



PASUGO

APRIL 2017

GOD'S MESSAGE

The Magazine of the Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church Of Christ)

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ADDED TO THE FOLD. One of those who were baptized in Australia East

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OUR COVER

A fresco painting of the Council of Nicea found in the Sistine Chapel
(Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nicea.jpg>)



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How the name of the true Church was altered

The true name of the Church established by Christ—the only true Church—is “Church Of Christ”.

“5. Did Jesus Christ establish a Church?
“Yes, from all history, both secular and profane, as well as from the Bible considered as a human document, we learn that Jesus Christ established a Church, which from the earliest times has been called after Him the Christian Church or the Church of Christ. ... This Church, founded and organized by Christ and preached by the Apostles, is the Church of Christ, ... It is the only true Church, and the one which God orders all men to join.” (Cassilly, Francis B, S.J. *Religion: Doctrine And Practice for use in Catholic High Schools*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1926, 1931, 1934.)

The name was changed into “The Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church” only in 1870.

“The Council of Trent made ‘Roman’ part of the official title of the Church, and the Council of the Vatican definitively, after a dispute to be discussed later, adopted as the name of the Church formula, ‘The Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church’.” (Taylor, Edward K. *‘Roman’ Catholic*. England: Nore-Press Ltd, 1961.)

“In 1870, at the Vatican Council, the name ‘Roman Catholic Church’ was proposed, but it was rejected. The bishops assembled unanimously decided upon this official name: ‘The Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church,’ ...” (Crock, Clement H. *Discourses on the Apostles’ Creed*. New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1938.)

True Christians believe Christ is man

Q: How can you claim that you are Christians when you do not believe that Christ is the true God?



A: The Lord Jesus Christ said that His true disciples or the true Christians obey His teachings or do the things He says (John 8:31, *Good News Translation*; Luke 6:46), hence, those who faithfully uphold the teachings of the Lord. One of these teachings concerns the true nature or state of being of the Lord Jesus Himself—that He is a man (John 8:40). The truth that Christ is a man negates any assertion that He is God. Christ, being man, is not God, and God, being God, is not man (Ezek. 28:2; Hos. 11:9). Moreover, Christ proclaimed that the only true God is the Father, who is Spirit—having no flesh and bones or without material form as Christ has (John 17:1, 3; John 4:24; Luke 24:39).

Even the apostles taught that Christ is a man (Acts 2:22) and is a distinct being from God Himself (I Tim. 2:5). In fact, Christ is subject to the power or authority of the only one true God who is over and above all (I Cor. 15:27-28). Apostle Paul declared that “there is only one God, the Father” who definitely is not Christ, the Son (I Cor. 8:6, *God’s Word*; Matt. 3:17). Those who uphold beliefs contrary to these are themselves far from being true Christians.

For questions, comments, and suggestions, e-mail us at pasugo@iglesianicristo.org.ph or pasugo@inc.org.ph or send your letters to any of our editorial offices (see staff box). We reserve the right to edit letters for reasons of space and clarity. Sender’s name may be withheld upon request.



How the Christ-is-God doctrine came about

CHRIST HIMSELF AND HIS APOSTLES taught that He (Lord Jesus Christ) is man in nature or state of being (John 8:40; Acts 2:22; I Tim. 2:5). Nowhere in the Bible can we read that He has another nature or that He has a dual nature. Nor was there any statement—explicit or implicit—from Christ that He is the true God. In fact, His being a man proves that He is not God, for the Almighty stated that, “I am God, and not man” (Hos. 11:9, *King James Version*) and, “thou art a man, and not God” (Ezek 28:2, *ibid.*).

How, then, would we account for the fact that the majority of Christian-professing churches and individuals around the world believe that Christ is God and not man? Some even ask: How could a great majority be wrong in their belief about Christ?—as if the truth were based on number. The more important question is: If the Christ-is-God doctrine is not found in the Bible, how and when did it come about?

The true nature of Christ had been the subject of many years of contention after the death of the apostles. In his book, *When Jesus Became God*, author Richard E. Rubenstein gave a precisely detailed account of the events that led to the formulation of the doctrine on Christ’s deity. Constantine the Great, whom historians regard as the “first Roman emperor to profess Christianity” (*Encyclopædia Britannica*), convened an ecumenical council to settle the dispute once and for all. But his real purpose was not to know the truth on Christ’s true nature, but to save his empire from falling apart, which the said dispute may cause.

The Nicean Council produced the Nicene Creed, which, declared among others, that Jesus is God: “Thus, for example, it was not until 325 A.D., at the Council of Nicaea, that the Church defined for us that it was an article of faith that Jesus is truly God” (*Discourses on the Apostles’ Creed*, p. 206).

Take note that the doctrine on the divinity of Christ was formed merely through a Catholic council, held more than two centuries after the last book of the Bible was written. If Christ were truly God, then the Holy Scriptures would say so in no uncertain terms. Since that is not the case, the Catholic Church arbitrarily made it her official dogma that Jesus is truly God after so much controversies and contentions. Christ, His apostles, and the Bible absolutely have nothing to do with that teaching.

Bible scholars give their take on the issue: “Jesus is never called God in the Synoptic Gospels, and a passage like Mark 10:18 would seem to preclude the possibility that Jesus used the title of himself. Even the fourth Gospel never portrays Jesus as saying specifically that He is God. The sermons which Acts attributes to the beginning of the Christian mission do not speak of Jesus as God. Thus, there is no reason to think that Jesus was called God in the earliest layers of New Testament tradition. The negative conclusion is substantiated by the fact that Paul does not use the title in any epistle written before 58” (*Jesus: God and Man*, p. 30).

Why should we not be surprised at all that such erroneous teaching came about? Apostle Paul gave this warning to the early Christians:

“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!” (II Cor. 11:3-4, *New King James Version*)

Early on, the apostles expressed their apprehension about Christians being deceived and their minds corrupted by the devil and his instruments, concerning the “simplicity that is in Christ.” They warned about those who would preach “another Jesus whom [they] have not preached.” The Jesus taught by the apostles is man in His nature or state of being. That is the pristine truth we, members of the Church Of Christ, vigorously uphold and believe in—though holding on to this truth is going against the tide, given the popularity of the Christ-is-God doctrine. But when it comes to our faith, we opt not for the popular but for the unadulterated truth written in the Bible. Christ our Lord made it clear that we should know or recognize His Father—not Himself—as the only one true God. This knowledge or belief, He promised, will lead to everlasting life (John 17:1, 3). ●

— DENNIS C. LOVENDINO
Editor-in-Chief



PAMAMALAGING TAPAT SA PANANAMPALATAYA

SA DULONG HILAGA ng Pilipinas matatagpuan ang probinsiya ng Cagayan. Ito ay bahagi ng Cagayan Valley na napaliligiran ng kabundukan ng Sierra Madre sa Silangan, Cordilleras sa Kanluran, at Caraballo sa Timog.

Likas sa mga Cagayano ang maging palangiti at palakaibigan, kaya ang Cagayan ay kilala bilang *Smiling Land of Beauty*. Subalit noong Oktubre 2016, ang kanilang ngiti ay pansamantalang napawi. Sinalanta ng *super typhoon* Lawin ang Cagayan, at ang lungsod ng Tuguegarao ang isa sa may pinakamalaking pinsala.

“Tandang-tanda ko pa. Araw noon ng pagsamba, at bago ang pagsapit ng takdang oras ng pagsamba ay ang kasagsagan ng Bagyong Lawin. Kahit



alam kong delikadong lumabas noon ng bahay, pinilit kong makatupad sa pagsamba. Nagpasama ako noon sa kuya ko papuntang kapilya. Sa daan pa lang, ramdam namin ang bagsik ng hangin na para ba kaming tatangayin. Yakap-yakap ko ang uniporme ko sa pagtupad bilang mang-aawit habang kami ay naglalakad, binalot ko iyon ng *jacket*,” sabi ni Kapatid na Yacine Marcos. Dagdag pa niya, “Sa daan, makikita mo ang ilang bubong na tinangay ng hangin, at mayroon ding nagliliparan sa taas. Ngunit sa gabay ng Ama, nakarating kami nang ligtas sa bahay sambahan, at maayos na tumupad sa pagsamba.”



Natangay ang bubong, hindi lamang ng mga bahay, kundi maging ng ilang mga gusali sa lungsod. Nabuwal din ang maraming puno at ang ilang mga poste ng kuryente. Lubog sa baha at putik ang ilang barangay. Nawalan din ng kuryente at komunikasyon sa buong probinsiya ng Cagayan; isang buwang walang kuryente sa buong Tuguegarao.

“Ramdam mo ‘yung hirap noong matapos ang bagyo. Maiiyak ka na lang dahil nakahahapis ang sinapit ng bahay namin. Bukas na bukas ito, walang bubong. Parang karton ng sapatos

na walang takip ang bahay namin,” sabi ni Kapatid na Jameela de Guzman, guro sa Pagsamba ng Kabataan. “Sa pagsapit ng gabi, sa isang sulok kami natutulog kung saan may kaunting silong. Ang iba sa amin, sa ilalim ng mesa. May mga pagkakataon pa na kapag may pabugsu-bugsong ambon at ulan, basang-basa kaming natutulog,” dagdag pa niya. Sa kabila ng ganitong kalagayan, ay nanindigan sila. “Gayunpaman, hindi namin nalilimutan ang aming pagsamba. Bago ang takdang oras ng pagsamba, maaga na kaming gumagayak at binibitbit ang aming mga sapatos dahil

maputik sa daan. Hindi namin alintana iyon. Ang mahalaga makadalo kami sa pagsamba at makatupad kami ng tungkulin,” pahayag niya.

Ilang buwan matapos ang pananalasa ng bagyo ay dumalaw ang Kapatid na Eduardo V. Manalo sa lungsod ng Tuguegarao. Ito ay kinasabikan ng mga kapatid hindi lamang mula sa Cagayan kundi maging mula sa mga karatig probinsiya. “Nasa trabaho ako noon sa Nueva Vizcaya nang mabalitaan ko na dadalaw ang Kapatid na Eduardo sa Lokal ng Tuguegarao. Walang paglagyan ang tuwa na

aking naramdaman. Hindi ako nagdalawang-isip pa. Umuwi ako sa Tuguegarao para makadalo sa pagsamba na pangangasiwaan ng Kapatid na Eduardo,” sabi ni Kapatid na Carlo Macarilay, maytungkulin sa SCAN. Dagdag pa niya, “Malayo man at mahaba ang biyahe, nang makarating na ako sa dako, napawi ang aking pagod dahil sa lalong pananabik na mapakinggan ang Tagapamahalang Pangkalahatan.”

Pebrero 24, 2017—isang natatanging araw na tumatak sa puso’t isip ng mga kapatid dahil sa araw na ito natupad ang matagal na nilang inaasam at pinapangarap, ang pagdalaw ng Kapatid na

Eduardo sa Distrito Eklesiastiko ng Cagayan South. “Ito ang kauna-unahang pagkakataon na ang Tagapamahala ng *Iglesia Ni Cristo* ay dadalaw sa aming lokal mula nang ito ay maitatag,” sabi ng isa sa mga naunang kaanib at pangulong mang-aawit sa Lokal ng Tuguegarao na si Kapatid na Salvador Verde Jr.

Itinuro ng Tagapamahalang Pangkalahatan sa isinagawang pagsamba ang kahalagahan ng mabuting pakikipaglaban at pananatiling tapat sa pananampalataya. “Marami akong natutunan sa pagsamba, isa na rito ay ang paninindigan sa pananampalataya sa kabila ng

mga pagsubok na dumarating. Gaya ng itinuro ng Kapatid na Eduardo mula sa Biblia, ibinubuhos ng Diyos ang awa Niya sa lahat ng nagtitiwala sa Kaniya,” pahayag ni Kapatid na Jameela. Kalungkutan at hapis man ang dulot ng bagyong dumating sa kanilang buhay, kagalakan at inspirasyon naman ang ibinunga ng pagdating ng Tagapamahalang Pangkalahatan. “Ang hirap na naranasan namin bunga ng bagyo ay napalitan ng karagdagang pag-asa at lakas ng loob,” paninindigan ni Kapatid na Jameela.

Lubos ang kanilang pagpapasalamat sa Diyos dahil



niloob Niya na madalaw sila ng Namamahala. "Nagpapasalamat ako sa Panginoong Diyos sapagkat naging inspirasyon sa akin ang pagsisikap ng Kapatid na Eduardo Manalo na mapuntahan ang mga kapatid upang maihatid ang mga aral ng Diyos," sabi ni Kapatid na Salvador. Dagdag pa niya, "Nag-uumpaw ang aming kaligayahan nang kanilang sabihin na kinasabikan nila kaming madalaw at malaman ang aming kalagayan; lalo na nang sabihin nila na mahal na mahal nila kami."

Bilang tugon, ipinangako ng mga kapatid na kanilang tutuparin ang mga aral ng Diyos na itinuro sa kanila. "Anumang pagsubok,

kahirapan, karamdaman, pag-uusig, at kahit anumang bagyo ang dumaaan, mamamalagi kaming *Iglesia Ni Cristo*. Saan man kami mapunta, ipagpapatuloy ko at ng aking sambahayan ang pagtupad ng aming mga tungkulin dahil narito ang aming kaligtasan," pangako ni Kapatid na Salvador. Taimtim na pangako naman ni Kapatid na Jameela na, "Lalo ko pang pagsisikapan na maitaguyod ang paglilingkod sa Panginoong Diyos. Isusulong po namin ang ikapagtatagumpay ng lahat ng gawain sa Iglesia." ☺

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• 03 MARCH 2017 •



GOD'S GRACE OF FORGIVENESS

TRULY INSPIRED AND uplifted, the brethren from the local congregation of Templo Central, ecclesiastical district of Central partook of the Holy Supper officiated by Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, the Executive Minister of the Church Of Christ, on March 3, 2017. "When the congregation was informed that the Executive Minister would officiate at the Holy Supper, the brethren felt really happy and blessed," Brother Joselito Geron, the resident minister said.

During the Holy Supper, members of the Church Of Christ partook of the bread, which symbolizes the body, and the juice of the fruit of the vine, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. "It was a special occasion and it became more memorable for us because it was officiated by Brother Eduardo Manalo," Brother Joselito added. Sister Eden Bernisca, a choir coordinator, expressed, "We firmly believe that God reserves an immense blessing for us during the Holy Supper."

Because of this, the brethren, especially the Church officers, fervently prepared themselves for the said occasion. Sister Eden spoke about the preparation of the choir members: "When we received the hymnals, we immediately started our sectional rehearsals." Even the deacons and deaconesses practiced their part so that everything would be in perfect order. Brother Eduardo Pelayo, the head deacon of the Templo Central Congregation, shared, "Not only did we conduct rehearsals and congregational devotional prayers, but we also had family devotional prayers for the occasion." The Church officers implored God for His guidance because they understood that they could not fulfill their duties on their own.

Citing from the Bible, Brother Eduardo Manalo taught that before partaking of the Holy Supper, everyone should prepare by examining himself and praying to God to ask for His mercy. By doing so, those who will partake of the bread and the juice of the fruit of the vine will surely receive God's





blessings. The Executive Minister truly inspired the brethren by encouraging them to be brave and not fear whatever challenges and hindrances may come along the way. As members of the Church Of Christ, they should stand their ground and be steadfast in living according to the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ to become worthy in serving the Almighty God and be certain to benefit from Christ's redemption.

"God really made a way for me to receive His blessings, which I indeed yearned for. One thing that really uplifted my faith was when Brother Eduardo Manalo encouraged us to ask God for His mercy. This is because if God sees in us that we are sincere in completely renewing our life, He will be compassionate to us. Rest assured, we'll receive His love and blessings in order for

us to have stronger faith," said Brother Angelo Aclan, *KADIWA* district president.

This special gathering inspired the brethren to all the more hope for and firmly hold on to God's love and grace. Brother Eduardo Manalo reminded that the Lord God promised His mercy and kindness to those who confess their sins to Him and serve Him wholeheartedly. "I learned that we should be eager to take part of the Holy Supper as this is when we receive God's grace of forgiveness and the chance to change and live a better life as His servants. Having received such blessings, I am motivated to be more active to participate in all the works of the Church, especially in propagating the words of God," expressed Brother Jonathan Comanda, a choir member and *KADIWA* group leader.

Brother Hanz Lumba, a choir member and *KADIWA* officer, stated with conviction, thus, "Though we have fallen short of His expectations, God is so loving and merciful that He forgave us and deemed us worthy—allowing us to remain members of the Church Of Christ. That is why I solemnly promise the Lord God that as long as I live, I will make every effort to be one with the Church Administration in all our endeavors for the glory of God." 🙏

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WATCHMEN IN GOD'S NATION

GAINING QUALITY EDUCATION in pursuit of a promising career is the desire of many. Attaining stability in life, however, is not easy. "For a person to provide at least the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter for himself and for his family requires hard work," said Brother Joseph M. Calindas who studied Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the New Jersey Institute of Technology and has worked for ten years as general contractor of his own company prior to entering the ministry.

Members of the (*Iglesia Ni Cristo*) Church Of Christ are encouraged by the Church Administration to strive for a bright future. "Through





the teachings of the Bible taught in the Church, members of the Church Of Christ are encouraged to make good in what they do," expressed Brother Felimaur Flauta from Chicago, Illinois, who has also attained some amount of success before entering the ministry. "Time management is a popular topic for the Christian Family Organizations' monthly meetings and occasional seminars. This is important because members need to balance their time between work and their duties in the Church which they diligently perform," he adds.

Because of such encouragement, members of the Church strive to earn a living by honorable means. "The guiding light for members of the Church in choosing a career is the commandments of our Almighty God. In our generation where everything is changing due to technological advances, no matter what decision a member makes, it must always be in line with what God wants for us. A good career is a gift from God, so it should not be a hindrance to the performance of our Church duties," conveyed Brother Ryan Malabanan who finished his Master's degree in Public Affairs in the University of Texas at Dallas and has worked with nonprofit organizations that were either education or health related. "But, I decided that it was best to leave for the Philippines to study in the ministry. I realized that in the ministry, the Church comes first and foremost," he added.

Thousands of young men, like Brothers Joseph, Felimaur, and Ryan made the decision to undertake this holy endeavor—to join the holy ministry. "For members of the Church Of Christ, our sights are not set on this



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NEWLY ORDAINED
MINISTERS

1. ABUAN, Elmer G.
2. ALARIN, Junie A.
3. ANDRADE, Roland W.
4. ANG, Luisito Jr. L.
5. ARANZASO, Roynel Jay L.
6. BALQUIN, Oliver C.
7. BRIONES, Johnny A.
8. CARCILLAR, Patrick D.
9. CARIGMA, Erick U.
10. DEGUIÑO, Vencer A.
11. ENCONADO, Aman Y.
12. FLORES, Rommel D.
13. GAMBALA, Alex DP.
14. GOMEZ, Buenaventura Jr. B.
15. GONZALES, Ronic M.
16. GUINOO, Ariel F.
17. GUMERA, Carlo Magno A.
18. HENSON, Jaime A.
19. JAURIGUE, Linnel Paulo A.
20. LORICA, Walter E.
21. MALABANAN, Ryan Matthew S.
22. MANGUBAT, Bobby A.
23. MARCIA, Jerson F.
24. MERCADO, Jerson P.
25. MIGUEL, Randy D.
26. PARCO, Val P.
27. SAN MIGUEL, Apolo Mel D.
28. SANDOVAL, Blas Mc Gyver F.
29. STA. MARIA, Aldine R.
30. UY, Paul H.

life, but on the everlasting life to come. Because of this, our priorities are different," stated Brother Joseph.

Brother Roland Andrade also realized the great value of joining the ministry. "I realized that in the ministry it is all about service to the Lord God and to our Lord Jesus Christ," he stated. Brother Roland proves his utmost respect for God by placing the Church and the brethren first in his life. "Prior to entering the ministry, I was focused on helping my father in his business. However, in my mind I really wanted to heed God's call to me to become a minister. I am now fully focused on what the Lord God expects me to fulfill: to help our Executive Minister in leading the brethren to salvation," he added.

Due to the continuous and extensive growth of the Church in all parts of the world, the Executive Minister, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, continues to encourage capable and eligible men in the Church

to accept the calling in the holy ministry. Along with accepting the call, however, come great sacrifices and a great expectation. "A minister wholeheartedly dedicates himself to bringing more people into the Church to give glory to our Almighty God. He never counts the hardship in fulfilling his divine obligation and remains united with the Church Administration," said Brother Benjamin A. Enriquez, a minister of the gospel assigned in Southern Europe.

Sister Irene Indiongco, originally from the ecclesiastical district of Southern California, remarked: "Integrity and holy fear of God is truly very important because it means that whatever you do or whatever you say, you know God can always see what is truly in your heart and your intentions. Having integrity and holy fear of God means that you will not do anything dishonest." Possessing these qualities is essential for a



minister and a ministerial worker in the Church Of Christ. This was emphasized by the biblical lesson preached by the Executive Minister on March 11, 2017, at the local congregation of Angono, ecclesiastical district of Rizal during the ordination of 30 new ministers and oath-taking of 21 regular ministerial workers, who recently finished their studies in the acceleration program of the Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church Of Christ) School For Ministers.

"There is a great need for ministers and ministerial workers because the Church, with God's mercy, continues to grow and expand. With that, more ministers are needed to help the Church Administration in caring for the Church and the brethren," said Sister Irene. Sister Janice Flauta added, "The members need them for guidance and inspiration and also for the protection of their faith, especially now that Judgment Day is so close. Not only that, but the

Church is rapidly growing across the globe. We need more ministerial workers in various places to make sure we reach out and introduce the Church to as many people as we can."

After hearing the lesson about the importance of wholehearted devotion to ones sacred duty, Sister Christine G. Calindas said: "I always ask God to strengthen my faith and to grant me patience and good health so that I can continue to help my husband fulfill his duty." The respective husbands of Sisters Irene, Janice, and Christine were some of the new ministerial workers who took oath.

As one of those who were blessed to be ordained, Brother Ryan also said, "I promise to the Lord God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Church Administration that, to the best of my ability, I will carry out my duties. I promise to diligently oversee those under my care for them to remain active members of the Church." ☺

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NEW REGULAR
MINISTERIAL WORKERS

1. AQUINO, Clark Kevin J.
2. BONTO, Cyr Willworth C.
3. CALINDAS, Joseph Dennis M.
4. DAVID, Ronnie M.
5. DAVID, Rowel M.
6. ENRIQUEZ, Ben Mark A.
7. FLAUTA, Felimaur R.
8. GUERRERO, Michael S.
9. INDIONGCO, Francis Ian C.
10. LIZARDO, Ronick C.
11. MANANGHAYA, Friel L.
12. MANGAHAS, Aaren Miles F.
13. MARIANO, Mark Irvine E.
14. MEDICIELO, Rvy DL.
15. MESINA, Axl Rose A.
16. NAGASE, Keiji France C.
17. SUNGA, Erwin B.
18. TERAMURA, Satoru L.
19. VILLANUEVA, Robert Jr. E.
20. VILLEGAS, Roger A.
21. ZARAGA, Gilbert B.

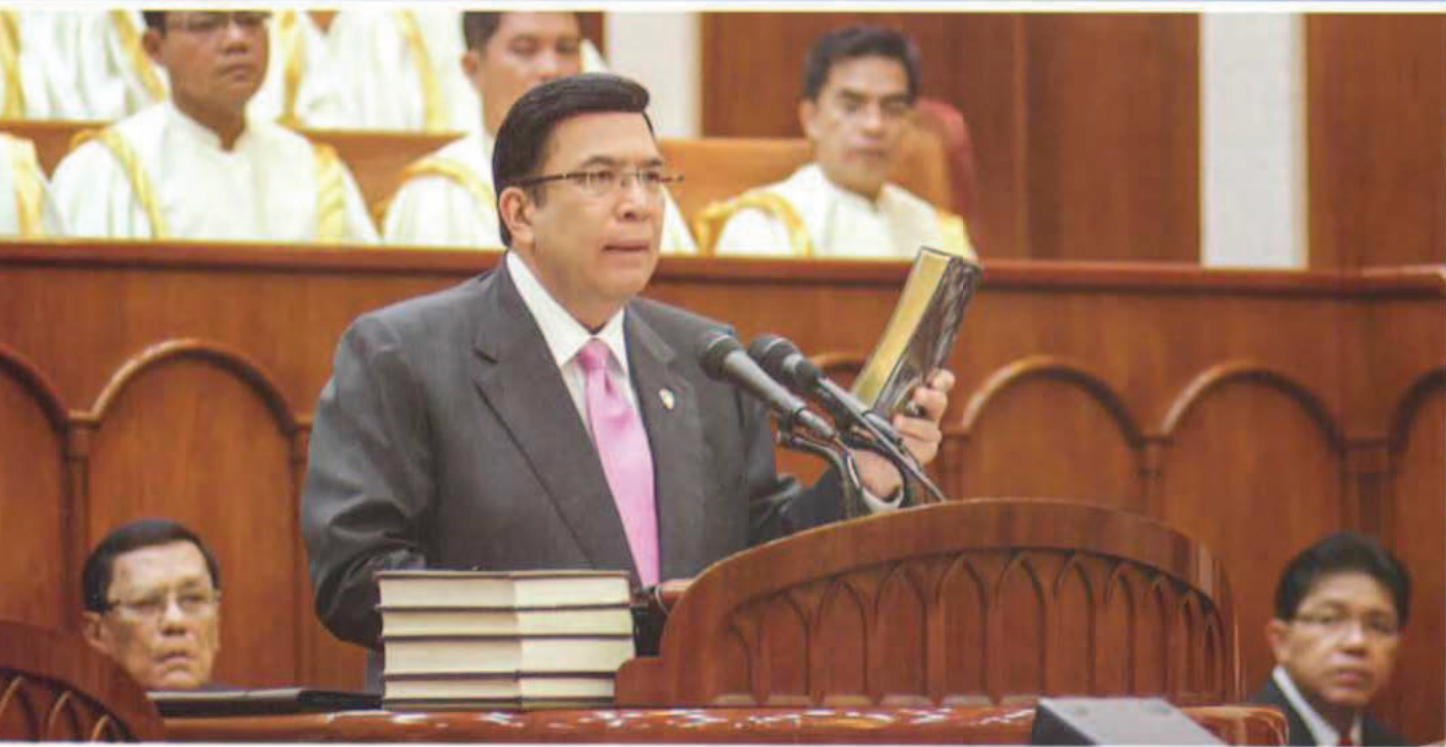
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ANG NAPAKAHALAGANG SANDATA SA BUONG BUHAY



ARAW-ARAW, ang tao ay nakikipagbaka laban sa iba't ibang hamon ng buhay. Nariyan ang kahirapan, kawalan ng hanapbuhay, karahasan, kaguluhan, at mga kalamidad na pilit gumagapi sa tao para itulak siya sa kawalan ng pag-asa. Sa alinmang pakikipagbakang kakaharapin, mahalagang taglay ng tao ang angkop na sandata

upang sa paghupa ng usok ng labanan, nananatili siyang nakatindig na hindi napanaigan ng kalaban. Para sa mga kaanib sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo*, may itinuturo ang Biblia na napakahalagang sandata upang magtagumpay laban sa alinmang mabibigat na hamon sa buhay na ito at manatiling nakatayo na taglay ang banal na kahalalan.

Noong Marso 18, 2017, sa pagsambang pinangasiwaan ng Tagapamahalang Pangkalahatan ng *Iglesia Ni Cristo*, Kapatid na Eduardo V. Manalo, sa Lokal ng Navotas, Distrito Eklesiastiko ng Metro Manila North, kung saan isinagawa rin ang pagtatalaga ng 30 manggagawa bilang mga bagong ministro, itinuro niya, ayon sa mga nakasulat sa Biblia,

kung ano ang mga sandata ng mga lingkod ng Panginoong Diyos. Ang mga ito'y pananampalataya, mga salita ng Diyos, at pananalangin. Sa pamamagitan ng mga ito, mapagtatagumpayan ng mga lingkod ng Diyos ang mga balakid sa buhay nang sa ganoon ay makatiyak ng pagtatamo ng pangakong kaligtasan.

Sa kabila ng kawalan ng pag-asa na nararanasan ng mga tao sa

pangulong diakono sa lokal. Ganito rin ang naging paninindigan ni Kapatid na Alicia Angeles, isang mang-aawit, noong siya ay dumaan din sa pagsubok: "Bagaman dumanas ang aming sambahayan ng matinding pagsubok sa aming hanapbuhay, hindi ito naging dahilan upang mawalan kami ng pananampalataya. Ito ay dahil alam namin na kahit mawala man ang lahat sa amin, may Diyos na

nagdudulot sa kanila ng lakas. "Sa tuwing nakikinig kami ng mga aral na itinuturo sa pagsamba ay lalo kaming tumatatag sa aming pananampalataya. Dito kami lalong lumalakas at tumitibay sa aming pagka-Iglesia Ni Cristo," pahayag ni Kapatid na Ryan Cardenas, katiwala sa Ilaw ng Kaligtasan sa lokal.

Subalit, katulad ng itinuro ng Tagapamahalang Pangkalahatan,



mundo, ang pananampalataya sa magagawa ng Diyos ang nagbibigay-lakas sa mga kaanib sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo*. "Ang ating pananampalataya ay nagsisilbing kapanatagan natin sa mga bagay na maaaring imposible sa tao. Dahil may Diyos tayo na kayang gawin ang lahat, nagiging posible ang lahat ng bagay," pahayag ni Kapatid na Jesus David, isa sa mga

Siyang magbibigay sa amin ng aming pangangailangan. Kaya, patuloy pa rin kaming tumutupad ng aming tungkulin."

Bahagi ng pagpapatibay sa pananampalataya ng mga kaanib sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo* ay ang pagtuturo ng mga salita ng Diyos sa panahon ng mga pagsamba. Sa pagsamba natatanggap ng mga kaanib ang mga aral na

hindi sapat na napakinggan lamang ang mga aral ng Diyos— mahalaga ang pagsunod sa lahat ng Kaniyang kalooban. Ito ang sinabi ni Kapatid na Ruth Lambon, isang diakonesa, na kaniyang natutuhan: "Tumatak sa aking puso at isipan ang pagiging masunurin sa utos ng ating Panginoong Diyos. Importante ang pagiging masunurin upang

ang mga biyaya ay tanggapin natin sa ating buhay.”

Upang ang mga kaanib sa Iglesia ay laging makasunod sa mga kalooban ng Diyos, mahalaga na lagi nilang natatanggap ang mga salita ng Diyos. Ito ang kahalagahan ng mga ministro at manggagawa na inilagay ng Panginoong Diyos upang tulungan ang Pamamahala ng Iglesia para tuluy-tuloy na makarating sa mga kaanib ang mga aral ng Diyos. Tulad ng buong pananalig na pahayag ni Kapatid na Ruth, “Ang mga ministro at manggagawa ay

maalaga sa Iglesia sapagkat sila ay mga katuwang ng Pamamahala sa pagtuturo ng mga salita ng Diyos.”

Ang pagmamalasakit sa Iglesia ang damdaming isinalin ng Tagapamahalang Pangkalahatan sa mga ministro at manggagawa. “Ginagawa niya ang lahat ng paraan. Ginagampanan niya ang kaniyang tungkulin. Dinadalaw niya ang ating mga kapatid saanmang panig ng mundo—pinatitibay at pinalalakas ang kanilang pananampalataya,” salaysay ni Kapatid na Adriel

Rillera, isa sa mga naordenahan. Sinisikap ng Namamahala na marating ang mga kaanib—kahit gaano kalayo, anuman ang kalagayan ng panahon, kahit mapanganib—upang personal na makita ang kalagayan ng mga kapatid at maihatid sa kanila ang mga kalooban ng Diyos. “Buong sikap niyang ginagawa ang kaniyang tungkulin na pangalagaan ang Iglesia upang tayo ay makapagtaguyod hanggang wakas at magtamo ng kaligtasan,” pahayag ni Kapatid na Christian Marella, diakono at pangulo ng *Buklod* sa lokal.





- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. ALMARIO, Renan J. | 11. FLORES, Ricky A. | 21. NISPEROS, Joef E. |
| 2. BALTOLORE, Reymer L. | 12. GABRIEL, Jonas M. | 22. OCUMEN, Rolando Jr. B. |
| 3. BELTRAN, Regalado Jr. P. | 13. GARCIA, Rolando II C. | 23. PAYABYAB, Glennon S. |
| 4. CATACHO, Eleazar R. | 14. IBASCO, Churchill P. | 24. RAGUIRAG, Carlo T. |
| 5. CENTENO, Dennis O. | 15. LEGASPI, Analey S. | 25. RILLERA, Adriel R. |
| 6. CORPUZ, Jeffrey R. | 16. MACAM, Edmund M. | 26. SENSANO, Dominador Jr. D. |
| 7. DACLES, Jefferson B. | 17. MADOT, Bernabe P. | 27. SISON, Lucadio M. |
| 8. DANAN, Danilo Jr. R. | 18. MALONZO, Paulito Jr. C. | 28. TABELIN, Billy Ed B. |
| 9. DE GUZMAN, Menandro M. | 19. MANAYON, Rash Oshay B. | 29. VILLANUEVA, Edwin E. |
| 10. ENRIQUEZ, Goodfrey L. | 20. MONTUERTO, George A. | 30. VITUG, Archie C. |



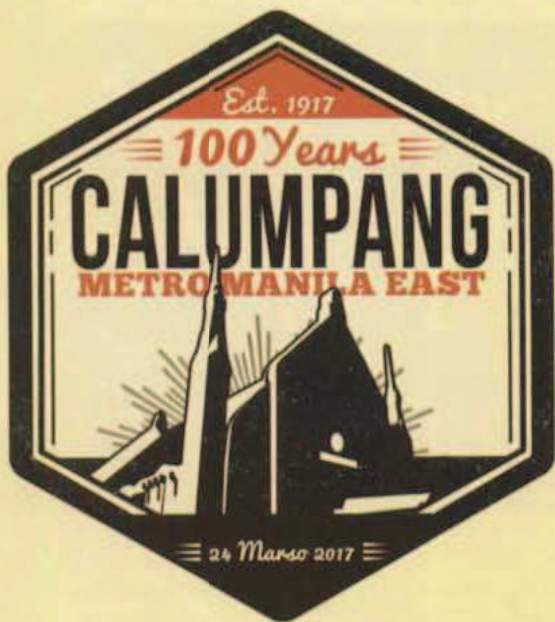
Bilang tugon sa pagmamalasakit ng Pamamahala sa Iglesia, ibinahagi ng mga kapatid ang kanilang pangako. "Kagaya ng natutunan namin sa leksiyon, ang mga tungkulin na ipinagkatiwala sa amin ay lalo pa naming iingat at pagtatalagahan dahil kami na mga maytungkulin ay nangangalaga rin sa mga kapatid," sabi ni Kapatid na Christian. Ang paninindigan naman ni Kapatid na Daniel Ybot, isa sa pamunuan ng lokal, kasama ng kaniyang pamilya: "Kami ay nangangako na kami ay lubos na makikipagkaisa sa Tagapamahalang Pangkalahatan para sa ikasusulong ng mga gawain at sa ikatatatag ng

aming pananampalataya. Ito ay sa paraang kami ay susunod at pasasakop sa lahat ng mga tagubilin at aral na aming tinatanggap mula sa Pamamahala." ●

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KUMBINSIDO SA KABILA NG KAWALAN NG PAG-ASA

“**H**INDI NAMIN AKALAIN na kami’y makaliligtas pa,” pahayag ni Kapatid na Gloria Nuque, isang diakonesa sa Lokal ng Calumpang na kabilang sa milyun-milyong Pilipinong naapektuhan ng bagyong Ondoy (*International Codename: Ketsana*). Mahigit pitong taon na ang lumipas mula nang humagupit ang bagyo noong Setyembre 26, 2009, subalit nananatiling nakatatak sa isipan ng maraming kapatid ang mga mapapait na karanasan na dulot ng bagyong iyon.

“Palibhasa’y nakatira kami malapit sa ilog, sa tuwing bumubuhos ang ulan, talagang binabaha kami. Pero ‘yung Ondoy, ‘yun ang kakaiba sapagkat napakabilis ng pagtaas ng tubig at ‘yung ilog, napakalakas ng agos,” paglalahad ni Kapatid na Joel Amistad, isang diakono sa lokal. Bagama’t sanay na sila sa baha, nabigla siya dahil hindi pangkaraniwan ang naging pagtaas ng tubig—lagpas dalawang tao ang lalim ng baha.

“Malubha ang ulan na iyon dahil wala itong humpay. Talagang napakatindi,” pahayag naman ni Kapatid na Jimmy Alancado, pangulong diakono ng lokal. Lahat ng mga kapatid sa Lokal ng Calumpang—mayaman o mahirap—ay naapektuhan ng baha. “Totoong maraming napinsalang kabuhayan, bahay, at ari-arian,” dagdag ni Kapatid na Jimmy. Kahit ang gusaling sambahan ng lokal mismo ay binaha. Ayon kay Kapatid na Martin Hernandez, ang bantay-kapilya, “*Almost 25 years* na ako dito sa lokal, pero wala pa akong karanasan na binaha ang kapilya kundi noon lang.”

Bagama’t naging matatag ang mga kapatid, inamin nila na sila ay



nakaramdam pa rin ng pangamba noon. "May takot pa rin, kasi tao tayo. Nangangamba, kasi baka lumaki nang lumaki [ang baha], at marami ang mapahamak," sabi ni Kapatid na Jimmy. Ganito rin ang naging damdamin ni Kapatid na Marissa Borongan, maytungkulin sa pananalapi: "Noong kasagsagan ng bagyo, nang naglalakad kami sa kalsada at nakita namin na ganoon kataas 'yung tubig, talagang natakot kami dahil noon ko lang naranasan iyon."

Kahit nagmistulang ilog ng putik ang daan at kabi-kabila ang bundok ng mga basura sa kalsada, nagsikap pa ring makarating sa

gusaling sambahan si Kapatid na Marissa at ang kaniyang sambahayan upang sumamba at tumupad ng kanilang mga tungkulin. "Sinong tutulong sa akin? 'Yung tao na may hangganan ang pagtulong? Sa ganoong klaseng pagsubok na darating sa buhay mo, ang Diyos lang ang tanging makatutulong sa iyo. Kaya kahit may bagyo, dadalo pa rin ako sa pagsamba," sabi niya.

"Sa pagsamba namin, doon namin naramdaman na talagang ginabayan kami ng Panginoong Diyos." Hindi namin inakala na kami'y mabubuhay pa pero sa awa ng Diyos, nanalangin kami at iniligtas Niya kaming lahat,"

pahayag naman ni Kapatid na Gloria.

Dahil sa sinapit ng mga kapatid sa kalamidad, kung saan sila ay nasa isang sitwasyon na halos panawan na ng pag-asa, naihalalintulad ni Kapatid na Jimmy ang kanilang mga sarili sa lingkod ng Diyos na si Abraham. "Tulad ni Abraham, naipakita ng mga kapatid sa lokal na ito na kapag inilagak natin ang ating pag-asa sa Panginoong Diyos, tutuparin Niya ang mga pangako Niya sa atin," paglalahad niya. Ang pag-asang ito sa magagawa ng Panginoong Diyos ang siyang naging dahilan kaya





nakapagpatuloy sa paglilingkod sa Kaniya ang mga kapatid sa kabila ng dumaang kalamidad.

Noong Marso 24, 2017, sa pagsambang pinangasiwaan ng Kapatid na Eduardo V. Manalo, ang Tagapamahalang Pangkalahatan ng Iglesia, sa Lokal ng Calumpang, Distrito Eklesiastiko ng Metro Manila East, bilang paggunita sa ika-100 anibersaryo ng lokal ay itinuro niya na ang mga nagtitiwalang lagi sa Panginoong Diyos ay hindi manghihina kailanman. Bagkus, magkakaroon sila ng panibagong lakas na kanilang magagamit sa pagharap sa mga matitinding pagsubok sa buhay.

“Lalo akong tumitibay, lalo akong lumalakas sa pananampalataya dahil alam kong ang Diyos ay hindi magbibigay ng mga pagsubok na hindi natin kayang lampasan,” pahayag ni Kapatid na Martin.

Sumasampalataya si Kapatid na Marissa na ikatatatag at ikatitibay sa tungkulin at sa pagka-Iglesia Ni Cristo ang mga pinagdaraanang pagsubok: “Kung ano mang pagsubok ang darating sa aking buhay, idinadalangin ko sa Ama na tulungan pa akong maging matibay at matatag sa paglilingkod sa Kaniya.”

Kaya naman nangangako ang mga kapatid sa Lokal ng Calumpang na patuloy silang magtitiis at magpapakatatag anuman ang dumating na mabibigat na pagsubok upang matanggap ang pangakong kaligtasan. “Ito ang dahilan kung bakit kahit anong mangyari, hinding-hindi kami titigil sa paglilingkod,” buong-pusong pahayag ni Kapatid na Joel.

Hindi maikukumpara ang pagtitiis sa mundong ito sa pangakong inilaan ng Diyos

kung kaya’t buong pusong makikipagkaisa ang mga kapatid sa Pamamahala sa lahat ng gawain sa Iglesia. Pangako ni Kapatid na Marissa, “Kahit na ano pang pagsubok ang dumating, mamahalin namin ang aming tungkulin at ang aming pagka-Iglesia Ni Cristo hanggang sa kamatayan.” ☺

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IGLESIA NI CRISTO (CHURCH OF CHRIST)

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ALL MINISTERS AND MINISTERIAL WORKERS

QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES • MARCH 28, 2017 • 7AM

AS JUDGMENT DAY draws near, the Administration of the Church Of Christ, under the leadership of Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, continuously makes every effort to lead the Church to become worthy of receiving salvation. To fulfill this divine task, the Executive Minister tirelessly inspires and encourages the ministers and ministerial workers through the words of the Almighty God. Brother Eduardo uses every possible means, like using modern technology, to reach all of his co-workers around the world to bring the Church towards further victories.

On March 28, Brother Eduardo Manalo presided over the first International Conference of

Ministers and Ministerial Workers for the year 2017. The supervising ministers, including the ministers and ministerial workers from the ecclesiastical districts in Metro Manila, the department heads of the Central Office, and the faculty members and the students of the Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church Of Christ) School For Ministers main campus, were gathered in the Central Temple in Quezon City. It was linked to a total of 155 remote sites—99 in the Philippines and 56 abroad.

Brother Danilo B. Caalim, a minister of the gospel assigned in Hamburg, Germany, recollects the importance of such events: "We are much more





inspired as we experienced God's power during the preaching of the Executive Minister. This is what gives us greater strength to move onwards and strive to make the works of the Church victorious," he said.

Sharing his thoughts on what was taught about protecting the spiritual welfare of the Church members, Brother Cad Jesriel S. Facal said, "As a ministerial worker, just like what was taught by the Church Administration, we will offer our lives to protect the brethren. I will spend my life and strength helping the brethren remain loyal to God, loyal to Christ, and loyal to the Church Of Christ." Brother Cad Jesriel, assigned in the ecclesiastical district of Central thus promised: "In whatever situation, I will devote myself to making sure that I and the brethren under my care are always living according to the will of the Lord God."

Brother Eduardo also taught how important it is for ministers and ministerial workers to be courageous, strong, and compassionate as they take care of the spiritual welfare of the brethren. "In order for a minister to be victorious in all the activities of the Church, he must be strong in caring for the people he had been entrusted with to oversee," Brother Mark Anthony P. Martin, a regular ministerial worker in the ecclesiastical district of Metro Manila South, explained based on what he learned. The Executive Minister also reminded the attendees to give their full concentration to every task entrusted to them. They ought to focus on all of their responsibilities as God's workers to lead the Church toward the promised salvation.

From the lecture, Brother Lgie Cajurao, a ministerial

student currently assigned in the ecclesiastical district of Metro Manila North, remembered how Apostle Paul regarded the duty of those in the ministry. He said, "We are soldiers of Christ, which is why we should not be distracted by anything not related to our duty. We need to focus on our ministerial functions to be effective in helping the Church Administration in propagating God's words and strengthening the faith of the brethren." ●

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A Reflection On The CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

A Glimpse Of God's Further Victories For The Church Of Christ

AFTER PRESIDING OVER the International Conference of Ministers and Ministerial Workers, Brother Eduardo led the opening of the exhibit at the 2nd floor of the INC Museum and Gallery. The exhibit is divided into four parts. The first part shows the pre-centennial activities, including the Countdown to the Centennial. The second part displays the Centennial week celebrations memorabilia where the visitors may also watch and hear the lecture of the Executive Minister during the special worship service held on July 27, 2014. The third part of the exhibit features the houses of worship dedicated to God and the Church edifices and self-sustainable communities inaugurated by the Executive Minister around the world presented through an interactive spherical display. This section also displays the recognitions the Church received around the globe. The last part presents the succeeding activities of the Church after its centennial celebration.

Brother Ron Dwight Lardizabal, a minister of the gospel, said, "This exhibit shows how our Almighty Father continues to shower His blessings and further victories on the Church and on all of its endeavors. This is why Church Of Christ members are always proud of their membership and remain strong and steadfast in their faith." 🕊



Centennial Week Activities Display



Interactive Spherical Display

Those who have the right to serve God

By BIENVENIDO A. SANTIAGO JR.

Based on the lesson preached by the Executive Minister, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, in Mountain View, California on January 15, 2017

IT IS COMMONLY ASSUMED that one may fulfill his sacred obligation to serve God in any manner he chooses. Sadly, such assumption has blurred for many two basic biblical truths regarding man's service to God: that one must first have the right to serve God for one's services to be deemed worthy and acceptable and that one should serve God based on His will. Precisely, for a person operating on that assumption holds that what's important is he is able to serve God—in whatever way he prefers. However, that is not the case when it comes to serving God. In fact, the Holy Scriptures teaches otherwise. Such person has failed or ignored to find out what the will of God is and the condition He set in order for man to have that right to serve Him.

Those who have the right

The Bible clearly states the prior condition that must first be met before one can serve the living God: one must first be made clean and pure from sins, and only the blood of Christ can absolutely cleanse a person. In Hebrews 9:14, it is written:

“So surely the blood of Christ can do much, much more. Christ

offered himself through the eternal Spirit as a perfect sacrifice to God. His blood will make us fully clean from the evil things we have done. His blood will make us pure even in our hearts. We are made pure so that we can worship (serve) the living God.” (*Easy-to-Read Version*)

Only those who have been made pure and clean can serve God—not just anyone.

In Acts 20:28, the apostles attest who were cleansed with Christ's blood. Apostle Paul says:

“Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, to feed the church of Christ which he has purchased with his blood.” (*Lamsa Translation*)

Contrary to the popular notion that all people benefited from Christ's sacrifice, it is only the members of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ) who have truly gained from Christ's redemptive act when He shed His blood on the cross. The members of His Church have been made pure and clean from their sins. Hence, they are the ones given the right to serve and worship God.

In the light of this, anyone who wants to serve God should strive to

become a member of the Church Of Christ. People should have no misgivings in leaving their religion for the Church Of Christ because what they would be doing is in compliance with Christ's command. The Lord said that people should enter through Him to be in the flock and be saved (John 10:7, 9, 16, *Revised English Bible*). The flock, as mentioned earlier, is the Church Of Christ.

Not only does the Bible attest that the Church Of Christ has the right to serve and worship God, but it also has the true relationship with Jesus Christ. Apostle Paul attests to this:

“That's why a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will be one. This is a great mystery. (I'm talking about Christ's relationship to the church.)” (Eph. 5:31-32, *God's Word Translation*)

Those who don't have the right

What about those who are not members of the Church Of Christ—those who do not have any relationship with Christ? According to Apostle Paul, such people do not have the right to serve God and have no share in His promises:

“... remember that at that time you were separated from Christ [excluded from any relationship with Him], alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise [with no share in the sacred Messianic promise and without knowledge of God’s agreements], having no hope [in His promise] and [living] in the world without God.” (Eph. 2:12, *Amplified Bible 2015*)

That’s a terrible condition to be in—to have no hope in God’s promise and live in the world without God. That is the predicament of anyone separated from Christ because he doesn’t have any relationship with Him. Any service and worship he renders to God will amount to nothing. God’s promised help and deliverance are not intended to include him. With the many uncertainties in this world and its nearing destruction on Judgment Day, things aren’t looking good for anyone outside the Church.

Therefore, one ought to strive to be in the Church Of Christ to have a relationship with Christ and be able to serve God.

The rightful manner of serving God

Just because one has the right to serve God and has been taught to do it accordingly, yet that person still insists on doing it in a manner he pleases, his services would be worthless. Christ teaches us that rendering service and worship to God should not be based on man-made laws because such service and worship will be worthless. In Matthew 15:9, the Lord said:

“Their worship is worthless, for they teach their man-made laws

instead of those from God.” (*The Living Bible*)

When one serves God, he should observe His laws and teachings. Only then will God consider such service worthy and acceptable.

This is what God has been seeking from those whom He has given the right to serve and worship Him. For example, the Israelites. During their time, only they had the right to serve and worship God (II Kings 5:15, *New King James Version*; Rom. 9:4, *Good News Translation*). However, they were not at liberty to do whatever they wanted. God gave them His decrees regarding the worship that they should render to Him, and He demanded that the decrees He had laid down be followed punctiliously (Deut. 12:13, 5, *ETRV*). The same is true in the Christian era.

A counsel to those who have the right

Those who already have the right to serve God are truly blessed because they are certain that their worship is acceptable to Him.

Hence they are given an instruction to fulfill first in order for them to hold on to God and uphold their services to Him. In Deuteronomy 13:4, this is stated:

“Follow the LORD your God and fear him. Keep his commandments and obey his voice, serve him and loyally hold onto him.” (*Digital American Standard Version 2011*)

God’s true servants must be obedient. They must have reverent fear of Him. They have to be careful in obeying His commandments. They have to remain true to Him. They should never revert to the wrong worship of Him. They should

never be enticed to stop serving the true God to serve false gods. Even if the ones who are pressuring them to do so are their family and friends, they must remain faithful to God (Deut. 13:1-3, 5-8, *Ibid.*).

To remain in their right to serve and worship God, the true worshipers are exhorted by the apostles to be strong in the faith (Rev. 3:11, *Expanded Bible*) and to always excel in serving God (I Cor. 15:58, *Names of God Bible*). If they do these—if they devote themselves to faithful service of God—they will never be on the losing end of things. The apostles remind them that the works they do for the Lord will never be pointless.

So, even if they encounter trials and hardship in this life, they should still uphold their faith and services to the Lord until the end because on Judgment Day, they will receive the promised salvation and eternal life. In II Timothy 4:7-8, Apostle Paul states this:

“I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. Without compromise I have remained true to the faith. What’s ahead for me now is to receive the crown that’s been reserved for me for saying and doing what was right, which the Lord, the Judge who always does what’s right, will give me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have looked forward in joyful and keen anticipation to His appearing.” (*Last Days Bible*)

Therefore, receiving the right to serve God and rendering the true worship to Him will not only make a person’s services to the Lord worthy and acceptable, but will also bring him great blessings in this life and in the life to come. ●



Kung paano nabuo ang aral na si Cristo ay Diyos

SI CRISTO MISMO AT ANG MGA APOSTOL ay nagturo na Siya (Panginoong Jesucristo) ay tao sa likas na kalagayan (Juan 8:40; Gawa 2:22; I Tim. 2:5). Hindi aral ng Biblia na may iba pa Siyang kalagayan. Walang anumang pahayag mula kay Cristo—tahasan man o pahiwatig—na Siya ay Diyos. Ang Kaniyang pagiging tao ay nagpapatunay na hindi Siya Diyos, sapagkat ipinahayag ng Diyos na, “ako’y Dios, at hindi tao” (Ose. 11:9), “ikaw ay tao, at hindi Dios” (Ezek. 28:2).

Paano ipaliliwanag, kung gayon, na ang karamihan sa mga taong nagpapakilalang Cristiano ay naniniwalang si Cristo ay Diyos at hindi tao? May nagsasabi pang, “Paanong magkakamali ang nakararami sa gayong paniniwala?”—na para bang ang katotohanan ay nakasalig sa bilang. Ang lalong mahalagang tanong ay: Kung ang aral na si Cristo ay Diyos ay hindi mababasa sa Biblia, paano nabuo ang gayong aral?

Ang likas na kalagayan ni Cristo ay naging paksa ng maraming taon ng pagtatalo pagkamatay ng mga apostol. Sa aklat na kaniyang isinulat, ang *When Jesus Became God*, isinalaysay ni Richard E. Rubenstein ang detalyadong pangyayari na nagbigay-daan sa pagkakabuo ng aral na si Cristo ay Diyos. Si Constantinong Dakila, na tinawag ng mga mananalaysay na “unang emperador Romano na naging Cristiano” (*Encyclopædia Britannica*), ay nagpatawag ng isang konsilyo upang talakayin ang nasabing isyu. Subalit ang kaniyang layunin ay hindi upang alamin ang katotohanan tungkol sa tunay na kalikasan ni Cristo, kundi upang mailigtas ang kaniyang imperyo mula sa pagkakabaha-bahagi, na maaaring ibunga ng pagtatalong iyon.

Ang konsilyong nabanggit ay nagbunga ng tinatawag na *Nicene Creed*, na nagpahayag na si Cristo ay Diyos: “Kaya, halimbawa, noong lamang 325 taon ng Panginoon, sa Konsilyo ng Nicea, nang ipaliwanag ng Iglesia sa atin na isang alituntunin ng pananampalataya na si Jesus ay tunay na Diyos” (*Discourses on the Apostles’ Creed*, p. 206).*

Mahalagang mapansin na ang doktrina na si Cristo ay Diyos ay nabuo sa pamamagitan lamang ng isang konsilyo ng Iglesia Katolika na isinagawa mahigit dalawang siglo matapos maisulat ang Biblia. Kung si Cristo ay tunay na Diyos, maliwanag sanang mababasa ang gayon sa mga Banal na Kasulatan. Subalit dahil wala nga sa Biblia, pinangahasan ng Iglesia Katolika na gawing opisyal na doktrina na si Cristo ay Diyos, pagkatapos ng maraming pagtatalo at kontrobersiya. Walang anumang kinalaman si Cristo, ang Kaniyang mga apostol, at ang Biblia sa gayong aral.

Ang mga iskolar ng Biblia ay nagbigay ng kanilang pahayag tungkol sa nasabing isyu: “Hindi kailanman tinawag na Diyos si Jesus sa Unang Tatlong Ebanghelyo (*Synoptic Gospels*), at ang talatang gaya ng Marcos 10:18 ay waring nag-aalis ng posibilidad na ginamit ni Jesus ang titulo para sa kaniyang sarili. Maging ang ikaapat na Ebanghelyo, hindi nito kailanman inilalarawan si Jesus na tiyakang nagsasabi na siya’y Diyos. Ang mga pangaral na tinutuntun ng aklat ng Mga Gawa sa pasimula ng misyong Cristiano ay hindi nagsasaysay tungkol kay Jesus bilang Diyos. Kaya, walang dahilan upang isipin na si Jesus ay tinawag na Diyos sa mga pinakaunang bahagi ng tradisyon ng Bagong Tipan. Ang negatibong konklusyon ng ito ay pinagtitibay ng katotohanang hindi ginamit ni Pablo ang titulo sa alinmang liham na nasulat bago ang taong 58” (*Jesus: God and Man*, p. 30).*

Bakit hindi natin dapat ipagtaka na umusbong ang gayong maling aral tungkol kay Cristo? Ganito ang ibinabala ni Apostol Pablo sa mga unang Cristiano:

“Nguni’t ako’y natatakot, baka sa anomang paraan, kung paanong si Eva ay nadaya ng ahas sa kaniyang katusuhan, ang inyong walang malay at malinis na mga pagiisip na kay Cristo ay pasamain. Sapagka’t kung yaong paririto ay mangaral ng ibang Jesus, na hindi namin ipinangaral, o kung kayo’y nagsisitanggap ng ibang espiritu na hindi ninyo tinanggap, o ibang evangelio na hindi ninyo tinanggap, ay mabuting pagtiisan ninyo.” (II Cor. 11:3-4)

Noon pa man ay nagpahayag na ng pangamba ang mga apostol na ang mga Cristiano ay madaya at ang kanilang “walang malay at malinis na mga pag-iisip na kay Cristo ay pasamain.” Nagbabala sila ukol sa paririto na mangangaral ng “ibang Jesus, na hindi [nila] ipinangaral.” Ang Jesus na ipinangaral ng mga apostol ay tao sa likas na kalagayan. Ito ang dalisay na katotohanan na buong giting naming tinitindigan bilang mga kaanib sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo*—sa harap ng malaganap ngunit maling paniniwala na si Cristo ay Diyos. Pagdating sa aming sinasampalatayan, hindi kung ano ang popular ang aming pinagbabatayan kundi ang katotohanang nakasulat sa Biblia. Itinuro ni Cristo na ang Ama lamang—hindi Siya—ang dapat makilala na iisang Diyos na tunay. Ang pagkakilala at paniniwalang ito ang maghahatid sa tao sa buhay na walang hanggan (Juan 17:1, 3). ●

— DENNIS C. LOVENDINO
Punong Patnugot

*NOTA: Isinalin sa Filipino

Ang iisang Diyos na dapat makilala ng lahat

Sinulat ni ARVIN T. GALANG

GINAWA KO ITO upang ako ay makilala ng buong daigdig, Na makilala nila na ako si Yahweh, Ako lamang ang Diyos at wala nang iba.” (Isa. 45:6, *Magandang Balita Biblia*)

Pahayag ito ng Panginoong Diyos mismo. Dito’y maliwanag na ipinaunawa sa lahat ng tao ang pagiging isa ng tunay na Diyos. Na ang katotohanang ito ang nais ng Diyos na tanggapin ng lahat ng tao sa buong daigdig. Ngunit, kapansin-pansin na ito ay taliwas sa kinamulang paniniwala ng marami na ang tunay na Diyos ay mayroon daw tatlong persona. Bawat persona raw ay pawang Diyos din ang kalagayan, pantay-pantay, at walang pagkakaungusan. Gayunman, pinatutunayan ng

Biblia na ang Diyos ay talagang iisa sa lahat ng dako at sa lahat ng panahon.

Ang Diyos na ipinakilala sa Matandang Tipan

Ilan ang tunay na Diyos na ipinakilala sa Matandang Tipan ng Biblia? Ayon sa isang lingkod ng Diyos, isa lamang ang tunay na Diyos:

“Sapagka’t ikaw ay dakila, at gumagawa ng kagilagilalas na mga bagay: Ikaw na magisa ang Dios.” (Awit 86:10)

Dahil sa pagkilalang iisa ang tunay na Diyos, buong paninindigang ipinahayag ng mga unang lingkod Niya na walang ibang Diyos bukod sa Kaniya at walang kagaya Niya:

“Kaya’t ikaw ay dakila, Oh Panginoong Dios: sapagka’t walang gaya mo, o may ibang Dios pa bukod sa iyo, ayon sa lahat na aming naririnig ng aming mga pakinig.” (II Sam. 7:22)

Kaya sinabi ng mga lingkod ng Diyos sa panahon ng Matandang Tipan na mag-isa ang Diyos at walang ibang Diyos bukod sa Kaniya ay sapagkat maliwanag sa kanila ang katotohanan na tanging ang Ama lamang ang tunay na Diyos. Hindi sinabing ang Ama, Anak, at Espiritu Santo o silang tatlo ang tunay na Diyos.

At ang dahilan pa kung bakit ang tunay na Diyos ay tinatawag na Ama ay sapagkat Siya ang lumalang o pinagmulan ng lahat.



By REGINE DENOLO

THE EXECUTIVE MINISTER of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ), Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, led the opening of Embrace Café at the New Era University (NEU) main campus in Quezon City, Philippines on March 1, 2017.

Embrace Café is a project of the Executive Minister through the NEU-Special Education (SPED) Program in collaboration with the Christian Society for the Deaf (CSD). Its objective is to give employment opportunities to people with special needs and assist them in integrating themselves into society as functional members of it. The café is so-named “embrace” because it advocates the acceptance of persons with special needs—“embracing” them with support and love.

Sister Aileen Z. Alcid, 27, from the local congregation of Camarin, Metro Manila North Ecclesiastical District, expressed in sign language, “As a college graduate, I tried applying for a job twice but was not accepted because I’m deaf.” She now works as a crew member of Embrace Café. This is what the organizers of the café had thought of—a place where the students with special needs could work after graduation.

Brother Ed H. Lumbao, a minister of the gospel and NEU-SPED Program Director, explained, “This is a good opportunity for them to have a job. Embrace Café employs persons with special needs after going through basic training to help them gain life-centered skills that will enable

them to be functional and productive adults in the future.”

Having a stable job is what Sister Danielle Anne C. Puriran, 25, from the local congregation of Manggahan, Quezon City Ecclesiastical District, has been praying for. “I thank our Almighty God so much for answering our devotional prayers. I used to work as a waitress in a restaurant, but only on an on-call basis. For a long time, I did not have a stable job, until I was accepted here at Embrace Café. I am also very happy working with fellow deaf brethren,” she expressed through sign language.

Sister Judy Ann P. Dayao, 20, from the local congregation of Baesa, Quezon City, was not able to attend formal schooling when she was



young. She expressed, "Before, when I didn't have a job yet, I only stayed at home. Now, I am very happy because I have a job."

Aside from academics, NEU imparts Christian values to its students—to accept, respect, love, and help others, including children and students with special needs.

"We need to understand that persons who are differently abled need to be trained to help them prepare for their future. We equip them with as much functional skills as possible. Embrace Café makes it possible to train students in the NEU-SPED Program for vocational skills so that once they graduate, they would be able to apply these skills when working, and also be

able to provide opportunities for our brethren who are deaf to have a decent means of living," said Sister Kristine Mae T. Aguirre, NEU-SPED Program staff.

Sister Marianne R. Bangloy, 26, a graduate of the NEU-SPED Program, said, "Here [in the café], I am assigned at the bread and pastries section. I learned how to serve the customers and interact with them. I feel happy being here and meeting other people. Thank you so much, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, for giving us this opportunity."

The relatives of the brethren with special needs observed the changes in their loved ones serving at Embrace Café. "This is a big help for my cousin because she is more confident now

in communicating with other people unlike before when she was just with her immediate family most of the time. She has become more active in worshipping our Almighty God," said Sister Odysa Belle P. Pagatpatan, Sister Marianne's cousin.

Brother Mark Jason Patagnan, a minister of the gospel and the NEU-College of Education secretary, added, "Through this project, the café assistants feel the love of God through the Church Administration. It gives them more confidence in dealing with other people. They can now do the things that most people are able to. Also, they don't only serve in the café, they inspire other brethren with special needs to be active in the Church Of Christ." ●



Iglesia Ni Cristo establishes

Ecofarm in South

The first Ecofarm of the Church outside the Philippines brings hope and joy to the people of Mantsopa, South Africa

By ROMMEL T. SANVICTORES

JUST A FEW MONTHS after the Aid to Humanity activity of the Church Of Christ was conducted in the last quarter of 2016 in Ladybrand, its residents and those of its neighboring towns saw the fulfillment of the agricultural livelihood project promised by the Church. Ladybrand is one of the five towns in the Mantsopa local municipality, Thabo Mofutsanyana district, Free State Province, South Africa. Owing to its naturally agricultural landscape and favorable environmental condition, Mantsopa is a suitable area for agricultural projects.

After a few months of bulldozing, acquiring of the essential farm implements, and partitioning of the different areas of the more than 500-hectare land purchased by the Church in Ladybrand, this huge tract of land is

now functioning as the first Ecofarm of the Church Of Christ outside the Philippines.

Employing modern agriculture techniques

Initially, more than 20,000 pecan tree seedlings have already been planted; the same number of olive tree seedlings are soon to follow. The pecan trees will take only three years instead of five to seven years to yield nuts for these have been grafted first and delicately budded for weeks to hasten growth and induce fruitfulness. The same agricultural technique will be used for other crops for consistency in the quality of farm produce. The main crops are intercropped with vegetables like cabbage, eggplant, bottle gourd, squash, broccoli, and pechay to maximize land use and for soil fertility.

Different species of trees have already been thriving in the purchased land. There are more than 600 cork oak, the bark of which is made into bottle stoppers, boards, flooring, furniture, and even footwear. Blue gum trees cover more than 100 hectares of the entire farm and are also mature and ready for harvesting to be used mainly as firewood. Other kinds of trees found in the farm include pine, cypress, and cedar.

A 50-hectare part of the farm was fenced and partitioned for livestock production. Initially, 250 cattle, 250 goats, and 250 sheep are being prepared as introductory livestock for raising, breeding, and producing commodities. The Church Administration sent animal husbandry experts to study exhaustively the pastureland and the appropriate agricultural



technology to be employed. Also, would-be herdsmen are being trained in the proper way of livestock management.

Providing sustainable means of livelihood

In employing different techniques in agriculture, it is made certain first that the very essence of ecological farming is being met, that is, the environment is not compromised but well taken care of. The aim is not only to increase productivity but also promote healthy, ecologically sound, and sustainable farmland-use system—protecting both its flora and fauna.

As of this writing, almost 200 South Africans are already working in the farm, most of whom are residents of Ladybrand and the other four towns of Mantsopa. As one of the beneficiaries of this

livelihood project, Sister Limakatso Malia, a mother of three children, testifies to the great impact to her life brought about by the Ecofarm project of the Church. She gladly said, “Since I began working here in the farm, my life has changed tremendously. It is because, before, I was just living through government provision and the only breadwinner in my family. Now, my family and I have a good life. I am very much happy.”

Like in other farms of the Church, nonmembers are also given the opportunity to work, especially those who have families to support. One of them is Mr. Moeketsi Lesenye. Recounting his past condition, Mr. Lesenye exclaimed, “We are so poor. Sometimes we sleep without eating. We sleep without food in two or three days. We go to the town to see what we can do and we come back





with nothing.” But now that he has been given the chance to work in the farm, there is a guarantee that there is something he could bring home and put on the table for his family. Thus, Mr. Lesenye joyfully added, “Now we’re so happy here in Ladybrand because of this farm of the Church Of Christ. You make a difference in our lives. My life has changed. I’m so happy to be with you, guys.”

Bringing hope and tremendous joy

The local government officials of Mantsopa are all the more grateful for this agricultural livelihood project provided by the Church. Mr.

Selby Selepe, municipal manager of Mantsopa, said, “It’s quite a relief for the local government sector. I thank Brother Eduardo Manalo for choosing this place. Every South African needs some support. We really appreciate the fact that Brother Eduardo identified our town and the municipality to give this humanitarian support. We are really grateful about that.”

In view of the high unemployment rate in the municipality, Ms. Tania Halse, municipal councilor of Mantsopa, humbly commented, “In Ladybrand we have many, many unemployed people and I feel that with our struggling economy, every year

food gets more expensive and the cost of living gets more expensive too. It is absolutely nice to have people who care for others. It will definitely uplift our community.” As the Ecofarm project of the Church creates work opportunities but all the more give hope and inspiration to the many residents of the municipality, Ms. Halse further exclaimed in delight, “Brother Manalo, I just want to say thank you so much. From the municipality and as a councilor of this ward, I just want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for bringing this joy to our community, for bringing unity, and for sharing the love.” 🌱

On the road to further victories

By NICANOR P. TIOSEN



The Governor's Rapids in Quirino province



QUIRINO

IN ILOCANO, “MANGANDINGAY” is a term reflective of a person’s welcoming and hospitable nature, as well as his propensity for affording comfort to those who need it. And these could be said of a local congregation with that name in the ecclesiastical district of Quirino. Truly so, for the house of worship of Mangandingay Congregation with 300 seating capacity, situated along the national road that connects the province of Quirino with the provinces of Isabela to the north and Aurora to the south, is

truly a welcome and comforting sight as it emerges among the surrounding trees and green fields in an almost 5,000-square-meter lot where it is built. Since the house of worship was dedicated to God on May 17, 2013, it has afforded sanctuary to weary souls—the brethren or members of the Church Of Christ seeking spiritual guidance and comfort as they attend worship services, as well as having their devotional prayers to God; and nonmembers, too, who enter its portals in their quest for truth.



The author (second row, third from right) with the local congregation's Church officers (above); the house of worship of Mangandingay Local Congregation (left)



the Dialanese Extension among the Dumagat, an indigenous tribe, in the nearby mountain village which is a good one-hour or five-kilometer walk from Mangandingay.

Meanwhile, the brethren from Quirino under the leadership of their district minister, Brother Alberto Ramos, are truly thankful to our beloved Executive Minister, for continually looking after their welfare. Since 2009, when Brother Eduardo took the mantle of leadership, 11 houses of worship have already been built in the district, and preparations for the building of another one with a 900 to 1,000 seating capacity and other buildings on a 9,000-square-meter piece of land are underway.

Everyone in the ecclesiastical district of Quirino—from the ministers, officers, and brethren—vows to continue being one with the Church Administration. All are eager to march onwards to further victories in all the works of the Church. ☉

The brethren from Mangandingay, a barangay in Cabarroguis, the provincial capitol, could not contain their joy as our beloved Executive Minister, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, approved the holding of an English worship service in their congregation which started just this year, on March 8, 2017. Their first Holy Supper in English was also the first for the ecclesiastical district of Quirino. Together with their resident minister, Brother Charles Orfeo Marquez, the brethren promise to remain steadfast in their faith, serve

actively the Father Almighty, and uphold their spiritual fervor for as long as they live.

For his part, Brother Marquez is thanking Brother Eduardo for the letter he received from him dated January 27, 2016, commending his dedication in tending to the flock in a remote local congregation of Villa Gracia, which can be reached on foot by crossing a river 14 times (some parts are waist or chest-deep especially during the rainy season). Despite the threat and the danger, he was able to establish

Truth found me

DEVON SMITH

Fremont, Northeast California

I WAS BORN in Virginia, but moved around a lot as a military family. I grew up mostly in Colorado and eventually joined the military and served in Colorado Springs.

I grew up with a pretty religious setup—belonging to a Baptist church. But I soon lost interest because my questions about the Trinity doctrine were never answered. Also, certain verses in the Bible that stood out did not make sense when the pastor tried to explain them to me.

I was invited by my best friend to a Bible study of the Church Of Christ when she visited a mutual friend in Colorado. I already had a feeling that the Bible was true, so I found it easy to listen and accept verses when I became a Bible student. But the one Bible lesson that stood out to me was that which regarded the sign or symbol of the cross as not being a tool of salvation, but rather a tool of condemnation.

I had a hard time processing it and became emotional, even a little bitter; but I realized I was only mad at myself for believing a lie all my life. Shortly after, I compelled myself to hear every single lesson the Bible studies had to offer, because I knew there was nothing but the truth to be heard. Combined with the experience of witnessing a structured, easy-to-understand worship service, I became fully convinced this is the Church where I should belong.

The first of the persecutions I experienced came from my own mother. At one time, she would accept where I went to worship, even supporting me for seeking religion of any kind. One can understand how heartbroken I was when she did not give a second thought but ignored my invitation to her to the Church Of Christ. The response from my brother was similar, and he didn't speak to me for two years after my attempt to invite him. I was pretty distraught at the rejection from my own family. But my faith was strengthened by such persecutions.

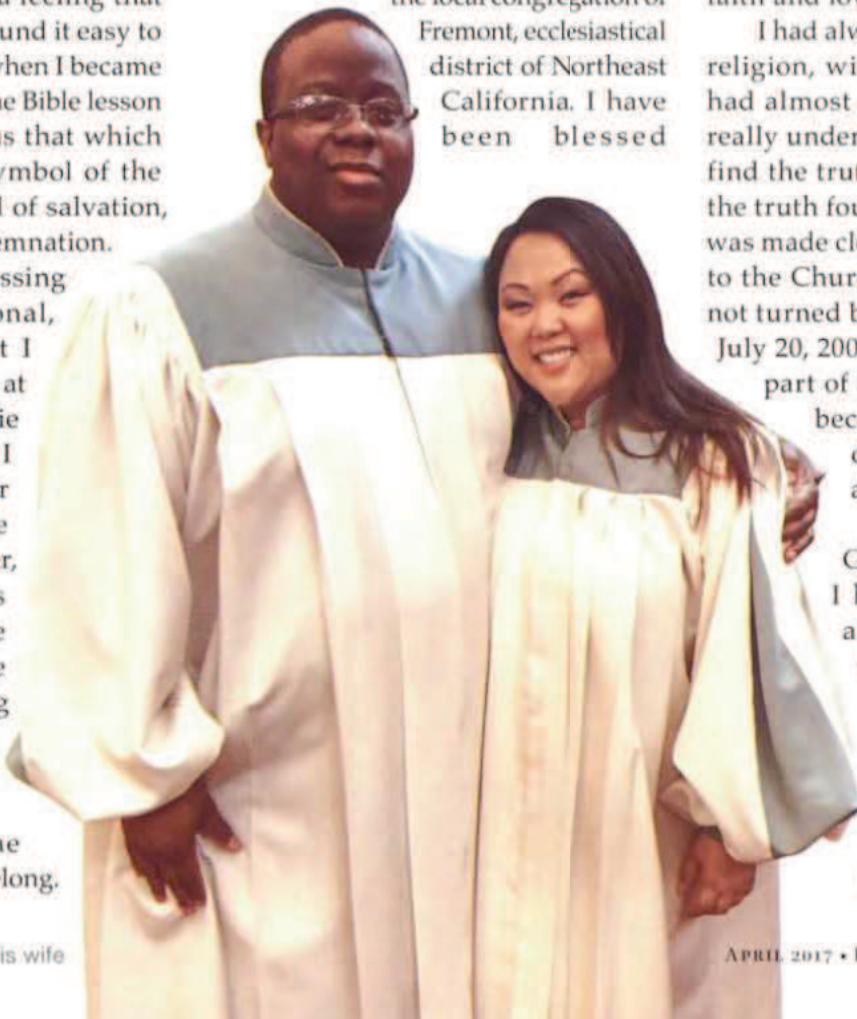
I am proud to be a choir member in the local congregation of Fremont, ecclesiastical district of Northeast California. I have been blessed

tremendously by God in a way I never thought possible, for He has given me such talent I never thought I even possessed until I became a member of the Church. There is truly no greater feeling of gratitude for the spiritual blessings received in worship service.

In addition to being a choir member, I hold an office in the *Buklod*, which allows me to help improve the quality of life of the married brethren. I hold an office as a district gospel choir member as well. The district gospel choir aims to inspire various people from all walks of life. I believe Christian music promotes stronger faith and love of the brotherhood.

I had always searched for the ideal religion, with no luck on my own. I had almost given up altogether, not really understanding that I could not find the truth on my own, but rather the truth found me. God called me. It was made clear once I was introduced to the Church Of Christ, and I have not turned back since my baptism on July 20, 2008. I have seen and been a part of the world for what it has become, and there's nothing out there that can tear me away from my faith!

My only prayer, if God will permit, is that I hope to see my mother and brother, as well as the many friends I've met throughout my life, witness for themselves the truth and love of the Almighty God through His words in the Church Of Christ. 🙏



Brother Devon and his wife



Sharing the faith

Brethren in the district of **Japan** held an evangelical mission officiated at by Brother Matusalem V. Pareja in Saitama local congregation and linked via live video streaming to different local congregations within the district; members of the Christian Brotherhood International (CBI) in **Pangasinan Central** filled a convention hall in Lingayen with guests eager to hear the words of God preached by Brother Benildo C. Santiago; in **Isabela East, Pagsambang Kabataan** or Children's Worship Service officers led the members in sharing the faith by handing out *Pasugo: God's Message* magazines and pamphlets.

Contributing writers and photographers: Hyacinth Aguinaldo, Rhonne Gacoscos



JAPAN



PANGASINAN CENTRAL



ISABELA EAST



Growth and expansion

Baptismal candidates in the ecclesiastical districts of **Northeastern Seaboard**, **Australia East**, and **Northern Midwest** took oath and received baptism, thankful to have made it and are now proud members of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ)

Contributing writers and photographers: Leslie Esguerra, Maha Fernandez, Eljay Manabat, Allen Carbonilla, Lorenzo Bondoc



NORTHEASTERN SEABOARD



AUSTRALIA EAST



NORTHERN MIDWEST



CAVITE NORTH



SOUTHEAST CALIFORNIA

Edifying the flock

Brethren in Habay Local Congregation, **Cavite North** commemorate their 40th anniversary through a program participated in by different Christian Family Organizations; in **Southeast California**, *Tagisan ng Talino* was held for the members of the Children's Worship Service

Contributing writers and photographers: Vanessa Manjares, Marlyn Prodigalidad



SOUTHEAST CALIFORNIA

Caring for others

Another Aid to Humanity (*Lingap sa Mamamayan*) Program sponsored by the ecclesiastical district of **Southeastern Seaboard** was held in Jardim Cocaia, Guarulhos, São Paulo, Brazil; *Cesta básica* (Portuguese for basic basket containing grocery items) were distributed to more than a thousand people

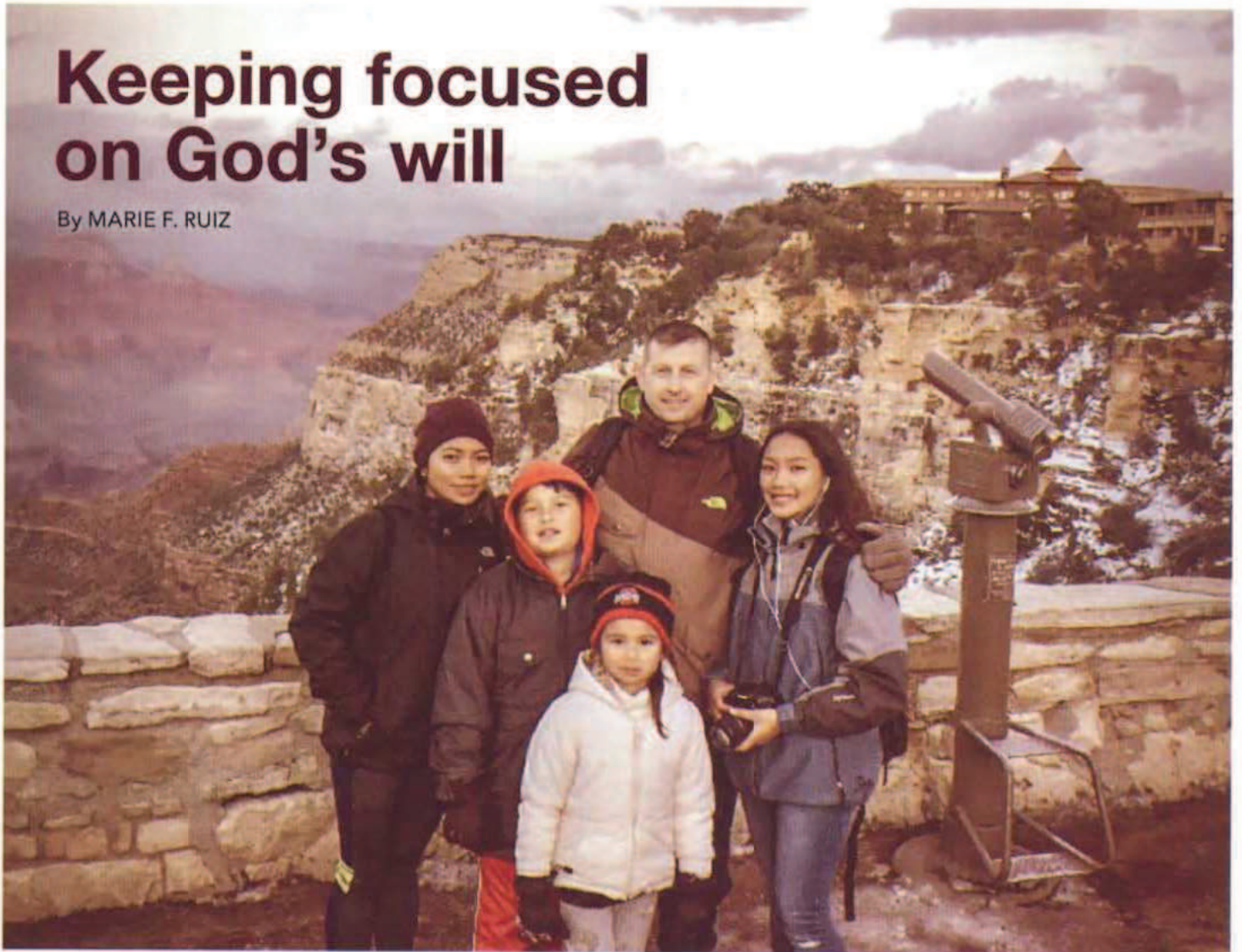
Contributing Writer and Photographer: Evangeline Galvez



SOUTHEASTERN SEABOARD

Keeping focused on God's will

By MARIE F. RUIZ



Brother Jerry with his family

LIVING IN THE HEART of Silicon Valley in California, Brother Gerald Francis Meyers is immersed in the fast-paced life in this place that breathes with the most modern technology. It is where the Facebook and Google headquarters are found and within a 15-minute drive are companies that are giants in the computer industry.

A couple of years back, he and his family lived in a different landscape—in a city where the sun shines almost every day, averaging 361 clear-sky days in a year, with a glimmering coastline that runs 244 miles along Tampa Bay, the Gulf of Mexico, and Boca Ciega Bay—the

City of St. Petersburg, Florida. But, he said, “My client base was growing quickly in California and shrinking in Florida.” He and his wife, Sister Claire, had to make that tough decision—“frightening” as he put it—for their family to move to California where the cost of living is extremely higher.

Blessing in disguise

Brother Jerry, as he is fondly called, is a career IT Auditor. After spending many years as a Public Accountant for well-known firms, he decided to establish his own. But running it, especially during its first three years, was not easy. It took a toll on the time he had to spend with his family and, more so, on

the time he needed to perform his duty as a head deacon in the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ) local congregation in St. Petersburg.

“I was traveling almost 100% of the time. My youngest was just a baby. My wife was taking care of all three children and our home. It became clear that all my key clients were going to be in California. Those three years of constant travel was very hard on me and my wife. We were both lonely and missed each other terribly. I was putting 90% of my time into work (including the travel), only 9.5% into my duty in the Church, and giving no time to my wife and family. We decided to move,” Brother Jerry narrated.

Having settled in California, he realized that what seemed to be a drawback was indeed a blessing in disguise. "The move allowed me to focus far more on my Church duty. By doing so, my faith grew. I know I still have so much to learn but that's okay because God will never stop teaching me and I will never grow tired of the lessons. For the moment, He stops teaching me would mean He's given up on me. I can't let that happen. It's not just about me and my salvation. It's also about my wife, my children, my co-workers, the brethren in Mountain View and, I honestly believe, the fruits I've yet to bear. I know He still has lots of plans for me. I just have to be spiritually mature enough to recognize what He wants me to do and then have the courage to do it," he said.

Putting on the armor of faith

Baptized on March 6, 2004, Brother Jerry noticed this about the Church Of Christ during his conversion: "This Church is the only one I had ever come across where the doctrines made sense." He was amazed at how clearly the teachings in the Bible were preached by its ministers. In comparing, he found the religion of his parents a far cry from the truth written in the Bible. "My mom is Scottish Protestant, my father, Catholic, and me, I grew up confused. I found the religions of both my parents frustrating. No emphasis at all on worshiping. We never went to church except for funerals, weddings, and the occasional Christmas mass. I saw a huge disparity between my perception of what godliness was and the way they lived their lives. Don't get me wrong, my parents weren't bad people per se. They were actually very kind and thoughtful. It's just that faith and serving God were not a priority at all," he said.

But now as a member of the Church Of Christ, he holds on to his faith every single day of his life. "I put on the armor of faith every morning and battle my way through each day with constant decisions and choices, always juggling responsibilities. When the Church Administration says you have to fight for your faith, well, that's absolutely true. None of it comes easily and simply, nor should it. It is my duty then to always prove myself to our Father, show Him that I choose Him over people and things of this world and prove that I'm worth all of what He does for me. And,

**"Put God first
and He will
take care
of the rest.
My kids have
heard me
say that
1,000 times."**

without fail, every time I put God first, He rewards me for it," he said.

As a head deacon in the local congregation of Mountain View, Northwest California Ecclesiastical District, Brother Jerry strives to fulfill his God-given duty. "Especially on worship service days," he said, "I might leave work just after lunch and finish my day at the chapel. I always want to make sure I'm there in plenty of time and that everything is taken care of for the other officers when they arrive. Working in Professional Services is difficult, high stress. You don't clock-in and out per se. Rather, you're on call 24/7 tracking the

time you bill to your clients. The upside of all of that is, as a head deacon, I am able to carve out sections of my week to properly perform my duty."

God's unlimited love and mercy

The biggest lesson he learned in life is how to truly serve God. "I wasn't raised knowing that. I had to learn it as a grown man. Put God first and He will take care of the rest. My kids have heard me say that 1,000 times," he said.

He teaches his children dedication in the performance of their duties to God and explains to them his duty as a head deacon. "It is borne by everyone in the family. This is something I stress all the time to them and something we head deacons pray for every week in our devotional prayers. My children see firsthand what duty means, what choosing God means. My oldest is in high school and the amount of temptations and distractions around her every day is scary. I can't imagine trying to raise children without God. Our faith is the cornerstone of our lives, the pivot point around which everything else rotates. Teen years are not easy ones, but the Church helps keep my oldest centered," he said. His children also hold duties in the Church. Sister Risha May and Brother Christopher Harris are choir members in the Children's Worship Service (CWS). The youngest, Sister Margaux, has recently been appointed, too, as a CWS officer. Sister Claire is a group and area secretary.

Truly grateful to God, Brother Jerry said that "when members truly examine themselves, they know they are not worthy of Him. The mere fact that I still have my life, faith, and duty is really only because of His unlimited love and mercy. He shows me His grace all the time. He constantly corrects me when I stumble. No matter what, I'll trust in God and place Him first and I have absolutely no doubt that He will take care of the rest." ●

AN ARTIST OF BLOCKBUSTER MOVIES

A loving husband and father, and a true servant of God

By MARIE F. RUIZ

ONE OF THE TALENTS BEHIND the highly detailed design and visual effects in blockbuster movies like *Furious 7*, *Watchmen*, and others is Brother James Raiz from the local congregation of Toronto, Eastern Canada. As a visual effects artist, he did a lot of chroma key compositing which was his main job. An illustrator and a matte painter, he was originally a comic book artist. Among his works is the *Transformers* comic book.

He was able to work on various comic book projects right after graduation from college. But by 2007, he already felt that working freelance was really hard and so, he decided to go back to school to study animation. That led him to work in the film industry.

"In the visual effects industry, I've been pretty blessed," he said, although "the decision to get into it was hard because at that time when I made the decision to make a change, I was getting the most work I've ever had in comics. In 2006, I had work offers from

DC, Marvel, Udon, IDW, etc. However in March, I was sitting down working on three different projects, stressed out of my mind. Then, my wife asked me if I would consider going back to school. I didn't want to at first because I've never been this sought-after in my life! Am I going to throw all that away? I had to think about it. I thought about my time working in comics, the amount of money I made, and how hard I worked to achieve it." But then, he said, "I looked at the three projects I was working on, stressed at how I'm going to finish it all."

Actually, while growing up, he had several things in mind about what he wanted to be. "I wanted to be like anything in uniform. I wanted to be a doctor," he said. But it was during his last year in high school that he finally made his decision, saying to his mother, "I'm going to be an artist!" It was not what she envisioned him to be but she did not force him to become a doctor.

Working freelance, "my mom still thinks I'm unemployed right now," Brother James quipped, though actually "because of the crazy deadlines, the short deadlines, I would be pulling 80-hour, 90-hour weeks." But despite his horrendous work schedule, he is still able to perform his duty as a Children's Worship Service teacher, which he has been fulfilling for more than ten years now, as well as spend quality time with his family. "I love spending time with my family," he said, "and they just love to run to me and give me hugs. Just to hug them and play with them, see them smile, that really makes my day. It really takes a lot of these stresses of life away."

He all the more uses his talent for a higher purpose than just work, saying, "I like being an artist because it gets those creative ideas flowing. It's nice to have a good job! But it's really not why we're here. We're here to worship God. We're here to serve God. That is my number one duty." When the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ) was going to celebrate its 100th year in 2014, he was totally excited about a project entrusted to him. He drew a huge mural highlighting the well-defined faces of Brother Felix Y. Manalo, Brother Eraño G. Manalo, and Brother Eduardo V. Manalo integrated with an intricate collage of the Church's milestones in its 100 years of existence. "I had this wonderful opportunity to do this very special project for the hundredth anniversary of the Church. All this talent, that's from God. Me, I'm just a man. I couldn't do that by myself. That's when you realize that God is the one working through you. And to use this talent that God gave me and for me to be a part of something as historic as the hundred-year celebration of the Church Of Christ, that means more than any video I put out or any movie I've worked on because this is for God. This is for something much more than this world can offer to me," Brother James said with conviction. 🙏

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Mean What You Say

You say you have faith, then prove it
By good works, not by empty words.
For what is faith without action?
Barren, dead, headed for destruction.

You say you're a Christian, then show it
Through obedience, not mere lip service.
Follow Christ's command to enter
The fold; of His Church, be a member.

You say you love God, then obey Him,
Be the true worshiper that He seeks.
Forsake not the faithful's gatherings
In the Lord's house, bring Him offerings.

You hope for His promises, then do what it takes.
Always excel in the works for the Lord,
Press onward, go to greater lengths
For the glory of God who gives us the strength.

Show that you mean every word you say
More so when it concerns our God;
For He is not to be mocked or profaned
What you sow now, you will reap in the end.

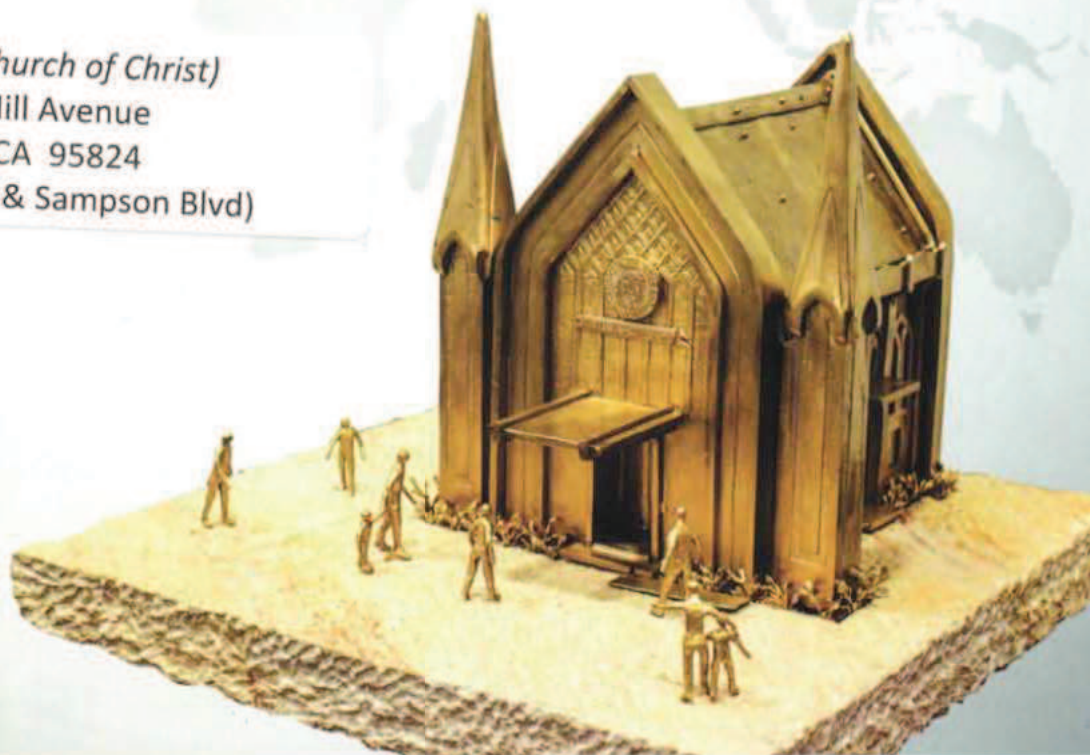
Marlex C. Cantor • Quezon City, Philippines

“Yet a time is coming
and has now come when
the true worshipers
will worship the **Father** in spirit and truth,
for they are the kind of worshipers
the Father seeks.”

John 4:23, New International Version

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"Araw ng Pagsamba"
by Joelito S. Pagalan
Metal Brass



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