




PASUGO

GOD'S MESSAGE

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A large, diverse crowd of people is shown from the chest up, filling the frame. Many individuals have their hands raised in the air, some with palms facing forward, suggesting a religious service or a moment of collective prayer. The crowd includes men and women of various ages, with some smiling and others looking intently. Two small flags with horizontal stripes of green, white, and red are visible, held by people in the crowd. The overall atmosphere appears to be one of active participation and devotion.

LET US GO ON TOWARD
PERFECTION AND
SPIRITUAL MATURITY

PASUGO
GOD'S MESSAGE

The Magazine of the Iglesia ni Cristo (Church of Christ)

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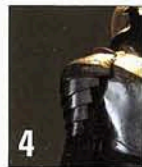
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Some of the brethren in Gibraltar, Benguet, Philippines after the dedication of their house of worship.





Let us go on toward perfection and spiritual maturity

SPIRITUAL MATURITY AND PERFECTION is, for many people, an elusive dream—a so-called castle in the air that they know they should aim for, yet, hazy and confused at how best to achieve it. They admit readily that it takes a degree of maturity and a big dose of humility to even recognize and acknowledge one's spiritual shortcomings.

True Christians know fully well that they are, in and of themselves, powerless against the onslaught of trials in life, the grinding economic poverty, the escalating lawlessness and criminality, and the daily tribulations of living in this wicked world. They need God and His promised help if they ever hope to "arrive" spiritually, because they know their limitations and, as such, cannot count themselves as fully mature in their faith, especially when it is to be measured by the standard set by Jesus Christ, Who is the Head of the Church.

Spiritual maturity is a continuing process characterized by growth and development in our spiritual life as opposed to dormancy or stagnation. It definitely involves an ability to outgrow adolescent attitudes and childish behavior that characterize immaturity—a rise from one level to the next.

But why strive for spiritual maturity and perfection when to err is very human? Apostle Paul explains, thus: "He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ, until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13, *New Living Translation*).

God appointed people with "gifts" to the Church with the noble intention of perfecting and fully equipping His servants to do His work and build up the

body of Christ which is the Church of Christ. It is His stated will. This growing process must continue until we all attain oneness in faith and all become full grown in the Lord—yes, a position of strength and maturity.

The key indicator of spiritual maturity and perfection was made plain by the same apostle, thus: "To make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:26-27, *New International Version*).

A fully mature Christian must be without a single spot or wrinkle or any other blemish, being holy and without a single fault—a tall order indeed. But that's exactly what every member of the "radiant church" must achieve if the Church is to be presented to Jesus on His Second Advent worthy of salvation and eternal life.

As such, the servant of God needs to begin the ongoing process of spiritual growth by avoiding immorality and all sexual looseness (I Cor. 6:18). He must flee from impurity in thought, word, or deed.

He is not deluding or even fooling himself into thinking that he will not sin (I John 1:8, 10), because he understands he remains human and can still be influenced by his base nature and the degenerate world around him. Still, he does not make it a practice to sin, rather, he strives mightily to avoid it—to the point of fleeing circumstances where he might be tempted into committing wrongdoing.

He makes the firm choice to apply God's words and admonitions in everyday circumstances and live by His will rather than human viewpoint which Apostle Paul describes, thus: "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ... The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you,

The Church Administration richly admonishes everyone to have a comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God until we all become fully grown, complete and mature in Christ worthy of the promised inheritance in the heavenly abode.

as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:16, 19-21, NIV).

Knowing that what our human nature wants is diametrically opposed to what God wants, the true servants of God allow their lives to be directed by Him—walking in lock step with His words as evidenced by an attitude that seeks obedience to God in all things. They make a conscious effort, sacrifice, and discipline to say no to whatever God says no to and to say yes when God says yes.

They try very hard to overpower the pulls of the flesh which produces these evil results: impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasures, ill temper, jealousy and anger, complaints and criticisms, the feeling that everyone else is wrong except those in their own little clique—knowing and fully believing that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the kingdom of God.

One more great sign of spiritual maturity is the acquired ability to keep one's mouth shut as James the apostle explains: "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless" (James 1:26, *Ibid.*).

Bridling the tongue takes discipline. Wittingly or unwittingly done, so many find it easy to air the neighborhood's dirty laundry. Why do many engage in this toxic behavior? To some, it boosts their self-esteem. By pointing the mistakes and failures of others, it makes them feel better about themselves and relieves them of their own frustrations in life.

Mature Christians don't participate in such gossips, prejudice, or other things that work to divide God's people. They keep reminding themselves that spiritual maturity is evident in the heart that looks for grace rather than self-righteously looking at the faults in other's lives. So, anyone who wrongs his brother or sister and can't humble himself so as to put things right because of pride, only succeeds in showing his immaturity.

Servants of God understand that life would not always be sunny and bright even if they do their best to follow His teachings as Apostle Paul testifies, thus: "As servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and ri-

ots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love" (II Cor. 6:4-6, *Ibid.*).

Truly, one's reaction to life's daily intrigues shows if he is not only a true servant of God but a mature one. Mature servants of God try to live in such a way that no one will ever be offended by the way they act, so that no one can find faults in them and blame such act on God. They patiently endure sufferings and hardships and troubles of every kind.

Their interpersonal relationships are wholesome, selfless, giving, forgiving, and mutually supportive. There is no room in their emotional vocabulary for hatred. Rather, their life is characterized by civility, lack of envy, and a temper that is well under control.

Truly, what a servant of God does in the midst of life's storms—not reaching out to man but to God, not drinking and drugging his pain, sorrow, and miseries away—is a tell-tale sign of his spiritual maturity.

God's servants prove their aspiration to be spiritually mature and on the way to perfection not in empty words but evident in thanking God still even when circumstances in their lives seem dire; by a heart that repents more deeply and sincerely; by a life defined by not seeking retribution for those that hurt them; by a generous heart that gives sacrificially; and by counting as loss everything the world may offer for the sake of remaining a faithful servant of God and our Lord Jesus Christ inside His true Church.

Being a family man, the spiritually mature Christian makes it a point to discipline his children even in their early years (Prov. 19:18), truly believing that doing so won't hurt them but may even save their lives from pun-

Exposing by contrast

BEING ALWAYS ON THE ROAD, it has become my hobby to tune in to your radio station (DZEM 954kHz). I must admit that I learn a lot from your programs especially with regards to various religious beliefs. In your attempt to be fair and objective, I also noticed that you quote from the books written by the authorities of other religions. However, my wife once quipped why your speakers at times deal with the beliefs of other religions instead of just confining yourselves to the doctrines you uphold. Is that approach not against the Bible?

Peter John Isidro
Manila, Philippines

Editor's reply:

Thank you for writing us and for tuning in to our religious programs on local radio, DZEM 954kHz.

In discussing the teachings of other religions, our modest objective is to correct the erroneous doctrines which will cause man not to inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:20-21, *New King James Version*). To attain such a noble aim, there are instances when we cannot avoid comparing the beliefs espoused by different religions with the tenets of the Bible, being the sole basis of the true faith. In so doing, we only use the Bible according to its intended functions: "... you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for

reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Tim. 3:15-17, *Ibid.*).

Notice that aside from being profitable for doctrine and instruction, the Holy Scriptures is also useful for "reproof" and "correction". The Church of Christ therefore believes that examining other religious beliefs in the light of biblical precepts eventually leads to understanding and enlightenment on the part of the people concerned.

Consequently, identifying what is false is effective and oftentimes necessary to show the truth. And since it is a duty of the Church of Christ to share what is true concerning God's wisdom (Eph. 3:10), exposing false teachings for the purpose of enlightening others, is therefore unavoidable and necessary. As a matter of fact, the Apostle Paul recommends this method of exposing the truth. He taught: "Try to discover what the Lord wants of you, having nothing to do with the futile works of darkness but exposing them by contrast" (Eph. 5:10-11, *Jerusalem Bible*).

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ishment, thus: "If you refuse good advice, you are asking for trouble; follow it and you are safe. ... If you don't punish your son, you don't love him. If you do love him, you will correct him" (Prov. 13:13, 24, *Today's English Version*).

Indeed, scolding a child helps him learn; left undisciplined, he'll bring his mother to shame (Prov. 29:15, *Ibid.*). Faithful servants fully subscribe to the conviction that God, through His words, can change the worst in us and free us from the many sins that hinder us. He can help us identify the changes that we still need to make and help us renew our wrong practices and thoughts.

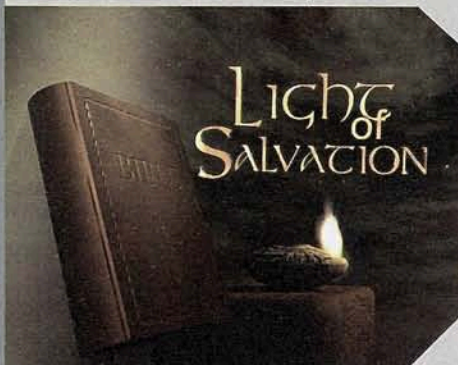
This is the essence why God placed an Administration inside the Church of Christ—to make known His teachings to His people (Col. 1:25, *Ibid.*). An august task that the Church Administration richly and willingly fulfills by proclaiming, warning, and admonishing everyone to have a comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God until we all become fully grown, complete and mature in Christ worthy of the promised inheritance in the heavenly abode. ☪

— RICHARD J. RODAS
Editor-in-Chief

Editor's Note:

Starting with this issue, the official logo of the Church's theme until its centenary in 2014 will appear on our masthead and select portions of our inside pages.

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Heeding the Divine Call

By NICANOR P. TIOSEN

CHRIST IS COMING SOON! The events happening in the world today herald His Second Advent as Christ Himself testifies (Matt. 24:3, 6-8, 33, *New King James Version*). We, members of the Church of Christ, God's people in these last days, believe in the Savior's pronouncements and are thus gearing up or preparing ourselves to meet the Lord as He commands us, thus: "Watch out, then, because you do not know what day your Lord will come. ... So then, you also must always be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you are not expecting him" (Matt. 24:42, 44, *Today's English Version*).

Not remiss in his obligations, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, the Executive Minister of the Church, inspiringly echoes this call for all of us brethren to get ready—summoning up every Church member, thus: "Let Us Go On Toward Perfection and Spiritual Maturity."

Who shall truly be blessed

But why should members of the Church of Christ heed the call? Whom does the Bible teach as fortunate, whether they be alive or dead, on the Second Advent of the Lord? In his first epistle to the Thessalonians, Apostle Paul wrote, thus: "For

"But let us who live in the light think clearly, protected by the body armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation."

— I Thess. 5:8, *New Living Translation*

the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (II Thess. 4:16-17, *NKJV*). According to Apostle Paul, when the Lord returns, "the dead in Christ will rise first" and those "who are alive and remain" will no longer experience death, for they will be caught up in the clouds together with those who were resurrected first to meet the Lord in the air.

But who are "in Christ"? Whom does Christ recognize as His? Christ knows who belong to Him: they are in the Church which He calls "My church" (Matt. 16:18, *Ibid.*) and which the apostles call "church of Christ" (Acts 20:28, *Lamsa Translation*). Faithful members of the Church of Christ therefore, whether they be dead or alive on Christ's Second Coming, are fortunate. Why? Because the second death in the lake of fire, God's punishment for sinners, has no power over them (Rev. 20:6, *NKJV*). Hence, we, members of the Church of Christ in these last days, have every reason to heed the call to prepare for our Savior's Second Advent.

Becoming perfect and spiritually mature

To truly prepare, all of us, members of the Church of Christ, should strive to become perfect and reach spiritual maturity. This we can do by following and serving our Lord Jesus Christ and be worthy of His promise, thus: "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor" (John 12:26, *Ibid.*).

During the time of the first-century Church of Christ, Apostle Paul recognized the value of faithful service

—❧—

**The servants, or members of the Church of Christ,
who are ready to meet the Lord are awake to
righteousness and are careful not to commit sin.**

—❧—

which constitutes the basis for the gifts that lead to perfection received from our Lord Jesus Christ, thus: "And that same Christ gave gifts to people—he made some people to be apostles, some people to be prophets, some people to go and tell the Good News, and some people to have the work of caring for and teaching God's people. Christ gave those gifts to prepare God's holy people for the work of serving. He gave those gifts to make the body of Christ stronger. This work must continue until we are all joined together in the same faith and in the same knowledge about the Son of God. We must become like a mature (*perfect*) person—we must grow until we become like Christ and have all his perfection" (Eph. 4:11-13, *Easy-to-Read Version*).

Doing what pleases the Lord

But what preparations should members of the Church of Christ make to go on to perfection and spiritual maturity, and eventually to meet the Lord Jesus Christ? Writing to the Christians at Corinth, Apostle Paul rallied them thus: "Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame" (I Cor. 15:34, *NKJV*).

The servants, or members of the Church of Christ, who are ready to meet the Lord are awake to righteousness and are careful not to commit sin. They fully believe in what Apostle Paul said, thus: "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us be-

have decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Rom. 13:12-14, *New International Version*).

True Christians have no problem following specific instructions, especially that which will set them apart from the rest of the people of the world, thus: "Have nothing to do with the worthless things that people do, things that belong to the darkness. Instead bring them out to the light" (Eph. 5:11, *TEV*). Resolute as they are in reaching perfection and spiritual maturity, brethren in the Church strive hard to deny and rid themselves of sinful pleasures as they heed Apostle Paul's admonition, thus: "Try to learn what pleases the Lord" (Eph. 5:10, *Ibid.*).

As children of the light

Striving to go on to perfection and spiritual maturity is truly in keeping with God's plan for us members of the Church of Christ in these last days. We do this guided by Apostle Paul's reminder that reverberates in our hearts, thus: "For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night" (I Thess. 5:5, *New Living Translation*).

And we cannot take chances, too. Hence, Apostle Paul's concerned instructions, thus: "But let us who live in the light think clearly, protected by the body armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confi-

On our journey to eternity

*When lean times come and fields yield not—
then pastures, once verdant, lay bare;
Neither must we fret nor frown
or cry in great despair.*

*When things, once sweet, start to sour—
and dreams begin to fade;
Never must we lose our hope
or should we be afraid.*

*When tables, once fruit laden—
now spreads just linen white;
Not surprising, if at all—
orchards suffer drought and blight.*

*Days are not always sunny.
Skies are not always bright.
Pitch dark nights are such
so we learn to value the light.*

*When mornings gray come by for days—
that seem to have no end;
Time to bow our heads,
and for our knees to bend.*

*Why should we be sad?
Why should we be discouraged?
God in heaven awaits our prayers.
Let our hearts not be daunted.*

*This, our world, is not worry-free
that, we ought to understand;
God lets us suffer tests and trials,
on our way to the promised land.*

*He lets us pass through beaten paths
midst woes and throes, midst poverty;
But should we abide by His counsel
He'll let us taste prosperity.*

*Now let us lift our voices sweet
in joyful adoration;
A solemn vow: we shall remain
God's strong and steadfast nation.*

*Nicanor P. Tiosen
Quezon City, Philippines*



While the rest of the world is wallowing in sin, the divine mandate rings clear: “Keep away from every kind of evil.”



dence of our salvation” (I Thess. 5:8, *Ibid.*).

Realizing the urgency of the matter, not only as the Church of Christ in these last days is moving toward its centennial on July 27, 2014, but as the day of the Lord’s Second Advent is truly fast approaching, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, inspiringly echoes Apostle Paul’s admonition to the early Christians, thus: “Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to everyone else” (I Thess. 5:14-15, *Ibid.*).

And while the rest of the world is wallowing in sin, the divine mandate rings clear: “Keep away from every kind of evil” (I Thess. 5:22, *Ibid.*).

Until the Lord’s appearing

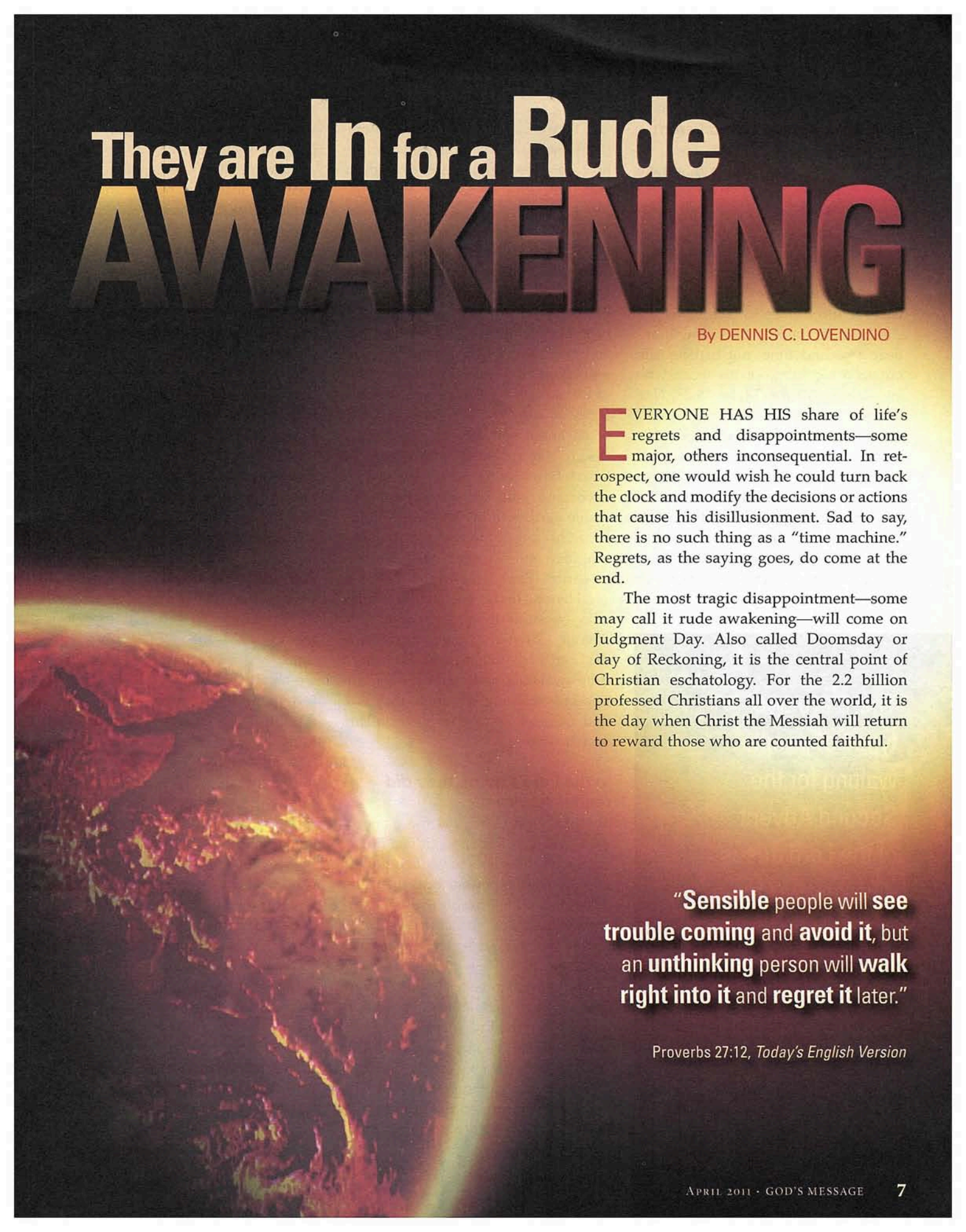
Nearing the day of Reckoning, the devil, the enemy of our faith, unleashes his full fury—using every available means to vanquish the elect, such as suffering and hardship and trouble of every kind that even the chosen ones are not spared. These should not prove daunting though. Like Apostle Paul, members of the Church of Christ in these last days ought to be able to say: “... We patiently endure suffering and hardship and trouble of every kind. ...

with God’s power helping us in all we do. All of the godly man’s arsenal—weapons of defense, and weapons of attack—have been ours” (II Cor. 6:4, 7, *Living Bible*).

Hence, today, whatever we may encounter, we must always bear in our mind and heart what Apostle Paul wrote, thus: “... that you keep *this* commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing” (I Tim. 6:14, *NKJV*). Rightfully so “... so that you will be able to choose what is best. Then you will be free from all impurity and blame on the Day of Christ,” says Apostle Paul (Phil. 1:10, *TEV*).

In the same manner, he instructed the Christians at Corinth, thus: “With these promises ringing in our ears, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from anything that pollutes body or soul. Let us prove reverence for God by consecrating ourselves to him completely” (II Cor. 7:1, *The New Testament in Modern English*). Apostle Paul likewise inspired the Christians at Thessalonica and bade them with a blessing, thus: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thess. 5:23, *NKJV*).

Heeding all these godly admonition and commandments translates to reaching perfection and spiritual maturity. 🕊



They are In for a Rude AWAKENING

By DENNIS C. LOVENDINO

EVERYONE HAS HIS share of life's regrets and disappointments—some major, others inconsequential. In retrospect, one would wish he could turn back the clock and modify the decisions or actions that cause his disillusionment. Sad to say, there is no such thing as a "time machine." Regrets, as the saying goes, do come at the end.

The most tragic disappointment—some may call it rude awakening—will come on Judgment Day. Also called Doomsday or day of Reckoning, it is the central point of Christian eschatology. For the 2.2 billion professed Christians all over the world, it is the day when Christ the Messiah will return to reward those who are counted faithful.

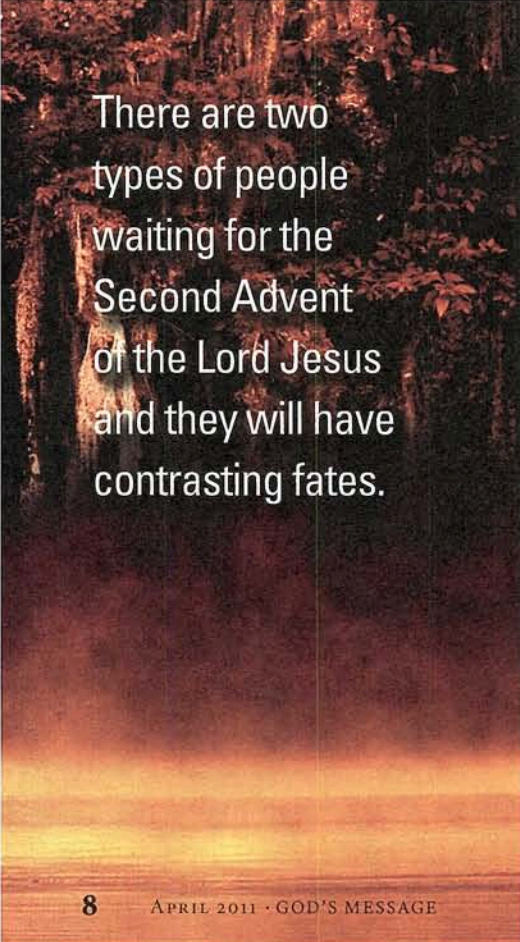
"Sensible people will see trouble coming and avoid it, but an unthinking person will walk right into it and regret it later."

Proverbs 27:12, Today's English Version

Both waiting, but two different outcomes

The Bible, however, teaches that there are two types of people waiting for the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus and they will have contrasting fates. The first one consists of those whose hope will be realized—the Messiah will bring salvation to them: “Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him” (Heb. 9:28, *New International Version*).

The second type includes those who are also waiting for Christ’s return, only to receive a shocking disappointment: “How terrible it will be for you who long for the day of the LORD! What good will that day do you? For you it will be day of darkness and not of light” (Amos 5:18, *Today’s English Version*).



There are two types of people waiting for the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus and they will have contrasting fates.

Take note that the people aforementioned are not simply awaiting—but are even longing for or eagerly anticipating—the day of the Lord. Yet, for them, such will not be a day of light (or salvation) but of darkness. Why? How does the Bible describe the day of the Lord in so far as those who will not be saved are concerned? “The great day of the LORD is near—very near and coming fast! That day will be bitter, for even the bravest soldiers will cry out in despair! It will be a day of fury, a day of trouble and distress, a day of ruin and destruction, a day of darkness and gloom, a black and cloudy day ... On the day when the LORD shows his fury, not even all their silver and gold will save them. The whole earth will be destroyed by the fire of his anger. He will put an end—a sudden end—to everyone who lives on earth” (Zeph. 1:14-15, 18, *Ibid.*).

Hence, there are people today who consider themselves avid and devout Christians, eagerly awaiting the Lord’s advent, but who are in for a rude awakening on Judgment Day. Instead of receiving salvation, they will find themselves cast into everlasting destruction.

In the Lord’s name they *did* render services

Some may postulate that those people who shall have such a tragic end do not even render services to God and to the Lord Jesus, thereby making them undeserving of the prized salvation. “Perhaps, all they do is to wait for the Lord’s coming and not perform pious deeds to earn the reward,” they may say. But the Savior Himself gave testimony on how zealous these people are in their service: “When the Judgment Day comes, many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord! In your name we spoke God’s message, by your name we drove out many demons and performed many miracles!’ Then I will say to them, ‘I never knew

you. Get away from me, you wicked people!’” (Matt. 7:22-23, *Ibid.*).

Notice how these people would recite all that they have done in the name of the Lord Jesus, assuming all along that those works will earn them passage to God’s kingdom. Take note also how the Savior will respond to them: “I never knew you. Get away from me, you wicked people!” We could imagine the great shock these people shall be in. All these times, they are confident that salvation is theirs because they profess faith and at the same time perform services in the name of Jesus. But on the day of Reckoning, they will end up being rejected and driven away by the Savior. It is, no doubt, a rude awakening—a sudden realization of an unpleasant fact—and shocking beyond words!

A point of no return

Others may be thinking that with disappointments and all, man can learn from his mistakes, rectify his actions, and recover from his loss. But we should all realize that the day of Judgment, in a way, is a dead end—a point of no return—where reversal is no longer possible. The condition of a person when he will be found by the Savior on His return will determine the type of recompense he shall receive. No amount of tears or repentance could help an individual “make up” for the transgressions and shortcomings he has committed.

It is then highly imperative to understand, in the light of the Scriptures, how one could avoid being among those for whom Judgment Day will be a day of darkness and destruction, but instead, be included among the fortunate ones.

The ones whose hope will come to fruition

According to the Bible, who are certain of being saved from God’s wrath

on Judgment Day? Apostle Paul spoke this truth: "But God gives proof of His love to us in Christ's dying for us while we were still sinners. If therefore we have now been pronounced free from guilt through His blood, much more shall we be delivered from God's anger through Him" (Rom. 5:8-9, *Weymouth*).

The apostles testify that the people who were "pronounced free from guilt through [Christ's] blood are the ones who "shall be delivered [or saved] from God's anger." Hence, regardless of a person's personal attributes—being devout or zealous in his religion, for instance—he still will not be counted among those who are assured of salvation unless he is among those pronounced guilt-free through Christ's blood.

To be considered free of guilt or to be forgiven of sins, one must be among those who have redemption through Christ: "It is through his Son that we have redemption—that is, our sins have been forgiven" (Col. 1:14, *Complete Jewish Bible*). The one redeemed or purchased by Christ with His blood is the Church of Christ (Acts 20:28, *Lamsa Translation*).

Added to the Church

Hence, where does the Lord God add those people who will be saved? This is what is recorded: "Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47, *New King James Version*).

Why is it necessary for people to be added to the Church? Because it is the Church whom Christ will save: "For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior" (Eph. 5:23, *NIV*). The Church, inasmuch as it is Christ's body and not someone else's, is called the Church of Christ (Acts 20:28, *Lamsa Translation*).

Judgment awaits those outside

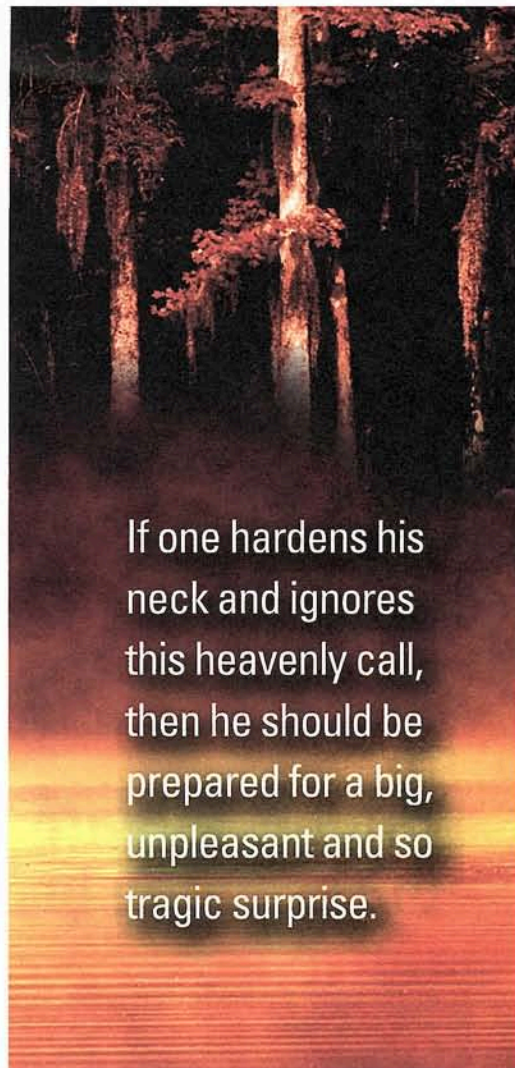
Hence, what is God's verdict concerning those who are not in the Church, or are outside of it? Apostle Paul declared, "God will judge those outside. 'Expel the wicked man from among you'" (I Cor. 5:13, *NIV*).

In contrast, those who are in Christ or are members of His body or Church have no more judgment or condemnation: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1, *NKJV*). Who are these people who are "in Christ"? They are those who are members of His body (I Cor. 12:27) or who belong to His Church (Matt. 16:18).

Terrifying events portend the great day

As prophesied by the Savior Himself, the worldwide events that are unfolding before our eyes are clearest indications that His advent is at hand: "There will be mighty *and* violent earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences (plagues, malignant and contagious or infectious epidemic diseases, deadly and devastating). And there will be sights of terror *and* great signs from heaven ... And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with great (transcendent and overwhelming) power and [all His kingly] glory (majesty and splendor)" (Luke 21:11, 27, *Amplified Bible*).

The powerful earthquakes that shook New Zealand on February 22 and Japan on March 11 are unquestionably the fulfillment of the terrifying events that portend the impending end of the world. According to the US Geological Survey, there had been 68 significant earthquakes in 2010, 50 of which had a magnitude of more than 6 on the Richter scale. Add to this the current social and political turmoil

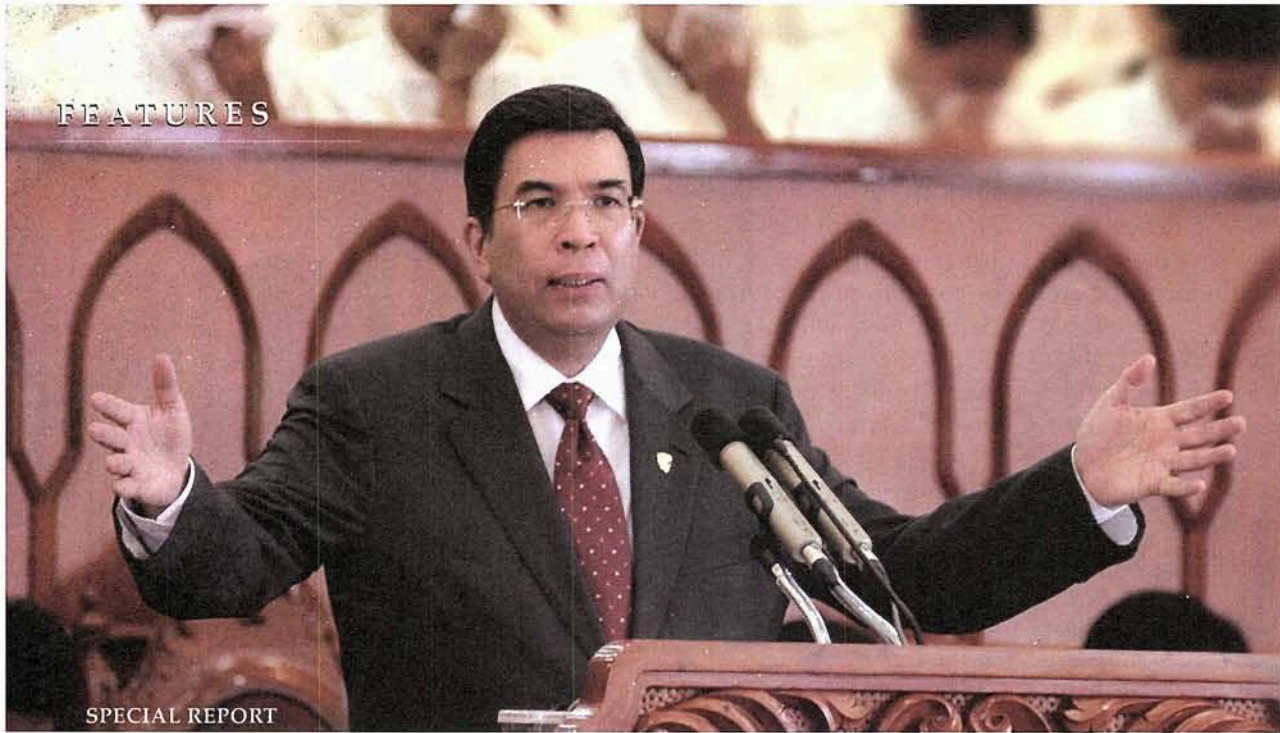


If one hardens his neck and ignores this heavenly call, then he should be prepared for a big, unpleasant and so tragic surprise.

in North Africa and in the Middle East—in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, Iran—where uncertainties have caused the price of oil to spike up in the world market, aggravating the already impoverished conditions of millions of people around the world. If these events unfolding before our eyes are not enough to convince us that the day of Judgment is indeed very near, then what will?

So why not act now before it is too late, and heed God's call: "For he says, 'At the right time I heard you, and on a day of salvation I helped you.' Listen, now is really the 'right time'! Now is the 'day of salvation'!" (II Cor. 6:2, *International Standard Version*).

If one hardens his neck and ignores this heavenly call, then he should be prepared for a big, unpleasant and so tragic surprise. ☹



SPECIAL REPORT

Brother Eduardo V. Manalo visits the brethren in Romblon

By PHILIPPE CHRISTIAN P. DIAZ

ROMBLON, PHILIPPINES—On February 26, 2011, more than 13,000 brethren gathered at the house of worship and compound of the local congregation of Odiongan, Romblon for a worship service officiated by the *Iglesia ni Cristo* (Church of Christ) Executive Minister, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo. This was his first visit to Romblon.

Prior to the occasion, the brethren held devotional prayers in their respective local congregations and thanked God for the great blessing they are to receive. They also prayed for the safe travel of the Executive Minister.

“We are very excited to see Brother Eduardo. Above all, we are excited to receive God’s blessings that he will bring here which we will take with us to our own local congregation,” said Brother Eduardo Adinig, one of the deacons from a nearby congregation.

Brethren from neighboring islands rode on pump boats to reach Odion-

gan. As if the far distance and long travel was not difficult enough, waves, as high as houses, threatened to flip their boats. They braved them all. “Because of our desire to attend the worship service and see Brother Eduardo, even though the travel was dangerous, even though the waves were big, we endured. With God’s help, we reached this place safely,” said Brother Angelo Teologo, an evangelical worker.

The Executive Minister’s longing to see the brethren and bring them God’s spiritual blessing matched the brethren’s wish to be with him. Brother Eduardo travelled the 168-mile distance from the *Iglesia ni Cristo* Central Office at Quezon City to Odiongan, Romblon. Upon seeing him enter, thankful prayers from the congregation echoed inside the worship building. At 9:25 a.m., the district minister, Brother Librado V. Santos, led the faithful in a heartfelt prayer.

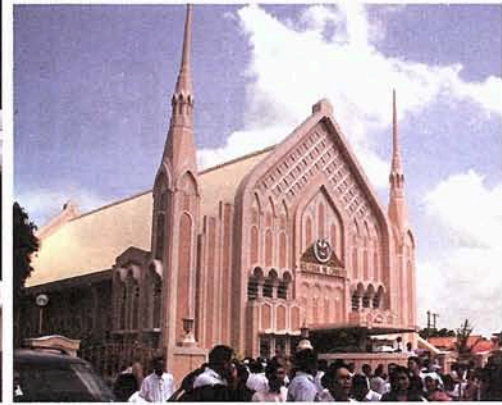
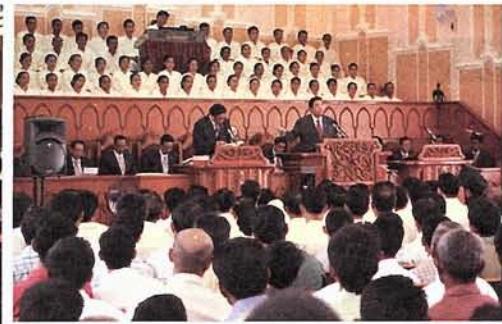
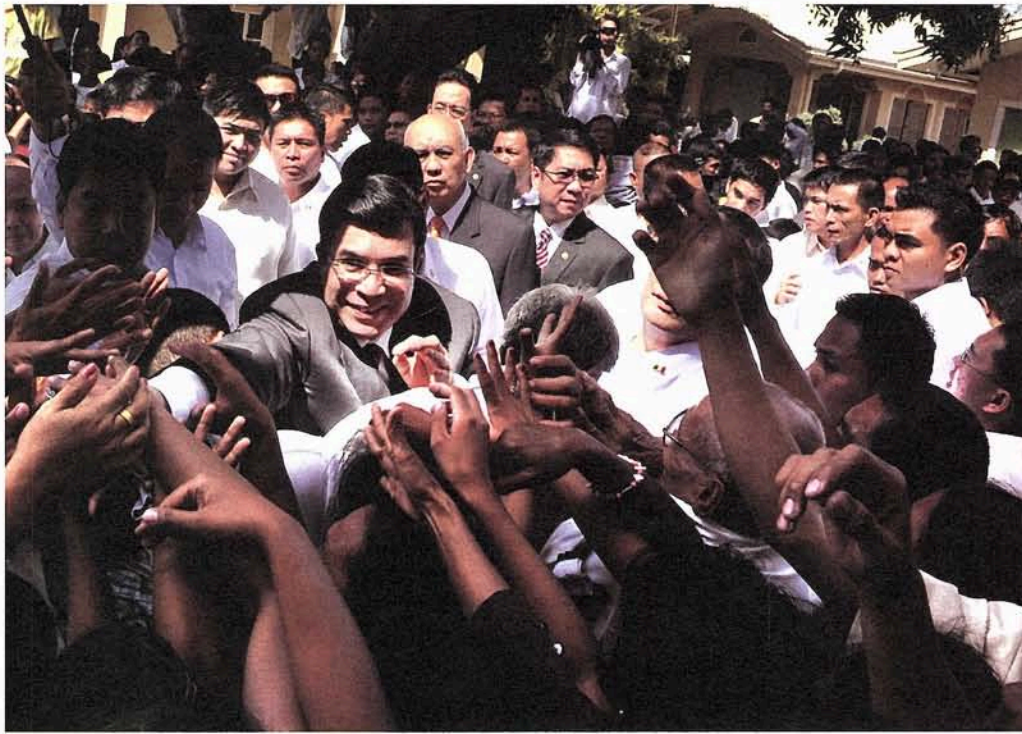
Reaching the promised salvation

“We thank God for this opportunity He has blessed us with, to see one another and for us to be able to serve you,” said Brother Eduardo Manalo, as he addressed the congregation.

In his sermon, the Executive Minister pointed out that if there is one thing that Church members must make sure of, it is that their membership in the Church of Christ would not be in vain. “That is why it is very important for us to remain members of the Church of Christ. In this Church, salvation is sure. Here, we shall receive God’s promises,” Brother Eduardo emphasized.

He explained that membership in the Church of Christ is what makes those who are of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ different from those who are not. He said those who are of Christ will certainly be saved from condemnation on Judgment Day.

As Brother Eduardo underscored, it is not enough to be members of the Church to be saved. Church members must remain strong and steadfast in their calling and election (II Pet. 1:10-11, *Amplified Bible*; Matt. 13:21-22, *Living Bible*). They should uphold their election



PHOTOS BY VICTOR MARCO DE LEON

THRILLED AND OVERJOYED

are the brethren in Romblon as they meet the Church Administrator (above) after the special worship service held at the local congregation of Odiongan (right photos).

by maintaining their zeal in serving God, which entails not only regularly attending the congregational worship services, but also actively participating in Church endeavors. In line with this purpose, the Church Administration launches activities such as those that aim to share the faith and to bring in more people to true service of God. Participating in them will strengthen the brethren's faith and help them endure until the day of salvation. The Executive Minister also cautioned that sin could hinder one from receiving salvation. Thus, he encouraged every member to get rid of sin and renew his or her life in order to be able to continue until the end and reach the promised salvation (Heb. 12:1, *New Century Version*).

After the homily, Brother Radel Cortez led the prayer of the congregation.

Source of inspiration

After the recessional hymn, thousands of brethren lined up outside the house of worship and waited for the Executive Minister to join them. They could not hold in their emotions, as shouts of joy were heard everywhere

when they saw Brother Eduardo. Their happiness was contagious.

The aged, the youth, and even very young children had their chance to meet him and shake his hands. But some brethren were just too far away. Some were unable to get close due to the mass of people surrounding the Executive Minister. They just stood on tiptoes and contented themselves with catching glimpses of the beloved leader. However, Brother Eduardo managed to reach those who were far away. Teary-eyed, the brethren stretched their arms to reach his.

After personally meeting the Executive Minister, the brethren seemed to forget the long hours of boat ride they endured and the meals they missed just to attend the worship service. "It's as if we were not hungry. We no longer mind if our bodies are tired because of the long hours of travel and lack of sleep. We are so happy," said Sister Julie Firmalo.

After attending the worship service and seeing Brother Eduardo Manalo for the first time, Brother Jerry Forjes said that the visit "serves as a source of inspiration" for all of brethren in

fulfilling their duties. "I am very happy that I was able to shake his hand. I will never forget this experience for as long as I live," he added. "This is one of our differences from those outside the Church of Christ. Even if we have problems, we are still happy because we have worship services like this. This is where we get our strength," said Brother Rudy Foyo, a choir member.

Brother Pym Brigigo was among those moved by the lesson taught by the Executive Minister. Brother Pym promised God that whatever trials and pain he may encounter, he will win over them through God's teachings that he receives from the Church Administration.

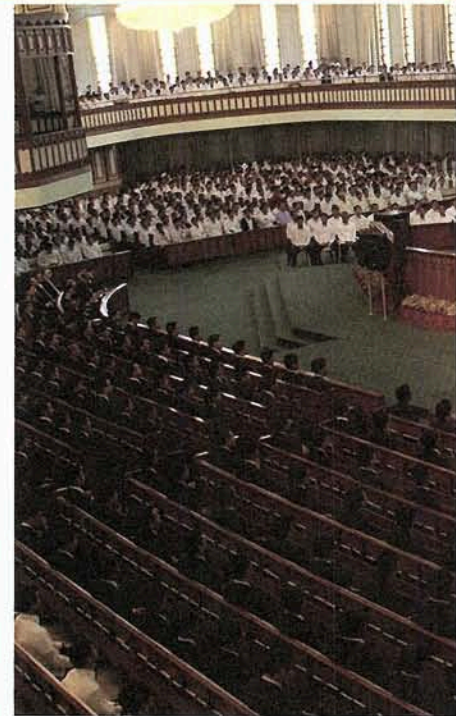
Receiving strength to endure

Brother Eduardo may have left Romblon but the message from the Bible that he taught to the brethren will be forever etched in their hearts: no matter how difficult the problems may be, members of the Church of Christ will be able to endure because God, who is faithful, will give them strength. ☺

The Executive Minister's Message To CEM Graduates,
Class of 2011

Be Faithful and Trustworthy Leaders of God's Nation

By ED H. LUMBAAO



THE 27TH COMMENCEMENT Exercises of the College of Evangelical Ministry (CEM) were held in the Central Temple, Quezon City, Philippines on March 15, 2011 with over 7,000 in attendance. The Executive Minister, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, addressed 143 graduates of the Bachelor of Evangelical Ministry (BEM) program in a worship gathering. Together with the BEM graduates were 27 ministerial high school students who completed their secondary education.

The spiritually blessed event manifested the Church Administration's fervent desire to strengthen the Church and lead its members to go on toward perfection and spiritual maturity. After the singing of hymns of praise and thanks to God, Brother Bienvenido C. Santiago, General Evangelist, led the congregation in the opening prayer.

Brother Eduardo began his homily by calling attention to recent news: "The series of catastrophic events around the world cause distress and despair to many people. Such should not be our reaction because we have our Almighty God Who can help us surmount all the hindrances and tri-

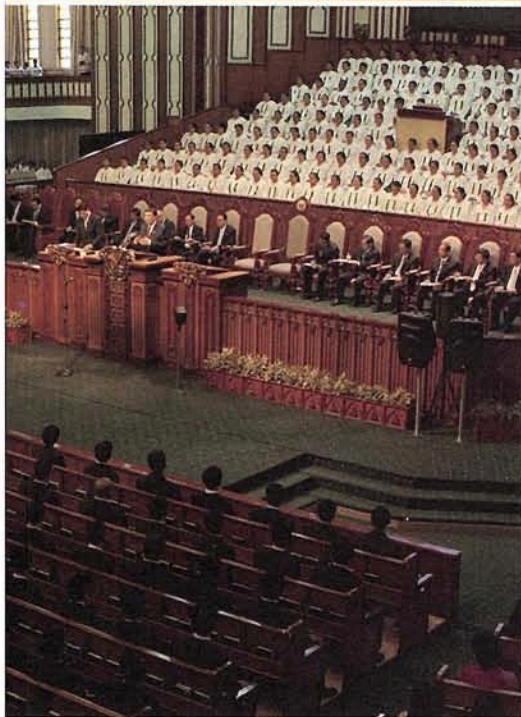
als in our lives. They happen because Judgment Day is indeed very near." He further explained that in these troubled times, the Church all the more needs true ministers and evangelical workers who will help the Church Administration in caring for and edifying the brethren in their faith in order to fulfill the will of the Lord God and of the Lord Jesus Christ -- to bring the Church to salvation. This was the very same reason for the labors and sacrifices of Brother Felix Y. Manalo, Messenger of God in these last days, and of Brother Eraño G. Manalo, who continued leading the work as Executive Minister until his passing in 2009.

Brother Eduardo highlighted that ministers and evangelical workers appointed by God to lead His nation should be trustworthy and faithful (Neh. 7:2, *God's Word Translation* and *New King James Version*). Trustworthy are those who obey all the commandments of God and instructions from the Church Administration without any reservation (Josh. 1:7, *New Living Translation*). Meanwhile, faithful workers of the Gospel are loyal to

the ministers whom God placed to administer them (Phil. 2:20, *The Message Translation*). Quoting the letter of Apostle Paul to Timothy, the Executive Minister expressed that the Church Administration is always at peace when the workers of the Gospel "share" the same "feelings" and "really care" about the brethren (Phil. 2:19-21, *TEV*).

During the Old Testament times, the leaders of God's first nation, ancient Israel, lost these qualities and, as a result, were severely punished. Saul, the first king of Israel, disobeyed the commandments given by God through the Prophet Samuel. He became more afraid of his men and did what they wanted. Hence, Saul did not succeed in his duty, and his disobedience cost him his kingship (I Sam. 15:24-26, *TEV*). Some prophets of ancient Israel also "deceived God's people by saying that everything is alright, but it's not alright. When someone builds a flimsy wall, the prophets cover it up with paint" (Ezek. 13:10 and 12, *GWT*).

Brother Eduardo cautioned the workers of the Gospel to never imi-



Brother Eduardo V. Manalo while addressing the congregation.

tate Saul's disobedience and the evil prophets' deception. He taught them to report completely the condition of the local congregation where they will be assigned so that the Church Administration can provide the effective solution to any problem. Not reporting the true condition of a congregation is like what a patient does when he is not telling what he actually feels to the doctor. If this would be the case, the doctor would not be able to prescribe the right medication but one which could even endanger the patient's life.

Brother Eduardo encouraged the workers of the Gospel to keep on working like faithful and trustworthy servants of the Lord. Such servants work hard with gladness all the time, think ahead or have proper plans, set right what is defective, and finish what was left undone (Eph. 6:6-7 *TLB*, Prov. 13:16, *TLB* and Titus 1:5 *Amplified*). Brother Eduardo inspired the attendees to desire that "all Christians will be filled with love that comes from pure hearts, and that their minds will be clean and their faith strong" (I Tim. 1:5, *TLB*).

Ending his homily, Brother Eduardo reminded the attendees to continue in their vow prayers especially in times of trials and difficulties. Then, Brother Dan V. Orosa, district supervising minister of Metro Manila Central, led the closing prayer asking the Almighty Father to bless the entire congregation.

All 143 graduates look forward to serving in their local congregation assignments and sharing with the brethren the spiritual blessings from God. Brother Brian Basi, a newly graduate from Philadelphia, Northeastern Seaboard, said, "Wherever I may be assigned by the Church Administration, I will continue inspiring the brethren with God's words and will strive to propagate the Gospel to bring people back to the true Church." Brother Brian promised to do his part "to help the brethren under his care to remain steadfast in their faith."

"We felt the love of the Executive Minister for all of us. He truly wants us to be saved," said Brother George David, an incoming fourth year BEM student from the Local Congregation of Mansaya, Iloilo South. He will be

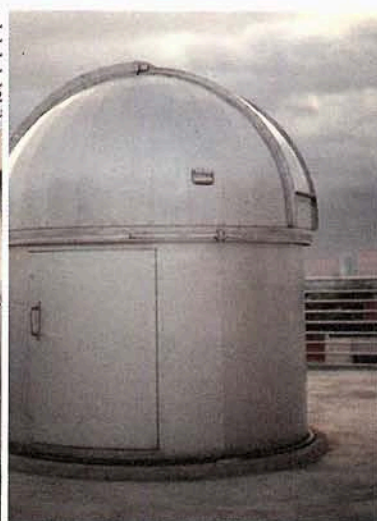
assigned in a local congregation for his training this coming school year. Sharing what he has learned from the lecture of the Executive Minister, he vowed to "remind the Church members to live by God's will and to actively participate in Church activities."

Brother Alberto Ledesma Sr., father of one of the graduates and a deacon from Puerto Princesa, Palawan, also expressed how he was strengthened in the faith after the special worship service. "Whatever trials I may encounter in life, I will remain dedicated to my duties."

Graduation might be the end of their formal schooling, but it marks a new chapter in the life of the graduates. As they embark on a life of Christian service, things will not go easy and trials will abound, but they will be able to carry on with the help of the Almighty God. As Apostle Paul declared, "God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him." (Phil. 2:13, *NLT*). ☉

Executive Minister Inaugurates NEU Observatory On SCAN International's 22nd Anniversary

By RAYMOND M. REYES



ON THE OCCASION OF SCAN'S 22ND ANNIVERSARY, (Clockwise from left) The Executive Minister, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, with his wife Sister Lynn V. Manalo, leads the inauguration with a ceremonial ribbon cutting; the new NEU observatory; the observatory dome; Brother Emernito Culala giving the welcoming address; the Executive Minister greeting SCAN members; some of the new equipment in the observatory; the Executive Minister with SCAN officers; guest speaker, Brother Jesus Rodrigo Torres, President of Rizal Technological University, during his congratulatory remark.

THE SOCIETY OF Communicators and Networkers or SCAN International marked its 22nd anniversary on February 6, 2011 with a renewed and stronger commitment to saving people's lives.

In commemoration of its establishment, SCAN inaugurated the New Era University (NEU) Observatory, a new facility located atop the main building of the NEU. The Observatory is aimed at advancing SCAN's information gathering about weather, pursuing astronomical research, and promoting

scientific knowledge among the youth. The inauguration was led by SCAN's founding chairman himself, Executive Minister Brother Eduardo V. Manalo. With him were his family and the members of the SCAN executive committee.

The NEU Observatory will operate weather and communication equipments and four new high-powered telescopes, including the C11 11-inch Schmidt-Cassegrain Celestron Telescope. It features 9 x 50 finderscope for accurate viewing and heavy duty (CG-5GT) computerized German Equatorial

mount. According to the guest speaker, Brother Jesus Rodrigo Torres, Rizal Technological University President and member of the International Astronomical Union, this Celestron telescope is "the second of its kind in the Philippines." "This is a start of something more exciting, especially for the young mind, as it would promote the study of astronomy and motivate them to excel in science," Brother Rodrigo said.

After the ribbon-cutting ceremony led by Brother Eduardo, a short program commenced through a prayer led by

Brother Geraldo Purificacion, SCAN's spiritual adviser. The prayer was followed by a welcome address by SCAN chairman Brother Emernito Culala.

Brother Emernito thanked God for His continued guidance to the brethren through the Administration He placed in the Church. He also reviewed the tasks entrusted to the SCAN by the Executive Minister which primarily rest on the campaign "Saving Lives Is Our Pri-

Rodmer S. Bulaoat, Arturo P. Yanga, Billy Ryan A. Gabriel, Nelson S. Barcelona, Abel M. Lacsina, Adolfo M. Calubayan, Victorio P. Diaz, and Michael Sta. Maria. Meanwhile, Brother Diego Valderama, one of the pioneering members of SCAN in Bulacan, was given the Lifetime Amateur Radio Licence Award.

The observatory and the SCAN club station, the organization's office located at NEU's 4th floor, will both serve as

"Saving people's lives will be incomplete if we don't help saving their souls," Brother Diego Valderama said. "That is why, all of SCAN's activities—such as their campaign for everyone



ority." To fulfill this obligation to all and "for the glory of God," SCAN formed teams that will handle communications, disaster preparedness and emergency response, information technology services, and organizational development and support.

The next portion of the program was the launching of SCAN's official website, newsletter, and hymn and the awarding of 10 outstanding SCAN members. The Executive Minister gave certificates of recognition to Brothers Gatpuri G. Ignacio III, Rolando D. Lam,

the Church's weather monitoring station, disaster coordinating center, and information base especially in times of calamities. "This is our guide and direction – always be prepared to help not only our brethren but whoever in the society may need it," Brother Emernito said. "We will not stop with what we have here. The Church Administration has great plans for this facility. They are planning to add more weather equipments and make this a training station for students," Brother Florante Arseno, NEU observatory staff said.

to take part in the missionary works, socio-civic projects, and disaster preparedness drills—are all gearing towards the Church's theme to go on toward perfection and spiritual maturity not only until the Centennial Celebration of the Church of Christ on July 27, 2014, but also and most importantly as preparation for Judgment Day." 🌟

Editor's Note: As of this publication, the newly appointed Chairman of SCAN is Brother Allan Blanco.

SPECIAL REPORT

Biblical truth shines in Bukidnon debate

By SIEGFRED T. GOLLAYAN

WITH CONVICTION and deep concern for the spiritual welfare of members and nonmembers alike, ministers of the gospel participated in a debate with preachers of the Liberty Bible Baptist Church on February 26, 2011 at the Valencia City Gymnasium in Bukidnon, Philippines.

Heading the *Iglesia ni Cristo* (Church of Christ) panel was Brother Ramil Parba, a faculty member of the College of Evangelical Ministry. Assisting

him were Brothers Nestor Ilarde, Noel Bocario, and Julito Ompad from the ecclesiastical district of Bukidnon. Two topics were discussed—the true Church established by Christ and

the true God. The religious discussion was patterned after the “US presidential debates.”

On the first topic, Brother Parba expounded on the Church’s proposition “The *Iglesia ni Cristo* is the true Church established by Christ and will be

saved on the day of Judgment.” Speaking for the Baptist church was one of its pastors, Mr. Pete Asuncion, who took the stand “The Liberty Bible Baptist Church is the true church established by Christ and is already saved.” For the second topic, another Bap-



“BIBLE SHARING” IN BUKIDNON: (Clockwise from above) Brother Ramil Parba during his exposition; the hundreds of attendees; INC ministers and Baptist pastors after the debate.

tist pastor, Mr. Jill Arellano, argued that “The one true God has three divine persons.” Brother Parba, speaking for the Church of Christ, convincingly refuted the argument by expounding on the proposition “The Father alone is the only true God according to the Bible and other references.”

Each speaker was given 30 minutes to discuss his stand. The listeners then were given the opportunity to ask questions after the speeches were made. Only four minutes were allotted to each debater to respond, yet, the biblical doctrines upheld by the Church clearly stood out as most of the members

of the Baptist church in attendance, one by one, silently exited from the venue.

After the debate, those undergoing instruction in biblical doctrines commented that the doctrines of the Church all the more became clear to them. Some Baptist members, on the other hand, expressed their will-

ingness to learn more about the Church of Christ.

The religious discussion was conducted very peacefully and the attendees, especially the brethren went home very happy and with a firm resolve to all the more share the true faith to others. *(With assistance from Eric P. Zarate)*

DZEM News Director Brother Ener Lagaza with Glenn Gatus accepting the award from DSWD Secretary Corazon “Dinky” Soliman and Undersecretary Celia C. Yangco (right); beside the Gawad Ulat Award is the plaque of recognition that DZEM received from the Philippine Mental Health Association on October 10 last year (below).



DZEM receives DSWD Award

DZEM RECEIVED THE *Gawad Ulat* Award from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) on the occasion of the government agency’s 60th founding anniversary on January 26, 2011. The awarding ceremony was held at the DSWD Central

Office, *Batasan Pambansa* Complex, Constitution Hills, Quezon City.

The *Gawad Ulat* recognition is part of the *PaNata* or *Pagkilala sa Natatanging Kontribusyon sa Bayan* award which acknowledges the efforts of individuals, groups, or organizations who share

their resources and time in providing better opportunities for the disadvantaged sector. Through the radio program, *Talakayan, Impormasyon at Public Service* (TIPS), DZEM was recognized for its generous support for the program advocacies and communication thrusts of the DSWD. The program segment “DSWD

In Action” conducts weekly interviews with the officials of the DSWD to inform the public about their activities.

DZEM launched TIPS with the aim of giving its listeners useful information and public service. TIPS is aired from Monday to Friday 2:30-4:00 p.m. over DZEM 95.4kHz AM band. *(Laila G. Tumanan)*

CHURCH REPORTS AROUND THE GLOBE



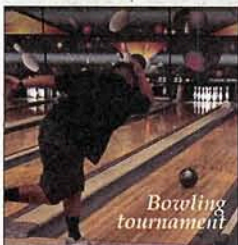
Baptism in Northern California.

day was filled with fun, excitement, and above all, fellowship. The winners were the local congregations of San Pablo (best of the best team and *Buklod* team), San Francisco (*KADIWA* team), Livermore (*Binhi* team), and Antioch (combined *KADIWA* and *Binhi* team). (*J. Uban*)



NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

• The collaborative efforts in missionary activities of the brethren and Church officers in the district once again bore fruit as a total of 71 new converts were baptized on January 29 and February 19, 2011 at the San Jose house of worship. Despite his condition of being deaf-mute, Brother Anthony Ryan Cabra was not hindered from joining the Church as he received the words of God through sign language. Also among the newly baptized brethren were Brothers Konstantino Nodaros, a Greek; Rico Sandriana, an Indonesian; and Dennis Lim, a Chinese. (*G. Abella*)



Bowling tournament

• On February 21, brethren from across the district gathered at the Classic Bowling Alley in Daly City for the district's annual bowling tournament. The



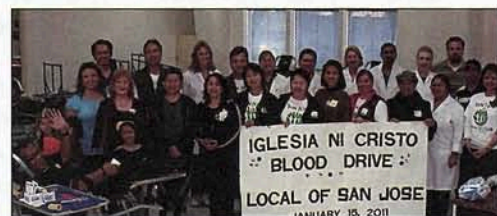
Special gatherings for Church officers in Northern California.



Special gatherings for Church officers in Northern California.



• **SAN JOSE**—Led by the *Buklod* organization, the brethren helped their fellowmen in the community through a blood donation drive and a food drive launched on January 15. According to the medical staff who assisted during the blood



Food drive in San Jose.

donation drive, 53 pints of blood were collected during the activity. On the other hand, hundreds of destitute and hungry people in the community will surely benefit from the non-perishable food items that were donated by the brethren. On January 22, an arts and crafts showcase also took place wherein some 30 Christian family organization members displayed their varied talents in visual arts, construction arts, and in handicraft. Topping it all, an evangelical mission was held on



Evangelical mission in San Jose.

January 21 wherein 79 guests were enlightened on why it is important to hear the words of God. This series of activities was in connection with the local congregation's 34th anniversary commemoration. (*G. Abella*)

SOUTHERN EUROPE

• Brethren in the local congregation of Madrid, Spain were delighted to have hosted the ministers' family special gathering on January 3, 2011. Ministers together with their families came all



Ministers' family special gathering in Southern Europe.

the way from countries such as Israel, South Africa, Greece, France, Italy and other cities of Spain to once again receive spiritual guidance. Officiating at the event, Brother Oliver Canlas, district minister, read a letter from the Church Administration and delivered a lesson concerning God's expectations from those who belong to the ministry and their household. (N. Dueñas)

PHILIPPINE DISTRICTS

• **LANAO**—Brethren in the district were filled with joy as 142 converts were added to the fold during the baptisms held in the local congregations of Tulod and Iligan City on January 21 and 22, respectively. Brother Samuel Gacutan Sr., district minister, officiated on both occasions. In his homily, Brother Gacutan stressed that



Baptism in Lanao.

spreading the gospel is an important and urgent task that every member of the Church must fulfill with utmost dedication. (E. Balatayo)



Baptism in Pangasinan Central.

• **PANGASINAN CENTRAL**—Congregations in this part of Northern Luzon reaped success anew in the work of propagation. A



total of 719 new members were baptized at the house of worship of the local congregation of Dagupan City last January 22 and 29. The brethren have vowed to continue imparting God's words to more people who are not yet members of the Church. (V. Hortaleza-Sarmiento)

• **CAGAYAN SOUTH**—The Church's concern in saving lives was once again manifested through the district blood donation drive held at the Capitol Multipurpose Hall on February 20. Led by Brother Mamerto Gabriel, district minister, the endeavor attained its worthwhile objective as about 40,000cc of blood were obtained from 80 volunteer blood donors. Meanwhile, the Church's concern for man-

Blood donation drive in Cagayan South.



kind's salvation was also shown as the district baptized 127 people in Tuguegarao on January 22 and 29. (J. Seguban)



Baptism (above) and oath-taking (below) of new Church officers in Ilocos Norte.

• **ILOCOS NORTE**—As the brethren ceaselessly fulfill their divine duty of propagating the gospel, 182 new converts were baptized at the house of worship of Laoag City on January 29.



A total of 200 new Church officers also took oath during the occasion which was officiated by Brother Artemio Retuta, district minister. (R. Rillera)





CHURCH REPORTS AROUND THE GLOBE



Baptism (above) and GEM (top) in Benguet.

• **BENGUET**—Despite the inclement weather that day of January 21, members invited a total of 4,075 visitors to attend the grand evangelical mission (GEM) that was held in Melvin Jones, Baguio City. Before the event, Brother David G. Agunia, district minister, officiated at a baptism in the local congregation of Baguio City on January 8 wherein 364 new brethren were baptized. (*L. Dela Cruz*)

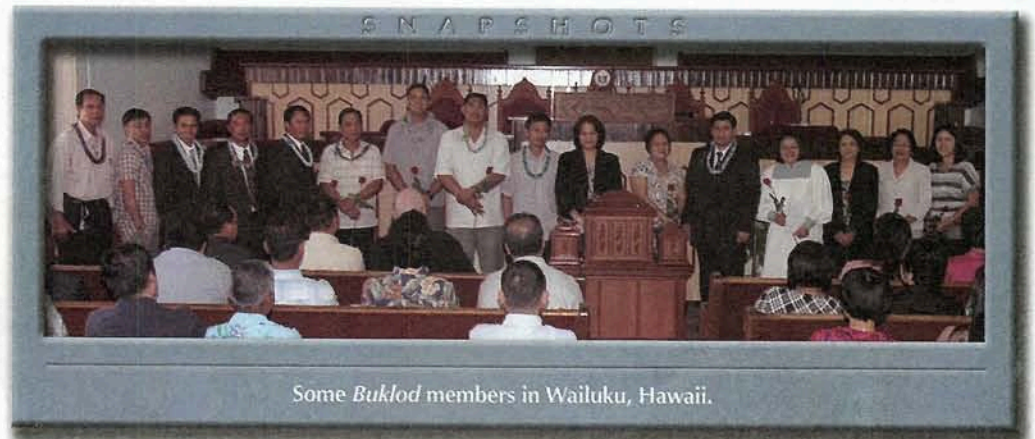


Buklod Night in La Union.

• **LA UNION**—It was a night to remember for married couples as a *Buklod* Night was held in all the local congregations in the district on February 27. The event elicited laughter and camaraderie as the attendees were entertained with cultural dance numbers, music, and parlor games. The activity gave the *Buklod* members opportunity to unwind from their busy schedules and inspiration as they look forward to more years of blissful marriage. (*I. dela Cruz*)

• **PANGASINAN EAST**—Brothers Eraño Augusto and Roel Castillo, district minister and assistant district minister, respectively, officiated at the series of baptisms that was held on January 21-23 and 29-31 in the local congregations of Tayug and Cayambanan. Brethren in the district were filled with joy as a total of 1,480 were added into the Church. (*E. Portacio, E. Arboleda, and R. Bacdayan*)

Baptism in Pangasinan East.



Some *Buklod* members in Wailuku, Hawaii.



Magpatuloy tayo sa kasakdalan at sa pagiging ganap sa buhay espirituwal

PARA SA MARAMING TAO, ang kasakdalan at pagiging ganap sa buhay espirituwal ay isang mailap na pangarap—isang mithiin na bagamat inaasam ng iba na makamit gayunma’y namamalaging malaking palaisipan kung papaano. Tahasan ding inaamin ng iba na nangangailangan ng *degree of maturity* o kahustuhan ng pag-iisip at lubos na kababaang-loob upang kilalanin ng isang tao ang kaniyang kakulangan sa espirituwal na aspeto ng kaniyang buhay.

Lubos na nababatid ng mga tunay na Cristiano na sa ganang kanilang sarili ay wala silang kakayahan upang pagtagumpayan ang mga pagsubok sa buhay, matitinding kahirapan, lumalaganap na karahasan at kriminalidad, at ang mga pang-araw-araw na tiisin sa masamang sanlibutang ito. Kailangan nila ang Diyos at ang Kaniyang ipinangakong tulong kung nais nilang maging ganap sa buhay espirituwal, yayamang alam nilang may hangganan ang kanilang magagawa. Samakatuwid, kinikilala nila na hindi nila maibibilang ang kanilang sarili na nakarating na sa kasakdalan ng pananampalataya, lalo na kung susukatin ito batay sa pamantayang itinakda ni Cristo Jesus na Siyang Pangulo ng Iglesia.

Ang maging ganap sa buhay espirituwal, kung gayon, ay isang tuluy-tuloy na proseso ng pagbabago na nahahayag sa pamamagitan ng pag-unlad ng buhay espirituwal, sa halip na mamalagi sa dating kalagayan. Tiyak na nangangailangan ito ng kakayahang talikdan ang pagiging isip-bata at pag-uugali na siyang kahayagan ng pagiging *immature*—isang pag-angat mula sa pagiging musmos sa pananampalataya tungo sa pagiging sakdal.

Subalit bakit kailangan pang magsikap na matamo ang kasakdalan sa pananampalataya gayung ang tao ay likas na nagkakamali? Ipinaliwanag ito ng apostol na si Pablo: “At ang iba’y ginawang apostol, ang iba’y propeta, ang iba’y ebanghelista, ang iba’y pastor at guro. Ginawa niya ito upang ihanda sa paglilingkod ang lahat ng hinirang, sa ikauunlad ng kanyang iglesya. Sa gayon, tayong lahat ay magkakaisa sa pananampalataya at pagkakilala sa Anak ng Diyos at magiging ganap ang ating pagkatao ayon sa pagiging-ganap ni Cristo” (Efe. 4:11-13, *Magandang Balita Biblia*).

Ang Diyos ay naglagay ng mga may iba’t ibang “kaloob” sa Iglesia sa dakilang layunin na ganap na maihanda ang Kaniyang mga hinirang sa gawaing paglilingkod hanggang sa lubos na paglaki ng katawan ni Cristo, na ito nga ang *Iglesia ni Cristo*. Ito ang Kaniyang inihayag na kalooban. Ang paglagong ito ay dapat magpatuloy hanggang matamo natin ang lubos na pagkakaisa sa pananampalataya at ang lahat ay maging ganap sa Panginoon—alalaong baga’y, isang kalagayang matibay at sakdal.

Ang pangunahing kahayagan ng kasakdalan sa pananampalataya at pagiging ganap ay itinuro ng nasabi ring apostol, na “Ginawa niya ito upang banalin ang Iglesia at linisin sa pamamagitan ng tubig at salita, at iharap ito sa kanyang sarili na isang nagniningning na iglesya, walang batik o kulubot o anumang dungis, kundi banal at walang kapintasan” (Efe. 5:26-27, *New Pilipino Version*).

Ang isang Cristianong nakarating na sa kasakdalan ay dapat na wala kahit isang batik o kulubot o anumang kapintasan, banal at walang dungis. Ito’y tunay ngang mahirap gawin subalit sa gayon ngang kalagayan dapat makarating ang bawat kaanib ng “nagniningning na iglesya” upang maiharap ang Iglesia na sakdal kay Jesus sa Kaniyang Ikawalang Pagparito, na karapatdapat sa kaligtasan at buhay na walang hanggan.

Dahil dito, ang lingkod ng Diyos ay kailangang sumailalim sa isang walang tigil na proseso ng pag-unlad sa buhay espirituwal sa pamamagitan ng paglayo sa pakikiapid at sa lahat ng uri ng imoralidad (I Cor. 6:18). Dapat siyang umiwas sa lahat ng karumihan ng isip, salita, o gawa.

Hindi rin niya dinadaya o nililinlang ang kaniyang sarili sa pag-aakalang hindi na siya mahuhulog sa kasalanan (I Juan 1:8, 10) sapagkat batid niyang bilang tao o laman ay maaari siyang madaig ng kaniyang kahinaan at masamang kapaligiran. Magkagayunman, hindi niya ibinubuhay ang kasalanan, bagkus ay nagsisikap siyang lubos na ito ay iwasan—sukdulang takasan ang mga situwasyon kung saan maaari siyang matukso na gumawa ng masama.

Naninindigan siyang ibuhay ang mga salita at payo ng Diyos sa araw-araw, sa lahat ng pagkakataon, at mabuhay nang ayon sa kalooban ng Diyos sa halip na sa kagustuhan lang ng tao, gaya ng inilarawan ni Apostol Pablo, na:

“Kaya sinasabi kong mamuhay kayo sa Espiritu at hindi ninyo pagbibigyan ang mga nasa ng laman ... Hayag ang mga gawa ng pita ng laman: pangangalunya, karumihan, kahalayan, pagsamba sa dios-diosan, pangkukulam, pagkapoot, pag-aaway, paninibugho, nagpupuyos na galit, kasakiman, pagkakabaha-bahagi, pagkakampikampi, pagkainggit, paglalasing, walang taros na kasayahan, at mga katulad nito. Binabalaan ko kayo, katulad noong una, na ang mga nabubuhay nang ganito ay hindi makapagmama-na ng kaharian ng Dios” (Gal. 5:16, 19-21, NPV).

Yayamang batid nilang ang ninanasa ng laman ay kadalasang labag sa kalooban ng Diyos, pumapayag ang mga tunay na lingkod Niya na ang kanilang buhay ay patnubayan Niya—lumalakad sila nang ayon sa Kaniyang mga salita lakip ang kaisipang nagpapasakop sa Kaniya sa lahat ng bagay. Sinisikap nila, na may pagtatanggi at pagdidisiplina sa sarili, na tanggihan ang anumang labag sa kalooban ng Diyos at tuparin ang anumang Kaniyang ibig.

Nagpupumilitsilangpagtagumpayananganumangpita ng laman na naghahatid lamang sa ganitong masasamang bunga: maruming pag-iisip, pagkahumaling sa mga makapitang kasiyahan, pagiging magagalitin, pagkainggit at kapootan, pag-uupasalaan at pagpaparunggitan, ang damdaming ang lahat ay mali maliban na sa maliit na pangkat na kaniyang kinabibilangan—dahil nababatid nila at lubos na sinasampalatayanan na ang sinumang nabubuhay nang gayon ay hindi magmamana ng kaharian ng Diyos.

Ang isa pang malaking kahayagan ng pagiging ganap sa buhay espirituwal ay ang kakayahang magpigil ng dila, gaya ng ipinahayag ni Apostol Santiago: “Kung iniisip ninumang siya’y relihiyoso ngunit walang pagpipigil sa kanyang dila, dinadaya lamang niya ang sarili at walang kabuluhan ang kanyang relihiyon” (Sant. 1:26, *Ibid.*).

Ang pagpipigil ng dila ay nangangailangan ng disiplina. Nakalulungkot na tila napakadali sa iba na pag-usapan ang kasiraan sa buhay ng kanilang kapuwa. Bakit ba marami ang nahuhulog sa ganitong masamang gawi? Para sa iba, isa itong paraan upang maitaas nila ang pagkakilala sa sarili. Sa pamamagitan ng pagtukoy sa kamalian at kabiguan ng ibang tao, gumagaan diumano ang kanilang pakiramdam tungkol sa kanilang sarili at naiibsan ang kanilang mga kabiguan sa buhay.

Ang mga Cristianong nakarating sa pagiging ganap sa buhay espirituwal ay hindi nakikisali sa paghahatid-dumapit, pagkakampi-kampi, o paggawa ng anumang bagay na nagpupunla ng pagkakabaha-bahagi sa kalipunan ng mga tao ng Diyos. Lagi nilang pinaaalalahanan ang kanilang sarili na ang kasakdalan sa buhay espirituwal

ay nahahayag sa pamamagitan ng pusong naghahangad ng mabuti sa halip na maging mapanghatol sa kamalian ng iba. Kung gayon, sinumang gumagawa ng masama sa kaniyang kapatid sa pananampalataya at hindi magawang magpakumbaba upang itama ang lahat dahil sa kapalaluan ay naghahayag lamang ng pagiging *immature*.

Nauunawaan din ng mga tunay na lingkod ng Diyos na ang buhay ay hindi laging maaliwalas at maliwanag kahit pa sila ay nagsisikap na lubos na masunod ang Kaniyang mga aral, gaya ng patotoo ni Apostol Pablo: “Sa halip, sa lahat ng paraan ay ipinakita naming kami’y mga lingkod ng Dios maging sa gitna ng matinding tiisin, kabalisahan, kahirapan, at kagipitan. Naranasan ko ang hagupitin, mabilanggo, at bugbugin. Gayon din ang kaguluhan, pagtatrabaho nang mabigat, di pagkatulog, at pagkagutom. Ipinakilala ko ring ako’y lingkod ng Dios sa kalinisan, kaalaman, pagpapahinuhod, kabutihang-loob sa pamamagitan ng Espiritu Santo, tapat na pagibig” (II Cor. 6:4-6, *Ibid.*).

Samakatuwid, ang pagharap sa mga pangyayari sa buhay araw-araw ay nagpapakita na siya ay hindi lamang isang tunay na lingkod ng Diyos, kundi siya ay nakarating na rin sa kasakdalan. Ang mga ganap na lingkod ng Diyos ay nagsisikap na mamuhay nang hindi sila nakagagawa ng katitisuran sa iba upang walang sinumang makasumpong ng kapintasan sa kanila at sa ganito’y maisisi pa ito sa Diyos. Matiyaga nilang binabata ang mga hirap, sakit, at iba’t ibang uri ng tiisin.

Sa pakikitungo sa kapuwa, sila ay magiliw, mapagbigay at hindi makasarili, mapagpatawad at matulungin. Walang puwang sa kanilang damdamin ang poot. Sa halip, ang kanilang buhay ay kinakikitaan ng pagiging makatao, kawalan ng inggit, at ng kakayahang magpigil sa sarili.

Tunay ngang ang ginagawa ng isang lingkod ng Diyos sa gitna ng mga “bagyo” ng buhay—sa Diyos siya naglalagak ng pag-asa at hindi sa tao, at hindi niya nilulunasan ang kaniyang hirap, sakit, at pagdadalamhati sa pamamagitan ng inuming nakalalasing o ipinagbabawal na gamot—ay kahayagan ng kaniyang pagiging sakdal sa buhay espirituwal.

Pinatutunayan ng mga lingkod ng Diyos ang kanilang mithiin na maging sakdal sa buhay espirituwal at tungo sa pagiging ganap hindi lang sa mga hungkag na salita kundi sa pamamagitan ng patuloy na pagiging mapagpasalamat sa Diyos kahit sa mga pagkakataong sila ay nasa matinding kagipitan; sa pagtataglay ng pusong taos at taimtim na nagsisisi; sa hindi paghahangad ng paghihiganti laban doon sa mga nanakit sa kanila; sa pagiging bukas ng palad sa pamimigay; at sa pagtuturing na kalugihan ang mga bagay

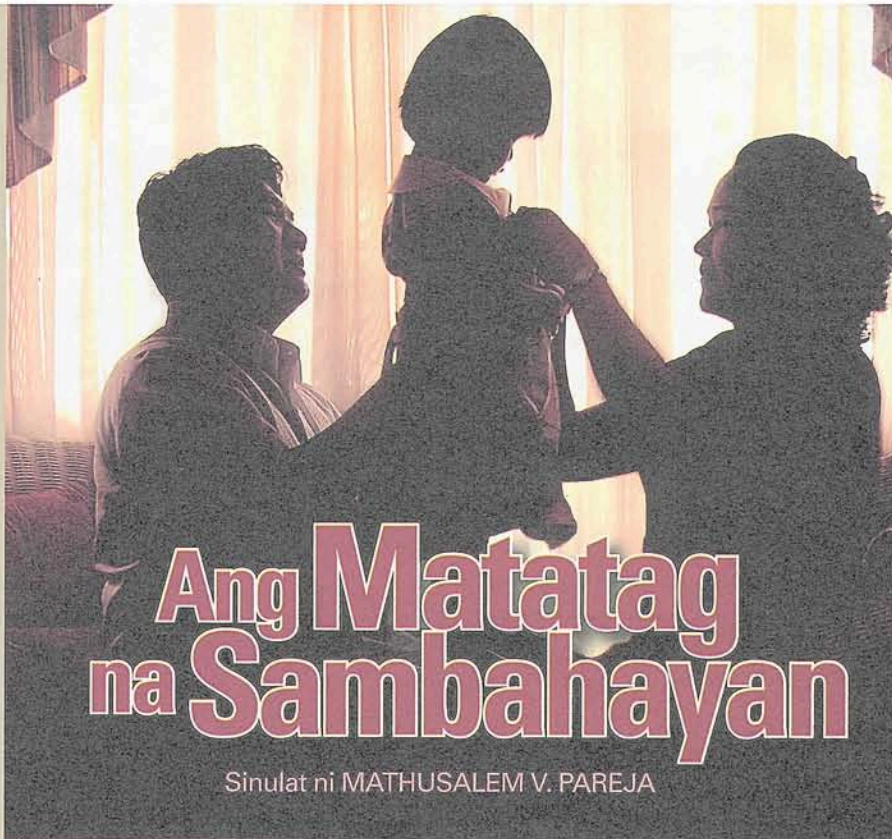
na iniaalok ng sanlibutan, alang-alang sa kanilang pananatiling mga tapat na lingkod ng Diyos at ng Panginoong Jesucristo sa loob ng Kaniyang tunay na Iglesia.

Kung siya ay isang ama ng sambahayan, tinitiyak niyang nadidisciplina ang kaniyang mga anak mula pa sa kanilang kamusmusan (Kaw. 19:18) dahil siya ay lubos na sumasampalatayang ang pagpalo ay hindi makasasama sa kanila, bagkus ay magliligtas pa nga sa kanila sa kaparusahang walang hanggan, gaya ng nakasulat sa Biblia: “Ang humahamak sa aral ay magbabayad balang araw, ngunit ang gumagalang sa utos ay gagantimpalaan ... siyang hindi gumagamit ng pamalo ay namumuhi sa kanyang anak ngunit ang nagmamahal sa anak ay masikap na nagtutuwid dito” (Kaw. 13:13, 24, *NPV*).

Tunay ngang ang pagtutuwid sa anak ay nagbibigay ng karunungan; “ngunit ang batang pinababayaan ay humihiya sa kanyang ina” (Kaw. 29:15, *Ibid.*). Ang mga tapat na lingkod ng Diyos ay nanghahawak sa paninindigang kayang-kaya ng Diyos, sa pamamagitan ng Kaniyang salita, na baguhin ang anumang kapintasan natin at palayain tayo mula sa maraming kasalanang pumipigil sa atin. Matutulungan Niya rin tayong maunawaan ang mga pagbabagong dapat nating isagawa at ganap na talikdan ang masasamang gawa at pag-iisip.

Ito ang dahilan kaya naglagay ang Diyos ng Pamamahala sa loob ng *Iglesia ni Cristo*—upang maipahayag ang Kaniyang mga salita sa mga hinirang (Col. 1:25). Ito ay isang maselang pananagutang buong sigla at giting na itinataguyod ng Pamamahala sa pamamagitan ng pagtuturo, pagbibigay ng babala, at pagpapaalala sa bawat isa na magkaroon ng ganap na pagkaunawa sa mga kalooban at panukala ng Diyos, upang tayong lahat ay makarating sa kasakdalan—ganap at sakdal kay Cristo na karapat-dapat sa pangakong mana sa makalangit na tahanan. 🙏

—RICHARD J. RODAS
Editor-in-Chief



Ang Matatag na Sambahayan

Sinulat ni MATHUSALEM V. PAREJA

PINAKAHAHANGAD NG BAWAT nagsisimulang bumuo ng sariling sambahayan na maging maligaya at matatag ito. Dahil dito, makatuwiran lamang na magplano ang mag-asawa ukol sa pagtataguyod ng kanilang pagsasama at sa pagpapalaki ng anak, kung loloobin ng Diyos na sila’y magkaanak.

May iba’t ibang pamamaraan na maaaring gawin ang mga magulang upang mapalaki at mahubog ang kanilang anak sa nais nilang maging pag-uugali nito. Ang isa rito, ayon sa mga *psychologist*, ay ang pagbibigay ng kaukulang pagkilala sa anak kapag nakatutugon ito sa inaasahan ng magulang upang kaniya itong ipagpatuloy. Sa ibabaw ng lahat ng mga ito ay may mahahalagang aral ang Panginoong Diyos na itinuturo tungkol sa wastong pagtuturo at pagpapalaki sa anak sa ikatatatag ng sambahayan.

Ang kahalagahan ng pagtuturo

Ayon sa Biblia, nananagot sa Panginoong Diyos ang mga magulang na magturo sa kanilang mga anak ng mga utos ng Diyos upang sila ay matutong maglagak ng tiwala at pag-asa sa Kaniya, gaya ng pinatutunayan sa Awit 78:6-7: “Sa lahat ng lahi nila ito’y dapat na iaryl, At ang angkang susunod pa ay marapat na turuan. Sa ganito, masusunod nilang lagi yaong utos, Ang matatag na pag-asa’y ilalagak nila sa Diyos, At ang dakila niyang gawa’y hindi nila malilimot” (*Magandang Balita Biblia*).

Sa panahong itinakda ng Panginoong Diyos na bawiin ang Kaniyang ipinahiram na buhay, ay maghihiwalay sila ng kanilang anak. Kung mangyari man ito, ang anak na naturuan ay patuloy na aasa sa Panginoong Diyos: “Maiwan man ako ng aking magulang, May Panginoon pa akong aasahan” (Awit 27:10, *Ibid.*).

Subalit, sinong magulang ang magiging mabisa sa pagtuturo sa kanilang anak? Sila ang mga magulang na mapagpigil sa sarili at nagpapakita ng mabuting halimbawa (Tito 2:4-7, *New Pilipino Version*). Ang mga magulang ay dapat maging *role models* ng kanilang anak, sa paraang sila'y magpakita ng mabuting pag-uugali, tulad ng pagiging mahinahon, masipag, at malinis sa pamumuhay. *Teaching by example* o ang pagtuturo sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay-halimbawa ang isa sa mga mabisang paraan ng pagtuturo sa anak.

Kailan dapat simulan ang pagtuturo ng magulang sa anak tungkol sa kabutihang-asal lalo na ng mga aral ng Diyos? Nakasulat sa Kawikaan 22:6 na: "Sanayin mo ang bata sa daan na dapat niyang lakaran, at kapag tumanda na siya ay hindi niya ito tatalikuran" (*Ang Bagong Ang Biblia*).

Marapat simulan ng magulang ang buong tiyaga at pagmamahal na pagtuturo sa anak sa panahon ng kamusmusan o sa tinatawag na *formative years*. Abala man sa paghahanapbuhay o iba pang gampanin ay kailangang maglaan ng sapat na panahon ang magulang para rito. Sa pamamagitan ng simpleng gawain na akma sa edad ng anak, halimbawa ay pakikipaglaro o pakikipagkuwentuhan, ay maaaring makapagturo ang magulang. Subalit hindi natatapos sa nakapagturo lamang ang mga magulang kundi dapat nilang sanayin para kung siya man ay tumanda ay hindi niya ito tatalikuran. Kaugnay ng pagsasanay sa anak ay ang pagsubaybay kung ginagawa niya ang itinuturo sa kaniya. Kung malayo siya sa tanaw ng kaniyang magulang ay sinusunod pa rin kaya niya ang kanilang mga payo?

Ang pagdisiplina sa anak

Hindi maiiwasan ng magulang na dumisiplina sa anak kung siya ay may pagkukulang o pagkakamali lalo at ito ay nagiging paulit-ulit. Subalit may mahalagang katotohanan na dapat maunawaan ang magulang tungkol dito gaya ng sinasabi sa Kawikaan 23:13 na: "Disiplinahin mo ang bata. Ang wastong pagpalo ay hindi niya ikamamatay" (*MB*).

Sana ay mapansin natin ang terminong ginamit—"wastong pagpalo." Ang wastong pagpalo ay hindi iyong napakarahas, na halos ikamatay na ng anak. Hindi katanggap-tanggap ang walang habas na pagpalo sa anak na kahit saan na lamang parte ng katawan tamaan ng pamalo. Naging paksa ng mga pagtatalo kung dapat o hindi dapat na paluin ang anak na nagkasala. May ilang tumututol dito. Ang totoo ay *last option* na ng magulang ang pagpalo. Dahil kung sa "tingin" pa lang ay napasunod na ang anak, bakit papaluin pa? Ang pagpalo sa anak na nagkamali ay bahagi ng pagdisiplina at hindi upang bigyan lamang ng daan ang galit ng magulang. Samakatuwid, nakapaloob ang pagmamahal sa wastong pagpaparusa ng magulang

sa anak. Ang pag-aalis ng ilang pribilehiyo ng anak tulad ng pagbawas ng oras ng kaniyang paglalaro o panonood ng telebisyon ay isang paraan din ng pagdisiplina.

At kapag nakita naman ng magulang ang buong pusong pagsunod ng anak sa kanilang itinuturo lalo na ng mga aral ng Diyos ay marapat namang ipagkaloob ng magulang ang kaukulang pagkilala sa anak kung nakatutugon ito. "Ibigay ninyo sa lahat ang sa kanila'y nararapat: ... puri sa dapat papurihan," ang sabi ni Apostol Pablo (Roma 13:7).

Kailangan din ng anak na maramdaman ang taos-pusong pagpapahalaga (*sincere appreciation*) ng kaniyang magulang ukol sa mabubuting bagay na kaniyang nagagawa tulad ng kaniyang ipinakikitang kasipagan sa pag-aaral, ang paggalang na kaniyang iniuukol sa kaniyang magulang at kapuwa tao, lalo na ang kaniyang malaking takot at pag-ibig sa Panginoong Diyos. Nakapagpapagaan ito ng loob at nagdudulot ng inspirasyon sa anak. Ang isang mapagmahal na tapik sa balik at o maaliwalas na ngiti mula sa magulang ay nakapagpapasigla na ng kaniyang buhay. Ang pagkakaloob ng mga alaala o regalo bunsod ng pagmamahal (*tokens of love*) ay paraan din ng pagpapadama ng pagkilala at pagmamahal.

'Two-way communication'

Kailangan ang malimit na pag-uusap ng mga magulang at mga anak. Hindi mabuti na masyadong matagal na hindi sila nagkikita at nagkakausap. Kaya may mga anak na bumabaling sa barkada hindi lamang upang makipagkaibigan kundi upang humanap ng pansin, pagmamahal, seguridad, at pagsubaybay. Ibaba muna ng ama ang peryodikong binabasa niya at itigil naman ng isang ina ang panonood ng telebisyon upang makapag-usap silang maayos ng kanilang anak at mabigyan sila ng pagkakataong makapagpahayag ng kanilang saloobin. Ang presensiya ng magulang na laging nagtuturo ng mga aral ng Diyos ay napakahalagang palatandaan ng pagmamahal sa anak. Panatag ang anak na binibigyan ng atensiyon at nakakarinig ng mga salitang nakapagpapalakas ng loob (*words of encouragement*) mula sa magulang nito. At ang lalong mahalaga na maibigay sa mga anak ay ang isang matibay na saligan ng pananampalataya (*spiritual foundation*) tulad ng pagpapakita ng magulang ng aktibong espirituwal na pamumuhay na ayon sa kalooban ng Diyos.

Ang mga aral ng Diyos sa mga kabataan

May mahalagang papel ding ginagampanan ang mga anak sa ikatatatag ng sambahayan. Ang isa sa mga ito ay ang paggalang na dapat nilang iukol sa magulang na ang ibubunga naman nito ay ang pagtanggap nila ng pangako ng Diyos (Efe. 6:2-3, *MB*). Dapat din na magsikap ang mga anak na maipagmalaki sila ng kanilang magulang (Kaw.

23:22, 25, *Ibid.*). Kaya, hindi marapat na ang mga anak ay bumabarkada sa makasalanan (Kaw. 1:10, 15) dahil ang masamang kasama ay nakasisira ng magandang pag-uugali (I Cor. 15:33, *Ibid.*). At upang magkaroon ang mga anak ng mabuting kinabukasan ay marapat silang mag-aral ng kasipagan at hindi katamaran (Kaw. 10:4-5, *NPV*).

Ang lalong mahalagang pananagutan ng kabataan

Mahalagang matugunan ng mga anak ang kanilang responsibilidad hindi lamang sa kanilang sarili, sa magulang, at sa lipunang kinabibilangan nila kundi higit sa lahat ay ang tungkulin nila sa Panginoong Diyos: “Alalahanin mo ang lumikha sa iyo sa panahon ng iyong kabataan bago dumating ang mga araw at taon na puno ng kaguluhan, panahong hindi mo na madama ang tamis ng mabuhay. ... Sa kabila ng lahat ng ito, isa lamang ang aking masasabi: Matakot ka sa Diyos at sundin mo ang kanyang mga utos pagkat ito ang buong katungkulan ng tao” (Ecles. 12:1, 13, *MB*).

Dapat igalang at sundin ng mga anak ang kanilang magulang na nagpapatupad ng mga aral ng Diyos sa kanilang tahanan. Subalit, ang lalong dapat na igalang at sundin ay ang Panginoong Diyos na lumalang sa atin sa

pagkasangkapan sa ating mga magulang. At kahit na ang mga anak ay nakapagtapos ng pag-aaral at naging *professional*, anupa’t naging matagumpay sila sa larangang kanilang pinili ay mamalagi nawa na ang tiwala nila at pag-asa ay nasa Panginoong Diyos, gaya ng nakasulat sa Kawikaan 3:5-7 na: “Magtiwala ka sa PANGINOON nang buong puso at huwag kang manangan sa sarili mong karunungan; isangguni mo sa kanya ang lahat ng lakad mo, at itituwid niya ang iyong mga landas. Huwag kang magpakapantas sa sarili mong mata; matakot ka sa PANGINOON at iwaksi ang masama” (*NPV*).

Hindi dapat gamitin ng sinumang anak ang natutuhang karunungan sa paaralan upang magmalaki o magmataas laban sa kaniyang kapuwa lalo na sa kaniyang magulang. Hindi niya dapat gamitin ang natamong karunungan upang siya ay mang-api at magsamantala sa ibang tao. At lalong hindi marapat na gamitin ito upang tutulan at labanan ang katotohanan ng mga salita ng Diyos na nakasulat sa Biblia. Ang mga anak o kabataan na nakikinig at nagitiwala sa Panginoong Diyos ang makatutulong nang malaki sa kanilang magulang sa pagpapatatag ng kanilang sambahayan at sila rin ang mga anak na mapapanuto ang buhay at hindi maliligaw ng landas. 🌟

Magpatuloy Tayo sa Kasakdalan at sa Pagiging Ganap sa Buhay Espirituwal

Abot tanaw na nga—laang gantimpala, pagkat paglalakbay na may dusa’t luha ay matatapos na’t sa Bayang hinanda ay di matatapos ang pagkakatuwa!

Kaya’t magpatuloy sa pagiging sakdal at pagiging ganap—buhay espirituwal. Yamang ang tatahan sa Lungsod na Banal ay yaong nabuhay na matwid, maranga!

Huwag manlalamig sa pag-ibig sa Diyos. Laging pag-alabin ang isipa’t loob sa mga tuntunin, sa lahat N’yang utos. Di dapat magsawa sa gawang pagsunod.

Huwag pabayaang ang ating pagsamba. Ang Diyos ay sambahin, purihin ang Ama. Sa pagkakatipon sa tuwi-tuwina ang puso at isip, laging italaga.

Huwag ngang uulong sa ‘ting kahalalan. Pagtawag sa ati’y di dapat talikdan. Mamalaging tapat at laging ingatan, biyayang sa atin ay pagkakahirang.

Huwag mawawalan nitong pananalig. Manampalataya, maghintay, magtiis. Sa kapangyarihan ng Ama’y mangapit at laging umasa sa Kanyang pag-ibig.

Huwag mabubuhay sa gawa ng laman. Ang gawaing liko ay dapat layuan. Itaguyod nati’y malinis na buhay, sa gitna ng dilim ay magsilbing ilaw.

Huwag sisirain, kapatiran natin. Ang pag-iibiga’y laging paningas. At kahit ang lakas, buhay man ang hingin ay handang ibigay kung kakaylanganin.

Huwag pabayaang, gusaling sambahan. Bagkus ay mahal in at pangalagaan. Linisin, ayusin, at laging bantayan na mapanatili ang kadakilaan.

Huwag kaligtaan, gawang pagbubunga. Saguti’y gampanan, pagkat tayo’y sanga. Magmisyon, ihayag saanman, sa t’wina. Ang tao’y akayin, dalhin sa Iglesia.

Huwag magpabaya sa ating tungkulin. Magwalang-bahala’y hindi dapat gawin. Maging kaaliwan ang ating sagutin, lagi nang tumupad kahit may tiisin.

At huwag lalaban sa Pamamahala, bagkus ay sumunod, pasakop na kusa. Yayamang sa atin ay nangangasiwa, nagmamalasakit, at nangangalaga.

Mga kautusang sa ati’y gagabay sa pagpapatuloy nitong paglalakbay. Yamang malapit na ang dakilang araw—Ang araw na ating pinakahihintay!

Kaya’t maging ganap at laging maghanda Pagkat darating na yaong gantimpala!

Ezzard R. Gilbang
Quezon City, Philippines

'My life took a complete turn'

By VIRGILIO P. DAVID

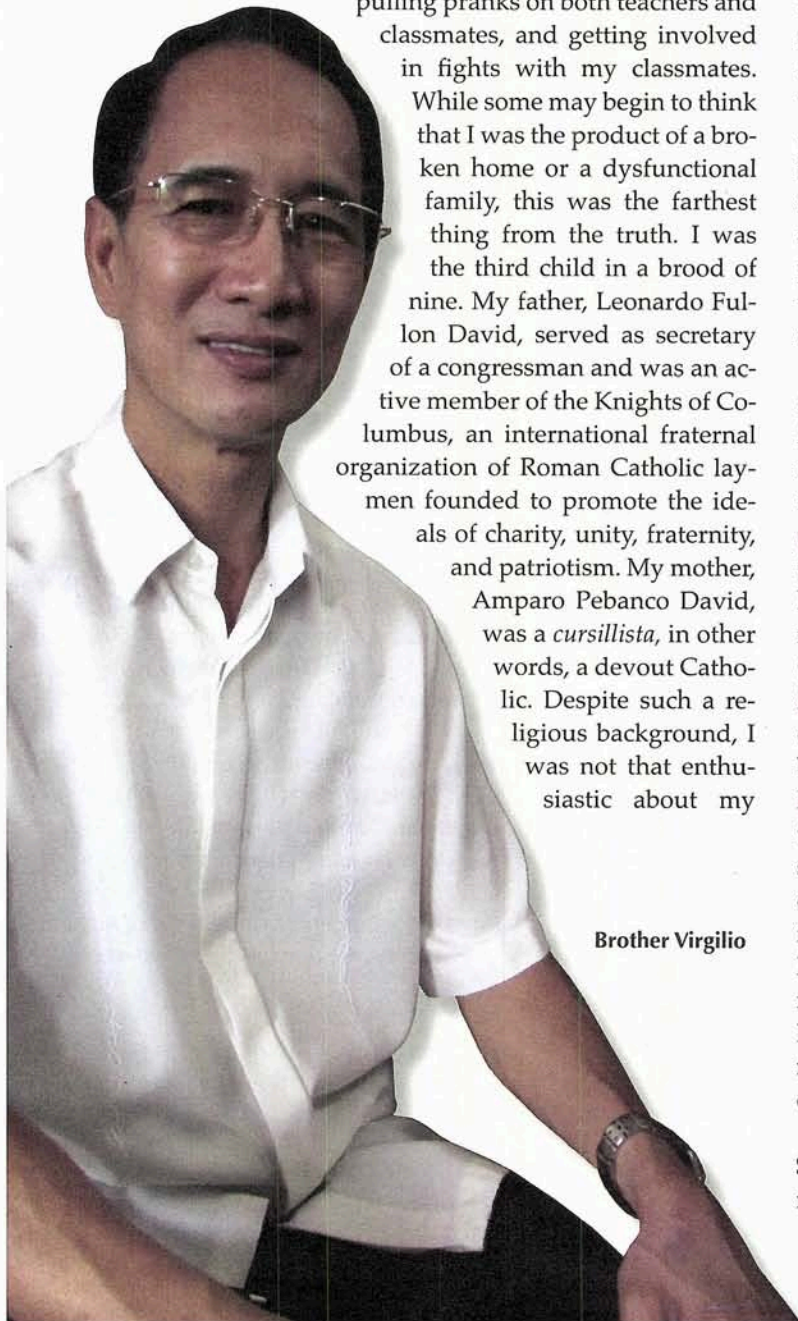
I WAS A PRODIGAL SON. As a child, I was the real-life version of the cartoon strip "Dennis the Menace", always having mischievous deeds up my sleeve. In elementary, I was a regular visitor to the principal's office for various offenses ranging from cutting classes, pulling pranks on both teachers and classmates, and getting involved in fights with my classmates. While some may begin to think that I was the product of a broken home or a dysfunctional family, this was the farthest thing from the truth. I was the third child in a brood of nine. My father, Leonardo Fulon David, served as secretary of a congressman and was an active member of the Knights of Columbus, an international fraternal organization of Roman Catholic laymen founded to promote the ideals of charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism. My mother, Amparo Pebanco David, was a *cursillista*, in other words, a devout Catholic. Despite such a religious background, I was not that enthusiastic about my

faith. I remember an incident when I was still quite young when I was slapped by my grandmother for asking why the priest was being paid for praying for my dearly departed grandfather every November 1.

I was not the ideal child my parents hoped I would be. I was a misfit, so to speak. Because of my misdemeanors, I gained notoriety in school. However, I was not kicked out of school because of my teachers' high regard for my parents. When I entered high school, I attended classes only whenever I felt like it. I spent most of my time with my companions—drinking, gambling, and singing the day away. If I was scolded, I would simply go to a friend's house or go to Manila to stay at a relative's house. This went on for about three years. With my lackadaisical attitude toward my studies, it was not surprising that I was left behind by my original high school classmates.

In one sober moment as I was about to meet again with my friends, the reality struck me that I would not be young forever, that someday my parents would no longer be around and, yes, I would like to have my own family. Realizing that I had wasted so much precious time with bad company and on vices, I resolved to finish my schooling. This time, I began to take my studies seriously. It was during my third year in high school that I got interested in the Citizens' Army Training (CAT). I discovered that I had an aptitude for military training and I could actually follow its discipline. And so, for the first time in my life, my mind and energy were focused on something worthwhile. The following year, 1977, I became the CAT-I Alpha Company Commander of Antique National School. When I entered college, I continued to join the Citizen's Military Training at the University of Iloilo. I started as a platoon leader. Afterwards, I became a company commander and then became a battalion commander and, finally, I was appointed as the university's corps commander. In the summer of 1980, I was appointed as the corps commander of the Summer Cadre Training of the Philippine Air Force in Mactan Air Base, Cebu. With my success as a student military officer, I harbored the ambition of embarking on a career in the military. However, God had other plans for me.

I was in my fourth year in high school when a classmate, Sister Mildred Aguirre, invited me to attend an evangelical mission of the *Iglesia ni Cristo*. Without second thoughts, I ac-



Brother Virgilio



Brother Virgilio and his family

cepted her invitation. I listened intently as the minister discussed the topic about the alleged deity of Christ. I waited for an opportunity to raise my questions regarding what the minister was teaching but what held me back was that he directly read from the Scriptures the truths taught by our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles. If I tried to press the minister with my questions, it would appear that I was the authority and that would make liars out of our Savior and the apostles. I shuddered at the thought!

After that, I was introduced to Brother Lopito Aguirre, who was at that time the district minister of Antique. I took on his invitation to witness several debates between the Church and other faiths, among them, a debate between Catholic apologists and *Iglesia ni Cristo* ministers. Deep within me then, I longed for the latter to be defeated so as to vindicate my Catholic faith. But lo and behold, those debates all the more showed me that the beliefs of the *Iglesia ni Cristo* were solidly anchored on the teachings of the Bible, and exposed the man-made teachings of other religions. This convinced me that the *Iglesia ni Cristo* was the true Church. I enlisted myself as a Bible study student. Brother

Ben Ogo, the minister who instructed me on biblical doctrines was very patient and answered all my questions from the Holy Book. God's promise of life eternal in the Holy City that He will bestow on the day of Judgment filled me with hope and enthusiasm to finish what I started.

I supplemented my biblical studies with readings of the *Pasugo*, the magazine of the *Iglesia ni Cristo*. I eagerly read issue after issue, so hungry was I for the words of truth written in the Bible. It also came to a point that I had to ask brethren-friends of mine to supply me with the older issues to satiate my hunger for the words of God.

Then it came to me—the persecutions that were foretold by our Lord Jesus. The first thing noticed by my other friends was that I did not join them anymore in drinking binges. They started calling me names and taunted me but I was not to be cowed. Even on the day of my baptism, they did everything to dissuade me, but to no avail. On May 28, 1977, I was baptized by Brother Ildefonso Forro with scores of other converts in San Jose, Antique.

A few days after my baptism, the bishop of our diocese went to my father who was a close friend of his. He asked

my father why he allowed me to become a member of the *Iglesia ni Cristo*. The bishop was taken aback by his answer. "If you can do what the teachings of the Church of Christ did to my son, that is, he was able to leave his old unprofitable ways, then by all means you can win him back to Catholicism," my father said. The bishop could only murmur and beat a hasty retreat.

I forsook my old life and wholeheartedly embraced the teachings of God by putting them into practice. My parents, siblings, former classmates, and friends were amazed. Their interest in my transformation from my old self to my renewed life paved the way for me to share my faith with them. I told them that had I not become an *Iglesia ni Cristo* member, I would have ended up in more troubles or worse, in perdition. Through constant prayers, a lot of effort, and patience, I was able to bring my parents and eight siblings into the true Church along with a number of friends and cadets.

My ambition to become a soldier or a police officer did not materialize but, I have no regrets because God entrusted me with different duties when I became a member of the Church: I became president of the *KADIWA* in the ecclesiastical district of Iloilo South; *Buklod* president, when I got married, in Grace Park, Metro Manila North and also in Iloilo South; and vice-president of the Society of Communicators and Networkers International (SCAN) in the ecclesiastical district of Negros Occidental. At present, I am the *Buklod* president in the ecclesiastical district of Negros Occidental.

To my friends, relatives, and loved ones, it is my fervent prayer to the Father that He also call you into the Church of Christ, so that we will be together not only in this life but, more importantly, we will dwell together in the promised Holy City. ☺

Los diez mandamientos de nuestra fe

Traducido por LYNDON A. AGUIRRE

UNO DE LOS SERMONES MÁS memorables preparados por el hermano Eraño G. Manalo, el difunto Ministro Ejecutivo, es lo que fue predicada en todos los servicios de adoración de la Iglesia el primer domingo de diciembre del 1996. En aquel servicio de adoración, se destacaron diez mandamientos que debemos obedecer para asegurar y salvaguardar nuestra esperanza para la salvación. Basados en los Diez Mandamientos que el Señor Dios dió a Moisés, esto no significa que remplazan los otros mandamientos de Dios. Más bien, nos sirve como una declaración de los principios fundamentales que todos los miembros de la Iglesia de Cristo debe mantener para que la Iglesia entera alcance una estatura gloriosa, digna de la salvación prometida.

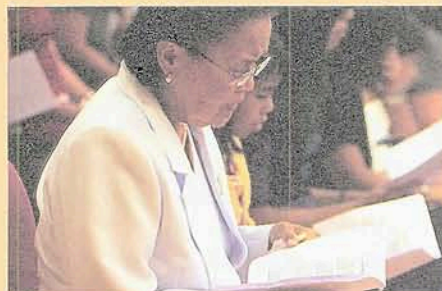
Recientemente, el actual Ministro Ejecutivo, el hermano Eduardo V. Manalo, reiteró la importancia de estos mandamientos cuando acudió a todos los ministros y trabajadores del evangelio en todo el mundo para mantener vigilante la misión del Señor y para ayudar a dirigir a toda la Iglesia para que "avancemos hacia la perfección y madurez espiritual."

Lo que sigue es una reafirmación de dichos Diez Mandamientos, junto con los punteros bíblicos para nuestra reflexión. Repasémoslos uno a uno y aseguremonos de no violar ni siquiera uno de ellos.

1. No permitas que tu amor por Dios se enfríe.

No hay otro amor más grande que el amor que hemos recibido de Dios mediante nuestro Salvador Jesucristo. Por Su gracia y misericordia, el Señor Dios nos eligió y llamó dentro de la Iglesia de Cristo, de tal modo, que nos concede el privilegio

de ser redimidos y salvos mediante la muerte de Su amado Hijo (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 8:1; Hch. 20:28). Por tanto, no es mas que apropiado que a cambio amemos a Dios con todo nuestro corazón, con toda nuestra alma, con toda nuestra mente, y con todas nuestras fuerzas (Mc. 12:30).



Amar a Dios es obedecer Sus mandamientos de todo corazón (1 Jn. 5:3). Esforcémosnos a corresponder el amor de Dios obedeciendo fielmente Sus leyes. Mantengamos la pasión ardiente en nuestro corazón de servirle mientras vivimos. Después de todo, fue Él quien nos amó primero. De hecho, Dios nos ama tanto que Le duele vernos menguantes o enfriarnos en nuestro amor por Él: "Has sido constante, y has sufrido mucho por mi causa, sin cansarte. Pero tengo una cosa contra ti: que ya no tienes el mismo amor que al principio. Por eso, recuerda de dónde has caído, vuélvete a Dios y haz otra vez lo que hacías al principio. Si no, iré a ti y quitaré tu candelabro de su lugar, a menos que te vuelvas a Dios" (Apoc. 2:3-5, Dios Habla Hoy).

2. No abandones tu deber de adorar.

Como verdaderos adoradores de Dios quienes obedecieron Su voluntad de que seamos reunidos bajo Cristo como nuestra cabeza (Jn. 4:23; Ef. 1:9-10; Col. 1:18;

Rom. 16:16), somos los que el Señor Dios busca adorarle congregándonos en Su Templo, ofreciéndole alabanzas (Sal. 5:7, 1 Cor. 14:26, 15; Heb. 13:15-16).



Por tanto, dediquemos tiempo y esfuerzo en asistir a nuestros servicios de adoración en congregación. No permitamos que otras prioridades en la vida nos impidan cumplir con este sagrado deber. Dondequiera que vayamos, busquemos siempre la casa del Señor donde nosotros, junto con nuestros hermanos en la fe, alabaremos nuestro Padre Todopoderoso y nuestro Señor Jesucristo. Abundantes bendiciones están reservadas para los fieles adoradores de Dios. Sin embargo, para los siervos negligentes, lo que les espera es el fuego ardiente en el Día del Juicio: "No dejemos de congregarnos, como acostumbran hacerlo algunos, sino animémosnos unos a otros, y con mayor razón ahora que vemos que aquel día se acerca. Si después de recibir el conocimiento de la verdad pecamos obstinadamente, ya no hay sacrificio por los pecados. Sólo queda una terrible expectativa de juicio, el fuego ardiente que ha de devorar a los enemigos de Dios" (Heb. 10:25-27, Nueva Versión Internacional).

3. No abandones la Iglesia de Cristo.

Mientras viajamos en este mundo hacia el reino celestial de Dios, no podemos evitar afrontar las pruebas, dificultades

y persecuciones. Mientras que bien entendemos que esto es parte de nuestra vida como siervos de Dios, hay momentos



cuando encontramos difícil de afrontar las adversidades que sufrimos día a día. De hecho, puede que haya veces cuando alguno de nosotros se deprima hasta el punto de rendirse.

Pero no debemos rendirnos. Recordemos que como corredores en una carrera, tenemos que mantener el ritmo en medio de los obstáculos para alcanzar la meta y ganar el premio (Fil. 3:13-14). Rendirse no es una opción, por que, ¿cómo podremos alcanzar la meta si abandonamos la carrera o nos apartamos del sendero en el que el Señor Dios nos ha fijado andar? Corramos hacia la meta y terminemos la carrera que hemos iniciado. Pongamos nuestros ojos en la gloriosa recompensa que nos espera al final de la carrera. Llegará el día en que Dios podrá fin a todo nuestro dolor, miseria, y aflicción.

“Pues dentro de muy poco tiempo, el que ha de venir vendrá, y no tardará. Pero mi justo* vivirá por la fe. Y si se vuelve atrás, no será de mi agrado. Pero nosotros no somos de los que se vuelven atrás y acaban por perderse, sino de los que tienen fe y preservan su vida” (Heb. 10:37-39, *Ibid.*).

4. No debes perder la fe.

Cuando creímos en el evangelio que a nosotros fue predicado mediante



el Mensajero en estos últimos días, obtuvimos el conocimiento que nos dará vida eterna. Nuestras mentes fueron iluminadas y nosotros fuimos liberados de la ignorancia, sabiendo la verdad que se necesita para la salvación. Es por esta razón que hemos rechazado las falsas creencias religiosas al aceptar el evangelio del reino de Cristo.

Debemos aferrarnos firmemente a nuestra fe y las enseñanzas de la Iglesia. En medio de la proliferación de falsos grupos religiosos y predicadores hoy en día, debemos mantenernos firmes en la verdad que Dios nos ha revelado mediante Su último Mensajero. No permitamos que la duda corrompa nuestras mentes y nos cause que perdamos la verdadera fe en nuestros corazones.

“El que cree en el Hijo de Dios, no está condenado; pero el que no cree, ya ha sido condenado por no creer en el Hijo único de Dios” (Jn. 3:18, DHH).

5. No vivas según la carne.

El Señor Jesucristo no murió sin causa. Para nosotros, su muerte significa la justificación y el perdón de nuestros pecados. Ofreció Su vida para cumplir el designio secreto de Dios de salvación para la Iglesia. Esta salvación prometida es la bendición más grande que recibimos cuando fuimos bautizados en la Iglesia de Cristo.

Como que ya hemos sepultado a nuestros seres pecadores con Cristo mediante el bautismo, se deduce que ya no debemos ser instrumentos de pecado sino que de la justicia. Ya no debemos ser encontrados en las obras de inmoralidad ni maldad. Nuestra redención mediante Cristo no nos da la libertad de pecar; mejor dicho que nos ata a una vida de obediencia al cual nos comprometimos cuando verdaderamente aceptamos a Cristo como nuestro Salvador. Ahora debemos llevar una vida recta y santa digna para los siervos elegidos de Dios, “¿No sabéis que los injustos no heredarán el reino de Dios? No os engaños: ni los fornicarios,



ni los idólatras, ni los adúlteros, ni los afeminados, ni los homosexuales, ni los ladrones, ni los avaros, ni los borrachos, ni los maldicientes, ni los estafadores, heredarán el reino de Dios” (1 Cor. 6:9-10, Reina Valera 1995).

6. No debes arruinar la hermandad.

Somos los hijos e hijas de Dios de los confines de la tierra (Is. 43:5-6). Ya que pertenecemos a una familia donde el Señor Dios es nuestro Padre, somos los coherederos de nuestro Señor Jesucristo (Mt. 23:9, 8; Heb. 10:21; Hch. 13:23). No debemos permitir que nada destruya nuestra hermandad en Cristo. Debemos trabajar juntos y no unos contra otros. No guardemos rencor contra nuestros hermanos en la fe, sino que debemos aprender a ser pacientes y perdonarnos los unos a los otros. Podremos hacer esto si rechazamos la avaricia, el orgullo, la envidia y otras maldades y si dejamos que el amor sea lo que reine completamente entre nosotros.



“Nosotros sabemos que hemos pasado de muerte a vida, porque amamos a los hermanos. El que no ama a su hermano permanece en muerte. Todo aquel que odia a su hermano es homicida y sabéis que ningún homicida tiene vida eterna permanente en él” (1 Jn. 3:14-15, *Ibid.*).

7. No dejes la casa del Señor entre ruinas.

Dios valora en gran medida la casa edificada en Su nombre. Es ahí donde Él promete estar en comunión con su pueblo y donde Su amor morará para siempre.



Sabiendo esto, nuestro Señor Jesucristo mismo dió gran honor y respeto al templo hasta tal punto que incluso condenó a los que difamaron su santidad convirtiéndolo en un mercado. El relato del apóstol Juan nos cuenta que Cristo estaba tan furioso con estas personas que Él hizo un látigo y les echó del templo. Tal reacción es comprensible, ya que el Señor Dios mismo enfatizó la severidad de la maldición que acaecerá sobre quienquiera que difame Su templo y la deje en ruinas:

“Ustedes buscan mucho, pero encuentran poco; y lo que guardan en su casa, yo me lo llevo de un soplo. ¿Por qué? Pues porque mi casa está en ruinas, mientras que ustedes solo se preocupan de sus propias casas. Yo, el Señor, lo afirmo. Yo, el Señor todopoderoso, les digo que piensen bien es su conducta. Vayan a las montañas, traigan madera y construyan de nuevo el templo. Yo estaré allí contento, y mostraré mi gloria” (Ag. 1:9, 7-8, DHH).

Verdaderamente, el templo es un lugar sagrado que se merece nuestro sumo respeto y honor. No profanemos la casa del Señor, sino preservamos su santidad y orden por medio de voluntariamente compartiendo en su construcción, renovación, y mantenimiento.

8. No olvides tu misión de dar fruto.

Nuestro Señor Jesucristo ilustró Su unión con los miembros de Su Iglesia comparándose a una vid y sus ramas (Jn. 15:1, 4-5). Como ramas de la vid, cada uno de nosotros debe dar fruto para estar seguro de recibir la salvación. El incumplimiento de esto causará nuestra separación de nuestro Salvador.

“Todo rama que en mí no da fruto, la corta; pero toda rama que da fruto la poda para que dé más fruto todavía. ... El que



no permanece en mí es desechado y se seca, como las ramas que se recogen, se arrojan al fuego y se queman” (Jn. 15:2, 6, NVI).

Dar fruto es abundar en las buenas obras, y una de ellas es convencer a otros para que se conviertan en miembros de la Iglesia de Cristo para que no sean condenados (Rom. 7:4; Jud. 1:23; II Pe. 3:10, 7). A través de participar activamente en la obra de propagación de la Iglesia, compartimos en la obra noble de propagar el mensaje de Dios para la salvación. De este modo, cumplimos nuestro deber como ramas de la Vid.

9. No debes ser negligente en el desempeño de tus deberes.

Todos nosotros tenemos respectivos deberes y responsabilidades que cumplir para que la Iglesia alcance la perfección y cada uno de nosotros pueda alcanzar la plenitud de nuestra salvación.



La Biblia menciona los diferentes deberes u oficios en la Iglesia como dones espirituales de Dios. Atesoremos estos dones cumpliendo diligentemente las responsabilidades que el Señor Dios nos dió cueste lo que cueste. Dios no es injusto; no olvidará nuestras labores. El Señor promete recompensar Sus siervos que, de todo corazón, llevan a cabo Sus obras y ayudan en la edificación de Su pueblo. Por otro lado, los que dejan de cumplir sus deberes serán condenados por rehusar llevar el yugo. La Biblia declara: “¡Maldito el que sea negligente para realizar el trabajo del SEÑOR! ¡Maldito el que de la sangre retraiga su espada!” (Jer. 48:10, Ibid.).

“Por lo tanto, mis queridos hermanos, sigan firmes y constantes, trabajando siempre más y más en la obra del Señor;

porque ustedes saben que no es en vano el trabajo que hacen en unión con el Señor” (I Cor. 15:58, DHH).

10. No te rebelarás contra la Administración de la Iglesia.



“Obedezcan a sus dirigentes y sométanse a ellos, pues cuidan de ustedes como quines tienen que rendir cuentas. Obedézcanlos a fin de que ellos cumplan su tarea con alegría y sin quejarse, pues el quejarse no les trae ningún provecho” (Heb. 13:17, NVI). El Señor Dios nombra líderes para pastorear Su pueblo. Cuando el Señor Jesucristo ascendió al cielo, la autoridad de administrar la Iglesia del primer siglo fue otorgada a los apóstoles. En estos últimos días, la misma autoridad fue dada a la Administración de la Iglesia dirigida por el Ministro Ejecutivo.

La Biblia enseña que debemos someternos a la Administración que el Señor Dios ha puesto dentro de la Iglesia. Debemos reconocer y respetar la autoridad que el Señor Dios le otorgó para pastorear y cuidar el bienestar de nuestras almas. Estando unidos con ellos en mente y espíritu, conservamos nuestra unión con Cristo y con el Padre (I Jn. 1:3). Por el contrario, rechazarles equivale a rechazar a Dios, quien les envió para darnos el mensaje de la verdad.

“Y así como Janes y Jambres se opusieron a Moisés, de la misma manera éstos también se oponen a la verdad; hombres de mente depravada, reprobados en lo que respecta a la fe” (II Tim. 3:8, La Biblia de las Américas). ☹

(A translation of the article “The Ten Commandments of Our Faith” by Marlex C. Cantor published in God’s Message in May 2003)

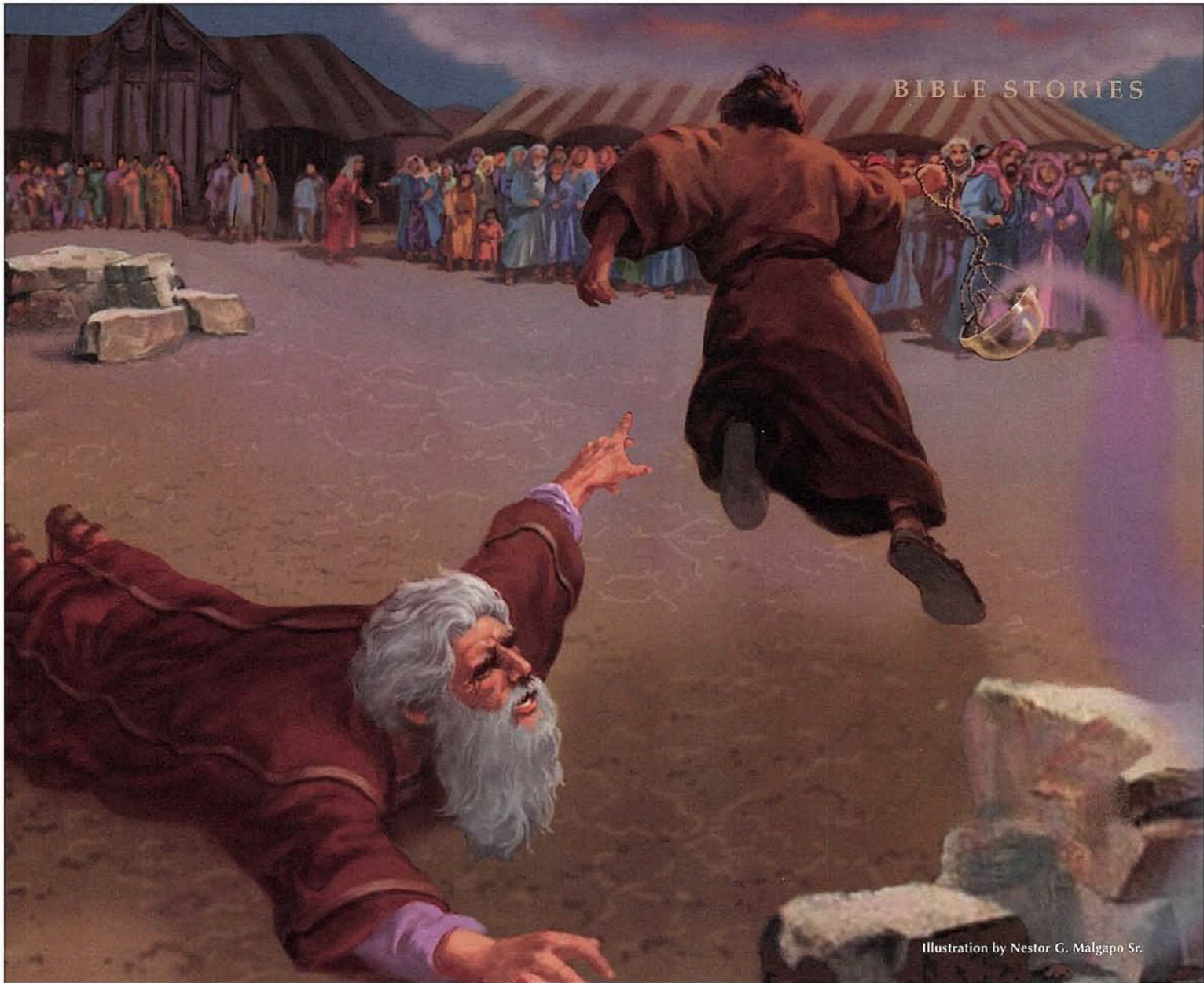


Illustration by Nestor G. Malgapo Sr.

Moses and Aaron plead for the people

BUT THE VERY NEXT morning all the people began muttering again against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the Lord's people." Soon a great, sullen mob formed; suddenly, as they looked toward the Tabernacle, the Cloud appeared and the awesome glory of the Lord was seen. Moses and Aaron came and stood at the entrance of the Tabernacle, and the Lord said to

Moses, "Get away from these people so that I can instantly destroy them."

But Moses and Aaron fell face downward to the earth before the Lord. And Moses said to Aaron, "Quick, take a censer and place fire in it from the altar; lay incense on it, and carry it quickly among the people and make atonement for them; for God's anger has gone out among them—the plague has already begun." Aaron did as

Moses had told him to, and ran among the people, for the plague had indeed already begun; and he put on the incense and made atonement for them. ... and the plague was stopped ...

Then Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the Tabernacle; and so the plague was stopped. ☪

(Excerpted from Numbers 16:41-48, 50, *Living Bible*)

From Darkness to Light

By ROLAND A. AGUIRRE

BEING IN THE DARK can be very devastating and distressing. You lose your perspective. You have no reference point. You don't know where you are—and where you are going. Those who can not see—who became physically blind for various reasons—have experienced, from the beginning, such loss and pain in one way or another. But they are not alone.

In the dark

There are people who are also in darkness, who "grope about like blind people ... stumble at noon, as if it were night, as if ... in the dark world of the dead" (Isa. 59:9-10, *Today's English Version*). They are the people who do not have the true faith and divine calling to serve our Lord God. Their minds, not eyes, are blinded by Satan; thus, they fail to see the light that comes from the Good News or the words of God: "They do not believe, because their minds have been kept in the dark by the evil god of this world. He keeps them from seeing the light shining on them, the light that comes from the Good News about the glory of Christ ..." (II Cor. 4:4, *ibid.*).



Brought out from blindness

Biblical prophecies attest to those whom God has brought out from blindness or darkness to light: "Bring out the blind people who have eyes, And the deaf who have ears. ... Fear not, for I *am* with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, And gather you from the west; I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, And My daughters from the ends of the earth" (Isa. 43:8, 5-6, *New King James Version*).

These prophecies refer to the Church of Christ in these last days. This is because the fortunate people referred to in the verses are to be called during the time called "ends of the earth" which refers to the period of time when the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ is near or "at the doors," the beginning of which is signaled by a world war (Matt. 24:3, 33, 6-7). On July 27, 1914, the First World War broke out (*The Nations at War*, p. 8) signifying the beginning of the period "ends of the earth." Concurrent with the beginning of World War I, the Church of Christ was officially registered by Brother Felix Y. Manalo with the Philippine government. Furthermore, the calling of such people will begin from the east. The "east" in the prophecy refers to the distant or Far East, (Isa. 43:5, *TEV*; *Moffat Translation*). Undoubtedly, the prophesied place and time of emergence were fulfilled in this Church that emerged from the Philippines, a country in the Far East (*World History*, pp. 440-441).

The people who would be chosen to be servants of God were also blind from God's truth prior to their conversion into the true Church at first but because they were brought out of their former religions, their eyes have been opened. They were delivered from false teachings and unrighteous ways; they were able to see the falsity

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of the beliefs and practices of other religions.

Indeed, in the Christian Era God appoints His messenger to open the eyes of men "turn them from the darkness to the light and from the power of Satan to God ..." (Acts 26:17-18, *TEV*). Specifically, in these last days, God commissioned Brother Felix Y. Manalo as His messenger who would be instrumental in the restoration of the true Christian faith by means of preaching God's righteousness, sending the light of His words into the darkness of men's hearts and minds and snatching them from false religions that are holding them captives (Rev. 7:2-3; Isa. 46:11-13; 43:5-6; Rom. 1:16-17)—people have been brought from darkness to the light—to the true Church!

Still in darkness

Yet, the apostles warn about those who are still blind and in darkness among members of the Church of

Christ: "He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes ... He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now" (I John 2:10-11, 9, *NKJV*).

Thus, a member of the Church who hates his brother or sister in faith or holds a grudge against him or her, and does not obey the commandment concerning the love of brotherhood—filing suits against one another, brother against brother, before unbelievers, spreading rumors, deceiving or defrauding a brother or sister, refusing to forgive the brother or sister who did something wrong—is still blind or in darkness (I Cor. 6:4-8; Prov. 17:9). Even those who gossip and discuss other people's lives, talking about others' flaws and failures in life still abide in darkness for "they stir up trouble and break up friendships" (Prov. 16:28, *TEV*).

In addition, living a life of sin is tantamount to living in darkness. The Bible mentions about those "who have abandoned a righteous life to live in the darkness of sin" (Prov. 2:13, *Ibid.*). Truly, anyone whose way of life runs counter to what the Bible teaches, having traits and earthly desires such as "... sexual immorality, indecency, lust, evil passions, and greed" (Col. 3:5, *Ibid.*)—still lives in darkness.

We should not be drawn to these deeds of darkness. Apostle Paul's advice is unequivocal: "Have nothing to do with the worthless things that people do, things that belong to the darkness. Instead, bring them out to the light" (Eph. 5:11, *Ibid.*).

Belonging to the light

God's righteous servants must bear in mind Apostle Paul's admonition as

well: "You yourselves used to be in the darkness, but since you have become the Lord's people, you are in the light. So you must live like people who belong to the light" (Eph. 5:8, *Ibid.*).

Belonging to the light means, not only living harmoniously as brothers and sisters in the Church, but also getting rid of evil deeds and desires, being decent and true in all that we do: "The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So don't live in darkness. Get rid of your evil deeds. Shed them like dirty clothes. Clothe yourselves with the armor of right living, as those who live in the light. We should be decent and true in everything we do, so that everyone can approve of our behavior. Don't participate in wild parties and getting drunk, or in adultery and immoral living, or in fighting and jealousy. But let the Lord Jesus Christ take control of you, and don't think of ways to indulge your evil desires" (Rom. 13:12-14, *New Living Translation*).

Living like people who belong to the light is not an impossible task. God, who is our light and in whom there is no darkness (I John 1:5), is with us. Also, His word that is a guide and light in our path (Ps. 119:105) can help us defeat and dispel darkness. Hence, let us take comfort in God's promise to us if we live in the light in these dark and difficult times: "Yet if you devote your heart to him and stretch out your hands to him, if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent, then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear. You will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by. Life will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will become like morning. You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety" (Job 11:13-18, *New International Version*).

Light and salvation

More importantly, we can ensure our hope of receiving the great reward that awaits us on Judgment Day if we remain in the light; when we uphold the love of brotherhood, we abide not only in the light but in eternal life (I John 3:14-15). On the other hand, remaining in darkness by refusing to heed God's call to turn away from sinful and wicked life could have dire consequence: we would be driven from light into darkness—to perdition: "The light of the wicked indeed goes out, And the flame of his fire does not shine ... He is driven from light into darkness, And chased out of the world" (Job 18:5, 18, *NKJV*).

The Bible made it clear that those who are no longer in darkness or those who belong to and remain in the light are the ones who will be saved: "For you yourselves know very well that the Day of the Lord will come as a thief comes at night. When people say, 'Everything is quiet and

safe,' then suddenly destruction will hit them! It will come as suddenly as the pains that come upon a woman in labor, and people will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in the darkness, and the Day should not take you by surprise like a thief. All of you are people who belong to the light, who belong to the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. God did not choose us to suffer his anger, but to possess salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:2-5, 9, *TEV*).

Remaining in the light

Now that Judgment Day is fast approaching, every member of the Church of Christ must make sure that he or she walks in the light, by constantly obeying the words of God, not in the darkness of destructive ways, by breaking His commandments—in order not to lose our sacred privilege to receive salvation and the everlasting life.

Let us promise then that we will remain forever in the light, not losing our perspective and sense of direction. Let us always remember that we do not belong to darkness anymore. Nor are we "running aimlessly ... [fighting] like a man beating the air" (I Cor. 9:26, *NIV*). We know exactly where we are going. And as we travel toward our true home, may we defeat the spiritual forces of evil around us, standing firm on the sure word of the prophecy that testifies to our calling and election: "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts ... Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:19, 10-11, *NKJV*). ☺

Belonging to the light means, not only living harmoniously as brothers and sisters in the Church, but also getting rid of evil deeds and desires, being decent and true in all that we do.

HISTORY HAS IT that Canada took its name from the Huron-Iroquoian word “*kanata*” which simply means a “village” or “settlement.” The two Indian youths from whom Jacques Cartier heard this word in 1535 were actually referring to the next village they were heading to—Stadacona, which is the site of the present-day Quebec City. But, for want of a new name, the French explorer coined the word Canada to refer to the entire area surrounding it.


Today, Canada, as we know it, is the world’s second largest country occupying the vast land mass north of USA. Highly developed and democratic, this English- and French-speaking nation prides itself of being “The True North, Strong and Free”—a slogan taken from a line of its national anthem.

Over the years, however, something else true, strong, and free has settled and been spreading coast-to-coast in Canada—the faith and membership of the *Iglesia ni Cristo* (Church of Christ). In retrospect, here is how the Church began and continues to grow in this economic giant.

Late 60s to 70s: Origins

It was in the late 60s through the early 70s when the Church of Christ mission began to penetrate Canada. In the central province of Manitoba, the earliest recorded group prayer meetings transpired in Winnipeg City in 1968. This was followed by the rise of a committee prayer group in Toronto, Ontario on February 22, 1973. Though miles apart, these two groups individually grew to become the Church’s first and second local congregations in Canada, both registering a few other firsts in the pages of the Church’s history.

In fact, Winnipeg and Toronto are also the first two sites where the Church was able to have houses of worship within this decade. On March 27, 1974, the Church bought a property at 88 Juno Street in Winnipeg City and converted what was once a Protestant chapel into a suitable Church of Christ house of worship. The Church then applied for and gained

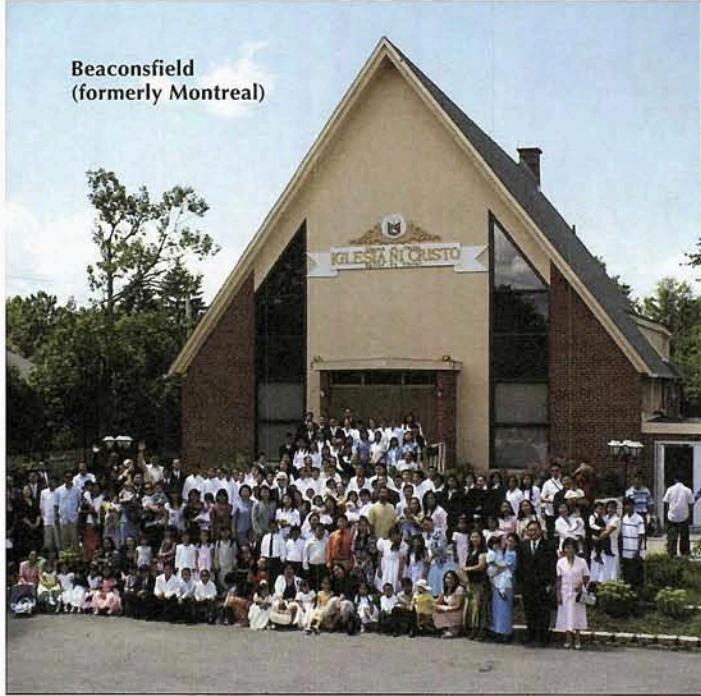


True Faith, Strong^{and} Free

The Church of Christ in Canada

By MARLEX C. CANTOR

Beaconsfield
(formerly Montreal)



From the late 60s to the 90s, the Church's mission in Canada has spread coast-to-coast as evident in the successive establishments of local congregations and the rise of houses of worship in various places.



official registration in Manitoba on September 7 of the following year. Later, it was Toronto's turn to have an appropriate house of worship. Just a few months after the Church was officially registered in Ontario on January 23, 1976, the property at 175 Islington Avenue in Etobicoke was purchased and renovated for use as a house of worship which was dedicated on June 3 of the same year.

The next Canadian province where the Church was planted is British Columbia (B.C.). There sprang the Vancouver Congregation, which, in the next decades, had branched out into several congregations and groups. To-

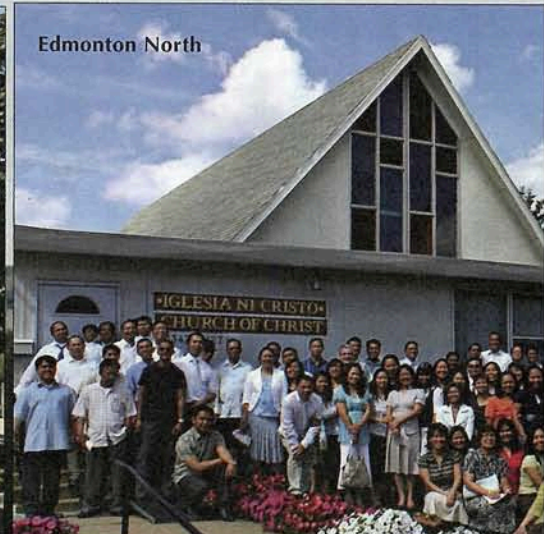
Burnaby, B.C.
(formerly Vancouver)



Toronto



Edmonton North





ward the end of the 70s, pioneering missions in Ottawa (Canada's capital, also situated in Ontario) and nearby Montreal, province of Quebec, had already been set in place.

Thus, as early as the 70s, the Church of Christ had already taken root in Canada's three most populous provinces—Manitoba, Ontario, and B.C. All these happened as with the Church's initial expansions in the West, first sown in the far west American states of Hawaii and California in mid-1968, by then Executive Minister, Brother Eraño G. Manalo.

The 80s Expansion Era

With the dawn of the 80s, more groundbreaking events unfolded for the Church in Canada, beginning with the establishment of the Ottawa-Montreal congregation in 1981, to which belonged the brethren from Canada's capital in Ontario to nearby Montreal in Quebec. This was shortly followed by the establishment of the Parksville Extension of the Vancouver Congregation in October 1981 and the dedication to God of the new, bigger Winnipeg house of worship situated at the corner of Portage Avenue

and Ingersoll Street on November 28, 1981. The following year, the establishment of the then conjoined local congregations of Edmonton and Calgary on October 5, 1982 marked the Church's entry into the province of Alberta.

Like Winnipeg, Toronto Congregation also needed a more spacious venue to accommodate its increasing membership for its religious functions. So, in April 1985, its new house of worship at 310 Burnhamthorpe Road, Etobicoke was dedicated to God after renovation. Another year later, in March 1986, one more house of worship was dedicated to God. That was the house of worship of the Ottawa-Montreal Congregation situated along St. Charles Boulevard, Beaconsfield, Quebec—the same one used to this day by the members of what is now known as Beaconsfield Congregation.

Thus, from the initial three provinces, the Church in Canada, by this decade, had grown to encompass five of its 10 provinces.

Toronto Congregation's further growth soon gave rise to Scarborough Extension in December 1988. This, and the dedication of another house of worship in October 1989—that of the Vancouver Congregation—were among the Church's other major achievements at the close of this decade. The said building along Southeast Marine Drive, Burnaby,

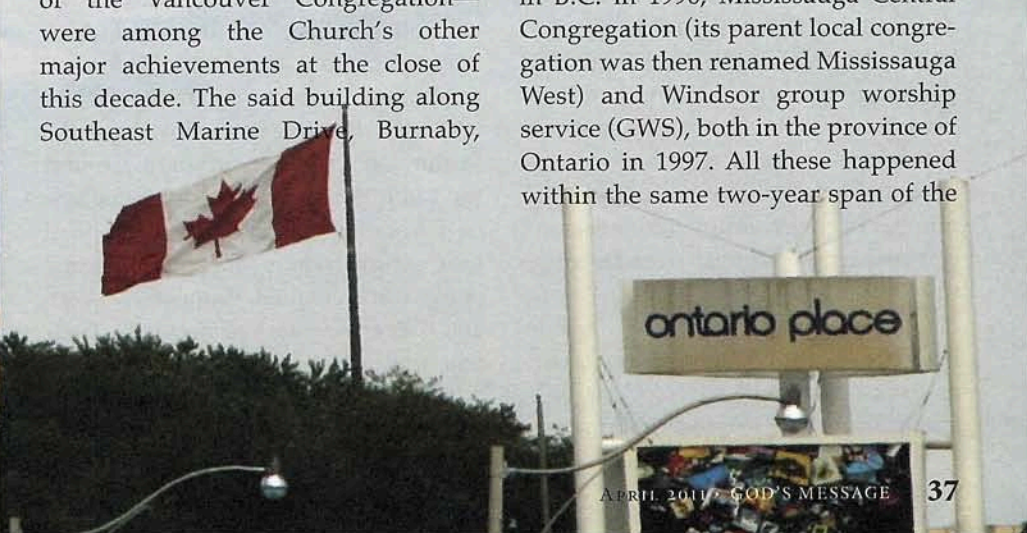
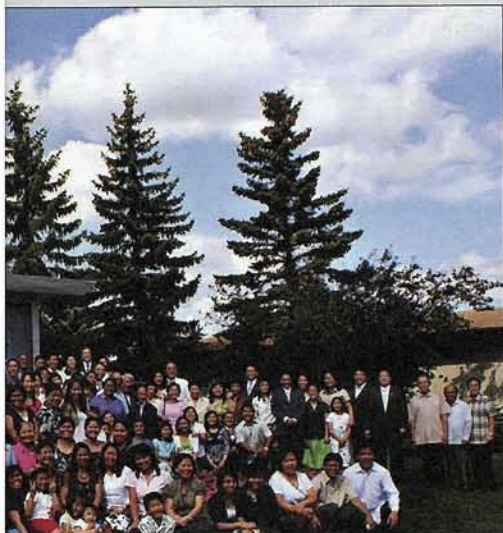
B.C. was dedicated to God months after the whole Church celebrated its Diamond Jubilee in the Philippines in July 1989.

Flourishing through the 90s

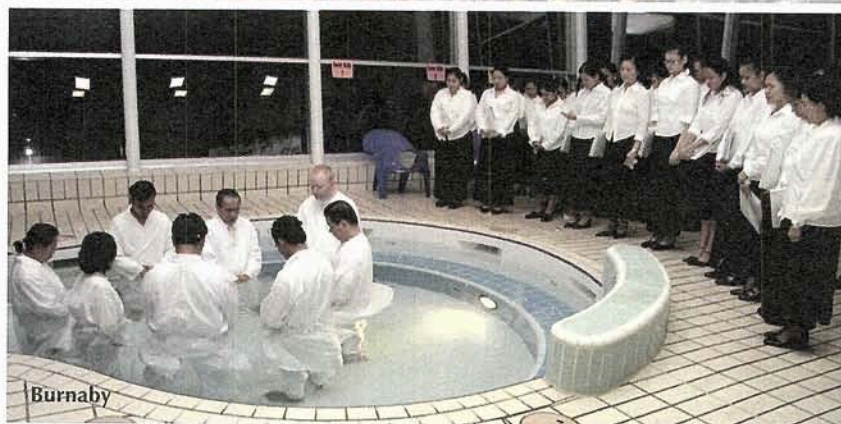
The early 90s was marked by the blossoming of the previously established Scarborough extension into a full-grown local congregation and the budding of a new committee prayer group in Regina, Saskatchewan. Thus, by that time, the Church was able to extend across another province of Canada—Saskatchewan.

It was also within this decade when the Church Administration approved the establishment of the Ottawa Congregation for the brethren residing within and near Canada's Capital. So, too, was the inclusion of the local congregations of Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver in the then newly formed ecclesiastical district of Pacific Northwest. Likewise, when the Northeastern Seaboard District on the following year was formed, four of its 14 initial congregations were those in eastern Canada—Montreal, Ottawa, Scarborough, and Toronto.

In addition, several more congregations and missions arose in Canada—the local congregation of Surrey in B.C. in 1996, Mississauga Central Congregation (its parent local congregation was then renamed Mississauga West) and Windsor group worship service (GWS), both in the province of Ontario in 1997. All these happened within the same two-year span of the



BAPTISMS



Church's historic registrations in the ancient cities of Jerusalem, Israel and Athens, Greece (1996-1997).

The 90s closed, thus ending the second millennium, with the Church mission in Canada already spanning six of its ten major provinces. There were four congregations in Ontario, three in British Columbia, two in Alberta, one each in Manitoba and Quebec, and a group worship service in Saskatchewan.

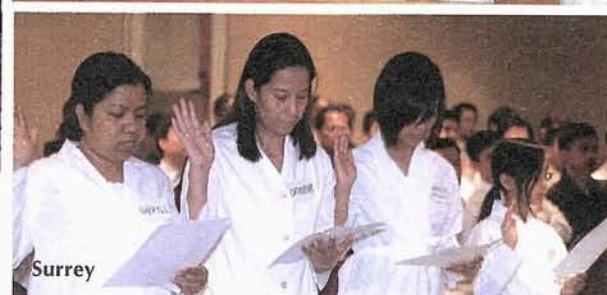
2000 to 2009: A 'bursting' decade

The first 10 years of the new millennium is a bursting decade for the *Iglesia ni Cristo* in Canada as it was then that the Church experienced a tremendous growth unlike what it had in the previous years. A total of 17 places of worship—12 congregations, three group worship services, and two extensions—were established in this period. This is twice more the total number of congregations and missions established in the past decades since the Church set foot in Canada.

In B.C., the Parksville Extension was elevated to congregation status and was renamed Victoria Congregation to aptly represent the location of its

new place of worship. Then, in November 2004, a new Parksville Extension was put up to meet the needs of the still-growing number of brethren in that area. The old Vancouver Congregation was renamed Burnaby also in view of its house of worship's location and of the rise of congregations in Vancouver proper. By the decade's end, there were already two of them, namely, Vancouver West (established in 2004) and East Vancouver (2008). Still within Metro Vancouver, the congregation of Richmond arose in 2008 in the coastal city after which it was named.

In Ontario, currently the most populous province of Canada, the local congregations of Brampton, Mississauga Central, and North York were established successively from 2007 to 2008. Mississauga West also begot the Burlington Extension in 2009. Around the same time span, the congregations of Edmonton and Calgary multiplied into several others, thus the original ones were renamed Edmonton North and Calgary Central, respectively. Their offspring are the congregations of Edmonton South (established in 2007), Calgary North (2008), and Edmonton West



(2009). Concurrently, group worship services were put up in Grande Prairie and Red Deer City, in Alberta.

Still within this decade, the Church succeeded in planting its mission in the province of New Brunswick through the establishment of the group worship service (GWS) earlier known as St. John's (now renamed New Brunswick GWS). This came about in the same year that new group worship services

TRUTH SHARED, GROWTH GAINED:
Evangelical missions held by various congregations.






GRAND EVANGELICAL MISSIONS



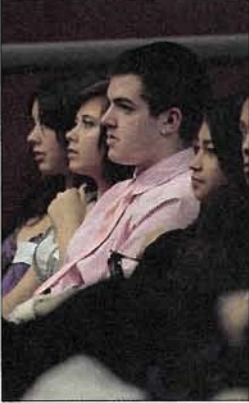
Edmonton South



Burnaby



Winnipeg





OFFICERS

GWS) and North Vancouver, B.C. Also, during that year, the Church Administration decided to form them into not one, but two new ecclesiastical districts. Thus, born weeks before Canada Day was celebrated throughout the land, were the Church's Western and Eastern Canada Districts, led by Brothers Paterno See and Ranniel Serreno as district ministers, respectively.

As the Church around the world prepares for its centennial in 2014, the two districts in Canada are doing their part in carrying on with the mission of salvation. Along with the rest of the districts around the world, they shall "go on toward perfection and spiritual maturity."

PREPARING FOR THE CENTENNIAL, Church of Christ members in Canada pledge to "go on toward perfection and spiritual maturity."



Bowling tournament in Burnaby



Graduation and awarding of art workshop participants in Montreal

2010 to present: Onward to the centenary and beyond

The second decade of the third millennium saw unprecedented developments for the Church of Christ in Canada. Not only did its membership keep on growing, as reflected by the establishment of two group worship services and two congregations in 2010 alone—Banff Congregation and Lloydminster GWS in Alberta, and the local congregations of Regina, Saskatchewan (elevated from being

were added in Saskatchewan (Saskatoon GWS) and Quebec (the new Montreal Congregation).

By the end of 2009, when Brother Eraño G. Manalo was called to rest and the torch of leadership was passed on to Brother Eduardo V. Manalo as the present Executive Minister of the Church, there were already 29 congregations and missions scattered in seven out of 10 provinces of Canada.

ACTIVITIES



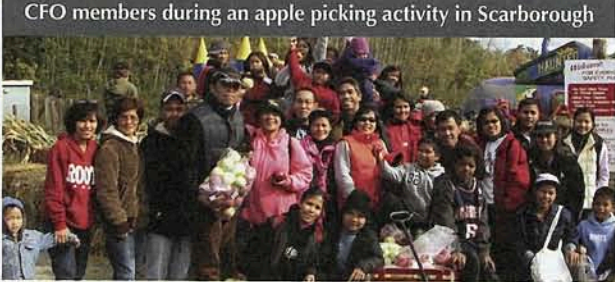
Blood donation drive in Victoria



CFO members during an apple picking activity in Scarborough



Sportsfest in Surrey



Symposium on immigration laws in Edmonton South



CFO members prepares for skydiving in Beaconsfield



Healthy cooking workshop in Montreal



Graduation and awarding of art workshop participants in Montreal



Burnaby

& MEMBERS



Lloydminster



Calgary North



Richmond



Saskatchewan



Saskatoon



Parkville



