see. We can change dangerous situations and save many people. But it is not easy to have the eyes to see. It takes faith and constant communication with God.

The second case - improving the situation so it can give some benefit. Matthew 13:16 says, "But blessed are your eyes because they see...". When you have the eyes to see God's will and purpose you will be able to change situations so that they can give to the people the needed benefit and blessings that God intends for His creatures. A good example is that of a man who lived in the city of Buffalo in the State of New York. He wondered what he could do to improve Buffalo's living conditions. Then he saw the Niagara Falls (the Niagara River tumbles over the American Falls alone at a rate of 6 million gallons per minute). He had the eyes to see power in the giant Falls and he exclaimed, "Give me the use of those Falls, and I will light the city of Buffalo and run all its machinery with its power." Today not only the city of Buffalo, but those cities surrounding it enjoy the blessings of what the eyes of one man saw.

Again let us pause a minute and analyze what would have happened had this man not had the eyes to see that changed

conditions that can be improved. You see God left His creation open-ended – meaning His creation is open to further improvement by us. In God's great goodness He has left something for us to do so we will not be idle. We can build bridges over rivers to shorten travel. We can build ships to cross oceans, we can build dams to produce electricity and prevent flooding. For years our people have improved living conditions because they have the eyes to see. Today Jaro Evangelical Church has improved. It will improve some more if we have the eyes to see.

The third case – a situation where we need an adjustment of focus so we can see something good. It is said that only those who have the eyes to see can be the best judge of character. We are not talking about inanimate things. We are talking about people. It is said that the best in people lies buried under a lot of passing or temporary traits which may be unacceptable at the moment. If people do not or cannot see these, there is all the possibility that the best in people will not be able to come out.

A lot of people who are now behind bars are rather unfortunate that they were not able to meet people who had the eyes to see. The people who saw and judged them did not bother to scratch deeper into their true persons. That is unfortunate.

One of Jesus' disciples was a man called Nathaniel. John 1:47 has these words, "When Jesus saw Nathaniel approaching, he said to him, Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false. The surprised Nathaniel asked – "How do you know me?" or, "Am I that to you?" Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." The Bible does not literally say so, but it will not be far from the truth if we say that Jesus had the eyes to see and what he did had a tremendous impact on the change that developed in Nathaniel's life.

Again if we pause for reflection – we will discover that almost all of the people whom the Jewish religious authorities rejected fared well with Jesus. Jesus had the eyes to see the best in them whom those who did not have the eyes to see failed to see. There is Zaccheus, the Samaritan woman, the woman of ill repute, to name a few. Jesus' motto would have been – "Send to me all those who are unacceptable to you and I'll show you what they can be under different circumstances."

How about you? How do you look at people? Do you have the eyes to see the other side of your children, your relatives, your workers, your friends, your students, your helpers at home?

The time calls for people who have the eyes to see start doing something that will change situations.

Trials in the Use of Our Possessions²⁷

Text: Luke 16:19-31

Mapasalamat kita sa aton Choir. Abi ninyo ang aton choir members masako gid kay may tulun-an sila. That is why kon makakanta sa aga nagapauli dayon sila kay kinahanglan ang time sa ila studies. Pero nasapwan ko sang pila ka Domingo nga wala sila nagapauli. Nagapabilin sila. Sa amon sang una sa BYF may iban nga indi mag attend kon may exam. Pero kami ya may sistema agod nga indi namon ma miss ang BYF kag ang amon tulun-an. Ang iban nga na miss ang BYF naganubo ang ila grade, pero ang naga attend nagataas ang ila grade. So we come to a conclusion that God helps those who are willing to be used by him. When God guides our studies, katahom gid.

Kanami batyagon kon amo ini ang aton choir. If God is God he knows how to reward those who are living sacrificially. May duha ka klase sa pag-alagad sa Ginoo. May ara nga sacrificial - hard pressed sa time pero sige man gihapon. May ara man nga kahapos lang gid. Daw wala gid sang kabudlayan; very easy. Kon ako papilion, sacrificial ang akon. So thank you gid choir sang inyo cooperation sa aton pagsimba.

I did not quite know how to title our message tonight. But our theme is "Trials - Blessings in Disguise." In other words, if you know what trials are, you should welcome them. Do not be afraid of them because they are blessings in disguise. I do not know what will come out of our sermon title tonight. I was thinking of our possessions being our trial. Our possessions themselves being our testing. If we fail in the right use of our possessions, well, it could be a sad experience for us.

I have just read to you a passage which is often misunderstood. The early Christians said, "Throw away your wealth, throw away your money, because it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Perhaps this was misunderstood by many people so that monasticism inspired people to throw away their belongings, never to get rich. St. Francis of Assisi, for example, got rid of his wealth. In those days they thought that material possessions were reasons for missing the mark.

The month of August has for its theme “Trials, Blessings in Disguise.” Trials are blessings in disguise only if they are overcome. Trials that are never overcome are not blessings in disguise. They destroy you. They could be instead the reason for missing the mark and not getting what God intends for us - life with him after we depart from this world. Our text tonight deals with this tragedy of trials overcoming us in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Here is a marked contrast between two lifestyles. The rich man is presented as dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. On the other hand, Lazarus was a picture of extreme poverty covered with sores and longed to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. So, we can conclude that it seems good to be poor and it is bad to be rich. That is why kagaina ginbudlayan ako kay siling ko daw damo di maayo pangabuhì nga nagasimba sa JEC, basi kon makulbaan sila. But I know the Lord will help us. The Lord will interpret this passage to us. I think we do not have to throw away our wealth, our riches.

If people were to choose between living like the rich man and living like Lazarus, there is no question about their choice - it would be the lifestyle of the rich man. Look around you and you will see what most people strive for. People want to be rich. But there is a problem because in the next life there is a reversal. The rich man landed in a place where there is suffering and pain. In contrast Lazarus lived a life of comfort and joy. “Ay, amo gali ni? Baw indi na ako ya magmanggad, kinahanglan mag-antos gid ko.” Kay ginasiling, “For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?”

Here is how Abraham explained the change. “Son, remember that in your life time you received your good things while Lazarus bad things. Now he is comforted here and you are in agony.”

One man had an easy way out of this difficult situation. This very clever man said: “On earth I want to live like the rich man, in heaven I want to live like Lazarus.” Puede ini? We wish it were that. We wish it were as simple as that! “Indi amo ina!”

There is an important truth that Jesus wants us to grasp in the story - that there is a kind of lifestyle that is acceptable in heaven. It is a lifestyle which is internalised, appropriated and lived here on earth. It is a lifestyle that comes out of overcoming the trial or testing that God assigns to us here on earth. Ginalahoglahog ko kay

Marvin Quimpo kon maghimo siya sang manami, “Baw Marvin panglangit gid ang kabuhi mo, thoughtful kag mabinuligon ka.” Wala sang tawo nga mabinuligon nga indi makakadto sa langit. Samtang ari pa kita diri, dapat may batasan kita nga panglangit. Ang tanan nga ginatipon sang Dios sa langit may kalidad, may traits kag character nga maayo. Indi bala nagasiling kita, “Indi ta madala ang aton manggad sa langit.” Another word for this lifestyle is character.

You will ask, “Was it being poor that qualified Lazarus for a life in heaven or paradise? Was it being rich that barred the rich man from entrance into heaven or paradise? This seems to be what the story tells us - that if you are rich you will not go to heaven and that if you are poor you will go to heaven.

You will be surprised that it is not the lifestyle of poverty lived by Lazarus on earth that is acceptable in heaven. May mga imol nga malain batasan. Indi makaon ang batasan sang iban nga wala kwarta, bugalon man kag wala nagasapak sa Dios.

The lifestyle that is acceptable in heaven is the lifestyle that develops from the conquest of the trial that each of us faces, the lifestyle that comes out of the trial which each of us goes through. Revelation 14: 13 says, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the spirit, they will rest from their labor for their deeds will follow them.” This is the meaning of this passage: those who die in the Lord are those whose lifestyles have been transformed by the Lord himself and developed into a character acceptable to God through overcoming their trials. Their trials have developed in them a character that will survive death and which they can take with them to heaven.

May kwarta ka? Indi pag-ipilak! Indi gid! May manggad ka? Indi pag-ipilak, tipigi! I think you will agree with me that you have never produced anything all by yourself here like money. Ngaa? Ara na na nga daan mo. Amo na ang ginasiling bala nga, “When we come we have nothing, when we leave we have nothing.”

The highest that we can achieve in this world is stewardship, to be steward not to be owner. There was a man who wanted to follow Jesus Christ. The Lord said, “Do you have any money in your pocket?” “Oh I have P2,000 here,” answered the man. “Give it to

me, demanded the Lord.” Surprised, the man asked, “What? You want my P2,000? Then I’ll have only P100,000 left in the bank.” “What, you have 100,000 in the bank? Give it to me!” The man asked, “Why? If you take that I will have only my land.” The Lord was surprised. “What? You have land? Give that to me!” “But Lord, Why? If you take my property what’s left will be my airplane, my cars, my refrigerators, my T.V. sets.” “Ah, you have those? Give them to me also.” Until at last there was nothing left of the man’s belongings. When there was nothing left, the Lord said, “I’m going to give all these back to you. It is yours! But remember you are now a steward and not an owner.”

Kamo iya, indi kamo magpati nga stewart kamo, kay gusto ninyo owner gid kamo? Bantayi kon mapatay kamo, indi ninyo madala ang inyo mga kwarta. Awayan pa ina sang inyo mga palangga. Pero kon gingasto mo sa husto, katahom! May mga kabataan dira nga mga bright nga kon tani ginhatagan mo scholarship agod may maayo pa nga matabo sa kalibutan.

Abi ninyo no, kon magbulig kamo, indi baya na maubos mo! Kon magbulig ka, the Lord will see to it that He will help you too. Ang tawo nga tikalon, sige lang nga gasto para pakita-kita lang. Pero amo ina ang nagapaputo. But when you give because people need money the Lord will see to it nga indi ka maubosan.

Now comes the significant question, “What were the trials of the rich man and Lazarus? Lazarus’ trial was his poverty - as to what kind of man would his poverty make of him. The rich man’s trial was his riches - as to what kind of man would his riches make of him. Lazarus’ poverty made him a better person by trusting in the Lord for his survival, even if it meant begging for his food. He never blamed God for his misfortune. For him, whether in want or plenty, he would always thank God for giving him life. People’s occasional help became an opportunity for him to thank and praise God.

Abi ninyo kon kis-a bala kon may nagapakilimos, ginatagaan ko five ukon ten pesos. Tapos masiling ang pobre, “Baw Toto pangamuyoan ta gid ka.” Ti, mabakal mo na ang pangamuyo sang ten pesos? Lazarus puts to shame those who steal because of poverty and rises in condemnation of those who kill as a way out of

their poverty.

When we read the papers, a number of cases are reported of thefts and murders committed by people who are hungry and who need money to settle debts. Lazarus never resorted to any of these easy and wrong ways of resolving his poverty. For all these, for overcoming his trial, he touched God's heart. God often cries when we do what is pleasing to him. *May kabataan man kamo nga sutil, pero kon masiling gani ang bata, "Baw Tatay palangga ko gid ikaw," mahibi ka gid.* And when Lazarus died, the angels carried him to Abraham's bosom or paradise.

As for the rich man, his riches were his trial and they made him a selfish and greedy person. God is always sad when we, who are in abundance, refuse to share what we have with others who need help. Greed and selfishness are two qualities that are never welcomed in heaven. God is sad when those whom he had blessed never even think of others who have less in life.

When the rich man died, he found himself in the place where people who live for themselves go, people through whom God's goodness cannot work.

Now, what has this story got to do with us? Plenty. For there are among us people who have riches and people, who, like Lazarus, live in poverty. It is not being poor nor rich that will make us land in heaven. It is what being rich as a trial makes of us and being poor as a trial makes of us. If we are poor let us not yield to the temptation to steal and kill as an escape from poverty. If we are rich let us not yield to the temptation to close our hearts to people who are in need. If the poor can wait, God will give them a chance to live in abundance. If the rich are generous, they will never become poor because such a godly trait as generosity will always be rewarded by God.

I would like to end with a statement: if you share what you have, God will keep filling your storehouse or your water jar. It will always be full because when you share what you have you are doing God's will. Do you have a trial? Is it poverty? Is it riches? Ask God to help you overcome these trials and you will be an instrument for good.

Shall we pray. Lord thank you for explaining to us what it

means to be poor and to be rich. For those who are rich, Lord, let them know that their riches are their trial. And for those who are poor, let them know that their poverty is their trial. But, oh God, whatever comes out of those trials, when we ask for your help, we will develop such a kind of character that will be “panglangit,” Ginoo. Buligi kami, sa ngalan ni Jesus ginaampo namon ini. Amen.

Wanted: Fathers Who Can Discover and Encourage Their Children's Hidden Abilities

Text: Proverbs 4:1-9

It must feel great to be a father, at least even just for one day when praises are heaped upon every father for only one reason: It is Fathers' Day. Those of us whose fathers are no longer living feel a yearning for those times when they gave us piggy rides or stood in our defense against some bullies. But who can really judge or tell whether a father is good or bad? Were there not ever times when we felt like changing fathers with our best friends? The world is looking for fathers who can discover and encourage their children's hidden abilities. What will the search involve?

There are certain steps to take before men can be helped become fathers who can discover and encourage their children's hidden abilities.

The first step is to ask three leading questions. The second step is to give relevant answers to these questions. The third step is to know the existing relationships between fathers and their children and the effect on the children of such relationships. The fourth step is to seek God's enlightenment and rectify errors.

The first step: The three leading questions: What is a father? What does a father do? What method does he follow in reaching his goals and objectives concerning his child?

The second step: Three relevant answers to the three questions. What is a father? The dictionary tells us that a father is "a man who has begotten or sired a child." What does a father do? A father supports the child he has sired. He feeds his child. He trains his child for the role the child will play at home and in the bigger society, until the child himself becomes a father and the cycle is repeated through generations.

What method does the father follow in reaching his goals and objectives concerning his child? Since many fathers have not gone beyond the elementary level of education, it can be safely surmised that the greater number of fathers use what we call "trial and error" or "hit or miss" or "paswerte" method to realize their goals and objectives concerning their children.

The third step: To know the relationships existing between the fathers and their children and the effect on the children of such relationships.

All over the world the general thing that happens when it comes to raising families is like this: A young man sees a young girl. They are both attracted to each other. Without the benefit of church or civil wedding the young man impregnates his girlfriend. To save the two families from embarrassment, they force the children to marry. Many cases of marriages all over the world reflect this “style” of marriage, that is, when the bride marches down the aisle she is already pregnant.

So what do we have here? We have a young man who has violated a young girl’s maidenhood. Without loving each other they are forced by circumstances to marry to save the girl’s honor. Later their families have second thoughts about this marriage but they “play along.” Circumstances like these gave rise to relationships that are not stable and which cause unhappiness to both the parents and their children. In a “play along” relationship, it is usually the children who suffer because of the absence of a factor that will insure their parents to find out what they need and what will make them happy. It is this situation that has inspired today’s message: Wanted: Fathers Who Can Discover and Encourage their Children’s Hidden Abilities.

That takes us to our fourth and last step: To seek God’s enlightenment and rectify errors.

What happens when we turn to God and seek His enlightenment? Here is what God will say:

1) I created you in my image, endowing you with many attributes so that you could make right decisions. When you decide to marry you do it with the instinct of a cat. You were created to love and to marry for love, but you people whom I created in my image often have wrong motives when you marry. You marry for security and for material abundance. That was not the purpose for which I created Eve. I took her from your side, close to your heart to be loved as you love yourself. Never marry for any other reason than love.

2) When I commanded you to be fruitful and increase in

number I did not mean for you to do it for the love of sex alone. I meant for you to have a plan for your children. Many of you marry with no plan for the children that will bless your marriage. Your reason for marrying is mainly for sexual satisfaction and you think of children as just the natural result of the sexual act – paaman lang. A little boy asked his father, Daddy, am I really important to you? The father answered, “To be frank with you son, I never even thought of you when I married your mother.

3) When you train your children you wait until they start causing you trouble and then start disciplining them. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.” A woman asked a religious man as to when she should start training her child. “How old is your child?” “5 years old.” “Hurry back and start training him. You’re 5 years late.”

4) Regarding a child’s profession when he grows up – what do you do? a) Paswerte lang. b) I don’t care attitude. “Toto bisan ano lang.” This is not really giving your children the freedom to choose. It is simply not caring.

5) Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers do not give your children a reason to hate you; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” What do we do then, Lord? And the Lord says, “Divine wisdom is what you need.” Wisdom is the ability to discern inner quality and relationship.

Enlightenment? a) Your child is not an extension of yourself. He is different from you. What will work for you will not work for him. b) The good thing that you force on him he will likely reject.

How do we rectify our errors? There are only two ways to do it: with love and understanding. It is only when fathers go to God and seek His enlightenment that they will be given divine wisdom that will enable them to discover their children’s hidden abilities.

King Solomon and King Hezekiah's Awe-inspiring Discoveries

Text: Psalm 37:4

Everyday we make discoveries. Our discoveries have various effects upon us. Some discoveries make us sad – as for example when we discover that our dreams will never be realized. Some discoveries make us glad – as for example when a husband discovers that he is about to become a father.

But what is an awe-inspiring discovery? It is a discovery that inspires a mixed feeling of reverence, fear and wonder caused by something sublime. This is not an ordinary discovery, but a discovery that causes a change in people. If this happens to you it will make you closer to God and will make you a better person.

Today's message (of discovering) is based on Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." Another way of putting it is, "Seek your happiness in the Lord and he will give you your heart's desire."

I understand there is no one here who has not set his heart upon something like a beautiful house, a stable job, the right person to marry, a beautiful watch, a college education, etc. Why can we not have these longings granted most of the time? Have you ever thought of these in relation to Psalm 37:4, "Seek your happiness in the Lord, and He will give you your heart's desire?"

I am reminded of a man who one night was found by a friend looking for his diamond ring under a bright lamp post. His friend helped him look for it but gave up after a while. "Are you sure this is where you lost your ring?" "No," the man replied, "I lost it over there in that dark area." "But why search for it here?" "Well," he said, "this is the only place that's lighted." How foolish! But I wonder if we are not like this man at times.

This morning our focus will be on the discoveries of two kings: King Solomon and King Hezekiah. As these two kings sought their happiness in the Lord, they each made an interesting discovery.

King Solomon's (1 Kings 3:4-15) discovery. King Solomon was born under trying times. His father had tried to keep the kingdom of Israel under one rule. As Solomon was growing up, he saw the problems of the kingdom multiply. But he saw God's hand

in his father's rule; his father's dependence upon God. This was a factor for his coming closer to God, too. When he became king, God knew he was a scared monarch. So one night, God appeared to him in a dream. God said, "Ask what you wish me to give you."

It is said that you will know a person by two things: 1) by the things he thanks God for and 2) by the things he asks God for.

In the case of Solomon in our following passage, we will know him by what he asked God for. What did he ask for? You know, in today's situation what God did by telling Solomon to ask Him for what he has set his heart on is like giving one a blank check.

What did Solomon ask for? In his own words, he said "Give thy servant an understanding (or discerning) heart to judge thy people, to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Thine?"

We can guess how God must have felt with this kind of request, but this was God's reply to Solomon: "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for discernment to understand justice, behold I have done according to your words. Behold I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days."

What did King Solomon discover here? First he discovered that if a man's ways are acceptable to the Lord, it is easy for God to give him what he asks. Secondly, that if God delights in you, he does not limit Himself to giving you what you ask for. He gives you more and beyond what you are asking. Thirdly, that we will lose God's help and support if our ways no longer please Him, as a matter of discipline.

King Hezekiah's discovery (2 Kings 20:16). He was told by God to set his house in order before he dies. What did Hezekiah do?

1. He turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord.
2. He reminded the Lord that he had walked before him in truth and with a whole heart and done what is good in

his sight. (The Pharisee also prayed like this but why was he not heard?).

3. He wept bitterly.

His discovery:

1. He discovered that God can be touched by our pleadings.
2. He discovered that when we pray to God about the things we do – according to our honesty and motive - God either confirms or denies it. (The Pharisee's prayer was not confirmed).
3. He discovered that if God wills it He can extend our life span – 15 years for Hezekiah.

Let me go back to what I said at the outset. There is not one here who has not set his heart upon something: a house, a job, a good education. We can learn from the discoveries of King Solomon and King Hezekiah.

My own discovery this last election: negative – vote buying always wins. Positive – the attitude of those who lost.

If losers and winners can unite, there will be more discoveries.

Post Resurrection Discoveries²⁸

Text: Luke 24:36-49

I will not yield to the temptation to tell you what I feel about preaching these days. Perhaps you will understand what I mean when I say that whenever your task is to make things clear or to help others who might be in some kind of trouble, it is a very difficult thing to do. The worst is that, you could be misunderstood. Kay kon ikaw gani pastor kag ang kabuhi sang mga pamilya intrahan mo, kag luyag ka gid kon kis-a magtandog sa kadadalman daw indi na ina husto kay indi ka gid bahin sang panimalay. Pero everytime I face you diri sa pulpit, I never forget to warn or to counsel because the Lord reminds me, as he reminds all pastors. Ugaling, liwaton ko no, nga sa karon nga panahon dali ma misunderstand ang aton mga paghambal kon maluyag kita magbulig sa katawhan. Bisan sa newspapers, ang aton politicians kag bisan si President Joseph Estrada madali ma misunderstand. So nagagamo, nagadugang ang problema tungod kabudlay maghangop kag mag-explain. Siguro ang maayo lang nga aton panaguan amo ini, if our motives are right, the Lord will help us.

Our sermon title says “Post Resurrection Discoveries.” I would like to start off by saying that these discoveries were in seed form before Jesus’ resurrection, they were there during the ministry of Jesus. But as I was telling you, the people listened with their ears and not with their hearts. It is one thing to listen with your ears and another to listen with your hearts. I think I do not have to explain that again because you know that when your children are in trouble and they talk with you and you listen with your ears only you will not be able to get into the depth of the problem of your children.

There are unexpected happenings that make life exciting and challenging. These are the daily discoveries that we make, a thousand and one discoveries. They come by accident. They are not products of diligent or intended search. Through these discoveries we become wise and mature. Bisan wala kita ka kadto sa eskwelahan kon may madiskubrehan kita, nagaalam kita. They are God’s way of making us understand his purpose and will for our lives. Discoveries hurt but only after the hurt has happened that you

could say, “Lord, you showed me exactly what is my relationship to you, to open my mind and my heart.”

As children we remember how excited we were when suddenly the dark room was flooded with light when we accidentally pressed a button in a wall. That was a delightful discovery. Even if it is accidental, still it is a discovery. Many of us can well remember the first time we looked into a mirror and saw someone in it. We laughed when we discovered it was only a reflection of ourselves that we were looking at. But that is a discovery and we know then what a mirror is. And what of the three-year old who goes to a black square plastic box on a table in the living room and playfully presses one of the buttons in it. The result of the accident gives the child a chance to tell everybody that people live in that box. Although the discovery is a false impression and short lived, the child is excited about it. We are referring to a child’s discovery of the T.V. set.

As grown ups we still make discoveries. “Oy may nadiskubrehan ako.” Sa akon, wala gid ako kabalo sang una nga myopic gali ako. I discovered it when I was 20 years old. I remember how thankful I was that eyeglasses could help me see distant objects more clearly. Until now I continue to benefit from that discovery 50 years ago. It is also said that an adolescent’s greatest joy is the discovery that he or she is beginning to fall in love.

The Christian life is also blessed with such discoveries. It has to do with something not ordinary or even ordinary at the same time. So what is the Christian’s greatest joy in the service of Christ? It is knowing and experiencing what we call post resurrection discoveries. Right after the resurrection, Christians discovered something beneficial. There are discoveries made after the resurrection of Christ by early Christians. If they were blessed when they discovered these wonderful things after the resurrection, we too, even if we are 2,000 years separated from them, will also experience joy. Daw ginapilit ko gid sa aton nga mga Kristohanon nga mag experience sang joy. Ngaa? Indi gid maayo kon ang resurrection estorya lang. Ang akon kuntani nga kada may problema ka, madumduman mo dayon ang resurrection

kag makasiling nga “I serve a living Lord, why should I suffer this way?”

Let us reflect on the discovery of the empty tomb. Pero basi maglawig ang aton sermon. May isa ka bata nga nagkadto sa tunga sang simbahan nga nagapamilit, “Nay, puli na ta.” Siling sang nanay, “Hulat anay kay ang pastor gahambal pa.” Sang ulihi natak-an na ang bata, gani nagkadto siya malapit sa akon nga nagawali kag nagsiling, “Ay kay ara ya ho, kadugay.” Tuod gid na kay na eksperyensyahan ko gid na. Siguro may ara man sina diri sa aton nga natak-an na kay kalawig sang sermon sang pastor. Amo na may gasiling nga, “Anhon ta, tawo man lang kita mo.” Pero wala gid man ako sina nagapati, kay man kon Kristohanon kita, nagkambyo na kita iya, as 1 Corinthians 5:17 says, a person who has accepted Christ is a new creation.

Last Sunday we mentioned the Easter Sunday shock. It was really the shock of discovering Jesus’ tomb empty and concluding that his body had been stolen. Kon wala ka sang maayo nga rason sa isa ka butang - kaangay sang resurrection - nga nagahatag sa imo problema wala ka gid sang hope. Pero kon may rason ka lang, masiling ka gid, “No, no, no, it is not that way. I’m going to fight for it.” Katahom gid kon may rason kita nga lain. We also said that had the disciples listened to Jesus’ statement of assurance about his dying and rising from the dead with their hearts and not only with their ears the truth of the resurrection would have prepared and cushioned them from the shock of the empty tomb. Luyag ko na ang expression nga “gin cushion” kay daw ginbutangan bala sang ulonan, nga mabaton mo kon mahulog ka kay ulonan ang imo matup-an. Subong man gin cushion kita sa mga shock nga kuntani nagguba sa aton.

Perhaps the problem of the disciples had to do with the word empty. Even today we have no liking for this word. No one wants to come home to an empty house. Amo ini nga ang kabataan indi na kon kis-a magpauli kay pirme lang wala tawo sa balay. We do not like an empty heart, an empty wallet, an empty pocket. Wala kita maanad sang empty nga word.

There are times when the word empty could be a blessing. I would rather have a heart empty of malice, illwill, envy or fear.

When I am climbing a mountain or a tree, how can I hold on to something that will give me support if my hand is full? Maayo kon empty ang aton kamot kay makapanguyat kita sa sanga. Kon sayoron pa, indi gali maayo nga indi kita gusto sang word nga “empty.”

It’s too bad that the disciples failed to see triumph in an empty tomb. Kalain nga ang tomb wala unod. Kinahanglan ara gid dira ang bangkay. Abi kadto kamo pauli kag gub-a ninyo ang inyo mga lulubngan. Pagkaguba ninyo sini kag wala ang bangkay sang inyo palangga, indi bala kamo malisang? “Diin ang akon palangga man. Diin?” Maglain gid ang balatyagon ta kay naga expect kita nga ara dira ang bangkay sang aton palangga. So Jesus’ disciples went to the tomb expecting Jesus’ body there, waiting for them to anoint with oil. Sa baylo kuntani nga sang mahibaloan nila nga wala dira ang bangkay ni Jesus makasiling sila, “Something good must have happened,” pero lain ang natabo. They were too blind to see that Jesus’ body in the tomb and the resurrection cannot go together. How can that be? Well, the other should not be there. For this they were rebuked by the angels who said, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” Abi ninyo, liwaton ko to ang ginsiling ko, kon may problema bala kita, we are looking for Jesus among the dead, sang wala pa siya magrise. Ngaa, indi makabulig ang resurrection sa aton kon may problema kita? Isa lang na ka butang - Kristohanon ka pero wala nagaandar ang power sang resurrection! Buot silingon, you are only a Christian in name, not in reality.

“He is not here,” the angel said. “Why do you look for the living among the dead? Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee, ‘the Son of Man must be delivered, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” Then they remembered His words. Kon sayoron pa, nahambalan man gali sila, pero wala magtudok. Today the discovery of the empty tomb after 2,000 years is still good news to us. It is a blessing to us in two ways.

1) When we are down and in trouble, when we are discouraged and afraid, when we are facing a crisis, or in a life and death situation, it is the reality of the resurrection that will get us out of these situations in one piece. It is the reality, the truth, of the

resurrection that will give us power to rise above the situation. Kon sayoron pa, kon daw ma give up ka na gid makasiling ka, “Nano ini, is my God whom I serve dead?” Kon mag give up ka na gid dapat makasiling ka, “Lord, you’re alive, you’re alive!” Ihambal ta gid na pirme until nga magdulot sa aton tagipusoon kag kon mag abot ang problema makasiling kita, “Lord take over. Lord I am giving everything to you.” Tilawan ta lang bala ina. Galing kon kis -a ang problema ta gid nga wala kita nagabelieve! Wala kita katilaw sang matuod-tuod sa kay Jesus. Pero kon makatilaw kita sina bisan isa lang you will tell everybody, “Please do it, I have experienced it.”

The resurrection should not be merely a story handed down from generation to generation. It should be a living reality that grips us as we experience the living Christ today. This is what is meant by the song “He walks with me and talks with me along life’s narrow way.” Ara gid siya. So makasiling kita, “Dali di bala, sugiran ta ka, ginbuligan gid ako ni Lord.”

2) The empty tomb will silence pagan groups whose gods were preserved in their tombs. May ara kita mga kaaway nga pagans nga nagasiling, “Hoy, ang amon ya dios ara sa lulubngan, bisan dugay na dira wala mag decay.” A Christian was having a heated argument with a pagan who kept insisting that it was his god that was the true God. Evidence? “Look at him lying peacefully in his tomb. As for you, where is your evidence that you have a God?” The Christian said, “God is alive, He is everywhere, He lives in our hearts, He walks with us, He talks with us. He does not stay there in the tomb.” God is not in the tomb because He is with you. You experience him, you travel with Him, you talk with Him, you sing with Him, you do everthing with Him. Until we can experience God, our Christianity is only in name.

The post resurrection event has to do with the discovery of the Holy Spirit. Abi ninyo, maghalong gid kita sa mga Pentecostals, pero wala ako naga put down sa Pentecostals, kay kon indi kalang mabakod mahuy-an ka gid. Kay singanon ka sang Pentecostal, “Naga speaking in tongues ka man?” Wala baya ako nagapakalain sa Pentecostals because I know what speaking in tongues means. Pero kon naga speaking in tongues ka nga ginapilit ukon ginatun-

an, ambot kon ara da ang Holy Spirit. Kay kon ara ang Holy Spirit ang number one mo nga emphasis is to live a life that has quality. If the emphasis is not on the quality of life, it is just a mere babbling. If the Holy Spirit really touches a person, then that person will change.

Sang nga “Summer Team” kami sa College of Theology, didto ako na assign sa Mindoro kag natabo nga naglusong kami sa sapa kag nagkatol ang akon tiil. Ginkalot ko kag ang panit naukab gid. Daw basketball ang tiil ko, daw ka exaggerated no, pero kon panumdumon ko daw basketball gid, wala man nana, nagapula lang. Kon magtudlo gani ako sa kabataan ginabutang ko lang sa bangko ang akon tiil. Sang nagahingapos na ang akon pagtudlo, may Pentecostal nga nagsulod kag nag-estorya. Siling ko, “Lord what am I going to do, mabayaan na ako sang amon nga team.” Pero pasalamat pa gali ako sa sadto nga Pentecostal bangod nagsiling siya, “Ngaa naghubag ang tiil mo? Kay man kamo nga mga Baptist wala gid power.” Labay man ang akon, wala ko pa gid ini masugid ang eksperyensya ko sa Ginoo kay daw nahuya pa ako. Pero subong daw bagay gid nga isugid ang eksperyensya agodto kita tanan mabuligan. Sa America may didto nga ang nagabulig sa ila ang natawag bala nga “spiritual pilgrimage,” sa diin ang natabo sa imo nga supernatural dapat isugid sa iban para ma revive sila. So kon may eksperyensya sa Ginoo makasiling ka bala nga, “I saw the Lord and he did this to me.” Kinahanglan gid na sa aton mo, agod ang iban ma revive. Ako may personal man nga eksperyensya sa Ginoo, so sang ginsilingan ako sadto sang Pentecostal, nag-estorya dayon ako sa Ginoo, “Lord you know my experience with you and of you, kabalo ka gid kon ngaa ginhambalan ako sining tawo nga ini nga wala power ang mga Baptists. Na hurt gid ako.” Man kon wala lang pagsabta sang Ginoo ang akon panawag, siguro wala gid ako nagpadayon sa pag-alagdan. Sang gab-i sadto, sang magpaligo ako sa bubon nga kasanag sang bulan, nagadungan ang ilig sang akon luha kag sang tubig. Siling ko, “Lord, kon indi mo lang pagsabton ang ginsiling sang Pentecostal sa akon siguro ma go crazy gid ako kag madula mo gid ako sa imo ministry.” Kahibalo kamo kon nano ang natabo? Batyagan ko gid nag flash sa akon mind, “Higti ang tiil mo!” Pag-abot ko sa balay siling ko, “May

lubid kamo di? May lubid kamo?” Siling nila, “Waay gid, pero may musketero diri nga daan na pero bag-o lang ginlabhan.” Gingisi ang musketero kag ginhigot ko sa akon tiil. And I slept like a log. Pagmata ko sang aga daw parehas sang resurrection sang Ginoo ang natabo. Ang ginhigot sa akon tiil didto na sa kilid sang katre kag ang akon tiil nga daw basketball nangin pareho gid sang kinaandan ko nga tiil nga wala kaagi hubag. But I did not tell the people nga, “Hoy, hoy, milagro, milagro.” I did not tell it right away because indi na husto. Basta gani nga daw milagro ang ginasiling sa tawo tungod luyag makakwarta, indi husto ang motive. Kinahanglan si Jesus amo ang aton larawan, Jesus did not do it, instead He said, “Don’t tell any man.”

The post resurrection discovery of the Holy spirit is important. The Jews themselves did not know that there is a Holy Spirit. When they referred to God Almighty, Jehova, they only thought of him as God in the Old Testament. When it comes to the New Testament, there is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “Is there such a thing as the Holy Spirit?” They did not believe in Jesus because they were looking for another man. It was when Jesus Christ resurrected kag naglakat na siya nga nabatyagan nila nga, “When Jesus was with us we really felt God and when he left us,” daw empty na ang ila kabuhi. So nabatyagan nila ang presensya sang Dios because of Jesus Christ. Kag paglakat ni Jesus, He said, “I will send you another comforter.” Kon sayoron pa, indi na kamo mangita sa akon, “I will send you another comforter who will live in your heart and will convict you kon malain ang ginahimo ninyo.”

Amo baya ni ang importante gid - ang post resurrection discovery sang Holy Spirit, nga kinahanglan ara siya sa aton. Ang manami sini kay kon may Holy Spirit kita bisan ang statement ta magaaayo. Mahuya kita magbinutig because the Holy Spirit will rebuke us, the Holy Spirit will convict us. Pero kon kis-a daw ginahampangan ta ang Holy Spirit kay masiling kita, “Iya lang na sang Pentecostal kay kita ya wala naga speaking in tongues.” But no, the entrance of the Holy Spirit will make your life different. Kag bisan ang pagbinutig ninyo madula na ina kay mahuya na kamo sa Holy Spirit nga yara sa inyo kabuhi. So kon conscious ka

na sini makasiling ka, “The Lord will help me, the Holy Spirit will help me. Maybe it will take time, but the Holy Spirit will really help.”

The last post resurrection discoveries nga aton tandogon amo ang mission. Mission is sharing. Usually we look at mission as a huge ministry of a large missionary institution. No, it is not. Every one of us must have a sense of mission so that wherever we go whether we are teaching, whether we are working anywhere else, we can tell people about Jesus Christ. To do a missionary work does not mean that you will convert people to Protestantism. It does not necessarily mean that you will encourage people to come to Jaro Evangelical Church. No, it is not. If you speak of mission, it is the mission of Jesus Christ to let people be converted to God not to a denomination. I am here at Jaro Evangelical Church (JEC) because this is part of our heritage but it is not JEC that I am preaching. It is God that I am preaching through JEC. JEC will be blessed too if our motive and strategy are correct.

Abi ninyo, sugiran ko kamo, indi na bala ini ang ginprepare ko nga inughambal kay siguro ang Ginoo gasiling gid nga kinahanglan makahibalo gid ang mga tawo sang Holy Spirit. Nga ang aton kaangtanan sa Holy Spirit indi lang bangod sang aton denomination ukon sang pagbasa naton sang Balaan nga Kasulatan kundi nga naeksperyensyahan naton agodto ang aton paghangop sang Holy Spirit husto gid. Kag ang number one nga ginahimo sang Holy spirit amo nga bantayan gid niya nga indi kita maglain; nga ang aton personalidad mangin husto gid; nga indi kita magbutigon; nga indi kita mangdaya.

Amo ini ang ginakulbaan ko kon kis-a. Man sa aton kon may negosyo kita ukon sa gobyerno kita nagatrabaho, mapilitan ka gid magdaya. Man kon nagasugid ka pirme sang matuod indi ka kabaton kontrata sa gobyerno. Let me just tell you this, kon mag honest lang kita kag tampad sa Ginoo lain gid ang matabo, manami gid. Indi kita maano because it is the Lord leading us onward. When you are rich because of the Lord you will be rich indeed. So ang aton sense of mission kon magpauli kita aton gid himoon. Abi ninyo, baw, kaisog sa akon magsagi hambal sini. Pero tilawi bala nga wala kamo sang sense of mission, nga wala kamo gana magshare sang good news, Christianity will not be a happy religion

bisan damo bugas, kwarta, ukon negosyo ang mga Christians. Life will be boring.

You must discover what the resurrection means to you now. You must discover who the Holy Spirit is and what he does today. You must discover that Christianity is a matter of sharing the gospel, telling the people, "Have you heard of Jesus Christ?" It was exactly what the early Christians did. Even if they were selling something, they took time to say, "Hey, have you heard of Jesus Christ?" "Hey, let me tell you about Jesus Christ!" I think it is about time that something like that will be revived in our time. Unless we do that kanugon sang post resurrection discoveries nga indi naton maapply.

Basi siguro sa ulihi may question man kamo kay daw amat-amat ako nagagwa kag nagakadto sa mga butang nga daw indi bagay isugid. We can talk about these things together because it is perhaps necessary that we should do that.

Shall we pray. Lord, take over. Lord, take over. Take hold of every member here. And let every member stand before you and face you squarely, Lord, and then from there let the Holy Spirit be with us. Take over Lord, take over. In Jesus name, Amen.

Implication of the 4th Commandment in Today's Christian Commitment²⁹

Text: Exodus 20:8-11

Usually the month of May is focused on work, that is why we have labor day. I thought that it is a good thing to touch on the relation of work to our Christian commitment. We always have trouble in church because sometimes instead of being found doing God's work we are somewhere else working. Some people have not liked that idea at all. They feel it is disloyalty to God who expects that we should all be in church. When it comes to worship, of course, as pastor, I have always been made sad by the fact that our commitments are not limited to the church. Sundays we find ourselves attending meetings that are sponsored by the government or sponsored by groups not related to the church. And always we are misunderstood, when we give priority to that because we are supposed to be in church. That kind of thing is making us a little ill at ease when we are questioned about our loyalty. So I thought that some kind of explanation should be attempted in order for us to not feel guilty whenever we are not in church. For those who are too religious to understand why some people have to be away and yet what they do is still acceptable to God, let me tell you this. I remember reading the book of Exodus when some Israelites were condemned because they gave priority to other things than what seemed to the Israelites to be religious. By religious they meant that we have to pray, use religious words, read the Scriptures and always have to know what is secular and what is spiritual or religious. I was hoping that that kind of confusion might be settled today but I found the task a difficult one.

Let us find out what we could do today about the implications of the fourth commandment in today's Christian commitment. For the month of May our spiritual feeding will revolve around our theme, "The Dignity of labor." It does not sound religious but we will find out that there is a lot of religion in it.

Dignity is defined as the quality or state of being worthy, honoured or esteemed. Can you speak of labor in that relation? Labor is defined as "human activity that provides the goods or services in an economy." If labor or work provides what we need

in order to survive, it is essential that we give to labor the dignity it deserves. I hope that we Filipinos will not be embarrassed if I point out a difference between the majority of Americans and us. Ang Pilipino nahuya makita nga naga-obra ukon nagapanilhig. Pero generally sa America wala kulba, bisan ano ka pa naga-obra gid without feeling nga, “Ay daw ka nubo haw?” Kita nga Pilipino kon magdala isda ginaputos ta pa kag butangan ribbon kay man gusto ta daw may dignity gid pirme.

What will happen if we fail to do this? There will be dire or tragic consequences. A dislike for work will gradually develop. Soon we will look at work as something to be ashamed of. Yet if we do not work, how will we be able to provide for the needs of our family? On the other hand, if we force ourselves to work when we do not like the idea of work, we are condemned to a lifetime of unhappiness doing something we hate just to survive. Many Filipinos are in that kind of predicament, para makasurvive ginapilit lang ang lawas. Kag dayaw ako sa Pilipino, ibaligya nila ang ila unod kag kadunggan, bangod kay damo sila salagoron – masympathize gid kita sa kaangay sina. May ara nagapangawat na lang para mabuhi. They are forced by circumstances. So maybe sometime later mabisita kita sa ila to understand their plight. Have you seen that man nga asta dilargo nagawagak. Ka embarrassing tan-awon. Why is our government not doing something about that? Sa mga tawo kag kita mismo nga nagaagi daw wala lang kaso, kay man indi kita mo! It will speak well of a country if when we see people like that we shed a tear. Kon sayoron may balatyagon pa kita nga nabilin.

This morning we are first going to look at two situations in relation to work; the situation of the Israelites from the time of their enslavement in Egypt to the time of their release under the leadership of Moses, and the situation of the Filipinos under Spanish colonialism to the take over of the Americans.

The lessons from the enslavement of the Israelites in relation to work is different from that of the Filipinos. The Israelites were forced by their taskmasters to work against their will. Ginapilit gid! Kon indi ka mag-obra patay ka gid. “You are our slaves, do it!” But the Israelites saw that work is the important factor for their survival. Since then work had characterized their life. As such,

there was a carry over of the value of work to the time when God through Moses liberated them. To the Israelites, work was a priority. “Kon wala kami magtrabaho, patay na kami didto sa Egypt.” This became a problem under Moses because he instilled that with God worship was the priority. “Hoy, mga Israelites anad kamo mag-obra ha, ang priority subong worship.” “Simba kamo!” Still many a time an Israelite was punished for going out to work instead of joining the people in the worship of God. Therefore, one day, the nation had to be reminded. They had to understand the value of worship at the same time. The nation had to be reminded of the fourth commandment, “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor.” Karon, sa pito ka adlaw, isa lang ka oras, isa lang ka oras ang iya sang Dios, imo iya 8 diyas gid! Kahibalo kamo sang 8 diyas? Meaning we borrow from the next week, therefore, ang next week 6 days na lang until finally, may working violations gid kay sagi ta panghulam.

Ang ti-on indi gid mabayran, ang kwarta puede. Gani indi mo pagsaklamon ang ti-on kon amo na gid ina siya dira ang gintalana.

On Sabbath you shall not do any work. Indi ka na gid mag-obra, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your manservant or maidservant. Kalabanan sa aton iya puede ang sulogoon maglaba samtang kita ya masimba. Man sulogoon lang mo! But here it is very clear, “nor your maidservants, even your animals, nor the alien within your gates, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day.” Therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and made it holy. Here God gave the reason why a day should be set aside for worship. It was intended to make the Israelites see the value and importance of worship in their corporate life. Here they were made to understand that they were to give priority to worship by relating it to God’s creative act. However, this does not mean that God became tired after his work and proclaimed a day of rest.

Let us look at the Filipino regarding work. What lesson did the Filipinos learn for almost 400 years of Spanish colonialism? They learned to appreciate the value of worship as taught by Christianity. If you go anywhere in the Philippines you will not

find an atheist. In Europe there are atheists because Christians were not able to penetrate the mountain areas. In America, there are many atheists. In the Philippines, bisan diin, nagatoo sa Dios. Everybody knows God and believes in God.

The Filipinos hated the Spaniards and the Spanish form of enslavement. As a result many Filipinos develop a negative attitude towards work. Work is appropriate for slaves because the Spaniards forced them to work, work, work -- this is different from the Israelites who worked because they found that work is their salvation. That attitude continues to this day and while the Filipino knows he has to work to survive it always reminds him of Spanish colonialism. Ginpakanubo kita sang Katsila. The Filipino is often ashamed to be seen working especially when it is of the menial kind. Gusto niya white collar job, “Pero pahilamonon mo ako, paulaon basura, esklabo gid na ya!”

Both the Filipinos and the Israelites, however, love God. Yet the Israelites because of their love of work oftentimes are guilty of the sin of infringement or trespass by using worship time to go out and work to earn an additional sum of money. The Filipinos who are having a negative attitude towards work find themselves also guilty of trespass. As an attempt to prevent the sin of infringement on secular and religious matters, the fourth commandment was given and the acceptable balance formula is six days of work to one day of rest - for one spiritual act of worship.

Although there is still some encroachment done, we seem to be satisfied with the formula given in the fourth commandment: 1 is to 6. Do we rest our case here? Ma-untat na ta? “Ok na, a! Puli ta!” Pero, indi gali, kay nag infringe pa kita, nagapangsaklam pa kita. The answer is no!

Now, Jesus comes into the picture. When Jesus makes corrections he says, “It was said of old, ‘thou shalt hate your enemy’, but I tell you love your enemies.” In other words, he makes clear some misunderstandings in the past.

I will give you only two instances. The first was the Samaritan woman’s case. The Samaritan woman said to Jesus, “You Jews you believe that the place of worship is Jerusalem because there is where your temple is, but we Samaritans we say Mt. Gerizim is the

place of worship.” Jesus said, “Woman, the time will come where neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship God.” You cannot limit God, because God is spirit and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Ano ang ginccorrect ni Jesus diri sa babaye? It has something to do with place and time. Anytime you can worship God. In any place you can worship God. Kag diri sini daw mahuy-an gid ako kay ang gina worry sang tawo sa akon nga ginatan-aw ko gid ang hitsura sang nagasimba kag kon waay gani da sila gasiling ako, “Ngaa waay si kwan, kag si kwan?” “Total bisan diin man lang gali puede ka simba!” Ang buot ko singganon indi ta paghimoon nga excuse nga indi kita magsimba. Pero kon indi kamo makakadto sa simbahan, it does not mean you cannot worship God. You can worship him anywhere. There is always a chance to worship God anywhere, anytime, because God is spirit and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. If you cannot worship God because ginhigtan ka, ginpriso ka, OK ina. Pero kon wala ka diri agod magsimba kag didto ka imo sa balay nagatulog then that’s another thing.

The second is the parable of the good Samaritan. Here a man was waylaid and hurt, left for dead. The priest who was going to the temple to perform worship saw the man, “I’m sorry I have a more important thing to do. I have to be in the temple. Bye, bye.” The Levite did the same thing. Then came the Samaritan, ginbulong ang tawo kag gindala sa inn kag ginabayaran pa ang inn. Jesus asks, “sin-o sa tatlo ang naghimo sang kabubut-on sang Ginoo?”

Everything is important to the Lord kag ang ginatan-aw sang Ginoo ang motive. Dichotomy is exclusive, but with God there is no such thing as secular or religious. It is the motive that is important. I hope indi ninyo ini ma misunderstand. Wala ako gasiling nga indi kita magkadto sa simbahan bangod sa Dios wala secular or religious.

A man may not be in church but God will make him feel closer to him because of his motive. Again it is the motive that makes the difference. In other words when a man becomes a Christian he looks at things not as secular or religious. If you have given your life to Christ bisan magsulod ka sa bulangan indi ka makasala

kaangay sang bulangero. Ano ang buot ta singganon sini? Ngaa naga-upod si Jesus sa mga malaain nga tawo? Para kay Jesus, your motive to be there will be different. You are there because you want to share a Bible verse to somebody. That is why Jesus said, “I did not come for the righteous but for sinners to repent.” Pero may tawo nga ara man pirme sa simbahan nga daw indi gid gani matandog sa problema sang kalibutan. So it is not the place. I will tell you this, “O, sin-o luyag sa inyo sang kwarta? Ikaw?” “Ay malain ang kwarta kay Diosnon ka!” Pero ang Diosnon kon may minilyon gamiton niya ina sa paghimaya sa Ginoo kag pagbulig sa mga tawo nga nagakinahanglan. Money will be used for a good cause. So madula diri ang dichotomy because having been a Christian lain ang motive mo.

While we still go with the balanced formula of six days of work to one day of corporate worship, we know that the six days of work are really worship days because in whatever we do, we do it for the glory of God. Ma confesar ako anay sa inyo. Sugiran ko kamo nga nakulbaan ako nga ma misunderstood. “Ngaa masiling ka nga si Jesus naghatag pagtamod indi sa religious kundi sa makasasala?” “Why would he give justification for the sinners?” We should know the answer so that we will not be trapped into religionism – nga kon ara kita sa religion husto gid kita. It is a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that you have changed. When Christ came he changed many things. Sa karon sa aton bisan nagasiling kita six days of work and one day of worship, but you are somewhere else during a Sunday, it may not matter, kon sa sadto nga lugar ang tawo makasiling, “I was blessed by his presence, he gave me comfort.” Liwaton ko kay basi madulaan kita diri membro. I think you understand what I am saying. If we become Christians, whatever we do we give the glory to God.

Shall we pray. Amay namon mabudlay ipahangop ang kadadalman sang gintudlo ni Jesus Christ. Pero taga-i kami dulunggan nga makapamati kag mata nga makabasa sa Biblia sang ginhimo sang amon Ginoo sa pagpahangop kag pagtudlo sa tawo kon ano gid ang imo ginahatagan sang importansya. Amo ini nga bisan ang religious authorities wala gid makashine sa imo atubangan kundi ang makasasala pa ang nakashine kay nahibaloan

sang makasasala ang husto gid nga paghangop kon ano ang matabo kon magcomiter siya sa imo kausa. Salamat sini nga aga nga napahangop namon sa sini nga congregation ang imo panan-awan. Kabay nga maglapta ini nga pagtan-aw sang mga butang nga ginsugdan sang amon Ginoo. Patawara kami sang amon mga sala. Sa ngalan ni Jesus ginaampo namon ini. Amen.

Two are Better than One – Unity

Text: Ecclesiastes 4:9-10.

Our sermon title is given in the context of unity and what can be done to strengthen unity.

If all of us were lovers, or if all of us lived alone or preferred to work alone, there will be no call for unity. But it never was God's plan for man to be alone. That is why He created Eve to be Adam's companion and out of the union of this first couple a community was born and then unity became a necessity. It cannot be denied that a large community is indeed a blessing. Did not God say "Be fruitful and multiply?" Our daily realization of events tells that a large community without unity is a curse. This is not a theory. This is the actual experience of nations the world over and we can attest to it as today our country itself suffers from a lack of unity.

The Bible seems to be silent on population control and today's text prefers a larger group to a smaller one although it only says "Two are better than one...". This is a principle favoring multiplicity and there is no stopping at two, for three are better than two, four are better than three, five are better than four, and before you know it you already have millions with more still coming. It is this principle that is responsible for the world's population explosion and the six billionth human being was born a few days ago.

Of course there are valid reasons why generally we prefer more people to just a few. For example China enjoys being feared by her neighbors because of her big population. Canada's small population has never made her a powerful country. The bigger a nation's population the bigger its output. The bigger the enrolment of a university the more money it earns. The more soldiers a nation has the safer the people feel. The more members a church has the more it feels blessed. All these reasons favoring and welcoming more people are reflections from our biblical passage, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who has no one to help him....Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves..."

Today, however, the world's authorities are beginning to

realize that our number one headache is population explosion. Civilization's worry is no longer extinction. It is rather that the world's resources could be exhausted by an ever-growing population and we could all die of starvation. To prevent this, population control experts have introduced population control programs and formulas which have aroused the anger of the Roman Catholic Church and some fundamentalist Protestant churches. These churches take the position that the government's population control program is contrary to God's will. Thus to our social, cultural, political, and economic disunity, we have added religious disunity not just in doctrinal disagreements between churches but in the disagreement between the church and the government regarding population control.

Whatever problems we face as a people, and problems cannot be prevented, the good news is that they can be resolved and overcome if we are united. Our unity is enhanced (to make greater) by love, understanding, goodwill and a disposition or willingness to share both in want and plenty. Whatever our crisis the answer is unity.

If the government can accept the reality that population growth can never be controlled, it will be a first step towards unity with the church. Why do we say that population control is an exercise in futility? The answer is simple. God willed the multiplication of people and it is He who should will its control. God has ways of doing it beyond our imagination. For example, through what process did God will the growth of population? Through pleasure – sexual desire. Without even intending to have a child couples will engage in sexual relation for the pleasure of it. Unfortunately a child often results. So how can you prevent population explosion? You can only do it if to engage in sexual relation the couple would experience a terrible pain that they would never try it again. What the government should do is to start a program that will enable every citizen to live a decent life.

On the other hand the church can help a great deal. It is in her power to mold people's lives. With her teachings and example, and God's help she can produce people who are loving, caring, understanding, of good will, and with a disposition or willingness to share. Besides, the church herself is wealthy, and she has

members who are wealthy. If both the government and the church can work on a plan to improve living conditions that will be another step to enhance unity.

There is a song which says, "This could be a wonderful world if there were no poor and the rich were contented." Our crisis is, there are few who are too rich and many who are too poor.

What we are trying to say is: true unity is the answer to our population explosion and our poverty problems, the two major problems the solution to which will help solve our other problems. In other words what we need are people who are kind, loving and helpful. One thing remains though; these should be expressed in words. (We are here taking the reverse position from the usual clamor that people are only good in expressing words that are not backed up by what is inside).

Many hurt feelings, misunderstandings and criticisms arise from the fact that we are not expressive when it comes to what we feel inside. Yes, words that can strain relationships are better not said. But words that can comfort, inspire, strengthen and produce good will had better be said. They can change an otherwise unhappy atmosphere. Because we live, work, play and eat with people words are necessary to communicate with them. Non-verbal communication is the cause of the unhappiness of many. So whether we are employees or employers, parents or children, students or teachers, department heads or daily-wage earners, we need to communicate with words. They are the glue that can cement relationships. Where words are concerned the book of Proverbs has an important message to impart: "Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones."

To strengthen the bond of unity that ties us together here are some words that will bring healing.

1. Six most important words: "I admit I made a mistake."
2. Five most important words: "You've done a good job."
3. Four most important words: "What is your opinion?"
4. Three most important words: "If you please."
5. Two most important words: "Thank you."
6. One most important word: "We."

If these were said to you, how would you feel?

Unity Between Giver and Receiver

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:14-20; Ephesians 4:11-13; Galatians 2:10.

After our message last week, I began asking the Lord for this Sunday's message. What came out of this plea is today's sermon title "Unity Between Giver and Receiver." We are going to try to explain and prove the importance of unity in our relationships.

If you try to observe what makes things work in the universe, there are only two principles that keep things going: the principles of giving and receiving (give and take). Without this give and take principle life would not be sustained on earth. The roles of giving and receiving are interchangeable. In other words, one does not only receive but also give.

Unity between giver and receiver means that the two principles of giving and receiving work together interchangeably in continuity and harmony. Only when their unity is disrupted will they stop giving and receiving. When this happens life in the universe is in danger, specifically life on earth.

We shall look at four relations where unity plays an important role and learn important lessons so that we can be challenged to take great care that our unity as a family, as a church, as a greater community will be preserved and not destroyed.

1) The first category of relation is that between the earth and its atmosphere including the clouds. The clouds drop their water and falls on earth's streams, lakes and seas. The earth gives back the water to the clouds through a process called evaporation. There is a continuity or unity of giving and receiving. When this is disrupted life on earth is affected.

2) The second category of relation is that between the animals and the plants. Were it not for the continuity or unity of giving and receiving between them, there would be no life on earth. So how is life sustained on planet earth? Plants manufacture oxygen which animals including man need very badly to sustain life and animals give off carbon dioxide which is absorbed by plants in photosynthesis for the production of food. Before we go on to the third relation let me remind you that where relationships are concerned there are two kinds of unity: unconscious unity and conscious unity. Conscious unity is the unity of things as the lower

forms of life not endowed with a mind (the element or complex of elements in an individual that feels, perceives, thinks, wills, and especially reasons). The earth and its atmosphere did not consciously unite. They unconsciously unite because of God's fiat. God decreed that the earth's atmosphere should so function as to make the existence of life on earth possible. Animals and plants are not conscious that their unity helps support life on earth. We call this ecology.

3) The third category of relationship, and here there is conscious unity, is that of human beings – creatures of a higher order created in God's image endowed with intelligence and a complex of elements that feels, perceives, thinks, wills and reasons. Here people respond to appeal and are to unite for their good and band together as a group with leaders and followers. With this category are three classes of groups.

A) The family. Here there is also a unity between givers and receivers. The givers are parents. What do they give? Discipline and education. They are supposed to give these in love, kindness and concern for the good of the receivers. The receivers are the children. But the children are also givers. What do they give? Obedience, love and gratitude. Now that is a beautiful picture of family unity. But this unity can be disturbed, disrupted and broken when given and imposed dictatorially and nagging enters the picture. Children's resentments will "pile up" or accumulate inwardly and will erupt when they come of age. When parents sow blunders when the children are young they will reap disobedience when the children have grown up. What will it take to preserve the unity of the family intact? Galatians 5:22 tells us to exercise the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

B) The second class in the third category is a classroom situation where we have a teacher and her students.

C) The third class in the third category is a work situation where we have an employer and his employees.

Although blood relationship does not play a major role in the last two categories like in the family, yet problems in the family are echoed. Teachers and employers can be nagging too and can

impose rules and regulations that are burdensome or oppressive. People are sensitive, they have feelings and when these feelings are hurt they can act negatively and refuse to cooperate. The teachers give training and education. The employer gives money in the form of salaries and other benefits. The students give their cooperation, gratitude and honor to the school. The employees give their loyal service to the employer, honor to the company and to an extent monetary profit. Beware of the unity of machines for we are dealing with people.

4) The fourth category of relationship is that among members of the church – pastor, church officers and congregation. While everyone's relationship is basically with God it is often the relationships among members that bring trouble and cause disunity in the church. With God there is no problem. The problem is with us. We want to force people to be like us. If churches split and behave like enemies there can only be one reason – we have lost sight of the fact that the church of Christ is one body with many parts. The parts constitute one body. So that our unity is maintained and will remain intact, here is St. Paul's advice: "The body is made up not of one part but of many. If the foot should say, 'because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be. But in fact God has arranged the parts in one body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body." The bottom line is – we belong to one body. You are an ear, and I am an eye. Change my attitude, my values, my dreams but do not change my function as an eye. Let me be that way. You are an ear, stay that way. If we all respect our different functions, the church of Christ will be as strong as ever and our unity will remain unbroken.

Behold how pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in unity. God is also a receiver. He receives our adoration, praise, thanksgiving and gratitude to Him.

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onians.ry until the day the **Lotory of Two Churches**³⁰

Text: Hebrews 12:1-3

Our message tonight is entitled “A Story of Two Churches.” Kon sayoron pa tandogon naton ang duha ka klase sang iglesia nga nagsugod sa sini nga kalibutan. Ang isa nadula kag napatay, ang isa nagpadayon. Kag aton tan-awon ang sekreto sang nagpadayon.

We have just finished our year long centennial celebration sang Domingo, July 30. Kag sang July 31 nagsugod kita sa ikaduha nga bahin sang aton motto, “For What Has Been, Praise God, For What Will Be, Amen!”

Last Sunday we developed watery eyes as we listened to our recounting of JEC’s glorious past; glorious because may mga “milagro” sa mga kabuhi nga nagkalambyo. Milagro kon ngaa nakabakal kita propiedad sa isa ka strategic place nga wala man kwarta. Ang mga katawhan sang una nga daw indi gid maalam kon ikomparar sa aton karon, naghimo sang mga dalagko nga butang. Ngaa? Ang ila sekreto, upod nila ang Ginoo. They always held on to God.

Starting with the acquisition of the first property and down to the present set up, ang JEC daw indi man maulihi. So we thank God. Nagsugod kita sa kaimolon. Karon may mga nagaagi diri sa JEC nga nagasiling nga natahuman sila sang aton simbahan.

But what is the church? Ang simbahan lugar kag tawo. Kon mamangkot gani kita, “Ano ang ginatindogan sang JEC?” “Ano ang iya ginahambal?” “Ano ang iya ginapakilala sa kalibutan?” Nagakasayuran ini nga ang simbahan mga tawo. These are asking about people not places. So when we say, “glorious past,” we mean people composing JEC.

Then we mentioned the trailblazers, the pioneers from Braulio Manikan, Eric Lund, Placido Mata, Vicente Doronila, Pascual Araneta to Bonifacio Fernandez, plus a host of faithful old timers many of whom are no longer around.

How surprised and thankful we were to be told that the early members of JEC were actually involved in personal evangelism and Christian education. Ina bangod nga bag-o ang Gospel para sa

ila. They told the Gospel to people after they had received Jesus Christ. Sa karon, daw kaangay ina sang bag-o nga kalan-an. Basta may bag-o nga kalan-an nagasiling dayon kita, “Hoy, upod kamo sa akon, kadtoan ta ang bag-o nga restaurant.” Ang aton ya subong no, daw sa kalan-an lang ang aton ginasugid. Of course we really hope and pray nga kalabanan sa aton luyag man magsiling, “I want to tell you something, I have experienced the Lord Jesus Christ. When I encountered him I became a changed person.”

Sometimes we see religion and not the personal God. Lain kon mabatyagan mo gid, lain kon ma engkwentro mo gid ang Ginoo kay nagaabyanay kamo kag naga-updanay kamo sa pagkanta. Kaangay bala sinang kanta, “And he walks with me and talks with me along life’s narrow way.” Amo ina ang balatyagon sang aton katawhan sang una. I hope sa aton time karon amo man ina gihapon.

Evangelistic rallies, personal evangelism and Christian education, ginapadayon naton ini karon. We cannot help shouting “For What Has Been, Praise God!” Our last two projects were three chandeliers and our fence lights, katapusan ini sa project nga “What Has Been.” Ang mga projects nga “For What Will Be” nagasugod humalin sang Lunes.

Today, we are seven days into the next centennial celebration. Kita na ang mga initiators kag forerunners. Ang mga apo naman naton ang masaysay sang ginhimo naton. Sa dason nga Domingo may ari na kita nga bag-o nga “For What Will Be” project. And then our first “For What Will Be” baptism will be on Sunday, August 27. Kon sin-o pa diri ang wala matugmawan kag luyag magpatugmaw sa August 27 madumduman gid kamo bilang mga bag-o nga natugmawan sa “For What Will Be” portion sang aton motto. Saturday, August 26, 3 p.m. will be our inquirers’ class for those who will be baptized.

Churches are like people, may kaluyahon kag kabakod, may ara man nagasunggod kag nagahugyaw. Churches are like people, they have stories to tell. But even if you hear thousands of stories about churches, generally they only tell us two things, they are like stories of people which tell only two things - success or failure.

It may sound like boasting if we claim success for JEC. But we cannot deny that; in our parade, souvenir programs, eating. Daw kahuluya bala ini? Indi man siguro, bangod membro kita sang JEC. But that is not the issue tonight. Our more important concern is what the feeling of having reached a certain level of success will do to us. May mga tawo nga nagakambyo kon mag-ayohan sila. So success for JEC can be dangerous, if success will go to our heads. Ang hangin bala para lang sa royda sang awto pero kon sa ulo na magsulod nagahanginon ang tawo. Kabay pa ang JEC indi maghanginon bisan may ginakabig siya nga success.

The worst that success can do is make us feel self-satisfied. Kadamo nga tawo nga sa primero pa lang nga nag-ayohan self-satisfied na. “Husto na ini,” “Bastante na ako sina,” “Ang akon nalambot husto na lang ina.” That is the danger. May mga manggaranon bala nga ginikanan nga sang pagkapatay nila nga may ginpapanubli nga minilyon, nangin self-satisfied ang ila kabataan. “Bastante na ini, indi na kami magpangabudlay.”

Self satisfaction means you want to stay put. You will not believe it but there is a sense in which failure can be a blessing and success a curse. How can that be, nga ang failure mahimo nga blessing kag ang success curse? It is like this: if every time we fail we develop a determination to try again and again and again, our failures will be corrected and made stepping stones. The path to success is strewn with corrected failures which will carry us to success. Maayo kon na fail kag nagpadayon sang sa successful nga nag-untat ka dayon.

In life's race there are temporary successes and one final success. Many people develop self-satisfaction at the first temporary success and make of it a bed of roses. Waay na gana mag-obra, kag nagatulog na lang. They are not aware that self-satisfaction kills the will to strive to attain the final success and so they settle for something temporary that will soon fade away.

Kaangay bala sang palumba sang bao kag koneho. Nagtikal ang koneho bangod sang pagbalikid niya kalayo pa sang bao. Siling sang koneho, “Nga-a magsigi pa gid ako man, abi kon matulog lang ko anay,” kay man self-satisfied na siya. Nadugayan ang koneho sa pagtulog, pagmuklat niya, ang bao didto na malapit sa

finish line. Ang ba-o bisan mahinay lang pero sige-sige naka-una sa koneho sa finish line.

We can learn a lesson from the experience of the rabbit. As a church we too have a race to run. Basing our life's race on our centennial motto we cannot fail to see that our race as a church has two aspects - the past aspect and the future aspect.

The past aspect "For What Has Been" for which we praise God is an accomplished race, the past was a success. Now we initiate "For What Will Be," the future aspect of the race. How will our performance be in this regard?

Here is a story of two churches. Once upon a time there were two churches who did very well. The first church became self-satisfied and said "Our church is overflowing. We have established a number of Bible centers. We have a lot of cash in several banks. Our evangelism department is busy with a year-round schedule for evangelistic rallies and we have a strong Christian education program. So why do we not take it easy? Relax and have fun." The members were self-satisfied. The years passed and this church dwindled. Soon only a few were left and its Christian education had only a few handfults to teach. Finally the last teacher resigned. Money had stopped coming in. And the last member was buried by an outsider. Today only an empty building stands, a grim reminder of the tragic effects of self satisfaction.

And what of the other church? It had practically the same program as the first church. But it did not allow self-satisfaction to affect its program. Christian education was fun, evangelism was fun because that was the kind of life they lived . To keep busy was joy.

The years passed and this church multiplied as more members were won. They nurtured the fruits of evangelism and monetary contributions multiplied. Even for us, we should love to do our ministries and not to be self-satisfied. It is this second church that we pray JEC will take after. So what are we to do to take after it?

Hebrews 12:1-3, "Let us throw up everything that hinders (misunderstandings, pity quarrels, self-pity) and let us run with perseverance the race set before us." Don't look at things which can be seen but look at the things which cannot be seen (like your faith) so that one can say for example, "God. I can still go on after

my love one died.” Hope cannot be seen. “I know I cannot see it but I know it will happen.” Love cannot be seen also. Indi makita ang paghigugma sang Dios. It is like this, “Who has seen the wind? Neither you nor I; but when the trees bow down their heads the wind is passing by.” The effect of God’s help is there - with perseverance hope and love, it can be felt.

Finally, let us fix our eyes on Jesus. Let us look at Peter’s experience. He was able to walk on the water. Pero nagtikalon siya, nagbalikid kag nagsiling, “Lantawa ninyo nakalakat ako sa tubig.” Pero sang liwat nga mag-atubang siya kay Jesus wala ka tupa kay Jesus ang iya panulok kundi sa balod, gani amat-amat siya nga nalunod. Sa aton, kon sa “balod sang kabuhi” nagatupa ang aton panulok, malunod man kita. Pero kon nagatupa ang aton panulok kay Jesus indi kita malunod. Kabay nga nakakuha kita sang leksyon diri nga makasiling kita, “Its good for me too because if I develop self-satisfaction, indi ako magtubo.” May God be praised.

Thank you Lord for opening our eyes, ears and minds, so much so that we now understand that we should not allow ourselves to be tempted by such things as self-satisfaction. Lord help us to struggle, help us to spend our effort in getting to the final goal so that the final success which you will give us will be attained by us. This is our prayer in Jesus name, Amen.

Condescending Love³¹

Text: John 15:13-17

Condescending love sounds like love that has been demoted and perhaps if we have such a thing as ascending love it would sound like love that has been promoted. But we shall find out what condescending love means. The month of February is here. Soon every post office will be busy sorting out Valentine's cards as people greet one another in the name of love.

There are a number of reasons why the celebration of Valentine's Day is associated with love. According to tradition, St. Valentine was a kind, loving and helpful man. He would visit people's homes at night unannounced and leave a gift for the family who needed help. If someone like that were living in our time, perhaps we would feel a little more secure for we would only expect him to come at night and when we wake up in the morning there would be help.

After a while gratitude began to develop in the hearts of the people. They began thinking of a way to return St. Valentine's love. They found a way, a significant one. They set a date, February 14, for a yearly celebration of love and called it St. Valentine's Day, which people today still celebrate in association with love.

Sometimes though, when we receive a Valentine's card, the sender did not really feel anything like love in sending it. It is just going through the motions. Even then, if it is not felt by the sender, it still feels good to receive a Valentine's card. Meaning, somebody still cares, somebody still loves you.

Today we are reminded of someone to whom we also owe a debt of gratitude. Like St. Valentine, he loved people but he went beyond giving food for the physical body, beyond doing physical healing, beyond giving monetary aid, beyond teaching right conduct. This man is Jesus who is our reason for being here. Please, when you go home today, will you ask yourselves, even if you worship at CPU, or here, or BCC or at other churches in Iloilo City, "What is my reason for being in the church? Why do I go to church?" There is a reason why we go to church, why we are in

church. This man Jesus is the reason why we go to church, why we join the choir.

When I was younger, I used to join the choir and every time I sang, I felt better because I was singing to the Lord. Of course, the reason that we join the choir is Jesus. Lahog lang - siling ko ang iban nagajoin sa choir bangod kay naga-entra man ang ila nobya. Pero kon may-ara gid man sina, dapat gid man naton koreheran. Jesus is the reason why we join the choir, why we attend Sunday school. In fact, he is the reason why we become Christians. If there are some other reasons aside from Jesus, something is wrong. He is the reason why we want to help people who are in trouble. Abi ninyo bala kon may tawo nga bululigan, daw may kinaiya gid ako nga magsiling, “ara naman, mangayo naman bulig.” But then when I remember Jesus, I ask him, “Lord, please forgive me.” Maguba gid ang rason kon ngaa nag Kristohanon ka kon indi man lang makita nga ikaw nagkambyo, kon indi man lang makita nga nagbulig ka sa iban. If you are not a helpful Christian, you will never be happy because it is inherent in a Christian to be helpful.

Although sometimes we find ourselves in trouble, if we have become Christians because of Jesus Christ, he puts us in a position where we can help others. We feel good if we can help others. I have students who are poor and at times I gave them money. A student said, “Sir I do not need money.” Ang Filipino gali ka pretentious. Ngaa? Kay man paggwa sadto nga estudyante, nakita ko gid ang pagtumbo-tumbo niya sa kalipay bangod nakabaton siya kwarta. Ngaa man nga masiling pa kita “indi ko.” Sa America, kon magsiling ka “indi,” wala ka na gid sang makuha. Gapahayag lang ini nga kanami gid kon makabulig kita sa iban labi na gid kon ang aton man kaugalingon ang mabuligan ta.

As Christians, we have changed and Christ is the reason for the change. If we are what we are today it is because of God’s love as demonstrated in Christ.

The question we want to ask is this, “Is there a difference between the love demonstrated by God in St. Valentine and the love he demonstrated in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son?” There is a great difference. We are thankful that there are people like St. Valentine who are willing to help people whose situation

can be helped. St. Valentine's love, therefore, can be categorized as sympathetic love. He was in the same lot with the people he was showing kindness to, but he was in a position to offer help. Their situation reminded him of his own situation and he offered to help out of sympathy, not of condescending love. We see ourselves in the place of other people and so we sympathize because we have seen our problem and suffering in them. So we say, "there I help and I have helped myself." This is sympathetic love shown to people whose situation can be helped. The highest response of people in this situation is appreciation.

Nadumduman ko nga may nagkadto sa akon kag nagsiling, "Baw Rudy, daw indi na ako ka agwanta magsagi bulig sa mga hinablos, paryente kag kakilala ko." Siling ko, "Pwede man na mabalhin, pangayoon ta sa Dios nga baliskaron ang kahimtangan. Kon nakulbaan ka nga daw pirme ka lang ginapangayoan, ikaw naman ang ibutang sa sitwasyon nga nagapangayo bulig." Siling niya, "Ay indi na lang. Maayo pa ako na lang ang manghatag sang sa ako ang mangayo."

May mga tawo man nga indi palahatag. Panan-aw nila sa tawo nga pigado, mukhang molestya, "Ara naman siya, mamolestya naman ina." Diin kamo gusto, mangmolestya ukon kamo molestyahan? Pero kon maayo ang kabubut-on mo, "sige ang dagdag sang Ginoo sa banga mo, bangod kay gapanghatag ka." I will tell you this, kon maalwan ka, God will be cruel if he will not support you. Kalabanan nga ginsuporta sang Ginoo nga indi magbulig sa iban wala na pagtoo nga ang Dios nagasuporta sa ila.

This month of love, February, we can change that, if we try. "I'm going to change, I am happy to help persons in need because God also helps me." God will say, "I will not be God if I will not help you." If you will not help, God will say, "kon amo na siya, indi ko man siya pagbuligan."

Condescending love gives us a picture of our situation when we fell in sin and became separated from God. Salvation from the state of sin requires that we go up to the level where God is. But that is humanly impossible, so He sends his Son down to where we are and takes us up to where God is. Condescending love is God coming down to take us up. When we cannot come up to God's

level, he comes down to our level and lifts us up. Condescending love comes to us in our sin, leads us to repentance and works for our transformation. Let me explain that. Sin-o man luyag mag join sa aton sa sala? And those up there will never come down to us. But God took pity on us. Amo to ang kanta sang choir, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Condescending love if not rejected will lead us to salvation. If it is rejected that is another matter. Remember this, if we reject God’s offer we have only ourselves to blame.

There is the story of a German soldier who was dying and his only salvation was blood transfusion. When it was about to be done, he said, “Wait, wait, before you do that, tell me what kind of blood is it.” The doctor said, “Good, English blood.” The German, who was conscious of his German blood, refused the blood transfusion because it was an English and not German blood. The soldier died. It is the same thing when God in his condescending love offers to us a way of salvation and when we say I am sorry I cannot accept that, we are dead!

Here is how the Bible explains condescending love. The passage is taken from 2 Corinthians 8:9, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich.” This sacrifice of Jesus, His coming down to where we are, in sin, did not begin at the cross, it did not begin even with his birth, it began in heaven when he laid his glory by and consented to come to earth. Condescending love began even before the world was made, so that when the time comes, when man would fall into a level of sin and shame, His Son who was up there might come down willingly and offer His help. The only trouble is sometimes we refuse the help. Gintun-an ko kon ngaa nagarefuse kita sang help. Kay man abi ninyo kon magbaton kita sang bulig magaliwat ang batasan ta. The reason why people do not accept this kind of love is they do not want to change. “I don’t want to be controlled by this God. I want to be free.” We do not want a change in life kay basi maputo kita; kay makapoy gid mag-atipan sa iban. The atheist is like that. “Anay kay wala pa ako problema, mapasakop pa ako sa inyo Dios? Gusto ko ya magtimalos, karon kon magpasakop ako dira indi na

ako makatimalos!” That is why when Judas was asked why he betrayed Jesus, he said, “I betrayed Jesus because he was too good. I am against the Romans, I want to destroy the Romans. And here comes Jesus who says he is savior, and he will forgive the Romans.” Judas did not like Jesus because if he accepted him, he would have to change. So ginbaligya niya si Jesus.

Condescending love produces sympathetic love in us, making us modern St. Valentines offering our help. Not one of us can demonstrate condescending love the way Christ did. But having been helped by Christ’s condescending love, we have become like him and in our own little way we try to help others.

I would like to give you two examples: I will begin with the declamation “Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight.” May isa ka babaye nga may nobyo nga kriminal nga palatyon. Kon mag ring ang 6 p.m. Angelus patyon ang iya nobyo. Sang malapit na lang ang alas 6 nagsaka ang nobya sa belfry kag nagkupo sa dila sang bell. Kahibalo siya nga kon magbagting na, maigo siya. Kag sang ginbagting na ang lingganay, igo gid siya kag nagpalamanog ang iya kalawasan. Maayo lang kay ang naga-uyat sang lubid bungol. For fiteen minutes naghinulat ang manugtero. The woman went out bruised and weak. Then the captain asked, “What happened to you, woman? Who did that to you?” The woman said, “I knew you were going to kill my boyfriend when the bell rang. So I went up the belfry and prevented the bell from ringing so that my boyfriend might not be killed.” This is condescending love. Ginbutang sang babaye ang iya kaugalingon sa katalagman tungod sa iya nobyo. Gani wala mapatay ang iya nobyo. The captain said, “Such consdescending love deserves a reward. Go with your boyfriend.” This is what Jesus did for us. Katahom! Siguro kita tanan komporme sini, pero indi kita luyag magbayad sang bili. We will not pay the price for consdescending love.

The second story happened during the civil war between the South and the North in America. The North defeated the South but they had a lot of casualties. So they wanted revenge. They made the Southern soldiers line up and then they counted 1,2,3,4, etc., and demanded that, “All number ten step out.” The Southerners asked, “Why?” “You are going to be killed,” was the answer. Kon

ikaw sadto, nano ang pamatyag mo?” Isa ka 17 years old Southerner cried, “I don’t want to die yet!” There was an old man listening to him, and the old man said, “What have I to enjoy? I am already more than 80. Why don’t I offer to the captain this – ‘Captain you don’t care who dies as long as a certain number of Southerners are killed?’” The captain said, “Yes, we want one hundred people killed, we don’t care who they are.” So the old man insisted, “I want to take the place of that young man who is crying.” The captain said, “Are you a fool? Why should you do that? The old man responded, “I just want to do it.” He was allowed to do it. And they patted the boy and said: “You don’t have to die, somebody has taken your place.” That is condescending love. The boy was saved.

You know, that is the way Christ saved us. Instead of us dying, he offered to take our place. And the result of the story was: The young boy said to the old man, “I will do everything for you, I will give my life for you, for your interest. If you have children to support, I will give my life for them because you gave your life for me. I will return that love and take care of your family.”

That is supposed to be what you should do. Christ having come down to save us from a terrible situation and now that we have been saved and transformed, we need to return that love. All of you who feel the same way, when you go home please ask the question, “What can I do for you Lord for all that you have done for me?” Ask that question and give the answer.

Shall we pray. Our loving Father, the message we have just heard is realistic. It is true to life. That is what has happened and that is what continues to happen in people’s lives. We who are in the higher level of society, we need to come down to save others and to make society better. There are risks to take Lord but because of You this plan will succeed. As we celebrate Valentine’s Day this coming week, our Father, help us to understand what St. Valentine did. Although it is short of what Christ did, it will open our eyes to what Jesus did and then we can truly appreciate your condescending love and accept it. Bless us all today, in Jesus name. Amen.

Lessons from Joseph's Life of Faith

Text: Genesis 50:15-21; Luke 17:1-5

Our opening passage tonight tells us that Jesus' apostles begged Him to increase their faith. I have often wondered why they made this kind of request. I believe we have found the answer to my question tonight. The apostles found Jesus' requirement – that of forgiving a sinning brother as often as he comes to you and asks to be forgiven – too difficult to comply with. Their faith had not yet come up to a level when they could say to the offender, "I forgive you." It was essential therefore that their faith be increased.

In other words only one with an ever-increasing faith can forgive. And not only that but a man with such faith must possess other qualities that will make him superior. We are interested in discovering these other qualities if possessing such qualities will enable us to live victoriously.

Is there a man in the Bible with such faith in whose life we can find these other qualities? There is such a man and his name is Joseph. His treacherous brothers became jealous of him. Unable to kill him they threw Joseph into a pit. Later they sold him to a merchant man bound for Egypt. There he was sold again as a slave. His master's wife accused him of attempted rape and had him thrown into prison. But in all these, Joseph's faith upheld him.

- A. And God turned the tide in Joseph's favor.
- B. Genesis 50:15-21: His brothers ask for his forgiveness. The faith that had carried him through difficult trials was now being put to a test. Will Joseph be able to forgive his brothers for what they did to him? You can imagine what went through the hearts and minds of Joseph's brothers as they waited in silence for Joseph's answer.
- C. Joseph's response (a classic example for all of us to follow): "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done – the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." He reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

Joseph's answer sums up the life of faith he lived and draws the

curtain aside to enable us to see what we are looking for – the other qualities he possessed that made him stand out as a man of faith. If we have these qualities today, like Joseph, we will live victoriously. What are these other qualities?

A) *Joseph was a man with a feeling of destiny.* If you interview people today as to what they are destined for these are some of the answers you will get: 1) I don't know. I just live from day to day. 2) I don't really care. As long as I can have three square meals a day, that's all that matters. 3) I have yet to see a palmist and have my future read. 4) *Depende sa swerte*, etc.

A man with a feeling of destiny is different. His faith in God makes him believe that God has a purpose in his life. Beyond eating, drinking and sleeping, which he does not consider a goal, he makes an effort to find out what God intends him to be and when he finds out, he throws himself into that which will make him realize his goal. Joseph was that kind of man. He felt destined to save his people from the threat of extinction by famine and he did just that. Through him Israel was saved.

B) *Joseph was a man undaunted by misfortune (not discouraged or dismayed).* This second quality supports the first quality. If God has destined you for a place in the sun, you will experience difficulties along the way for no other reason than to prevent you from achieving your goal. A man undaunted by misfortunes knows that obstacles are part of life's strengthening process. If you know how to deal with obstacles, they will prove to be blessings in disguise.

You may have heard of Helen Keller known to many as the "miracle worker." She became blind and deaf at the age of 19 months. Through the years she realized that God was using her handicap to help the thousands of handicapped people. So she determined to use her handicap as a means to help others. In this she was triumphant. She graduated and began a life of writing, lecturing and fund raising on behalf of the handicapped. Joseph was this kind of man – undaunted by misfortunes.

C) *Joseph was a man with a mystical sense of right and wrong.* Many of us pride ourselves in our ability to know right from wrong. But Joseph's sense of right and wrong was a mystical one, meaning that his sense of right and wrong resulted from direct communion with God. This sense of right and wrong is supported by quality life; nourished by truth, honesty and holy living. It is not mere intellectual assent but behavior as well; it is how you live day by day, affirming what is right and rejecting what is wrong.

D) *Joseph was a man too big to hold a grudge.* Revenge had no place in his life. He was too big for that. Observe the number of times you wanted to get back at people who did you wrong. One man insulted you and you want to make him suffer for it. Another was the cause of your downfall and you wanted to do the same to him. A third may have caused you unhappiness and you wanted to give him a dose of your own medicine. It is the man who can forgive who will save the home, the nation, the world. There is a need to fill this planet with people too big to hold a grudge.

E) *Joseph was a man with a staunch or strong belief in the providence of God.* As a boy under his father's care he saw God's providence demonstrated in the life of his father. He saw how God followed it up when he was separated from his father; when he was sold into slavery, when he was in prison, and when he became second in command to the King of Egypt. He saw the providence of God in the behavior of the billions of heavenly bodies; how they were kept from collision courses in the orbits of the planets and their satellites around the sun. He saw how life on earth was sustained by God's wonderful providence; how the insects were kept alive, the lower forms of life upheld, the vegetations kept green and the bodies of water maintained.

Why is it important to know how God provides for His creation? It is because when we do not know how the universe is run, we are likely to entertain the idea that provision comes by chance and with no order and purpose at all. This could be one reason why nations are plunged into war; one nation grabbing resources that belong to another for fear of hunger and extinction.

In conclusion, let me say this: if we have Joseph's faith, not only will we be able to have possession of his other qualities that will make us live victoriously. We will be:

a people with a feeling of destiny

a people undaunted by misfortunes

a people with a mystical sense of right and wrong

a people too big to hold a grudge

a people with a staunch belief in the providence of God.

Amen.

Faith – an Acronym for Freedom, Action, Inspiration, Truth and Hope

Text: Luke 7:36-50

What we are saying in today's message is supposed to have been experienced by the woman to whom Jesus said, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

This is the last Sunday that we will dwell on the subject, "Indispensable Faith." As we said, faith is indispensable, especially in desperate times when our pressing concern is to live the Christian life victoriously. Our faith is our only link with God to keep us going.

What is the promise to us when we are in possession of this indispensable faith? According to our acronym (formed from the initial letter of each of the successive parts of a compound term which spells faith), we are promised Freedom, Action, Inspiration, Truth, and Hope. We shall take these up one by one.

The letter **F** stands for **freedom**. Freedom is the quality or state of being free. When you have faith you are free from the power that enslaves or restrains. For our purpose we shall limit ourselves to one aspect of freedom – freedom from fear. We can fight any difficulty or obstacle that stands in our way, but when it is fear that confronts us we lose the power to resist. We are paralyzed. A man facing danger may be small in size, physically weak, and without a weapon, but if he has no fear, he will fight and could win. An example of this man was David who defeated the great Goliath. A man may be big in size, physically strong, and armed to the teeth, but if he is gripped by fear he will run from his own shadow. A man with faith has freedom from fear and the only reason for this is the Lord. When the Lord is with you this show of victory will characterize your life: "The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident." (Psalm 27:1-3).

A is the second letter in the acronym and stands for **action**. No thought or truth is realized until it is translated into action. You may hatch a perfect plan, you may come up with a good formula, you may formulate a sound policy, but unless they are put to action they will not amount to anything. They will all be relegated to unrealized dreams. The greatest failure is the failure to put to action, to translate into deeds noble thoughts, bright ideas and good intentions.

Try to go down town from Pavia and observe what you see along the way. You see buildings representing institutions of healing like Iloilo Mission Hospital, St. Paul's Hospital, West Visayas State University Hospital. You see campuses and buildings representing institutions of learning like CPU, University of San Agustin, Western Institute of Technology, University of Iloilo, West Visayas State University. You see the Jaro Plaza, the La Paz Plaza and Plaza Libertad. When you go to the port area you see the custom's house, boats at anchor, and the new port area. Do you know, or has it even struck you that once upon a time these were just ideas, dreams and plans? They are all examples of noble thoughts, bright ideas, and good intentions that had the good chance of being translated into action and deeds.

The conversation between an old man and his grandson recalled these: 1) Plans of a happy marriage to someone now still beautiful, successful and healthy. 2) Plans of building a house with a swimming pool.

What happened to these plans? They were never put to action. Do you have noble thoughts, bright ideas, and good intentions? Make an effort to put them to action.

The third letter in the acronym is the letter **I** which stands for **inspiration**. What is inspiration? It is a joyful and motivating influence that guides and moves people to change or to action. If you are feeling sad and lonely inspiration will get you out of that mood. If you are brimming with beautiful thoughts inspiration will put those thoughts into words. The poems we recite, the books we read, the songs we sing were in the beginning thoughts. It is inspiration that causes a thought to evolve in the mind. It is inspiration that expresses thoughts into words. It is inspiration that

translates words into deeds. It is inspiration that changes people. It is inspiration that saves people from unhappy circumstances. When people say “I was inspired” they mean they were changed, made happy, and given a new start. God’s inspirations are everywhere like fruit waiting to be picked. Indispensable faith opens our eyes, enabling us to see these inspirations. The cycle of inspiration goes on – Inspiration inspires the evolution of thoughts, inspires thoughts to be translated into words, and words into action. Anyone having the words and seeing the actions will in turn become inspired. Thus we have inspirational talks. In fact that is the very purpose of sermons; to inspire and comfort people who are downhearted and distressed, who are lonely and discouraged. Sermons are meant to move people to action. They are first convicted and then they move.

The fourth letter is the letter **T** which stands for **truth**. People who have no faith are often blind to the truth. Christ is the truth. If we know Him we will hold to His teaching and we will be set free. People are imprisoned in many ways and it always has to do with the truth. When this truth is hidden from us we become prisoners and the prison house is falsehood. Until we realize the truth we remain prisoners. The truth is the key that opens prison houses. There is only one prison house that we will touch today and that is the prison house of not knowing who we are. Not knowing who we are is a spiritual amnesia. Amnesia is loss of memory due to brain injury or illness.

When we do not know who we are our potentials are not realized, our talents and abilities are wasted, we are not able to develop ourselves, and we live mediocre lives (of low quality). When we know Christ and we have faith our eyes will open to the truth about us and that truth will set us free. (Someone said to Queen Victoria: “Don’t you know the truth that you are a Queen’s daughter and someday you will be Queen?” “Is that so? Then I’ll behave as Queen right now.”)

The fifth letter is the letter **H** which stands for **hope**. Hope is a cherished desire anticipating of fulfilment. In other words the proper place of hope is in the future. Our language says, “I hope to graduate,” “I hope to see you again someday.” “I hope to be able to land a job next year.” It is hope that gives us patience to wait until

what we hope for is realized. This is what made the soldiers escape to the mountains when the Japanese occupied our country in 1941 and wait for the fulfilment of Gen. Douglas MacArthur's promise "I shall return."

Hope should also have a place in the present. Jesus said, when you pray, do not pray that you will receive what you are praying for but that you have already receive it. This is the place of faith. So we have here faith and hope upholding each other. Faith makes the future a present reality. Hope lifts faith through the years and carries it towards the future, so hope can be experienced in the present and faith in the future.

Look what we are guaranteed when we have faith. To summarize, when we have faith –

We have **F**reedom from fear.

We have the guarantee that what we believe will be expressed
in

Action.

We have the **I**nspiration to put our thoughts in words and
actions.

We have the **T**ruth that sets free.

We have **H**ope that makes the future a present reality.

Amen.

Indispensable Faith³²

Text: Hebrews 11:1-3; 6

The month of February having made its exit and the month of March having made its entrance, we now change our theme from Condescending Love to Indispensable Faith. From Love we go to Faith.

What is indispensable faith? Let us define the two words that constitute our theme today. Faith refers to the living confidence (pagsalig) and trust (pagtugyan) in God which result from the experience of His active presence. In other words, we do not have this confidence and trust if we have not experienced his active presence. Kag dira sina ang mabudlay kay kon ang tawo wala makaexperience sang active presence sang Dios, waay siya faith. Nadumduman ninyo ang Russian cosmonauts nga naglupad pa ibabaw kag nagsiling, “We scoured the heavens looking for God, we could not find him!” Sa aton diri, ang tawo nga bisan wala instrument nadakpan niya ang faith kay nakita niya ang Ginoo. Luyag ko e-emphasize ang “the experience of his active presence.” When you have experienced God’s active presence, you never refer to things as happening by chance nga daw masiling ka, “Ay naswertehan lang to ya.” Indi ka kasiling sina kay you will always say, “God did it.” It is that relation to God in which final dependence rests upon him. In short, faith is confidence and trust in God. It presupposes a relationship between the one who trusts and the one who is trusted.

What about indispensable? It means absolutely necessary. Indispensable faith, therefore, means absolutely necessary confidence and trust in God. When we speak of something absolutely necessary, it means that there is no substitute for it, otherwise when you change it, you will suffer. When it is absent or missing, nothing can take its place.

Where our physical life is concerned, there are essential things for which there are no substitutes. Ano ang butang sa kabuhi nga maislan? Ang aton bala nga mga kilay, puede maislan. Pero sa aton pagpreserve sa kabuhi, there is no substitute for water to quench our thirst and to sustain our physical life. Indi kita makasiling, “Ay

kasabad sining tubig nga ni, daladalahan mo pa, maayo mangita kita substitute.” Of course, puede man ang softdrink, pero kon isa ka tuig nga wala ka tubig, todas ka gid. So softdrinks may do for a while but eventually we will long for water and if we do not have it we die.

Likewise, where our spiritual life is concerned, there is no substitute for faith in order for us to have a personal and meaningful relationship with God. Now, can we say, “Here is God and I am here, can I have some substitute for faith?” No, you cannot do things without faith! Amo ni siguro nga ang iban nagasiling, “my life is empty,” because they do not have faith.

For our physical life, food and water will sustain us. There is no substitute for them. For our spiritual life, faith will sustain us. There is no substitute for faith. Without faith it is impossible to have a living relationship with God. Without faith we will die spiritually.

What we should know is that we have two lives. Daw kulbaan ako sini kay basi i-challenge ako, “Ha? Did you say we have two lives?” I am trying to tell you that we have two lives to maintain – the physical and the spiritual. Some people are physically well but spiritually ill. Some are physically ill but spiritually well. Why is this? It depends on one’s emphasis or priority. A man who frequents eating places, buys good food and eats a balanced diet but who does not care to go to church to worship, does not read the Bible, has no liking for Sunday school, does not pray, never cares to go to prayer meetings, does not care about the things of the spirit, makes excuses just to avoid God, is physically well but spiritually ill. People try to avoid God because if they believe in God they will be restricted in their activities kag indi na sila makakadto diri ukon didto sa paghimo sang malain nga butang, kay man gatoo sila sa Dios. Therefore, dulaon nila ang Dios. “Let us eliminate God, let us substitute evolution,” kay ang tawo ya luyag magpagusto. These people will certainly be physically healthy but spiritually malnourished.

However, in contradiction to what has been said, the same thing need not be said of the spiritually healthy man. A man who cares about spiritual thing will not neglect the essential need of his body

because of wisdom. A man who is spiritually well will also be physically well except in two cases – when he is fasting and then when he is suffering from a physical ailment (kay nagmasakit siya). But that is out of the question. When he is suffering for a very good reason, when God allows him to suffer from physical ailment, the reason for which God only knows, he is still spiritually well. That is why St. Paul, when he was sick said: “Outwardly we are perishing but inwardly we are renewed day by day.”

Why is the topic “indispensable faith” important to us? The main reason is that, as God’s children, it is our only link with God. Sang una, may pagbaisbais ang mga iglesia. May nagasiling, “kuhaon ta ang faith, islan ta sang good works. So let us have good works instead of faith.” Bangod sina wala gid sila magcloser sa Ginoo, because nothing can substitute for faith.

Without faith there is no relationship between God and us. Without faith nothing happens between us and God. Faith is the bridge that makes us cross rivers. It is the network of roads that enables us to travel from one place to another. Faith is the ocean liner that carries us to other continents. It is the telephone that enables us to communicate with a relative in Saudi Arabia. It is faith making connections between one another. So, there is no substitute for faith (pagtoo).

Sa isa ka simbahan may ara powerful life kag may ara man nga daw ka paloypaloy; one has a working faith, ang isa waay. Mabudlay kon wala faith. It is said that there are only two kinds of religion. Abi, nano? Katoliko? Ano ang isa? Protestante? Kay gali indi. It has nothing to do with Catholicism or Protestantism. The two kinds of religion are religion A and religion B. Please decide where you are.

Those who belong to religion A have faith, whether Catholic or Protestant. Their life works on the basis of faith. They find employment on the basis of faith. They go to church, they deal with people, they ask for their needs and receive on the basis of faith. Because of faith they have patience to wait for the answer to their prayer. If what they pray for is not given, they are not disappointed and they believe that what they are praying for is not for them. Kon mangayo ka manggad kag indi pag-ihatag sang Dios, buot

silingon dalok ka pa. Pero pagkambyo mo, tagaan ka na because you will now know how to use your wealth. They belong to the church on the basis of faith, indi kay may ginalagaslagas sa simbahan. It is faith that makes them do things and empowers them to live quality lives.

Those who belong to religion B have been attracted to religion A because of the example and testimony of the believers. Sin- o man abi ang indi maattract kon ara si Tim Buensuceso nga nagadirect sa choir. “Dyanay ka makadto ko sa JEC kay daw kanami sang music nila didto.” Pagsulod nila indi man na sila dayon makakita sang faith, kag kon wala na si Tim, wala naman na sila nagasimba, kay wala faith. They lack one thing, they have not caught what makes the believers do what is almost impossible - the reason for overcoming obstacles and trials and for living an exemplary life. The secret is faith. The outsiders often wonder why they cannot be like these people. Someone has to point out to them the difference. It is not one’s status in society; indi kay mayor ka, governor ka; not material abundance, not the number of academic degrees one has achieved or garnered. The difference is faith.

We should commit to memory the reminder given in Hebrews 11:6, “Without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Kinahanglan ang presensya sang Dios gin recognize mo, kag nagdangop ka, nagdepend ka, nagtrust ka sa iya. God is well pleased kon amo na ang matabo sa aton.

I think we now know the difference. Wala substitute sa faith. In other words, faith is the difference between a genuine pearl and one that is an imitation.

In the parade of heroes of faith, these people are enumerated as having been able to accomplish what they became famous or noted for. Because of faith, Abel gave the right sacrifices, Enoch was able to walk with God, Noah saved the later generations. Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, David, Samuel, the prophets and others, were able to do their jobs and their responsibilities well for only one thing - they had faith. It was not because of their ability or power but because of their faith.

On the other hand, we have a record of those who failed in their given task. When the disciples saw that a man had demons in him, and they could not drive them out, the man was referred to Jesus. The people said, “your disciples could not drive these demons out.” Then Jesus drove out the demons. Siling sang mga disciples nga nahuya, “Lord, why were we not able to do it?” Jesus said, “This thing comes out of faith.” Indi kamo makatabog demonyo kay waay kamo pagtoo. When Peter who walked on the water with Jesus began to sink, pagkadakop sang Ginoo sa iya nagsiling si Jesus, “Why did you waver and lose your faith?”

Pag-abot sang Israelites sa Red Sea, nagsiling sila, “Moses mapatay gid kami sini; tawga na ang Ginoo. Baw, kadto si Moses sa Ginoo kag nagsiling, “Lord lampusan ko na ang tubig.” “Pak!” “Ay, waay mapihak ang tubig, ara na ang Egyptians!” “Pak. Pak, pak!” Pila ka lampos waay gid mapihak ang tubig. Siling ni Moses, “Lord pakahuy-an mo ko? Indi bala nagsiling ka man sa mga tawo nga imo pihakon ang tubig, pero wala man?” God said, “Tell the people to jump.” Pagkabalo sang mga tawo, nagsiling sila, “Ay, malumos kami e! Indi kami kabalo maglangoy! Moses, singgana ang Dios nga pihakon nya anay ang tubig, kag kon pihak na malumpat kami!”

You know, that requires faith - the risk of faith. Amo na nga madali kita madisappointed kay gusto ta limpyo na gid ang tanan before we plunge.

Palihog di ay, machallenge ako sa inyo no. Kon wala kamo nagapati, kadtoi lang ko da sa opisina kag magsiling, “Pastor mahuy-an ka gid sa akon, gintilawan ko ang imo ginsiling nga faith, waay gid sang may natabo.” But I do not think that will happen. Whoever has faith may magagwa gid nga resulta nga manami.

God often puts us in possession of profound difficulty from which there seems to be no escape. That is exactly where the exercise of faith will do wonders. Our faith in God will lead us to seek his deliverance. The difficulty becomes an opportunity for the display of God’s almighty grace and power. God will not only deliver us, He will give us a lesson which we will never forget and cause us to rejoice in thanksgiving. Those who witness will be

amazed and move to believe in God. “Ay, wala ko gasiling nga maconvert sa Baptist ha, kundi conversion to God.”

Finally, kada mata ninyo, ano gaabot sa inyo pensar ang pagluto sa kusina ukon ang inyo date? “Ay, dianay ka, basi ma late ako!” Pero lain gali ang gina-expect sa inyo. Faith requires that we must not face the day until we have faced God first. Indi anay pag-abrehe ang bentana - unaha anay ang Ginoo, tan-awa anay ang guya sang Ginoo. Do not look into the face of others until you have looked into His. You cannot expect to be victorious if the day begins only in your strength, nga nalipatan mo ang Ginoo. Pangitaa anay ang Ginoo. Ang makahimo sini amo ang may pagtoo nga matuodtuod.

Shall we pray. Our Father, we hope that we have been enlightened by what has been taken up; that there is no substitute for faith. If we do not have it Lord, please give it to us. If we do not have enough of it Lord, we want to pray with the disciples who said, “increase our faith.” For Christ’s sake we pray. Amen.

The Balance of Life

Text: Mark 4:24

Life is characterized by giving and receiving. In order to receive one must give. In this scheme of giving and receiving God has shown us the balance of life. Our text says, "Pay attention to what you hear! What you get depends on what you give. What you give you will get back, only more so."

Someone has said that "the life we live is God's gift to us; what we do with that life is our gift to Him." William Barclay said that "In life there is always a balance. A man's getting will be determined by his giving. The balance of life has to do with input and output, giving and receiving."

We shall look at the balance of life in three areas.

1) *This is true in the area of study.* The more a man is prepared to give time and effort to any subject, the more he will get from it. All subjects are like that. They give pleasure and satisfaction in proportion to the effort that we are prepared to spend upon them. This will remind us of our days in school. The grade of 3.0 or Inc in Math or English is proportionate to the time and effort we spent on these subjects. I heard many an honest student say, "I deserve that failing grade in history because I didn't really care about the subject. I didn't give the effort equivalent to a good grade."

It is especially so in regard to the study of the Bible. In popularity no other book can come close to the Bible. But sad to say, that is as far as things go. Ignorance of the Bible is widespread even among so-called Christians. If reading and understanding the Bible is the secret of a changed life, what we hear and see of people's behavior these days leave much to be desired. Which makes us raise the question whether the Bible has not become a mere decorative item on the bedside table. The Bible is not meant to be seen but read. We may sometimes feel that there are certain parts of the Bible with which we are out of sympathy but if we study these parts they will often be the very parts which end by giving us the richest harvest. A really intensive study of the Bible will leave us thrilled and fascinated and end up in our having powerful lives.

2) *The balance of life is also true in the area of worship.* The more we bring to the worship in God's house the more we will get from it. How many times have we come out of a worship experience empty, disappointed or upset? Have you asked yourself the reason for this? There are contributing factors to worship which when rightly observed will make you come out of it happy and blessed. You can contribute attention, silence, appreciation, a little laughter when the sermon calls for it, a good sense of humor, awe when you are moved by the message, a few drops of tears when a sad incident is recalled. You can contribute a gesture of inspiration for the pastor, the worship leader, the choir director, the choir, etc. You can contribute concern for the visitors that somehow they might be encouraged to return.

When we come to worship in the house of God, there are three ways in which we may come.

a) **We may come entirely to get.** We may come with the idea of getting an entertainment. "Alright, pastor, perform. I want to get something in return for my time." If we come in such a way the likelihood is that we will criticize the organist and the choir and find fault with the minister's preaching. We will regard the whole service as a performance laid on our selfish satisfaction.

We must come prepared to give. We must remember that worship is a corporate act, and that each of us can contribute something to it. Let us not say, "What can I get out of this service" but "what can I contribute to this service?" If we do this we will be in for a great surprise. We will in the end get far more out of the service than if we came to take.

b) **We may come without expectation.** Our coming may be the result of habit and routine. It may be simply part of the timetable into which we have divided the week. One of the living principles of preaching is that it is given with the expectation that a change will take place in the life of the listener. If every worshipper expects something like this, this will be a great purifying process in the midst of God's people. You may expect this to happen to your husband, to your wife, to your friend or to anyone you have brought along with you. After all, we should be coming to meet God, and when we meet Him anything may happen.

c) **We may come without preparation.** It is so easy to leave for the worship in God's house with no preparation of mind or heart at all because often it is a rush to get there at all. Where there is no preparation, there is no readiness for something worthwhile receiving and where there is no readiness, a beautiful thing is wasted. And so often a beautiful worship is wasted. It would make a difference in the world if, before we came, we were in a moment or two still and quiet with God in prayer. As the Jewish Rabbis told their disciples, "They pray best together who first prayed alone."

3) *The balance of life is true in the area of personal relationship.* One of the great facts of life is that we see our reflection in other people. If we are cross and irritable and bad-tempered, we will probably find other people equally unpleasant. If we are critical and fault-finding, the chances are that we will find other people the same. If we are suspicious and distrustful, the likelihood is that others will be so to us. If we wish others to love us, we must first love them. The man who would have friends must show himself friendly. It was because Jesus believed in men that men believed in Jesus.

Doing God's "Unfinished" Work

Text: John 14:12-14

Today's sermon title "Doing God's Unfinished Work" evokes a question that we cannot ignore, "Does God deserve an incomplete grade for His unfinished work?"

In school a student who gets an incomplete grade has a reason to worry, and many a promising student has forfeited the chance to graduate with honors because of incomplete grades. But God has deliberately left His work unfinished for a purpose. He saw that life for us would have more meaning if we were given a chance to perform finishing touches. God did not want us to feel useless. In other words, God starts something beautiful and allows us to finish it. But in the process He stays with us to provide strength, direction and inspiration.

As we mentioned in the previous Sunday's sermons, God could have built bridges, a network of roads, houses and boats. But He did not. He left a number of things for us to do.

Someone says in jest that unlike God, yesterday's generation in their great concern for today's generation saw it that they – today's generation – would have nothing more or nothing left to do but relax and enjoy their heritage. As a result, today's generation is busy destroying its precious heritage just to have something to do to escape boredom. Nothing can make a man feel more useless than to have nothing do. For our sake God has left much of His work unfinished that we might have something to do and so feel useful.

Our Scripture text supports the claim that God has left much of His work unfinished to give us a chance to continue what He has started. Here Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing! He will do even greater things than these, because I am going back to the Father." This is what Jesus is saying, "I have started a wonderful work, but I am giving you the responsibility of continuing it because I am going back to the Father."

When you look at a house you really see two things. First, the house itself. Its floor, walls and roof have to be kept in good condition. Repair work should not be neglected if you expect the

house to last long. The second thing about the house is the people who live in it. This is where our concern lies. God's unfinished work has to do with people. Jesus promised to give the abundant life. Abundant life is a life that is not simply having enough to eat, a good job, a beautiful house. It is a life that is not afraid, does not feel insecure, does not easily give in to hate or envy. It is a life that can look at failures. It is quite shocking, however, that many people are miserable in spite of material abundance. Their lives are characterized by worry, fear and anger – the greatest disease causers. Even in our time it is worry, fear and anger that destroy relationships. Between two people who are at each other's throat are worry, fear and anger.

Jesus' work can be described as setting people free from the clutches of worry, fear and anger. All who encountered Jesus and listened to him with their hearts were set free from these prison houses.

The Samaritan woman before she met Jesus was a very troubled woman. She was worried about survival in a man's world where women were considered inferior to men. She was always afraid her live-in partner would forsake her for another woman. She hated the Jews whom she blamed for all her troubles. Here was a woman whose life was made miserable by worry, fear and anger. When she met Jesus, she was set free. It is Jesus' work with people like the Samaritan woman, harassed and miserable, that we are called upon to "finish". There are thousands of people whose cases are like that of the Samaritan woman. We are like doctors or specialists whom God will send to free those who are in bondage. Who are we to make such presumptions? What are our credentials?

We need to be certain of three things: 1) That God has called us to continue His work; 2) That we, too, have been released from worry, fear and anger; 3) That God's presence is with us.

To give us a clearer picture of what our work involves, this incident offers a great help. It happened a few years ago.

"A New York businessman, vice-president of his firm, expected to be chosen president when the founder died. But the directors chose an outsider. The resentment of the vice-president became a secret but an all-powerful obsession; he could not sleep

or concentrate. One day he was shocked to overhear two office boys talking about him; people were saying he was going to pieces. In despair he asked a wise friend what to do. "Love the man you resent," was the answer. "Help him!"

Next morning he tried it; forced himself to make a suggestion. The new President heartily thanked him. "I'm scared of this new job," he said. "You know more about it than I do. Please help me." Life changed then and there for them both.

That worried, afraid and angry vice-president represents many people today who are plagued with worry, fear and anger. To such people we are being sent not to take sides but to work out a reconciliation.

The Mindanao crisis has stemmed from that kind of situation. If our government can send peacemakers to Mindanao and make efforts to reconcile the protagonists, it will be a tremendous relief to the nation.

There is another case that is closer to us not geographically but in matters of kinship – our Convention (CPBC). During the third night of our Convention assembly I mentioned in my prayer for God to help our Convention in Crisis. The fault is not with our leaders. It is with all of us. For our leaders – both the past and present leadership - can come together not pointing to anyone's fault nor blaming anyone. If there is no reconciliation we will be in deeper trouble.

A Man of Prayer

Thanksgiving³³

Shall we look up to God in prayer. Our loving Father, it is November and we all know what that means. That means that our focus will be on thanksgiving. It will be a sad thing if we have nothing to thank you for. Therefore, in our worship experience today, remind us Lord to begin to count what blessings we have received from you. Not only in terms of money, not only in terms of good health, not only in terms of having many friends. These are visible signs of blessings from you. We want to thank you for making us travel from immaturity to maturity. There were times when we were often embarrassed or ashamed because we were so childish in many of our ways. We could not face serious matters. When we landed in serious situations we got scared immediately. We developed cold feet and asked you to spare us from situations like those. Therefore, our Father, we look back and begin to see that we have changed, we have grown up. We are now mature and we are not easily discouraged. We are not easily scared because our maturity has told us that we have a God who can take care of us. That is a wonderful thing to thank you for.

We want to shift our thoughts today to the national events. Two weeks ago we were worried about our predicament as a nation. Today it seems that whatever is going to happen, the near future has become very clear. Since we are Christians – merciful, kind and loving - we do not wish to condemn anyone, for who are we to do that when you yourself Lord are forgiving and You give us chances to reform. Therefore, our prayer is that you guide the nation as it responds to the issues that are beginning to take place. Let our people be without malice. Let our people be humble, kind and forgiving.

Our attention goes to our President who is somewhat under siege. Help him to face the situation honestly and in a way that only a Christian can face such a situation. Give our President what he would need to face the issues and to act according to wisdom and courage. Give the Philippines a chance, Lord, to rise again

whoever becomes our leader. Do not forget those who have stepped out of the way. Remember them, Lord, in your kindness. Remember our President and all of us. May all the opposing parties find unity in you so that the whole world as it watches us might believe that you are with the Philippines in her crisis.

We want to turn our attention to this congregation, the Jaro Evangelical Church. Unite us Lord. Of course, we take many sides in terms of politics but do not let politics disunite us. As the Lord Jesus Christ has promised if we would take everything to you in prayer, You will hear us; and we are enjoined in 2 Chronicles that if we humble ourselves and pray and seek your ways and stop doing wrong then you will hear from heaven. You will forgive our sins and You will heal our land.

This morning service is a beautiful one, having experienced some kind of crisis last week when not many of us were able to come because of the bad weather. But we were able to worship in our homes. So it cannot be said that there was no worship last Sunday for individually wherever we were we worshipped you in spirit and in truth.

Right at this minute, Lord, there are people who are somewhat suffering because of the loss of loved ones. We remember the Ruizes who have lost Dr. Macario Ruiz, who died last Tuesday. We remember the Tingson and Quimpo families whose loved one Lazaro Tingson also passed away. There are still many others Lord, many passing away; many heartaches which we may not know consciously but you know it. So help whoever is in that kind of trouble. It is not a joke to lose a loved one Lord but when you are with us trying to steady us and to comfort us then things begin to take shape differently.

Bless our children, our young people, our women, our men, our senior citizens. Bless those who are here for the first time, probably invited by some of our people, and probably out of curiosity just dropped by to find out what we are doing here. At this moment, Lord, let your presence be felt by everyone in this worship experience.

Help us to be thankful, and thank you for reminding us that it is now officially our thanksgiving month.

Oh God, we love you. Forgive us if we are having some difficulty expressing our love to you. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and our Savior. Amen.

Anger

It is a wonder Lord that we are still able to carry on in spite of the many obstacles that we face today. Socially, financially, morally, spiritually, we are facing giants or gigantic enemies trying to keep us from being the kind of persons you want us to be. In this world there are many things that will keep us angry. Anger does not limit itself. It is not found only in the home, although the home is the almost permanent place of anger. In our effort to keep the family united, there is always a reason to get angry. Our children may do what is wrong and that makes us angry. Our parents may be too domineering and that is what makes the children angry. We may not have food in the house and that is a reason to be angry. Outside of the home there are places where anger tries to get hold of us, trying to make us angry. When we hire a taxi cab, and we cannot agree with the driver we get angry. When we buy items at a store there is always a reason to be angry. Lord we can never escape from anything that would make us lose our control of ourselves, making the situation bad. But we always are given opportunities to correct situations like these. For example, every time we come to worship there are messages that remind us that we are somewhat off the track in some of the things that we do. Our worship services often make us careful and we often teach ourselves when something is mentioned in the sermon, about which we are guilty. Thank you for helping us to maintain our patience so that we do not always give in to anger when we come out of the church. The more we strive for peace, the more we want to be in good terms with our neighbors, with our friends, with our workmates, the more there are temptations to lose our temper and destroy friendships and relationships.

Today our focus is on what you are telling us about anger. This is a good chance for us to really align ourselves to what could be favourable in terms of rebukes, counsels and reminders. Many of

us are getting mad. We are about to lose our control because of what is happening in Mindanao. A certain bishop of a Catholic church is in danger of his life because in his anger he uttered some words against the perpetrators of crime in Mindanao. There are times Lord that no matter how patient we are when people do not stop doing wrong, we begin to get angry. How do we maintain our patience Lord so that in our concern for our country and for what is obtaining in it, we might maintain our composure? Although there are many things that we are against, we might find ways whereby even in trying to fight these things we might do it in such a way that those who do wrong will welcome our advice, our counsels.

It is just difficult, Lord, these days to really do what you want us to do. We thank you that every Sunday when we gather to worship you there are reminders. Wednesday evenings are nights of reminding us to be careful. Bible study nights do the same thing. There is no place where we can go that we are not at the same time reminded that we should as much as possible try to maintain our composure so that we do not shout angry words at people.

Today we have come to worship you. We do not know if there are some people whose appearance we do not like, people who make us irritated. But every time we come to worship you Lord there is something that controls us. Even at the entrance when we see that it is now your temple that we are getting into, the place where we want to reconcile with people and with you, then something begins to happen in our hearts.

As we listen to the message today Lord touch us so that when we go out and return to our respective homes what we have heard might stay. Remind us not to lose our cool.

Our loved ones, Lord, are scattered. Some of them are in our homes, some are away studying or working. We want to remember them now. Lord, touch the lives of our loved ones who are not with us right this minute. Help them to remember the homes that they have left behind, the love of their parents, and the care and concern of their siblings. Today, Lord, we are happy that we can ask you to take care of our loved ones wherever they are.

Lord, there is something about the rising of prices that worries

us. Is there anything you can do about it Lord? Some of us think they should control rising prices. Some of us think we should go abroad and look for greener pasture. Some of us think that even here in our own country our employers might be able to see the need of their employees and so perhaps think of raising their salaries. Will that happen Lord? Will you bless us with that kind of thing? We can never control You, Lord, but you are a merciful God, kind, loving and always impend yourself when we are in trouble. We always say nothing hurts you because you are God. We always say nothing moves you because you are God. We are wrong about that, Lord. For the cross itself reminds us that you were so hurt when we fell in sin and when we started to do wrong that you sent your Son to die for us. It was the only way, Lord, whereby an appeal can be made to us and our hearts be touched and say, "I cannot bear to let God suffer. I want to do something that will make him happy for what I am doing. I will begin today to be a good person."

Lord, when you sent your Son to die for us that is enough reason to tell us that you really care. You are not a passive God. You are always thinking of our welfare. This morning, Lord, even us we bow our heads and close our eyes and try to think of what will be pleasing to you, accept our thanksgiving, oh God, for everything you have done for us. Those who have problems, help them. Those who have heartaches, comfort them. Those who are in any kind of trouble Lord, let them feel your holy presence so that they will not be afraid.

Thank you Lord and forgive our sins for Christ sake. Amen.

Our Father³⁴

Let us be comforted by the assurance of pardon knowing that we sin almost every day. We need to be assured that God is always a forgiving God. Isaiah 55:6-7 says, "Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call on him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord and He will have mercy on him." Our God will really pardon us.

Let me now read our Scripture text: Hebrews 12:1-3,

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.” Shall we now look up to God in prayer:

Our loving Father, there is a difference when we can address you like this, our Father. We, human beings, are often ashamed to request people who do not know us, to help us in the absence of friends. No matter how much we are pushed to approach the person we do not know, we are short of courage to do so. It is different with you, Lord. Had not your Son Jesus Christ introduced you as our Father, had we been told that you are, as the ancient Jews thought you to be, a God who punishes, a God who often gets angry, a God who always finds fault, perhaps had we stayed in that kind of concept of you even today, we would not have the courage to come close to you. When the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth, he called you, our Father. He told us in Scriptures to call you, our Father. The wall separating us and you had been broken down and we do not look at you now as an angry God but a God who is kind, merciful, loving, forgiving and understanding. There is a difference, Lord, in the way we approach you. Now where we stand in awe of you, we do not entertain any fear in your presence. The fear that makes us cower, the fear that drives us away has been removed, Lord. Like little children calling to our earthly fathers, we cuddle up to you and say, “Lord, please, we need your embrace, we need your protection; put your arms around us, our Father, because in this world we cannot feel safe.” There is always something that makes us afraid for this is a hostile world, unkind, unloving. But you have changed many people, many lives. We often find sympathy from those who love you. Together with them we look up to the skies and say, “Lord, here we are helpless but longing to be closer to you.” You wipe away our sins. You cleanse us from all unrighteousness so that you will be pleased with us.

There are many of our loved ones that we want to bring to you.

We pray for Mr. Viray who is not feeling well. We do not really know what is happening but as human beings, Lord, we fall prey to dangerous elements existing in the world, something we call viruses, something we call germs that cause us sickness. But thanks be to you God! You help us and we get healed. Be with Mr. Viray, Lord, wherever he is.

We ask you to comfort Imelda, our choir member whose father has just passed away. It is a deep sorrow that Imelda is experiencing but you promised that your presence will comfort us. No matter how grave the tragedy we are facing, things will be different when you are with us. Lord, help Imelda.

We thank you for healing Emily Asis. We were almost afraid she would leave this world but you showed your mercy on her and her husband.

Now, Lord, coming back to where we are, bowing our heads, closing our eyes and imploring you to sustain us, we pray that this worship experience tonight might bring about a stronger faith, a better relationship with you, and wisdom that will open to us what is hidden – our sins.

Tonight, Lord, hold us; embrace us, Lord. Open our eyes that we might see that there is no need to fear because you are with us. Continue to forgive us our sins. This is our prayer, in Jesus name. Amen.

Loving and Kind God³⁵

The passage I am going to read is very popular. It always comes as a great comfort to know that God is a different God from what we believe about Him. So let me now read James 1: 5, “If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given to you.”

Matthew 7:24ff, “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down and the streams rose and the winds blew and beat against that house. Yet it did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a

foolish man, who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell with a great crash.”

May the Lord bless us upon the reading of these portions of Scriptures. Shall we now look up to Him in prayer.

The day is ending, our Father. We anticipate another day tomorrow. Help us not to forget what happened today. This morning when we woke up, we anticipated coming to church, meeting one another, greeting friends, comforting one another. Then in response to you, we sat down and asked you to bless us. Tomorrow, it is going to be a different day. There will be no church worship but worship goes on. It will be done wherever we will find ourselves - in school or at work. Somehow, Lord, there is a great difference when we are conscious of you.

God-consciousness is something that we must learn to develop so that between prayers in the morning, at noon and at evening, our minds will be drawn to you, conversing with you, thanking you for understanding us. Some of us may be blaming you because how can it be that with a God like you, powerful, loving and kind, they feel abandoned. But that is a wrong expectation, our Father.

We are thankful that when we think thoughts that are against you, blaming you for our misfortunes, you do not mind us. Therefore, there is no fear of you striking us with some kind of cane. This differentiates you from our human nature. We were made in your image but we are always tempted to strike back at people when they hurt us, when they insult us, when they make us feel rejected. You are different, Lord. Perhaps this is the reason why we get spoiled. Give us something that will make us afraid of you in one sense, Lord. For while you are loving, kind and helpful, there should be a sense in which we will be made afraid to do anything that would hurt your feelings, our Father.

Tonight's prayer has something to do with our regret that sometimes we somewhat resent you. Thank you Lord for understanding us and for giving us a chance to change our mind. Until today we have not been eliminated from your presence because of the kind of God you are – forgiving, loving, caring and concerned. Tonight, everyone bowing his or her head is silently

saying, “Lord help the Philippines; something is going on in Mindanao, Lord, that makes us ashamed because the whole world knows about it. The whole world’s eyes are upon us. They know the pain we are going through because brothers are fighting against brothers.” We hear that in Western Visayas many people do not really have the true knowledge of what is going on in Mindanao. We are confused, Lord, and in pain. But every time we are able to look up to you, there is always some kind of consolation that you will never leave us alone; that one of these days there will be peace throughout the Philippines.

Schools will open tomorrow. Since it will be a first time for some of us, enable them – pupils, students and teachers - to make adjustments, Lord. For our first meetings tomorrow, as represented by the different institutions in the whole country, let our experience be something wonderful that will make all our students, pupils and teachers anticipate a wonderful year of studies.

Please sit down with us tonight Lord. Help us to feel your presence for it is only when we are able to feel you that we will begin to lose our confusion, our doubts and our fears.

Thank you for bringing to us newcomers. Thank you for those who sympathize with us. Thank you for the guests and visitors, who, when they pass by, develop a feeling of wanting to find out what is happening inside.

Perhaps tonight there are some with us who are praying for peace. Thank you for everything you have done for us, Lord. Continue to forgive our sins and help us to face the future unafraid. For Christ sake we pray. Amen.

Omnipresent God³⁶

Shall we look up to Him in prayer. O heavenly Father, we are always told that you are in heaven. Having become Christians, we have felt your presence here on earth. Every time we are in trouble you are near us. There is not a day that we do not experience your presence. We are not confused when we are told that you are in heaven because you are omnipresent. Some people may find it difficult to believe that you are present in China and

simultaneously present with us. Both from Scriptures and from our experiences, we have realized that nothing limits you. And so right this minute we can rest assured, and to put it in human terms we can say, that you are seated with us and this worship experience is meaningful because of that reality.

A question often comes to us, that some kind of explanation has to be made. We believe that wherever you are there is peace. But our present problem in Mindanao somewhat belies that. We are often embarrassed when those who do not believe in you ridicule us in terms of our claim. The fact is that you are a God who honors our freedom and who has given us free will. Many things contrary to your will could happen in our world and people will blame you and ridicule us because they just cannot understand that Christian claim. Thank you Lord for giving us an indepth interpretation of your presence in the world. You allow evil to co-exist with the good. For what reason? Only you know. But we can have an inkling of that reason for in our experience we become stronger and better people in the presence of evil. And while we denounce the fact that our loved ones are being killed and murdered in a world created by God, we know that physical death is not the end. For those who have lost their lives we are given the assurance of blessings, for in this world they could not have the kind of rest that they now have with you.

Lord, thank you for coming to us explaining in some way those things that embarrass us. Today we are here to tell you that we are suffering from many things. We are sometimes tempted to say to you, "Why do you allow that Lord? Don't you have mercy at all? Why?" But thank you for enabling us to understand that you are always on our side and no matter how tense we may look there are such things as blessings in disguise.

This morning we are thinking of our country. We are thinking of the hostages and their families. We are also thinking of the members of the Abu Sayyaf who are hiding behind cruelty in relation to their insecurity, their fear and their confusion.

Give us understanding, our Father, so that from the President down to the last man we will be able to do the right thing. Help us to follow Jesus and to remember his words, "do not resist evil."

Often times we wonder why he says that. Just these last few days we have discovered that when we resist evil the stronger it becomes. There is a way of making evil weak, and that is by showing it the best we can do. That is why we are admonished to overcome evil with good. In this way, we destroy evil.

Let our worship experience this day be a meaningful one. Speak to everyone of us Lord for we are sad and somewhat confused ourselves. The only difference between us and those who do not think well of you and who disregard you is that we always look behind the thing that threatens us and we are comforted by the saying that “behind the clouds there is the sun,” still shining. Behind every evil act there you are with the assurance that in this world we may have tribulation but that we have to take heart because you have overcome the world.

Thank you for your presence with us today and bless everyone of us and help us to hold on to you in spite of disappointments and discouragements. Thank you for sending your Son, who, when he came, revealed you to us in human terms. Before He came you were so far away from us. But when He came we saw you in His face.

Thank you for that and bless us now. In Jesus name. Amen.

Love³⁷

John 3:14ff, “Just as Moses lifted up a snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned. But whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

Our Scripture text is found in John 15:9-17, “As the Father has loved me so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands you will remain in my love just as I have obeyed

my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy maybe complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business, instead I have called you friends for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me but I have chosen you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command, love one another."

Shall we now look up to God in prayer. Our loving Father, this is a hard command. Humanly speaking, it is just difficult to love others. How can we love them if they will not do what we like? How can we love them if they make life difficult for us? How can we love them if they cause us to be shamed? So it is hard Lord to love one another. And yet today the command, while difficult, is not impossible to do. We can love one another. Therefore, Lord, give us the formula so that it will not be difficult to love other people. We have been told that we should see ourselves in other people, so if we see ourselves in other people, and we love ourselves, we can love others, seeing ourselves in them. And then we are advised that we should not focus on others' faults. That is what makes us angry. But if we see ourselves in others, it is possible Lord that we can be reminded that we ourselves are not perfect. And there are even times when we hate ourselves. Therefore, we will be given patience if we are able to see ourselves, our interests, our hopes, our fears in other people. That is possible if we stop thinking of ourselves alone. And the beauty of it Lord is that when we keep thinking of ourselves, we will never be happy. For happiness comes when we forget ourselves and when we think only of helping others and making them happy. This month of February, Lord, we thank you because our emphasis is again on love. St. Valentine's Day is just around the corner, Lord. And our inspiration to love others is demonstrated by us in our purchase of Valentine's cards, sending them to our parents, brothers and sisters, other people we care about and strangers who

may represent all that we are.

This morning our Father, we are thinking of those who are in need of help. Last Sunday we prayed for those who were taking examinations, those experiencing sorrow because of the departure of their loved ones. We prayed for those who are in pain physically, emotionally, spiritually. Today Lord, as we bow our heads in prayer, it is easy to think of life as having no problems. And we deceive ourselves Lord if we think that way. For the first thing that we notice when we reach home is the presence of problems. And if we could remember to address our problems the right way, firstly, by taking them to you immediately, we see possibilities of conquering them. Lord help us, according to the advice of St. Paul, not to look at things that can be seen such as the things that cause us to worry, the things that bring dishonor. Help us not to focus on these. Help us to focus on things that cannot be seen. Love cannot be seen. Faith cannot be seen. Hope cannot be seen. You cannot be seen Lord. But there is a way of seeing these differently that they do not give us problems. When we see you as our only help Lord, then we begin to throw all our prayers on you. By doing that, we begin to feel lighter, we begin to feel that the world is a better place to live in without our fears and our worries. This morning Lord, we are concentrating on love, descending love. Just what is that Lord? Tell us what it is.

As we read the newspapers our, Father, we are made sad by developments; a new development has sprouted Lord. This is the case of people having killed a priest. Perhaps when it became possible that that could be released, they were so happy but then questions began to come in. Perhaps their hopes are dying down. If we are not with you God, we can never give answers to this problem Lord. So come and sit with us and show us Lord what you are trying to do in spite of all these developments that make our world sad.

Every Sunday, Lord, when we come to worship you, we feel lighter, we feel better, notwithstanding the fact, Lord, that at times the messages are so thrilling. And although they are not meant to make us feel guilty, they are meant to open our eyes so that we might start doing something to those things which are causing

unhappiness.

Many of us, Lord, are in situations where we can help others. If so Lord, use us as channels of your blessings, as instruments of your kindness. And before we know it, when we had been used by you as instruments of your love, we will have forgotten our own worries and that is a very good thing Lord.

This morning speak to our hearts; help us to understand what love is all about. They say it is love that makes the world go round. Just what is that Lord? Does it mean that it is love that minimizes trouble, that makes burdens lighter to carry? If it is that way Lord, then we welcome it.

Open our eyes, open our minds, open our hearts, and let your love dwell in us so that from now on we will be carriers of hope and faith.

We continue to ask you to bless our young people. The old generation is slowly making its exit and the young people are slowly getting into positions of importance. Once upon a time these young people were just teenagers, some were just little boys and little girls, but today they have passed exams and in a matter of just a few months Lord they will be practicing professionals and filling positions that used to belong to the elders.

Oh, God, thank you that, having started the year 2000, we don't seem to feel threatened by all those prophecies against humanity all because you are with us and all because you care.

Help our parents Lord become understanding in terms of their children's doings. Help our teachers become the kind of teachers that will really help to emphasize care and concern.

And as together we march toward the future, help us to see the light beyond so that even though we see darkness in front, the light beyond gives us hope that we will soon get to the light and things will be different. Forgive our many sins our Father and let this be a beautiful day for all of us, in Jesus name. Amen.

Trials³⁸

Sometimes it happens that we feel we have sinned against God and we become afraid for if the anger of man is to be feared how

much more if God is angry with us. But there is always a passage from Scriptures that will relieve us, for our God is a good God, merciful and loving. So let me read Psalm 103:1-14, "Praise the Lord, O my soul, all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits - who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, and crowns you with steadfast love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel. The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor his anger forever. He does not treat us as our sins deserve, or will pay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him. For he knows how we are formed; he remembers that we are dust."

Our heavenly Father, we are afraid of what we have just read (see, Luke 16: 19-31). It seems that if we are rich, it will be hard for us to go to where you are. And if we are poor, the angels will carry us to you. Is this it really, Lord? If this is true, then we are almost afraid of engaging in many businesses that will make us rich, so that perhaps we would be satisfied if we were poor. Explain to us Lord this passage, for there are many Christians who have been blessed by you. They have beautiful houses, cars and bank accounts. At the same time, there are those who are in want. Even in church, when we come to worship you, there are poor people and there are rich people. Why is there a difference, Lord? Where will these people go when they leave this world? It is hard to tell Lord, but we know that you love both the poor and the rich.

There are poor people who are bad, and there are many rich people who are good. Therefore, Lord, what determines our destiny? Help us Lord, to so live that whether we are in want or plenty, we will always be people who love you. And there is no

danger when people love you, no danger of going to places of torment.

Right now, Lord, we do not belong to one category in terms of material possessions. Some of us have more property than others. Some can barely have three square meals a day. Some have a lot of debts, Lord, while others keep accumulating thousands of money. Help us not to be discouraged, Lord, whether we are poor or rich but explain to us that it is not our poverty nor our wealth that determines our destination. It is something else. Tell that to us, Lord, tonight.

At this moment, many of us have just been cured of ailments. Some of us have just been discharged from hospitals. Perhaps some of us have been satisfied with just staying at home because they do not have the money to pay for hospital bills. Our heavenly Father, sometimes we are confused. Tell us plainly, Lord, what does it mean, what will it take to be counted as belonging to you?

Again we think of those our loved ones who are far away. We don't know what is happening to them. The few letters that we received from them can never tell us exactly their state. Give us faith then Lord that, every time we receive bad news of our loved ones being sick or having been featured in accidents, will lead us by the thought that you will take care of them for our sake. You will take care of them for they belong to you.

There are some of us here who are looking for jobs. Guide them as to where to go Lord and let them find something that will be of help. Perhaps there is a vacancy somewhere. You alone know that. We do not know. So if there is any one who is in need of a job, be merciful Lord, and lead that one to some firm or company that is in need of workers or laborers or secretaries.

Lord, help us to be able to listen carefully. Every time we come to worship Lord, give us clear minds. Help us to leave our worries at home, so that we can sit back and relax here and so that when we finally leave for home we shall have been able to absorb every word spoken here. Let the Holy spirit take control of our lives. Let him touch our hearts. Let him remind us of our failures, our shortcomings and even our sins.

Bless everyone present here tonight. Tomorrow morning Lord,

let there be opportunities for us to do better - if we are working, to improve our performance; if we are in business, to be blessed with reasonable profits; for we who are your people know what to do with what we receive from you. Keep us strong and loving, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Discouragement³⁹

Every time we sin against God, there is fear in us that He might not forgive us. But the Bible comes to our rescue. It tells us about God's nature. If we feel that he will not forgive us, we are wrong about that. Joel 3:20-21 says, (This was the time when Israel sinned against God and many punishments were experienced by Israel but then came God's pardon) "Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem through all generations. Their blood guilt which I have not pardon, I will pardon."

1 Kings 19:13b-18, "Then a voice said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He replied, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord God almighty; for the Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left and now they are trying to kill me too.' The Lord said to him, 'Go back the way you came and go to the desert of Damascus; when you get there anoint Hazael as king over Aram. Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshe as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah to succeed you as prophet. Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu will put to death; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will put to death. Yet I reserve 7,000 in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal, and all whose mouths have not kissed him.'"

Shall we now look up to God in prayer. Our loving Father, sometimes we are so discouraged. We try hard to understand why we get discouraged and what it does to us. Now we have understood that when things do not happen according to our expectations, we get discouraged. We plan on a vacation and when it is not realized, disappointment takes over and finally we are too discouraged to move on. One of the great enemies of your children

is discouragement. When we fail an exam, we are discouraged. When a young man sees someone beautiful and tries to win that one over as his girlfriend, but he is rejected, he is discouraged. We think we will get promoted, but when promotion does not come, we lose interest in life. We do some transactions as in business and when things do not happen according to our plans, we get discouraged. There is every reason to quit, to stop moving forward, when discouragement takes over. We know Lord that you are not a God of discouragements. Yes, you allow discouragement but only you know that discouragement has a role to play in our strengthening, in our becoming a better person. If we will not only let discouragements get the better of us Lord, if we can fight and still look forward, knowing that this is the kind of God you are, you allow disappointments and discouragements to come our way, then if we understand that, we will be helped.

As we face the year 2000 Lord, discouragements come our way, but we are thankful that as a church, we can gather together in a worship experience like this and listen to songs by our choir, by the congregation and by anyone who is still treading the path of endurance. The moment we refuse to yield, Lord, and the moment we look up to you and see you nodding your head as if giving us the assurance that everything will be alright in spite of our trials and temptations, then we develop a kind of confidence that will overcome every discouragement.

Today, Lord, as we bow our heads and pray individually, there are so many things that occupy our minds and our hearts. The most permanent problem that bothers us Lord has to do with money. We are told not to put importance to money; but what can we do Lord when we do not have the things we need, when there is no food in the house, when there is no money to pay for bills, when loved ones are in hospitals, and we are incurring a lot of expenses? What do we do Lord? Even in the support of our church, when we cannot give our pledges, when we have nothing to give by way of an offering every time we come, we are ashamed Lord. We are embarrassed when the offering plate is passed in front of us and we have nothing to give. All these lead to discouragement, Lord. But while the Bible says that the love of money is the root of evil, we are given the assurance that you will give us what we need, and

money is one of them. Therefore, Lord, instead of being discouraged, help us to take heart and to wait for you to act. Only when we do that will things fall down in torrential amount such as would amaze us. Please, Lord, give us the power to resist discouragements, and not only to resist but to overcome them.

Our country for example, Lord, is facing discouragements. Our President, who was for the conquered was resisted to the point of despair. When he let go of the conquered, there were threats Lord coming from all corners. So, what will he do for he is also confused. At such time Lord, come to him and help him. Encourage all Filipinos Lord, whether we are for our President or not; that only in our unity will we be able to survive. And while we have different candidates Lord, which ever candidates win and rule our country give us the will to cooperate- and then when another election comes, help us to fight for our rights, so that whatever we wish to happen might happen. And still Lord, if our expectations do not come help us to know that it is not yet the end of the world and there are still many instances when we can overcome our shortcomings.

This morning Lord there are many who maybe discouraged. They keep on, however, because as they come back to listen to words from Scriptures, the sermon given Lord from you, they are strengthened and encouraged. And so as the month of January Lord unfolds and soon it will be February even if the year 2000 is feared by many, what is that when you are with us? Only lift us up Lord and then will we be inspired and encouraged. Thank you for every thing you've done for us. Forgive our many sins, for in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Faith⁴⁰

“God hears the confession of our hearts and lips. Lord Jesus Christ, we are forgiven all our sins and by the Holy Spirit we are empowered for new life.”

Hebrews 11:1-3; 6, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what our ancestors

were commended for. By faith we understood that the universe was formed at God's command so that what is seen was made from the things that are not visible. Without faith it is impossible to please God because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

Shall we now look up to God in prayer. Our loving Father, sometimes even we who have been Christians for a long time find difficulty in explaining what faith is. If we have it, perhaps it is easier to live it than to define it. For that, we thank you. It is better that we have difficulty defining faith but able to live it, for we are judged by those around us not by the words that we say but by the life that we live. The words that we say may be contested, may be refuted but not the life we live from day to day. We can even say that we do it unconsciously. For example, Lord, when we are loving, we are not even conscious that we are loving - we just live that way and people who watch us will ask us: "Why are you so loving?" and we do not know how to explain because that is the way we are. We simply love people. It is our faith that enables us to live like that. All over the world today, we wish this faith would become the controlling factor in the life of every person.

We read of people who are discouraged and disappointed because they are failures. Even what is easy to be done they cannot do it and they do not understand why. They simply leave it to fate, saying, "Swerte, nga indi gid ko ya mag manggaranon," "Swerte nga dimalas gid ako sa bisan ano." If they only know the real reason, Lord, why they cannot do many things, easy or difficult of accomplishment, they will be helped Lord.

When our Lord Jesus Christ was here, he pointed to many of his disciples that they were having trouble because of only one thing, lack of faith. Let us learn from situations as we read the Scriptures from Enoch down to Noah to Abraham and to Moses. If they were able to accomplish significant contributions to make this world a better place to live in, it was not because of their power, not because of their rank in life or material abundance, but because of their faith.

Our theme for the month of March is "Indispensable Faith." Now in relation to that, our Father, as we look around us, the lack

of faith causes many problems and we who are Christians and are supposed to possess faith are somewhat discouraged and disappointed because there are moments in our lives when in our willingness to do something for others, we find ourselves unable to do so. In other words, Lord, sometimes we forget and think that faith is some kind of gadget or instrument that we have forgotten to carry with us and in the process we become helpless. That should not be the case Lord, for our faith is always with us and in us and because of it we can make this world much better.

Today, Lord, when we look around us, there seems to be some problems going on. Help us to be conscious of your presence and to relate ourselves to you in relation to our faith in you. For through our faith in your power, your power comes to us enabling us to help those who are in need of help.

The Philippines, Lord, is struggling hard against a lot of crisis-political, economic, social, whatever. Therefore, from our President down to the last man, help them to be God-conscious - for our President to always look to you for help and assistance and setting an example to us that we might be reminded to do the same, our Father, and before we know it, things will have found their proper places.

As we worship you today in spirit and in truth, remind us that there is no substitute for faith. If we have been trying to go about our responsibilities, our tasks, using other ingredients other than faith and if we fail Lord, please remind us, that we have forgotten one thing, the most important thing given to us to be able to accomplish much. This thing is what we call faith. Help us to understand it and to know how to use it so that we will not be discouraged.

Bless our loved ones who are not with us. Yesterday, there was a heavy rain - a heavy down pour. Lord, the farmers were grateful for it. We are also grateful for it but we can see that many were ill affected; some were unable to do their responsibility, some were prevented from leaving their homes and accomplishing responsibility. Anyway, Lord it does not matter. What matters is that, whether we are sometimes prevented from doing something

significant, there will always be another time to do it.

Today, Lord as we worship you, we begin to see many faces of opportunity that we can follow through and so fulfill your will for us these days. Forgive our many sins, bless our senior citizens, our women, our men, our children and young people. Bless this worship experience today, Lord, to the end that when we finally separate from one another we shall have been transformed by the Holy Spirit. This is our prayer, in Jesus name. Amen.

A Seventy-Year Old Man with a Vision

Dreams⁴¹

I thought that after “retiring” I will just sit down along a busy road to “evangelize” people, not to let them in to my denomination but to point them to Jesus. I want to refer people to Jesus, not to denominations. But now I don’t have plans. I leave it to the Lord, as long as the Lord will use me.

I wish that wherever I go I would be able to help people silently. I just want to be like “salt.” I wish to help in enabling people develop a quality of life. To illustrate: there was a man who told people that he was a born-again Christian. When he became materially rich, his attitudes changed to the extent of being dishonest to preserve his wealth. Yes, quality of life is quality of character regardless of material possessions. Happiness is measured not by the possession of millions of money but by the quality of character.

JEC’s 3-Pronged Vision for the Next One Hundred Years

Text: Proverbs 3:5-6; Philippians 3:13-14

We are in the middle of two centuries of faithful service and commitment to the cause of Christ. The first hundred years representing the first-half portion of our centennial motto – “For What Has Been – Praise God!” – have just gloriously ended. The next hundred years representing the second-half portion – “For What Will Be – Amen!” – will still come strongly and challengingly.

Our generation is standing in the place of those fearless pioneers led by Eric Lund and Braulio Manikan whose undaunted efforts paved the way for today’s jubilant centennial celebration. For their sacrifice and unselfish devotion we are eternally grateful to our heavenly Father.

At the second centennial celebration in the year 2100 it will be our generation’s turn to be remembered and for that matter the

challenging words of St. Paul should start keeping us busy in anticipation of that great day: “Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

For the next hundred years, Jaro Evangelical Church will still be wonderfully and triumphantly blessed if she stays within the framework of the Lord’s promise given in Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.” It is a promise that He will help us, today’s heroes, overcome obstacles along the way and enable us to move forward with enduring determination.

But of what significance is it if we go forward without a vision? And if we have a vision what should it involve?

Let me suggest a 3-pronged vision for the next hundred years. The first prong will cover plans for the improvement and extension of our physical property. I was inspired by the imagination of our Sunday school children when they presented a plan for a furnished 5-story Christian education building and the acquisition of three vans for church use. Of course, with the present size of our property there is no other way to go but up. Another option is to purchase additional property as we never can tell what necessities or opportunities the future will throw at our feet.

The second prong will represent plans for innovative programs designed to serve the surrounding communities as they grow larger and their needs multiply. In our home missions program focusing on Christian education and evangelism we could include the following ministries:

- Orphanage
- Home for the aged
- Nursing home
- Radio and television
- Ministry to the needy
- Ministry to fallen women
- Work-student study service
- Foreign missions

The third prong will lay stress on improving the quality of our membership. What kind of Christians do we really “produce?” Jesus taught His disciples the parable of “a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.” (Matthew 13:47). In this parable Jesus puts premium on quality. We are to nurture our people to the end that they will live “quality lives.” This is what Jesus meant by the abundant life in John 10:10 – a life lived to the full. It is a life that overcomes. One who has the abundant life is always in control of the situation. Trials, temptations, heartaches and obstacles are not stumbling blocks but stepping stones to victory. To summarize, this is our 3-pronged vision:

- A. Improvement and extension of our physical property including equipment.
- B. A dynamic program in relation to worship, everyday Christian living, Christian education and evangelism.
- C. Enabling our people to live quality lives.

Again, let us joyfully shout – “For What Has Been – Praise God! For What Will Be, Amen.”

Still on the Road of Faith with a Mission

“Love in Working Clothes”⁴²

“The palest ink is better than the sharpest memory.” I wrote this line in my notebook in our reading skills class that Pastor Rodolfo P. Acosta taught way back in 1981. It seemed to have been so long ago and my notebook has long been eaten away by colonies of termites in our dilapidated 13-B home, but the irony of it all is that no matter how dulled my memory has become and even when I do not possess the slightest tint of the ink which I used to write this line, I remember in my heart what Sir Acosta shared with us in the class.

In the many years of learning with Sir Acosta, I have come to realize that much of what he teaches and lives by is rooted in his heart. His passion for God, the pastoral ministry and life in its fullness has impressed and inspired me in searching for meaning and direction in my own journey of faith. Some of the details of what I have learned from him in homiletics, reading skills, and church history may not be easily retrieved from my memory, but one thing stands out from the volumes of wisdom I have received from Sir Acosta: “Love in Working Clothes.” This is the title of a sermon he shared in one of our homiletics class some time between 1983 and 1985. I do not claim that I remember this title word for word, but it lingered all these years even after the lessons I have learned from him seemed to have faded out.

“Love in Working Clothes.” The first time I heard this expounded to us in class by Sir Acosta, I was fascinated and deeply moved. It had impressed me so much that I have not forgotten it after more than ten years. There are two things that I consider as, in my own words, an “Acosta gem.” First, I would like to reflect on what that means to me over the years in relation to my understanding of the message and my understanding of how Pastor Acosta incarnated that message.

Sir Acosta used an illustration to explain his sermon, “Love in Working Clothes.” One evening a mother was all dressed up for a party. Suddenly, one of her children, all messed up and dirty from

the playground, eagerly rushed into the room heading straight into her arms with a big smile on her face, full of love and longing to express that and be cuddled. Instead of hugging the child she steps back and waves her child away and says, “Ay abaw, indi ka anay magpalapit sa akon kay basi mahigko-an ang akon bayo!” I can still hear and see how Sir Acosta narrated this story in class. All of his students know what I’m talking about. Recall Sir Acosta’s “down-to-earthiness” and like me remember how awesome that moment was for a 17 or 18 year-old. I was awed and transfixed then. And I still feel the same way, after all these years. But we have not yet arrived at the shining moment of this sermon. Sir Acosta went on to say that many times humans cannot fully express and experience love until they learn to love with the “Love in Working Clothes.” This love is willing to take the risk to love and embrace even those who are “dirty” and “messed up.” God’s love according to Sir Acosta is like this love. God in Jesus Christ took off heaven’s royal robes fit for a banquet and put on earthly, “working clothes” of a human carpenter and received into his arms those who desperately needed love. This is “Love in Working Clothes.”

“Love in Working Clothes” has made such an impact in my life that I have tried by God’s grace to serve God kag ang Iya katawhan drawing inspiration and empowerment from God’s “love in working clothes.” It had not been very easy but when I took the risk I discovered that such a love had a transformative power that brought healing to individuals as well as communities. Sir Acosta’s homiletics lesson has contributed to the shaping of everything that I have learned in the seminary and the kind of ministry that God had entrusted to me all these years.

How has this sermon helped me to understand the person, work and teachings of Pastor Acosta? In my view, “Love in Working Clothes” vividly and dramatically expresses all that Sir Acosta means to me. We had our lighter and enjoyable moments eating batchoy or pizza; but we also had our share of disagreements and misunderstandings in class. In all these situations, Sir Acosta had taken risks in loving and being vulnerable to his students. We felt blessed by his generosity and shared many joyful moments with

him. There were times that he had been hurt, but he still continued to love with the “love in working clothes.” Inside and outside the classroom he had “embraced” his students with this kind of love that can only be expressed by one who has been touched and “embraced” in the heart by God. We may not agree in every aspect of theology or doctrine or even in the style of preaching, but there is no doubt that Pastor Rodolfo P. Acosta has become to me and to many of us “Love in Working Clothes.”

A Pebble Dropped into a Calm Lake⁴³

I used to call Pastor Rudy Acosta “Uncle Rudy” during my elementary days when I spent summer vacation here in Iloilo. My parents were working in San Jose, Antique as pastors. When I entered the seminary he became “Sir Acosta,” a very influential mentor. He was our professor in Church History. He introduced to us the early church fathers and the reformers. He made us feel as though Huss, Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli were his colleagues. He made us realize that history need not be boring if students knew how to relate past events to current realities. We discovered that the church was not exempted from the political maneuvering of emperors. Even reformers disagreed in their biblical interpretations resulting in the formation of different non-catholic denominations. We remember him using the pie to illustrate the body of Christ as represented by different denominations. Big slices represent denominations with bigger population and smaller slices, smaller groups. Whether big or small all of us belong to one body, hence we must not belittle or quarrel with each other due to differences.

Sir Acosta also taught us to share. We remember him take the whole class to Fely’s to eat batchoy while discussing our concerns as students. In one prelim exam he also distributed chocolate bars as Christmas presents since we were about to have our Christmas break. Many of my fellow students shared how Sir Acosta would help them financially when support from their families were delayed or when it did not really come at all. He told us that the more you share with others the more God will bless you and sustain you.

He, too, was our professor in Homiletics. He was a patient and understanding teacher who believed that students could become who they wanted themselves to be if they did their best and with the help of God. He required us to preach as though it was our last chance to do it. We had no choice but to give our best. He likened planning the sermon to a woman who is on the family way. The process begins with the conception that usually takes place on Monday up to Thursday, the prenatal check up on Friday to Saturday and the delivery on Sunday. What creativity and imagination!

One time, it was an afternoon, as the classes were over I had a chance to converse with my mentor. I appreciated his loyalty and faithfulness to God and his mission to serve Christian Filipinos. I learned he was trained at Andover Newton Seminary. Life was very convenient in the States. Job opportunities were available yet he chose to come back, just like our other mentors Dr. Johnny V. Gumban, Dr. Domingo J. Diel, Jr., Ms. Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes, Dr. Limuel R. Equiña; Dr. Nestor Bunda and my friend Ms. Carla Gay Romarate-Knipel. He believed his mission is here. I appreciated Sir Acosta because he did not count coming back to the Philippines as a lesser calling than remaining in America. God's call is the same wherever one is serving.

Sir Acosta would often use this illustration in some necrological service I was able to attend. One's life is likened to a pebble dropped into a calm lake. That fall created ripples as it impacts with the water. The ripples represent the influences brought about by the life of the individual to persons he/she encountered. Sir, you too had an impact in my life. I may be far comparable to you, but the ideals you lived will always be my inspiration to go on in spite of various pressures that challenge my faithfulness to God and his call. Sir, Happy Natal Day!

Joyfully Struggling for a Global Transformation

Christian Identity and Global Awareness⁴⁴

Text: Genesis 1:26-29;3:17-19; Matthew 28:28-30

This essay begins with two significant questions: What is global awareness? What is Christian identity? The answers are brief though inferences drawn from them will be observed throughout the discussion.

Global awareness is the knowledge or awareness of events and developments taking place in the entire world and of their good and evil consequences to humankind. Christian identity is the faithful and loyal stand one must take along with Christ in His judgments and pronouncements against prevailing situations and trends that are morally wrong, destructive and dehumanizing.

Five levels of global awareness will be pointed out in this work. Our purpose is to learn from each level while our own global awareness is in process. Global awareness is of two kinds or categories: passive and active. One's role in passive global awareness is simply that of onlooker. In active global awareness, on the other hand, one meaningfully plays the role of participant. It is Global awareness of the second category that enables leaders of every generation to keenly perceive two possibilities open to them: to support, sustain and encourage movements that promote the establishment and enjoyment of freedom, peace and prosperity; and to resist the powers whose end is detrimental to human life.

In the earliest stages of global awareness when the world was in its infancy the responses and reactions of the generations immediately involved are best described as those of awe, wonder and fear. Life then was not so complicated and demanding. Today the picture has radically changed. Confronted with difficult and life threatening challenges in a fast-changing world, our generation will receive the enlightenment it so desperately needs to deepen its global awareness only from a fair, honest and objective assessment of trends. Consequently we will be encouraged to move from there. We are speaking here of a cumulative global awareness. The higher

one goes the more his global awareness reveals a fearsome picture of what the future holds. Depending on motives, global awareness can influence either to do right or to do wrong.

It will take a strenuous but rewarding flashback into history before we can perfectly understand how civilization in its long, arduous and painful struggle has finally come up to the present rung on the ladder of an ongoing global awareness. In this we shall be helped tremendously as from both Scriptures and secular history we draw records of significant events that clearly indicate God's interventions in the affairs of men. To that we shall now turn.

An eternal, immutable, omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent God had formed, before the dawn of time, a mighty plan to create an open-ended world that would allow for a significant degree of participation to a creature of superb intelligence that He would create in time. God had great expectations of this apex of His creation that in contrast to the lower order of created life, He made this creature He called man in His image and likeness. God is spirit and only in that sense can we rightly infer that man's likeness to Him must be nothing less than moral and natural likeness. Man's natural likeness to God endowed him with intellect, emotion and will; his moral likeness with holiness and sinlessness at his creation. When he missed the mark, i.e., when man fell in sin, he lost the moral likeness but the natural likeness he still retained. In spite of the tragedy, God did not change His mind about man and his possibilities. Through providential and remedial counteractions - the law, the prophets and ultimately through Jesus Christ, His Son - God had contrived a plan to reconcile fallen man to Himself.

It is now our opportunity to look back to learn from five significant instances or levels of global awareness. Each level reveals that God had willed for man to know of His purpose in order to prepare him for his important role. God had designed for man to experience not only global awareness but, in an active sense, enjoy global participation in significant events, as well. The first indication of this divine intention is found in Genesis 1:28. "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it'." Unfortunately, as time

progressed and mankind increased in number, people saw the need to band themselves together and stay put in one place. Against their Creator's wishes they built a landmark prominent enough to be seen from any point to enable them to retrieve their steps in the event they strayed a bit too far from what to them was "home." This was in direct defiance of God's injunction that they "fill the earth and subdue it" as stated in Genesis 1:28 and repeated in Genesis 9:1.

Into the detail of God's interventions that ended with the triumph of His plan we need not go. But we can accept the fact that if there are inhabitants all over the world today what happened can be traced back to the event of the confusion of language as recorded in Genesis chapter 11.

Although the word "global" has modern connotations and more appropriately applies to the present development of events in the entire world, it is interesting to discover how it also relates to the earlier levels of global awareness. The thrust of this message is to point out in ascending scale instances or levels of global awareness essential to the Christian understanding of God's plan for the world and what that plan would ultimately involve. It has a time span that begins with the creation of man and on to the present modern age of scientific discoveries and inventions.

The first instance or level of global awareness was the discovery that God's world was bigger than man could imagine given the limits of his immediate surroundings. It began with the generation that built the tower of Babel centuries after the great flood. This is recorded in Genesis chapter 11. The intention was to make that generation know the extent of habitable land and "fill it." At that time there was no hint of any knowledge of the existence of such vast bodies of water as the seas and oceans that we know today. How long it took the succeeding generations to discover some semblance of a shoreline that would suggest something, we do not know. But after the confusion of language, God's plan for man to "fill the earth and subdue it" was gradually and steadily finding fulfillment. This was the point to which the first instance of global awareness had come - knowledge of the great expanse of habitable land, the challenge to fill it with people, and the necessity

of exploiting the natural resources for livelihood and survival.

The second level of global awareness will take us to the days of Jewish captivity after the height of King David's successful career. David's sons and grandsons were not like him at all and in their time Israel succumbed to the mighty power of the Assyrian Empire in 721 B.C. Judah's turn came in 587-586 B.C., this time at the peak of Babylonian incursions and invasions. Both Israel and Judah ended up in shameful and unhappy captivity. Such tragic consequences as experienced by the Jews in consequence of their disobedience can be considered as one aspect of global awareness – an awareness of man's cruelty and greed and misuse of power, which taught the Jews a hard lesson. At the same time they had learned that when two cultures co-exist in a given situation a process known as "acculturation" is the likely result, with the strong culture dominating and absorbing the weak. Aware of this the Jews to this day have tried to live in isolation to preserve their own culture. In countries where they are in sojourn or exile Jews live in ghettos either as an imposition on them by local authorities or by their own free choice. The kibbutz - a modern collective form or settlement in Israel could have developed from this situation.

The third instance of global awareness points to the time of Jesus, at the close of His earthly ministry. When we read the account of His commission to His followers recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, one significant question enters the picture. Was Jesus here trying to instill in the minds of the people of His day the fact of a spherical earth? This would then imply the need for a wider global awareness than ever before as a prelude to a global dissemination of the Gospel, this time with Jesus' perception of a round world. While on our part this is mere speculation we might mention at this point that Isaiah 4:22 surprisingly suggests a spherical earth. "He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth and His people are like grasshoppers." Why, then, in spite of this support from scriptures, did the idea of a flat earth prevail even beyond Jesus' time? Only the fact that the Bible was not widely circulated or read at the time would explain the people's ignorance or slowness in catching on to the idea of a round world. It took another fifteen hundred years before an official announcement of

this amazing discovery could be declared. We might say then that Jesus' main concern was not to prove a round earth but to make people aware of the existence of more lands beyond their knowledge where the Gospel must be proclaimed. As a matter of fact it is this concern of Jesus that had moved a number of Christian missionaries as they caught His message at the close of the Middle ages to take the Gospel into the unknown world and make efforts to convert the heathen to the Christian religion. This was the level to which the third instance of global awareness had come - an awareness of the existence of people in lands still undiscovered "sitting in the darkness" and waiting for the light of the Gospel to shine on them.

I am reminded at this point of the rooster in a children's storybook. For the first time since it had broken out of its shell it was able to fly to the top of its wooden pen. Then and there it beheld "in awesome wonder" a much bigger, much brighter world. It had assumed all along that there was nothing beyond the wooden enclosure that was its world. This story of the rooster will be repeated in man's experience each time his global awareness takes him a step further. At the close of the Middle ages, particularly in the time of Christopher Columbus and before his celebrated discovery of America, there was this feeling of the earth being limited to and just within the scope of one's view. Believing that the earth was flat, sailors dared not go beyond the range of safety, until Columbus thought better, made the leap of faith and once and for all convinced the people of this day of the reality of a round world. Man's outlook and expectations had changed directions since then and today the expression "global" whether referring literally to a sphere or simply what would involve the entire civilization in terms of events, has found a place in people's everyday conversation. As the adventurous among them were lured into "discovering" new lands in the vast expanse beyond what the eye could see and the existence of continents and hundreds of remote islands became confirmed, global awareness has since challenged the nations to go to "the regions beyond."

"Think global" has become the modern man's motto. It will take an earnest and determined effort to find out to what extent this

motto has affected our world be it for good or for ill. I want to underscore the phrase “for good or for ill” for no better reason than that the “signals” received from global awareness and how they are interpreted and implemented can have both these effects on our present world. It behooves us therefore to ask, “What is God’s purpose behind all this? What is our role, as Christians, in His eternal plan? In one of Jesus’ encounters with the Jewish leaders of His day who were in the dark about His mission, He quoted Psalm 118:22-23 and meant it as a rebuke for their blindness: “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.” This passage is a warning and reminder that on man’s behalf God has left nothing to chance and if man is being deprived of the blessings intended for him it is because he has taken them for granted. Therefore we would look at every instance of global awareness as God-inspired and God-willed set against the background of God’s imperatives and addressed to every generation - imperatives which, when obeyed, will make a great difference.

We now proceed to the fourth level of global awareness the setting of which was the Renaissance Period in the Europe of Christopher Columbus’ day. The Roman Empire had broken down into nation states centuries before, and three of the strongest and most influential of these in the 15th century were England, Spain and Italy. As mentioned earlier, it had taken a man with Columbus’ determination to convince the whole of Europe that the world was not flat as it had been assumed. The significance of Columbus’ mind-opening achievements was tremendous. Like the first-born that opens the way for others to follow, subsequent navigators and explorers had started braving the open seas and returning with the glad news of more lands discovered and others still awaiting discovery. We might take this moment to mention that it was this period that had given rise to a trend that would prove to be both a blessing and a curse: colonization.

With the discovery of America, global awareness became an intricate matter with a mixture of different motives. In Europe, particularly, colonization seemed to be the only means of expanding territorially and it had to be somewhere else since there

was no longer any room for expansion there. A few daring and venturesome nations like Spain, Portugal and England, not without ulterior motives, eagerly responded to the challenge to “discover” and colonize nations on a program inspired by Jesus’ Great Commission to “make disciples of all nations” – in the Middle East, in the Far East, in the vast Pacific, in the African continent, and elsewhere. Regretfully, however, the subsequent explorations, the final straw that broke the intransigence of the believers in a flat world, were really inspired by wanderlust and greed. As we said earlier this level of global awareness was both a blessing and curse, for while finally God’s intention that His creatures know what lay before them and “to fill and subdue it” in preparation for that great gathering at the end of history, what developed from such awareness was at the same time disastrous in many respects to human society.

A fair assessment of the results of colonization from the Christian understanding of global awareness would bring immediate judgment and condemnation upon the colonizers. For what was global awareness about in the beginning? Here was a God who had wonderful plans for the creatures He had made after His likeness to dwell with Him in eternal bliss after their sojourn on earth. From the beginning to the end of history these creatures were to play significant roles in the unfolding events. As participant and witness generations from every age were to have a global awareness of what was going on for a full grasp of the different situations obtaining in the world of relationships in order to play their role meaningfully and well and to be in harmony with God’s intention and purpose. Unfortunately, somewhere along the way greed, evil desires and wrong motives began to evolve. People were getting the wrong message from their global awareness and good intentions were being perverted as fellow creatures began to take advantage of one another in their political and economic pursuits. Colonization, as it gained ascendancy, was causing clusters of trouble here and there between the colonizer and their subject people.

For want of space, we have to limit ourselves to the Philippine experience of colonization. For some four hundred years the

“colonized” who were given by their Spanish colonizers the name “Filipinos,” after King Philip II of Spain, had suffered tremendously from the tyranny of Spanish colonial rule. There was something ironical about this despotic rule since Spain was a Christian country and it was in fact the Christian religion, in obedience to the Great Commission of Christ, that gave Spain the inspiration to start on a program of colonization, the original purpose of which was to make Christians of the heathen.

Spanish colonial rule in the Philippines has been characterized as blind, cruel and exploitive. This is deduced from testimonies and biographies written on the struggles of the defenders of the Filipino cause among whom were Dr. Jose Rizal, Andres Bonifacio, Apolinario Mabini, and Emilio Aguinaldo, to mention a few. Unfortunately, where the religious sector should and could have prevented, minimized, or made up for the wrongs committed by its political counterpart, it was accused instead of being apathetic, a passive onlooker at what was immorally being perpetrated if not itself the very instigator of the wrongs committed.

Where colonization is concerned, what is the Christian stand on the issue? Freedom fighters give no weight to testimonies of good will between the colonizer and the “colonized.” The real issue is that colonization has no place in a world where freedom is equated with life. As Manuel L. Quezon, former President of the Philippine Commonwealth once said, “I prefer a government run like hell by Filipinos to a government run like heaven by Americans,” hellish freedom is to be preferred to heavenly enslavement. Here global awareness opens the eyes of the people to the evils of colonization that had degenerated into an “ism,” indicating a closed system. Colonialism, as a matter of fact sets itself against the Christ who came “to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Luke 4:18-19.

After what proved to be a long agonizing struggle, one by one the subject nations finally gained political freedom although “friendly” relations are still maintained with their former colonizers.

For obvious reasons, these nations have been categorized in our

time as third-world countries and their former colonizers as first world countries, which means only one thing: that while these former colonies are in a sense free from the political control of their erstwhile masters, in reality they are still under their economic control. This is the unfortunate situation that has engendered the unhappy and worrisome rift between what we call in our time, rightists and leftists, the former being branded as capitalist-leaning and the latter as communist-leaning. Whether or not there is truth to the accusations, the real issue and the heart of the matter is the cry for freedom from economic control.

The fifth instance or level of global awareness must now take our attention. From an awareness of the evils of colonialism we now shift our focus to an awareness of a recent trend in the economic world - globalization. Global awareness, as we have seen, is not a trend that threatens a nation's life and future. It is simply a call of necessity to keep our eyes open to what is prevailing in the economic and political world so that we can prepare or be ready as to what action to take to oppose or neutralize the effect of a harmful trend. At the same time it is being aware of the availability of the natural and human resources for our help, use, or benefit.

A short review of what the first four levels of global awareness that we have already covered can do for our present generation is in order. We in our time and with our own messy problems can be helped by the lessons we have seen from the first four levels of global awareness.

1) The first instance or level of global awareness will help us see that in our own time there are still situations that need "filling and subduing." In our present world made rich by scientific discoveries there are still many empty stomachs, empty hearts, empty minds and souls that need filling. And there are situations, systems and people in our so-called modern world that need to be "subdued" so that peace and righteousness will reign.

2) The second level will help us see that we can learn from other cultures and that while acculturation may be a painful sifting process, it will one day bless the world with the final culture that is most acceptable to God, making us all fit to live with Him when

the appointed time comes.

3) The Third level will remind us that as long as there are new generations coming the dissemination of the Good News of Salvation must go on. The “regions beyond” may not always be places where the Gospel has yet to penetrate. It can mean the coming generations who are our hope and with whom the Good News must be shared.

4) The fourth level will create in us a vigilance which is always the price of liberty. Colonialism under a new garb will always seek to return and wreak havoc in our society.

After that brief once-over we must now turn to the fifth and final level of global awareness. Here we are being made aware of a prevailing trend in our time that could be worse than colonialism. We refer to that trend which is known in the economic world as globalization. Defenders of the people’s cause describe this trend as a social, political, and economic trend that is subtly imposed upon helpless nations to the benefit of powerful nations who are in control of the world’s economy. If that is the true intention of globalization, an active global awareness can help check its abuses and evil inclinations.

What is globalization? A simple definition from the dictionary will not help much. It is an act of “making world-wide in scope or application.” But those who are vigilantly coping with the challenges of the New Millennium explain it this way: “Globalization is a condition where most countries of the world are made to align themselves with the economic and political systems of the powerful nations of the world.”

Extreme care should be taken that as Christians we maintain an unbiased position and seek to reconcile the protagonists who take extreme positions over the issue as pros and cons. For example, in protest against the side taking the negative stand, the pros say that “globalization does not threaten poor nations because foreign investment would help reduce gaps in wealth.” The claim is - when viewed in a positive light “globalization is the best means of improving the human condition throughout the world.” The foregoing is a defensive stand in an effort to counter the charges hurled by the detractors from the merits of globalization.

According to these detractors globalization will bring these about:

1) Destruction of our environment. Because of the free entry of foreign companies and tourists, there will be a demand for tourist spots, 5-star hotels, shopping malls, recreation areas (golf courses, resorts, etc.) and subdivisions.

2) Food insecurity. Because of the demand abroad for cash crops (bulk production) such as asparagus, cutflowers, bananas, pineapples, etc., instead of planting our staple crops (corn, rice), the farmers will be forced to resort to cash crops for export.

3) More poverty. Because of free market there will be a cutdown on government subsidies for the poor, the unemployed, and the underemployed.

4) Unemployment. With the entry of foreign products, our local companies that cannot cope with the stiff competition from foreign companies, will be forced to close down.

5) Breakdown in family values. More shopping malls and recreational facilities will take members of families from their homes. There is more push for people to be consumeristic and to spend beyond their means and on non-essentials. People are becoming "McDonaldized." Instead of having their meals at home they go to restaurants and other eating places where out-of-this-world attractions are made available by way of enticement.⁴⁵

Into the intricacies of the argument we need not go. But as Christians what action do we take when there is a threat to human life and values? Of course there are always two sides to the question and protagonists - pro and con - do not have a monopoly of either the right or the wrong side of the whole issue. It is often, if not always, a mixture of right and wrong, of false and true, and the preponderance of either side will have to be proved for purposes of reconciliation.

This finally takes us to the first half of the title of this essay - "Christian Identity." What is Christian Identity? Christian identity is identifying with Christ in all our concerns, in all that we think and say, in all that we are, and in all that we do. During the early church period when Christians were being persecuted, they were at times tempted to deny Christ, i.e., in order for their lives to be spared they pretended (some did leave Christianity) that they were

not Christ's followers. Some refused to be identified with Him and the reason was fear of death.

Today persecution takes many forms and one may not even lose his life by identifying with Christ. Persecution in today's context may be losing one's friends, job, wealth, popularity, or influence because of one's stand. All the same people may opt not to lose these assets or privileges and choose to "lie low" and take the role of nominal Christians and refuse to take a stand on issues such as globalization.

It is the observation of many that Christianity itself takes many kinds today. Extreme fundamentalism has always stood for what it considers the fundamental teachings of the Bible as against the position taken by the Liberals or even by the so-called Modernists. Between these two extremes that accuse each other of theological "faults" are various groups that emphasize what they consider the essentials of Christianity and put premium on evangelism and personal commitment to Christ. Others emphasize correct doctrine as necessary to salvation and look at theological wranglings as a waste of time. Still others look to good works as the only thing that matters while a great number take the very opposite view and insist that faith alone saves.

It must be said that all these are representative thoughts or ideas of what Christ stands for, although He is more than all of them put together. As the Jewish leaders could not hold Christ in their limited and biased view of the truth that sets men free, so Christian identity today as claimed by the differing sectors of the Christian persuasion falls short of the all-encompassing truth that is Christ.

Was Christ a political figure? Was His concept of religion identical with those held by the sects within Judaism that looked down on sinners? Was He right in defending the plight of publicans and sinners over and against the condemning spirit of the scribes and Pharisees? Was it right for Him to take up the cause of the underdog? Was He right in downgrading the rich?

If we can, after going through all of the above "labels", still be one with Christ, then our identity with Him will stand the test of faithfulness and loyalty to His cause. Our Christian identity is established only as we remain faithful and faithfulness to Him is

nothing less than being identified with Him in all that He stands for.

At the outset we said that Christian identity is the faithful and loyal stand one must take with Christ in His judgments and pronouncements against prevailing situations and trends that are morally wrong, destructive and dehumanizing.

When we read the versions of the Gospel what stands out about Jesus are His judgments and pronouncements against evil, against immoral acts, against the oppression of the helpless - the underdog, the ignorant, the poor – all who are being taken advantage of in fact. That was some two thousand years ago. One observation made by social scientists is that situations have not changed since then. In fact with the passage of time they have grown worse. Although Jesus is not with us physically, His Spirit is, as He promised in Matthew 28:20 – “...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” The question is - who will take up the cudgel for Jesus in times like these? It is those, of course, who have identified themselves with Him and His cause. It is the Christians in our time. The problem, however, is - how like Jesus are we really? Will we be able to handle the delicate task and understand the situation the way He would? In other words, are we like Him in motive, in purpose, in concern, in understanding, in sympathy, in mercy, in love?

The fifth level of global awareness confronts us with the issue of globalization which we have already discussed. The proponents who look at globalization with a positive eye have made the claim that it is the answer to our economic crisis. This was negated by the defenders of the people's cause who presented an analytic argument showing the disadvantages of globalization and the harm it does to our nation's economy. Granting that the detractors from the merits of globalization are right, i.e., that globalization is a disastrous economic trend, what measures should those who are identified with Christ or with the Christian cause propose to counteract the paralyzing effect of globalization on our economy? We propose nothing less than the renewal of man as he encounters the living Christ. When we have men “who cannot be bought... who put character above wealth...who will make no compromise

with wrong...who are not afraid to stand for the truth when it is unpopular..." we have half of our task accomplished.

Essentially we need to recognize two given or existing facts where globalization is concerned. The first existing fact is that our government, left with no choice, has accepted this unwelcome system. The second fact is several churches and church-related organizations are not sleeping on the job. Through the print media and radio and television facilities, challenges, appeals, and mind-opening presentations are being coursed to get to the people's hearing. In all these one thing stands out as a reminder - we are identified with Christ who did not resort to force as a means to get His message across. Today's major ideologies can make people angry at the realization of wrongs being perpetrated by those in power and there is always the possibility that arguments could turn into armed conflicts and cause the loss of many lives.

Since Christian identity is to be identified with Christ in what He says and does, what we say and do as the issues of globalization confront us is a matter of great concern. Jesus' way is the way of peace. He never advocated armed struggle. His teachings may be revolutionary but they are geared towards spiritual, not political ends. He loved those who considered Him an enemy. It is said that Judas' reason for betraying Jesus was the fact that he hated the Romans so much he would have wiped them out of existence given the means. He was hoping Jesus would do that kind of thing but when Jesus instead said, "Love your enemies," that made Judas decide to break with him. What Judas did not know was that Jesus' way was most effective. It effected a change of life and direction and the religious leaders were witnesses to that miracle as people who flocked to listen to Jesus were changed in the process. If Jesus was killed by His enemies it was not because he used arms but because He was so effective He had to be put out of the way.

Mention must be made briefly about why slavery was finally abolished in America, Europe and elsewhere. Jesus never directly attacked this evil system that deprived people of their freedom and all the rights and privileges that went with it. Jesus merely pointed out the value of life and challenged His hearers to do good, to love their neighbors as they love themselves, and to be kind and

forgiving. Little did people know that He was indirectly saying, "You have no right to enslave others."

What is the challenge of "Christian Identity and Global Awareness" to us today who have chosen to be identified with Christ? Let me recall a book written by Charles Sheldon titled "In His Steps." After one has read it, this is the message that will linger in his mind: Every time a man is about to make a decision, he should ask himself, "If Jesus were in my place, what would He do?" That is a wonderful way to explain Christian Identity.

The message of the following poem by Kristian Ostergaard will provide a fitting conclusion:

That Cause Can Neither Be Lost nor Stayed

That cause can neither be lost nor stayed
Which takes the course of what God has made;
And is not trusting in walls and towers,
But slowly growing from seeds to flowers.

Each noble service that men have wrought
Was first conceived as a fruitful thought;
Each worthy cause with a future glorious
By quiet growing becomes victorious.

Thereby itself like a tree it shows:
That high it reaches, as deep it grows;
And when the storms are its branches shaking,
Its deeper root in the soil is taking.

Be then no more by a storm dismayed,
For by it the full-grown seeds are laid;
And though the tree by its might it shatters,
What then, if thousands of seeds it scatters?

Towards a Quality of Life in Thought, in Word and in Action

Faith with Wings Like an Eagle⁴⁶

What strikes me most about Pastor Rudy Acosta is his child-like spirit. I guess he must have mastered the skill of relating to God and to others by looking through a child's eyes. This seems to be the reason why he has such a strong faith and conviction and points out faults without being judgmental. He is hurt at times but does not bear grudge.

Pastor is a man who experiences God daily – he has his own share of struggles but he inspires others by always relying on the Lord for renewed strength. Sometimes, he gets so burdened by how some of us members of the church lead our lives and, indeed, he is blessed with the gift of giving apt reminders and timely warnings. It shows by his actions that he feels for his flock.

As he celebrates his 70th birthday, I wish that he would not slow down but go on with the work God has entrusted him. Surely, the Lord will continue mounting him with wings like the eagles.

God-Consciousness, Quality of Life and Personal Relationship with God⁴⁷

“God-Consciousness” is one of Pastor Acosta's emphases on Wednesday Prayer Meetings, Sunday Worship Services and Bible Studies. Truly this has been my way of being close to God everyday, knowing that He is with us everywhere we go. He knows everything that we do - may it be right or wrong. In spite of being sinners He still loves us. He prepares the way and walks behind to protect us. He walks beside us too, to accompany us. Being God-conscious makes us come closer to Him. We know that He will always help us whenever we are in trouble. It makes us realize to do the right thing because He is beside us watching.

Another emphasis of Pastor Acosta's sermons, Bible studies and lectures involves the quality of life that we are living. In this

world, we are surrounded by evil motives, thoughts, and deeds. But they could be overcome by the kind of life that we choose to live. Pastor Acosta always tells us to look and examine ourselves if we are living a quality life.

Quality life is living in accordance to God's will. We will know how to live this kind of life by reading the Scriptures and putting to action what God wants us to do. Quality life means loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. As I always hear from our Pastor, "our neighbors are the ones who are in need." So whenever someone is in need, we must help him/her no matter what circumstances there may be.

Living a quality life is not easy. It is a struggle within one's self to suppress the desires of one's being. It means sacrifice, concern and most of all love to other people.

Pastor Acosta also emphasizes the significance of a personal relationship with God. Our relation to God does not end as soon as we receive Him as our personal Lord and Savior. It does not end in immersing ourselves into the water as in baptism. The key word is personal.

Personal means having an everyday encounter with God. We seldom recognize that God makes way for us everyday. We seldom see that we have already met God and bumped into Him as we walk along. It is because we do not recognize that it was Him.

Personal relationship with God continues to be strengthened as we go along living the quality life and being God-conscious. Having a personal relationship with God, we will be able to know Him better, to love Him more and experience Him as we continue to venture the Christian way of living.

All these that I have learned from Pastor Acosta and I am trying to remember in living my kind of life.

Words are not enough to thank you, Pastor, but I know that you are always happy whenever you see us living the God-conscious way, living a quality life, and having a personal relationship with God.

You are the Salt of the Earth

Text: Matthew 5:13

Just recently it has come to my attention that all schools holding commencement exercises nationwide this month of March are being admonished by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports that they challenge their graduating students with this general theme: “New Millennium, New Challenges, Higher Aspirations.” The admonition implies that this year’s graduates are to set their focus on the future, and I can think of no better thing than to be prepared for what lies ahead. God has a purpose and it is no accident that the graduation theme chosen by Bethany Life Center Academy “Equipped for Every Good Work” supports this general theme.

The threat of the new millennium has hounded us for sometime now and the dreaded thought of what is in store for us is like the Sword of Damocles hanging over our heads. It is of utmost importance then that we meet the new millennium’s challenges with higher aspirations and with everyone “equipped for every good work.”

Graduates, as the years unfold you will discover that the higher you go the farther your horizon will extend and the bigger will be your responsibilities. In all these one thing rings true, loud and clear: you cannot hope to meet tomorrow’s challenges and expectations with yesterday’s effort, equipment and zeal. For your growing buttons you need bigger buttonholes. As graduates of Bethany Life Center and in anticipation of your graduation from college a few years from today what preparations should you undertake that will make you equal to the task awaiting you?

I am reminded of the challenge posed by a poem I read as I was growing up. It is titled “The Nation’s Builders” and I quote:

“Not gold but only men can make
a people great and strong,
men who for truth and honor’s sake
stand fast and suffer long.
Brave men who work while others sleep,
who dare while others fly,
they build the nation’s pillars deep,
and lift them to the sky.

The poem reminds us that two essential things should be borne

in mind as we march into the future. Firstly, it is not gold but young men and women like you who will make our nation great and strong. And it is neither by magic nor by wishful thinking but by sheer hard work and stubborn determination that will make you do it with considerable success. Our silent observers fear that it is gold that is given emphasis. No wonder we are in trouble.

Secondly, as you face the initial challenges of the new millennium, your qualification for the task to which you are called in terms of nation building is constituted in three major aspects: a) your academic attainment (knowledge); b) your spiritual equipment (wisdom); and c) the quality of the life you live, a basic ingredient that will engender power and effectiveness wherever you are and in whatever you do.

A) Your preparation for your academic requirements extends in ascending scale from the nursery school and up to the graduate level and even beyond in terms of continuing special training programs designed to make you efficient. Here your professional preference will stand out. Whether as an engineer, as a teacher, as a doctor, or as a scientist, etc., you will be an asset to your country. In all these you will gain knowledge: As a nurse you will know how to...; as an engineer you will know how to...; as a lawyer you will know how to..., etc.

Let me repeat, your academic attainment will give you knowledge but not wisdom. Knowledge is acquaintance with or understanding of a science, art, or technique. Your expertise here will earn for you fame, honor and monetary benefits to guarantee a lifetime of material abundance. But that is as far as you can go.

B) The second aspect of your qualification is your Spiritual Equipment. In this world there are bad influences that can lead you astray. This is where your spiritual equipment comes in. Where your academic attainment gifted you with knowledge your spiritual equipment endows you with wisdom – the ability to discern between good and evil, right and wrong. The Bible speaks of a spiritual armor that can ward off the fiery darts of the forces of evil whose only intention is to make you miss the mark. Let me cite a few major ones.

Against all lies that will deceive you, stand firm with the belt of

truth buckled around your waist. Against influences that will entice you to do wrong, put on the breastplate of righteousness. Against all frustrations that will make you doubt God's purpose and plan for your life, take up the shield of faith. These are the major defense weapons that will enable you to distinguish between right and wrong. They will help you to always do what is pleasing to God.

C) The quality of the life you live. This third aspect of your qualification for the task to which you are called is the highlight of this graduation message. Aim for quality life. It is not perfection that is meant by quality life. It is a degree of excellence accessible to God that will enable you to live an exemplary life. It is based on Jesus' expectation of His disciples.

In preparation for the task ahead, Jesus wanted His disciples to be aware of what they are. What one does depends on what one is. If you help others it is because you are helpful.

So Jesus told His disciples, "You are the salt of the earth," a rather unusual way of addressing people. Today we refer to people or describe them in terms of precious stones such as diamond or rubies (for example on coronation nights – "Ikaw ang mutya sang Pilipinas").

Jesus referred to His disciples as salt because salt has two important properties or qualities. Salt gives savor; if you are salt you can change conditions or situations or atmospheres from sad to happy. At home, at work or at play, you can improve unhappy situations and relationships. Salt has preservative power; it prevents food from spoiling ("lob-ok"). If you are salt you can preserve the peace and order in your country and prevent bloodshed (e.g. in Mindanao).

Finally, as you go, remember that you are the salt of Iloilo City.....

This Man is Pastor Rudy P. Acosta

Conclusion: Panglangit nga Kabuhi

Many of us have seen and interpreted the life and ministry of this man. Many of us have read and heard the Christian message through him. This man – a humble person, a colleague, a historian, a pastor, a theologian, a teacher, a composer, a singer, a preacher, a man of prayer, a missionary, a man with a clear vision, a man with a moving faith, a friend – is Pastor Rudy P. Acosta.

In all his sermons and essays printed in this volume, Pastor Acosta has thought and re-thought on, told and re-told about, and acted and re-acted upon the multi-faceted Christian message aiming at a quality of life, a life in abundance (kaginhawaan). The testimonies included in this volume give evidence to that.

Pastor Acosta has consistently struggled to achieve a life worth living on earth, a life that can be experienced in Jesus Christ, a life on earth that mirrors a life in heaven. “Panglangit gid nga pagpangabuhi diri sa duta,” as Pastor Acosta declares.

Pastor Acosta’s interpretation of life in the context of the Christian message may be likened to an interpretation of life according to a struggling farmer whose precious “possessions” are his labor and a bag full of various seeds. This farmer claims that he is only a steward of his “possessions” including all other resources to farm – land, air, water, etc. This farmer is not like a squatter who does not have the desire to beautify or plant his surroundings because the land on which his house stands does not belong to him. This farmer, even if he has no private possessions, joyfully plants the various seeds. Day by day, he labors hard – cultivating the soil, planting some seeds, watering, watching, and praying for a quality harvest. As the seeds grow, he puts them in small pots and then offers them to anybody – rich or poor, beggar or elite, children, teenagers and adults - out of his love and concern. He feels that to give seedlings to anyone is a matter of faith in the service of God through his people, especially the needy. A rich man accepted a seedling he offered and kept it somewhere. A teenager nurtured the seedling he received as a decorative plant. An artist cultivated the

seedling he got as a bonsai. A poor man planted the seedling he received in a backyard and neglected it. A beautiful woman planted the seedling she received from him in a fertile soil until it grew to become a fruit-bearing tree. She harvested the fruits, ate them and gave some to her friends and neighbors. Then she collected some seeds, planted them and as they became seedlings she transplanted them to small pots and gave them to her friends and neighbors.

Pastor Acosta will surely like the beautiful woman more than the others because when she received the seedling from the farmer, she nurtured it until it multiplied and gave all of them to others. She demonstrated a quality of character because she was thinking of others. Indeed she is a woman for others “in thought, in word and in deed,” as Pastor Acosta will surely agree.

Is the ministry of that woman comparable to the ministry of Pastor Rudy P. Acosta? It is. Does she demonstrate a Christian identity similar to Pastor Acosta? She does.

Jesus Christ has shown us the way to a quality life by demonstrating that He is the Man for others. That beautiful woman was a woman for others. She followed the footsteps of Christ, just as Pastor Acosta does.

Have you received a seedling from Pastor Acosta? What have you done with it? Your answer will partly determine the life you are living now whether it is *panglangit nga kabuhi* or not. But for sure Pastor Acosta has proven to us that he is a faithful follower of God in Jesus Christ.

Endnotes

¹Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes. Ms. Ruiz-Duremdes is the current General Secretary, National Council of Churches in the Philippines. She is a member and former Church Administrator of Jaro Evangelical Church, Iloilo City, Philippines.

²Ronny Luces, in, *Ang Manugbantala*, vol. LXXXI, No. 2, May 1998, 8. Pastor Luces is Technical Assistant of the Development Ministries, Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, Inc., Fajardo St., Jaro, Iloilo City.

³Data were taken mainly from the Curriculum Vitae of Rodolfo P. Acosta, ca. 1968.

⁴Data were taken from Rudy Acosta's "autobiography," ca. 1977. He wrote an autobiography in relation to his application for a six-month study in Jerusalem under the auspices of the *Centre pour L'Etude de Religions* (Center for the Study of Religions), P.O. Box 20505, Jerusalem, Israel.

⁵Data were taken from an Evaluation, ca. 1973, written by Rudy Acosta, a Scholar who had studied in the U.S.A.

⁶Rudy P. Acosta, in, *Golden Year in Christian Ministry*, CPBC, 1985, 31f.

⁷Esther "Takim" G. Carnaje, November 19, 2000. Ms. Carnaje is a former student of Pastor Acosta at the College of Theology, Central Philippine University, Jaro, Iloilo City.

⁸Christian Ervin G. Lozañes, November 21, 2000. Mr. Lozañes is member of the Baptist Youth Fellowship of Jaro Evangelical Church, Jaro, Iloilo City.

⁹Atty. Lino M. Lozañes, November 21, 2000. Atty. Lozañes is member of Jaro Evangelical Church, Jaro, Iloilo City.

¹⁰Nola M. Hibionada, November 21, 2000. Ms. Hibionada is Chairperson of the Board of Stewards of Jaro Evangelical Church and member of the Scholarship Committee of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, Inc.

¹¹Martha Mae Encila Luces, November 21, 2000. Ms. Luces is Christian Education Directress of Jaro Evangelical Church, Jaro, Iloilo City.

¹²Excelyn Celeste Landero, November 21, 2000. Ms. Landero is former student of Pastor Acosta Year 1977-1982. She is Officer-In-Charge of the Religion and Ethics Department, Central Philippine University, Jaro, Iloilo City.

¹³Nestor D. Bunda. The text is an excerpt from a friendly talk with Pastor Rudy Acosta on September 6, 1993 in his residence at Pueblo Concepcion, Mandurriao, Iloilo City.

¹⁴Nestor D. Bunda, An Interviewer with Rudy P. Acosta, Tuesday, August 13, 1996, 10:00 a.m. – 12:15 noon, Pastor's Office, Jaro Evangelical Church, Jaro, Iloilo City.

¹⁵Nestor D. Bunda. Excerpts from an interview with Pastor Acosta on November 16, 2000, Pastor's Office, Jaro Evangelical Church, Jaro, Iloilo City.

¹⁶Dennis Delos Reyes, November 30, 2000. Mr. Delos Reyes is a student of Pastor Acosta in Preaching at the College of Theology, Central Philippine University.

¹⁷Esther "Takim" G. Carnaje, November 19, 2000.

¹⁸Excerpts taken from the Textbook used, "Principles of Preaching," by I.T. Jones. The text was provided by Ms. Elsa Baynosa, a student of Pastor Acosta. It is used by Pastor Acosta in his course on Preaching at the College of Theology, Central Philippine University.

¹⁹A composition of Rudy Acosta, to the tune of "Lumabaylabay Nga Daw Aso." Asin has become a popular song among students of Pastor Acosta at the College of Theology. Ms. Excelyn Celeste Landero knows the song by heart and has submitted the lyrics on December 1, 2000, for the purpose of this volume.

²⁰A Composition of Rudy Acosta, to the tune of "Top Of The World." Through the initiative of Ms. Melchorita Valdez, former student of Pastor Acosta and now Principal of

the Kindergarten School, Central Philippine University, the lyrics were given by Pastor Acosta to her on December 4, 2000. Mrs. Valdez has learned this song by heart since she was introduced to it many years ago but Pastor Acosta has slightly revised the lyrics lately.

²¹“Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem” and “The Holy City” are favorite songs of Pastor Acosta. Ms. Martha Mae Encila Lucas has submitted the lyrics on December 4, 2000, for the purpose of this volume.

²²Mona Lisa P. Siacor, November 29, 2000. Ms. Siacor teaches Mathematics and Natural Science and takes courses leading to a Master of Divinity degree at Central Philippine University.

²³From a recorded sermon preached at Jaro Evangelical Church on November 5, 2000.

²⁴Preached during the Worship Service at Jaro Evangelical Church on January 16, 2000.

²⁵Preached during a Worship Service on June 4, 2000 at Jaro Evangelical Church.

²⁶Preached during the Vesper Worship Service at Jaro Evangelical Church on July 23, 2000.

²⁷Preached during the Vesper Service at Jaro Evangelical Church, August 1, 2000.

²⁸Preached during the Worship Service at Jaro Evangelical Church, April 30, 2000.

²⁹Preached during the Worship Service at Jaro Evangelical Church on May 5, 2000.

³⁰Preached during the Vesper Worship Service at Jaro Evangelical Church, August 6, 2000.

³¹Preached during the Worship Service at the Jaro Evangelical Church, February 6, 2000.

³²Preached during the Worship Service at Jaro Evangelical Church, March 5, 2000.

³³Prayed during a Worship Service at Jaro Evangelical Church, November 5, 2000.

³⁴Prayed during a Worship Service at Jaro Evangelical Church, August 6, 2000.

³⁵Prayed during the Vesper Worship Service at Jaro Evangelical Church, June 4, 2000.

³⁶Prayed during the Worship Service at Jaro Evangelical Church, May 7, 2000.

³⁷Prayed during the Worship Service at the Jaro Evangelical Church, February 6, 2000.

³⁸Prayed during the Vesper Service at Jaro Evangelical Church, August 1, 2000.

³⁹Prayed during the Worship Service at Jaro Evangelical Church on January 16, 2000.

⁴⁰Prayed during a Worship Service at Jaro Evangelical Church, March 5, 2000.

⁴¹Excerpts from an interview of Nestor Bunda with Pastor Acosta, Pastor’s Office, Jaro Evangelical Church, November 16, 2000.

⁴²Carla Gay A. Romarate-Knipel, November 21, 2000. Ms. Romarate-Knipel is a former student of Rudy Acosta. At present she is a Faculty of the College of Theology, Central Philippine University, Jaro, Iloilo City.

⁴³Adele Grace G. Fegarido, November 21, 2000. Ms. Fegarido is a former student of Rudy Acosta. She is Coordinator of Family Wellness Center and a Faculty at the College of Theology, Central Philippine University.

⁴⁴Roldolfo P. Acosta. An essay he wrote as a contribution to a volume in honor of Dr. Domingo J. Diel, Jr. on the occasion of his retirement as President of Filamer Christian College, Roxas City, in May, 2000.

⁴⁵Excerpt from *Women’s Program Guide 2000*, Federation of Convention Baptist Women’s Missionary Unions, Inc.

⁴⁶Hannah Joy Silencino Quanico, December 6, 2000. Ms. Quanico is member of Jaro Evangelical Church. She teaches English at Central Philippine University, Jaro, Iloilo City.

⁴⁷Argerie Blanche “Jingle” R. Gallos. Ms. Gallos is the current President of Jaro Evangelical Church Baptist Youth Fellowship.

A Program for Pastor R. Acosta’s 70th Birthday