

PRAYING FOR THE RAINS AND THE RAINS CAME!



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QUEZON CITY**
takes part in
Feeding Program

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FOCIM QUEZON CITY
TAKES PART IN
FEEDING PROGRAM

EDITORIAL

By Woodrow Wilson C. Young



FOCIM's 35 years of faith journey with God have been nothing short of amazing. The church's journey started by reading the Word of God. After years of studying the scripture, FOCIM proceeded to knowing the Word of God as it received its prophetic declaration to relocate, build, and expand. The church then took a giant step of faith by performing the Word of God. As FOCIM grew, its members learned how to listen to God's voice. After a few more years, the church began declaring the Word of God by praying and decreeing blessings and healing. And now as we reach 35 years, we are beginning to see the Word of God as we experience signs, wonders, and miracles. As we move forward in carrying out the prophetic words "relocate, build and expand" by building the new sanctuary and expanding the Church beyond the four walls of FOCIM, we need the anointing of Elijah to deliver on God's mandate upon FOCIM. When Elijah started praying, there were no clouds. Elijah travailed in the spirit until the clouds were formed and the clouds yielded the rains. Just like FOCIM, the Project Sanctuary started with zero balance. Founded on strong faith, the FOCIM members persistently fasted and prayed until the rains of blessings poured in and eventually the church was able to purchase a 647 square meter lot in Mandaluyong. As we celebrate FOCIM's 35th year of founding, we are about to complete the Six-Story Sanctuary even at this time of pandemic. However, our journey does not stop once the new sanctuary has been built. As the effects of COVID-19 virus continue to wreak havoc, we need to declare healing upon this nation. Hence, we need this generation's Elijahs of God. Christian leaders must step up and have the courage to carry out the burden. This generation's Elijahs of God must be willing to travail in the spirit and release the rains of healing and recovery into our nation. Once the rains of healing and recovery have been released, only then can we ensure intergenerational blessings and anointing to keep on flowing just like what Elijah did when he trained Elisha. The time is now for the Elijahs of God to make a stand to ensure that God's mandate will be fulfilled.

TRAVELLING AMIDST THE PANDEMIC: A FAMILY REUNITED THROUGH GOD'S FAVOR

By Elso U. Cabangon



It had been three years ago when Vicky and I were together with our daughter Kay for longer than a week. At that time, Kay brought us to savor the tail end of the beautiful spring in South Korea and its exquisite cuisine that we came to be familiar with in Netflix's K-dramas. Then she flew with us to Manila, then returned to her Dubai work base. That was a little more than a fleeting, albeit most enjoyable reunion that God allowed us to have.

Then, calamity struck the whole world. The Covid-19 virus developed into a pandemic that did not spare any country and wrought havoc on people's lives and livelihood. And from the late first quarter of 2020, the Philippines came under virtual lockdown, semi-isolated from the rest of the world. Senior citizens like me and Vicky became most vulnerable to the contagion and were prohibited from going out of our houses. Tales of woes and sorrows enveloped the land. Disrupted lives became commonplace. Our own (extended) family suffered grievous loss when an OFW nephew died of Covid 19 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. For the 3 of us, the prolonged inability to get together physically for such a long period, especially in such a fraught time weighed heavily on our hearts and so we asked God for help. We prayed and prayed, having in mind His assurance in Mark 11:24.

Finally, Kay came up with a plan to bring us to Dubai, got for us a 3-months visit visa, and booked us on an Emirates flight for March 28th. Frantic preparations followed. Like we needed to have pre-departure consultations with our doctors, get their consent for us to travel, take new laboratory tests and be issued new prescriptions for medicines, good for 3 months, to bring with us to Dubai. Then we closely monitored any change occurring in-flight situations in both Manila and Dubai ends.

The Dubai sector appeared pretty consistent in allowing incoming flights. But the resurgence of Covid 19 cases in the NCR foreshadowed stricter lockdown measures including flight suspensions in Manila and threatened to upset our schedule. Just the same, we proceeded to have our pre-flight swab tests at home which, by God's grace, showed negative results.

"Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

(Mark 11:24)



On our departure date, we were driven to NAIA 3 by Vicky's nephew Allan, accompanied by his wife Lea, who is my niece. Allan works as president of Vertical Space Inc. which engaged me for 3 years as Facilities Maintenance manager at their project construction of Grand Hyatt Hotel. Two days after our departure, Allan caught Covid 19 virus at their VSI plant in Imus City and subsequently infected Lea and their daughter. They have all recovered, praise God.

Even after successfully checking in (we chose to ride wheelchairs for quick immigration check and faster trip to the Emirates flight ramp), we could not yet feel completely at ease until we actually boarded the flight, actually took off for Dubai and actually reached Dubai. But the knowledge that we were joined in prayers for safe and successful travel by our home church mates and other spiritual family members assuaged those concerns. All throughout our journey, God was always with us. He never left us. After getting swab tests upon Dubai airport arrival (the results were sent us the next day - negative) we breezed through Immigration and Customs checkout of our luggage. A brightly smiling Kay behind the face mask picked us up and we're (physically) family again!

Kay actually wanted us to celebrate together our milestones - Vicky reaching 70 years last May, and me hitting 75 years last June. (Kay is also a June birthday celebrant). God is so good to allow those to happen. Her other motivation was to personally see to our health, even if it's only for 3 months. But the roller coaster developments about the pandemic upset our original plan to be back in Manila by end June. We thought it best to extend our stay here in Dubai, though we had to work out ways to have our regular medical consultations especially for Vicky.

So, the laboratory tests we needed to have as required by our physicians in Manila needed to be performed here, and the initial tests results were not encouraging. The last test results for Vicky before we left Manila showed high creatinine and potassium levels and low hemoglobin level - issues that impacted on the health of her kidneys.

On June 25th, we had blood tests done at home here. The results for Vicky were disquieting. While her creatinine and hemoglobin results were within limits, her potassium reading reached danger level at 7.2. When we conveyed that to her nephrologist at Cardinal Santos hospital, the doctor sounded so alarmed he actually suggested for us to go back to Manila immediately for his better management. Anyway, he required a retest which Vicky had July 1st. The potassium level went down to 5.3 (still outside of acceptable 3.5 - 5.1 range). So, another retest was done July 3rd which unfortunately showed even higher level at 5.7.

Dr. Cobankiat, Vicky's nephrologist, finally suggested we consult with a specialist here. Meantime he required very strict diet which Vicky complied with under Kay's no nonsense direction. So, we went to consult with a specialist at the Saudi-German hospital, a Syrian who is really good. He went through all the lab results, the medicines and treatment given by Dr. Sylvie Gunigundo (our common doctor) and Dr. Cobankiat and said he would have given the same. But he gave Vicky medication to address directly the high potassium issue. Then he scheduled a lab test for potassium at the hospital after one week followed by repeat consultation on the same day.

Now, here's the best part. We have prayed and prayed for good results from Vicky's coming lab test and perhaps because it's always on her mind, (and in ours), Vicky had the best of dreams the night before our return to the hospital clinic. She narrated to us that in her dream, she was gazing at bright skies, and she very distinctly heard a pleasant voice that told her simply "YOU ARE HEALED!" She awoke in pleasant spirits and we all thought: THANK YOU LORD!

So at 8am, Sunday July 11th, at the hospital, she had another blood extraction with results expected after 2-3 hours. When it came out, God's promise came to pass. From 7.2, then 5.3, then 5.7, the last test confirmed God's miraculous words: It was 4.36, well within the 3.5 to 5.1 acceptable range.

I told the doctor (a Muslim) of Vicky's dream, and he said: "Ma Sha Allah" - that means It's God's will. Indeed, all glory to our God for His super-natural care and never-ending love for His children.



PRACTICING SELF-CARE DURING THE PANDEMIC

By Rosalie C. Faune

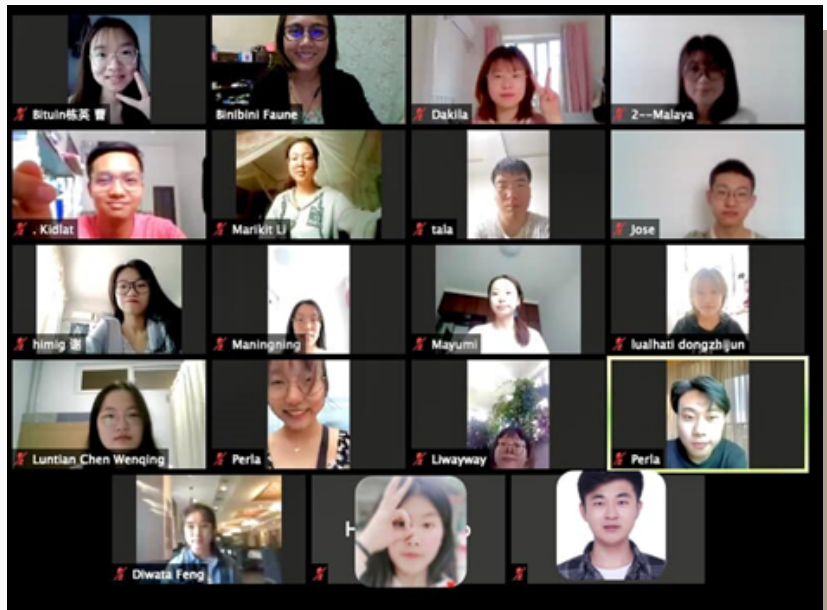
As a teacher, it had been difficult navigating in the Pandemic. Our university shifted to online learning; thus, I had to transfer all my teaching materials online. During the onset of the lockdown, I had to balance preparing for 5 different lessons for 5 subjects, with all learning materials sent through online platforms. I had to ease the anxious and burdened hearts of my students, while I myself was still coping with what Covid-19 wrought.

Overwhelmed with all sorts of emotions and pressure, I had to remind myself that I cannot perform my responsibilities if I myself am disoriented and disheartened. I cannot give what I don't have. Hence, I had to anchor myself back to my King as the waves and winds of the Pandemic tried to overwhelm me.

Here are the five ways God spoke to me to put me back on His solid ground:

1. God is sovereign: Understand that you're not in control

The first few weeks of the 2020 lockdown, took an emotional toll on me. I remember the anxiety that overtook me as questions came one after the other: "When will this lock-down end? When will I be able to travel? When will I be able to teach in person?" The inability to plan for the future saddened me. And as my worries piled up, the frustrations of my students also added to my already anxious heart. I clearly remember desiring to gain back the "sense" of control that I once had - control over my plans, my travels, etc. Yet all I could do was accept my God-given situation and do best with what He has given me.



I praise God for giving me the wisdom through His words in Proverbs 19:21 "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." I may plan my life for the next 3-5 years but it is God's will that will prevail. He is sovereign. Not worrying doesn't mean that we should not think about or plan ahead but that we are not to be anxious. 1 Peter 5:7 says, "Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you." Worrying over tomorrow's concerns will rob us of the strength we need for today.

Remember, Matthew 6:34 "Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Remember what the disciples did after Christ died? After witnessing their teacher's suffering and crucifixion, their fear drove them into hiding. Although it's normal to fear and worry in this time of uncertainty, it can also steal our joy and can make us ineffective for the works that God has called us to do. It can immobilize us and steal our zeal to serve God through our job, our family, our community and our church. We can learn a lot from how King David's response to worry and fear. He said, "In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Psalm 56:11).

2. God created our body as a temple of the Holy Spirit: Take care of your health holistically.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies."

Taking care of our health is not just about eating the right food or exercising, it must be done holistically. Our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health are interconnected. Among these, spiritual health should be our priority. Feed your soul with the Bread of Life.

Studying the scripture every day transformed my thoughts. I now clearly understand the verse "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). As I was spiritually filled, I found it natural to obey God in taking care of His temple - my body.

Let the truth of God's word wash away your old worldly habits in the way you treat your body. Let Him give you a renewed mind on how to take care of your health in a way that is honorable to the temple of the Holy Spirit. This means we should ensure to make healthy eating choices. Just like Daniel and his friends (Daniel 1:8-16), we can choose to avoid the kind of food that King Nebuchadnezzar offered and make wise choices in the food we feed ourselves.



We also need to clean the temple of God by removing the idols we cling on to. (Matthew 6:21). Remember, we can't serve two masters and let them both rule the same temple at the same time (Matthew 6:24).

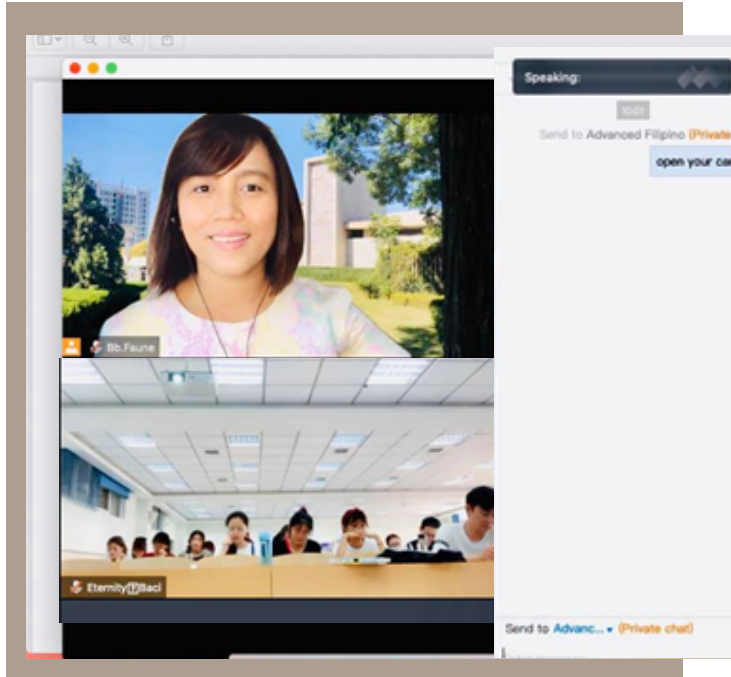
Removing junk could also mean removing items that deteriorate our health or well-being such as having vices like too much alcohol drinking, tobacco products, drugs, pornography, etc. But once we remove them, we can draw even closer to Christ, becoming more and more like him every day. We have to keep in mind, God made us in his image (Genesis 1:26) and that we are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

3. God is a god of order and peace: Make a schedule to establish a routine

Having a sense of normalcy was a daily battle for me during this pandemic. I struggled to figure out how to establish a daily routine. I tried to welcome any sense of normalcy that I can entertain. I realized through 1 Corinthians 14:40, "But all things should be done decently and in order," that my brain and my body perform better if there's an order to things, following a regular schedule. Without a routine, I find myself unproductive.

I learned to be intentional in everything. I reflected on what I wanted to accomplish, its duration, and the process how to accomplish them. From these, I built a routine and arranged them by urgency. The key is to be productive, but still have time for self-care.

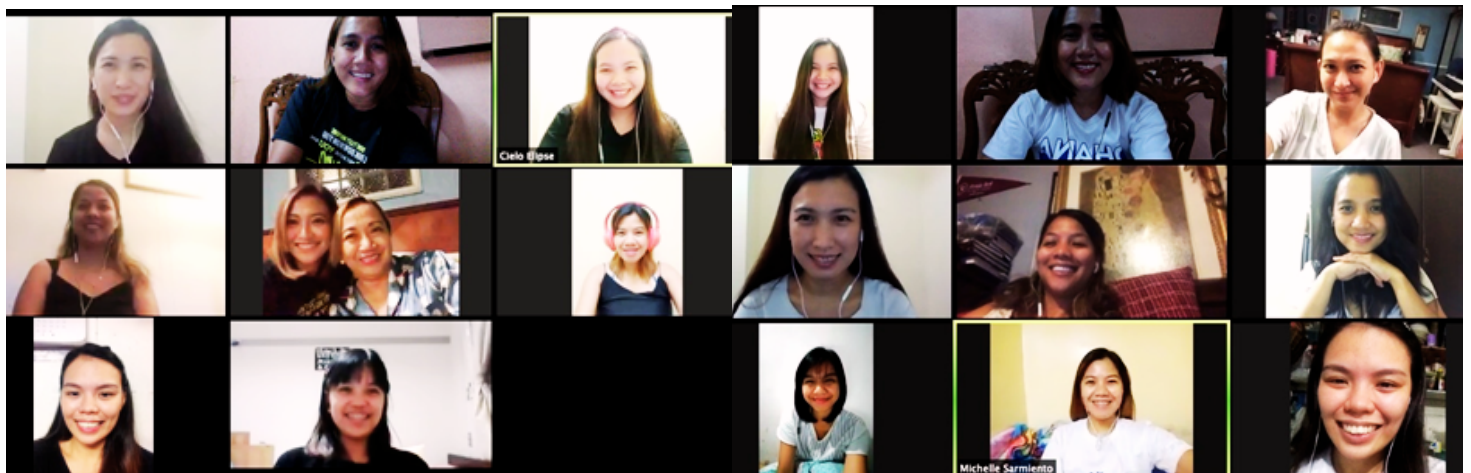




Throughout my day, I included things that I used to do regularly prior to the pandemic such as daily Bible reading, drinking my hot black coffee, preparing my meals and exercising. I also get dressed up for work. It helped me feel more normal. I tried to make each day different, while also giving my best to be consistent, helped me to become more productive each day. Designating areas for certain activities also helped me create a sense of stability. I identified a space for working, a space for working out, and other spaces for my daily activities. Although, I was also realistic about the things I can get done in a day.

4. God encourage us to fellowship together: Physical distancing is not social distancing.

To keep the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) from spreading, the World Health Organization and government officials have asked the people to maintain at least 1 meter distance from each other. However, for an extrovert like me, keeping distance from friends and loved ones can be tough. But the truth is, we all need contact with other people, we need to continuously be thinking of ways to stay in contact with our community. Human connection is essential for good health, especially when life presents situations that can cause increased anxiety just like this ongoing pandemic. Thus, emerging technologies like video calling and other forms of mediated communication like voice calling and text messaging became important resources for people to stay in touch. I intentionally connected with friends through different social media and messaging platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Whats App, Voov and Zoom. One of the things I thank God for in this pandemic is that I was able to reconnect with long lost friends and even made new ones that I am now doing Bible study with. As written in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken." Praise God for technology!



5. God rested on the 7th Day: You should too!

Before the pandemic, people used to say "Thank God it's Friday" for Fridays signal the end of a work week and to some, like me, leisure days outside the house. But now, days seem to have no distinctions. We, all, stay home to unburden the strained medical system. Hence, there is no difference between a Monday or a Saturday. But, as God rested, we should keep the days of the week separate by intentionally allotting a day of rest. Genesis 2:2-3 says, "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He

rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

Rest does not only prepare me for another work-week, but it also honors God. Though I could no longer afford to travel during weekends for rest, I was able to reclaim my Saturdays and Sundays by writing down my ideas for rest and fun and I make it a point to fulfill them even while at home. The weekend is not lost. It's just a reset of the mind and putting on the right perspective.



“

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.”

MORE THAN ANSWERS: MY JOURNEY IN THE SEMINARY

By Daniel Alberto G. Guinigundo

The value of critical questioning,
humility, and staying curious



Entering the seminary in 2017, I viewed it as a place to simply seek answers—to know how to deal with the hurting, the inquisitive, and even the defensive, to determine whether I was called to be a pastor, and to prepare an arsenal of verses, theories, and strategies for the travails of church leadership and everyday Christian life. For seemingly shallow reasons, I also entered the seminary to simply know which books were part of which testament, how scripture came to be and why it was considered infallible in light of its human authorship, and what set apart our faith from the rest.

Graduating in 2021, I came to understand that one's faith journey was not defined by answers or receiving an explanation for every conceivable question; rather, it was in being confident in the unknown and fully embracing the mysteries of our faith in spite of those gaps; when our outlook in life rests not in answers but in the powerful nature of God.

Forming one's consciousness about God was never intended to be perfect and linear—it is messy, confusing, fearful, and at the same time, enlightening, healing, and empowering. I remember Peter, who, despite being called the rock, sunk beneath the waters, betrayed Christ, slept in the garden, and even argued with the disciples on who was the greatest. As much as I wanted to know more about God, He was not meant to be defined and compartmentalized at all. If He could be neatly understood and encapsulated after just a few years of seminary, then that would belie His nature as the creator of space, time and the universe.



Seminary taught me that my persistent quest for answers was self-centric; not everything was about me.

Seminary taught me that my persistent quest for answers was self-centric; not everything was about me. Receiving theological education can easily cause one to fall prey to arrogance and becoming overcritical towards one's faith community. Having been exposed to senior pastors and church leaders, who in their own right, had their wealth of knowledge and experience, I found myself becoming humbler. As much as I consumed knowledge from the mountains of readings, came the crashing reality that I actually knew so little. Seminary opened my eyes to things that I had to learn, to unlearn, and to relearn—that curiosity was such an important trait to learning; that all of us should come to class, leaving our pre-understandings, biases, and prejudices out the door.



Having taken pastoral counseling, I became all the more aware of the empathy and compassion needed to journey with others—that at the center of loving Christ is loving His people. At ATS, I interned for Balay Rehabilitation Center, an NGO for displaced persons and victims of EJK. I heard stories of injustice and grief; that despite being armed with a law degree, there was nothing I can really do; that one's words can only go so far. I visited communities and churches in the worst places of the country, not just to complete a school requirement, but to actually witness that kingdom building was about His people, and not just about church projects and services. I took on clients for counseling sessions, finding myself overwhelmed with the issues they faced while going through life—that trauma and depression were not just words that we haphazardly throw around when something does not go our way; it is a condition and a pervasive way of thinking that can affect one's self-worth and identity. That one cannot just pray away a hurt; that oftentimes, slapping a Bible verse does not have the healing effect we think it has, if we disregard extending compassion and a listening ear; after all, Jesus Himself walked, ate, slept, celebrated, grieved, and engaged with those in need.

My seminary education has challenged me to use my learnings to rebuild and redefine the normal. In a time where church gatherings are limited to seeing each other through screens and in Zoom squares, how can I continue becoming a channel of healing that people so desperately need?

Ultimately, it is in the example I show, and not in the degree I finish, that I can fulfill Christ's mission and be one with the church in becoming a lampstand to the nations.

FOCIM Quezon City takes part in Feeding Program

By Woodrow Wilson C. Young



As the on-going pandemic continue to bring economic struggle causing majority of our beloved brothers and sisters to lose jobs and experience difficulty feeding their families, FOCIM as a lampstand to our nation must find ways to extend a helping hand to fellow Filipinos in need. Accordingly, the Lord presented FOCIM Quezon City with such an opportunity to be a blessing to its community. Under the leadership of Bro. Rey Borile, FOCIM QC took part in a series of Feeding programs in partnership with the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) and OBMA (Old Balara Ministry Association). The Feeding Program took place in Blocks 5 and 6 Barangay Kaingin Pansol and was done on three separate dates (April 16, May 4 and June 11). The FOCIM QC volunteers served “lugaw” to more than 1,000 people residing in Barangay Kaingin. In addition to ensuring that people were fed, our fellow FOCIM QC brothers and sisters did not let the opportunity go without sharing the Word of God thereby ensuring that the recipients were spiritually fulfilled. Bro. Rey even shared that because people felt extremely blessed, there were some who decided to join a FOCIM QC home church and looked forward to the completion of our new Sanctuary so that they can join the Worship Service.

Aside from Bro. Rey, other FOCIM QC members who volunteered in the said Feeding program were as follows:

- 1.) Bro. Mark Nicer
- 2.) Bro. Cesar Pacquiao
- 3.) Bro. Jay Borile
- 4.) Bro. Emanuel Velasco
- 5.) Sis. Analyn Borile
- 6.) Sis. Gena Borile
- 7.) Sis. Malou Yuro
- 8.) Sis. Melanie Velaco
- 9.) Sis. Dang Libantino
- 10.) Sis. Wilma Felix
- 11.) Sis. Clara Osio
- 12.) Sis. Mary Jane Guiceres

It was indeed a fruitful and spiritually uplifting three days of Feeding program activity done by our FOCIM QC brothers and sisters. We now look forward to more opportunities from the Lord to allow us to share our blessings and further become a lampstand to the community and our nation even beyond the day we overcome this on-going pandemic. We continue to praise the Lord for such opportunities.

FOCIM Holds Echelon Webinar Series

By Dan Abraham G. Guinigundo

FOCIM recently concluded its first-ever webinar series, entitled “Echelon: Flying High Together,” held every Sunday in the months of May to July 2021. The banner name for the series drew inspiration from the V-shaped formation of migratory birds that serves a dual purpose: the conservation of energy among all members and the over-all improvement of communication. The formation, because of its strategic advantages, has also been applied in modern warfare situations.

The series consisted of basic but fundamental topics meant to equip all members of FOCIM in preparation for the church’s expansion.

Session One (Who are we in FOCIM”) and Two (“FOCIM as Lampstand”)



Bro. Diwa Guinigundo

The first two sessions (May 2 and 9) featured Bro. Diwa Guinigundo, who spoke on the identity of FOCIM and its members. Bro. Diwa focused on the mission and vision of the church, its core values and beliefs, which include its views on the Bible, the Trinity, salvation, and the five-fold ministry, among others. FOCIM’s specific role in nation and community building was also covered in the context of its calling as a “lampstand.”

Sessions Three (“Linking Generations: Present”) and Four (“Linking Generations: Past”)



Sis. Sophie Guerrero and Bro. Abe Guinigundo

Sessions Three (May 16) and Four (May 23) centered on the topic “Linking Generations,” both present and future. The topics were discussed separately by Sis. Sophie Guerrero and Bro. Abe Guinigundo. Sis. Sophie revisited the roots and history of FOCIM, beginning in the 1940s in Tondo, Manila and its journey up to the building of the new sanctuary along Mayon Street, Mandaluyong. Bro. Abe next discussed the significance of bridging the gap between the older and younger generations. The main idea behind linking future and present generations is the potential of the so-called finishing anointing, best demonstrated in the life of the prophet Elijah.

Session Five (“Worshipping in the Spirit”)



Sis. Roanna Santos

Session Five (May 30) was led by Sis. Roanna Santos, who introduced the members to the whys and hows of “Worshipping in the Spirit.” During the session, the members learned that worshipping in the spirit leads to the activation of spiritual gifts and the manifestation of the Kingdom of God in heaven here on earth. Sis. Roanna stressed that through praise, the Lord engages in warfare on behalf of His children to silence the enemy.

Session Six
("Kingdom and Prophetic Prayer")



Sis. Apple Guinigundo

In Session Six (June 6), Sis. Apple Guinigundo explored the topic "Kingdom and Prophetic Prayer," which are those prayers meant for receiving a greater measure of the spirit of wisdom and revelation. Sis. Apple explained that engaging in such prayers leads to breakthroughs and transformation. Calls to action given to the members include enlarging one's capacity to understand God's love and strengthening the desire to experience God's presence in one's life.

Session Ten
("Home Churches")



Sis. Shirley So

Session Ten (July 11) tackled the general topic of "Home Churches," which was discussed by Sis. Shirley So. Much of the session revolved around the specific role of Home Churches in the growth of the mother church, mainly as a vehicle of fellowship, encouragement, and teaching.

Session Seven
("Binding and Loosing")



Bro. Bing Guerrero

In Session Seven (June 13), Bro. Bing Guerrero delved into the concepts of "Binding and Loosing" as used in Matthew 16:19 and 18:18. Bro. Bing defined the terms as a dual authority given by God to the Church to promote His Kingdom and fight the forces of evil that aim to hinder His ministry. He explained that binding and loosing are tools used to engage in spiritual warfare but would only work if the Church fully surrenders to God, remains mature, and realizes its authority in Christ.

Session Eleven
("Restoration")



Sis. Hilda Lactao

Session Eleven (July 18) was taught by Sis. Hilda Lactao and revolved the key principles of "Restoration." Sis. Hilda reminded members that God is a God of restoration and second chances, that restoration of relationship with God, with man and with the church is the responsibility of every believer. Thus, unless everyone is restored and remain in their proper mind and spirit, Christians cannot fly high together.

Sessions Eight and Nine
("Evangelism and Discipleship")



Bro. Daniel Guinigundo

Sessions Eight and Nine (June 27 and July 4) were led by Bro. Daniel Guinigundo. Evangelism and discipleship, according to Bro. Daniel, comprise a singular mission aimed at leading others to know Christ and to be like Christ. This mission is given to each and every Christian, which must be carried out intentionally and faithfully. His lecture, entitled "Church on a (Com)Mission," used a Bible-based approach to emphasize the importance of living out the basic mandate of the Church.

Session Twelve
("Church Administration")



Sis. Marie Demafelis

The final session (July 25) was led by FOCIM's Church Administrator, Sis. Marie Demafelis. The session was composed of brief summaries of some of the previous sessions in the particular context of church administration. Sis. Marie shared lessons from her experience and presented a practical perspective of handling the day-to-day affairs of the church, as well as shedding light on the importance of having a strong administrative support system in the operations of FOCIM.

All FOCIM members who participated in a majority of the sessions were granted a Certificate of Completion for their attendance. They were acknowledged in the Sunday Worship Service on August 1, 2021. A total of 56 members were recognized.

Praying for the Rains and the Rains Came! FOCIM Celebrates 35th Anniversary

By Woodrow Wilson C. Young

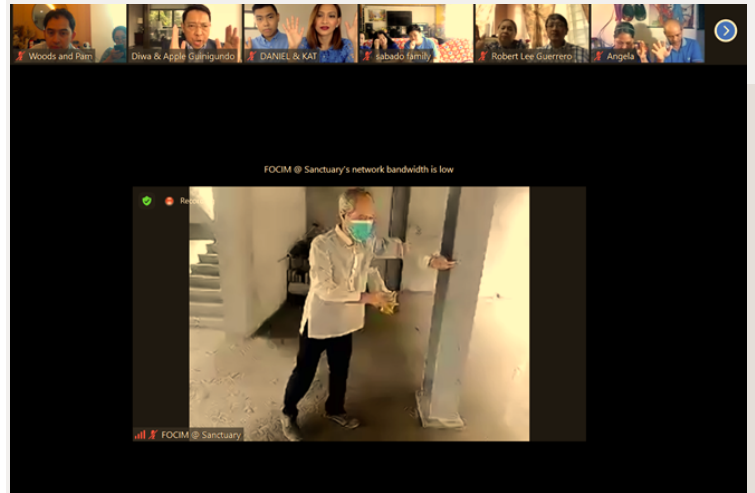


August 29 was a joyous day as FOCIM celebrated 35 years of God's faithfulness. It was a double celebration as the church is about to complete the Six-Story Sanctuary and about to be finished amidst the pandemic. Throughout the years, FOCIM has been guided by the prophetic words "relocate, build, and expand" which led us to this critical point of building our Sanctuary and expanding the kingdom of God beyond the four walls of FOCIM. For the said crucial task, we need the anointing of Elijah to deliver on God's mandate upon FOCIM. Hence, our theme for the 35th Anniversary is "Where are the Elijahs of God?" as it was Elijah who persistently prayed for the rains during the time when Israel had been in a long drought. There were no signs of rain, but Elijah held on to faith and believed.

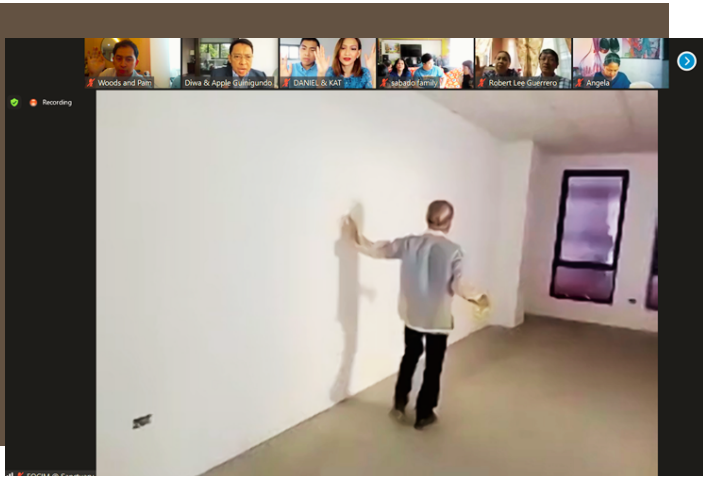
The 35th Anniversary celebration was held virtually via the online worship service streaming. The FOCIM Worship Team started the celebration by declaring the anointing of Elijah upon the church through the joyful song "Days of Elijah". This was followed by the solemn worship song "Great Is Thy Faithfulness", which reminded us of God's faithfulness to FOCIM for 35 years. FOCIM Senior Pastor Rev. Diwa C. Guinigundo delivered the anniversary's special message. In his message, Bro. Diwa shared that FOCIM's 35 years of journey comprised of reading, knowing, performing, listening, declaring and seeing the Word of God. It took time to know God but we are now seeing and experiencing miracles, signs and wonders. Through the message, we are reminded to become Elijahs of God and to "Cast your bread upon the waters for you will find it after many days (Ecclesiastes 11:1)". Just like Elijah, God will multiply our blessings and rebuke the devourer. As Elijahs of God, we represent the prophets and are empowered to give life. In addition, our spirit turns our hearts to our children and theirs to us. This is now the time to become Elijahs of God as our nation needs the rains of healing, recovery, favor and blessings in this time of trouble, confusion, and suffering caused by the pandemic.

After the message, the Ministry team recognized and gave awards to members and friends of FOCIM who brought honor and glory to God through their exemplary testimonies of their ministries, achievements, and contributions to the vision and mission of the Church. This year, the Ministry team has chosen to honor the following members and friends of FOCIM:

1. Bro. Aaron Luke V. Serafica – for his inspiring talent and energy in putting together our worship service, taken separately, but presented as one seamless whole and put out on-line for the greater glory of our faithful God. His contributions have allowed FOCIM to transcend borders and reach other souls despite the lockdown.
2. Arch. Rolando A. Pinangat – for after being touched by the Lord, and having the burden to use his many years of experience and skills as an architect, offered his talent and service to FOCIM at no cost.
3. Dr. Milton D. Amayun – for serving as a great epitome of excellence in his marketplace ministry and singular commitment and consistency in his walk with God.
4. Bro. Angelito V. Dionisio – for selflessly giving his time and heart to preach the Gospel, and teach our construction workers how to pray, and receive their salvation while ensuring the structural integrity of the FOCIM Sanctuary.
5. Arch. Robert Lee L. Guerrero – with a bold spirit and an unwavering faith, for initiating the blueprint of the FOCIM Sanctuary and organizing the FOCIM Project Management Team to oversee its actual construction in the time of pandemic.



The second part program of FOCIM's 35th Anniversary celebration was done via a virtual fellowship of all members and friends through the "Zoom" application. Bro. Daniel and Sis. Kat Guinigundo hosted the second part of the Anniversary program. To be able to relive and share the miracles and blessings received by FOCIM members throughout the past year, several "Praise Report" AVPs were played. The said "Praise Reports" testimonies included church members experiencing God's favor through achieving milestones such as graduation, promotion in work, and successful start-up of online business. Another batch of praise report testimony showed God's power through the miracle of healing and restoration among church members. In order to show and remind the audience as to how the Lord has been faithful to FOCIM for 35 years, an AVP made and updated by the FOCIM Creative team was presented. The wonderful and inspiring AVP showed the roots and history of FOCIM – from its founding and establishment as Gospel Faith Christian Church in 1986, the "Touching Heaven Changing Earth" events, transfer to different venues including the PBJ Building, up to the present time wherein the construction of the new Sanctuary in 36 Mayon Street in Mandaluyong is taking place. The said AVP also included photos of the ground-breaking, construction, and even the community pantry organized and held at the new Sanctuary's site. The FOCIM history AVP ended with photos of the proposed Worship Hall and final look of the New Sanctuary to further excite the people of God.



The highlight of the Anniversary celebration was the live streaming of the anointing of the New Sanctuary. Bro. Angel Dionisio, FOCIM Storehouse Ministry head, went to the site and anointed the Lord's building with oil while the whole congregation (led by FOCIM Senior Pastor Bro. Diwa Guinigundo) prayed and dedicated the temple to the Lord. Bro. Angel started in the lobby, and then proceeded to the second and third floors. The Worship Hall, which covers the 4th to the 6th floors, took more time for prayer and anointing as this is considered the most important area wherein future worship services will be held. With the anointing, the Sanctuary is indeed ready to house the Elijahs of God.

After the live streaming of the new sanctuary's anointing, the member virtually present had an enjoyable time engaging in an online game prepared by young FOCIM leaders Bro. Dan Bello Jr. and Sis. Cielo Elipse. The fun game was done via the "Kahoot" online app and it challenged the participants with very interesting trivial questions ranging from Church anniversary facts, Bible passages, worship songs, church events, and even FOCIM's official publication "The Menorah".

The Anniversary celebration ended with another exciting event – the Raffle of cash prizes. FOCIM couples and young professionals who were blessed by the Lord contributed to the success of the raffle, wherein the total amount of cash prizes reached an astounding 65,000 pesos. To ensure that more members will be blessed and that the Project Sanctuary will also benefit, FOCIM's leadership decided to have the following split:

- Two winners to get Php 10,000 each
- Five winners to get Php 5,000 each
- Ten winners to get Php 1,000 each
- Excess of Php 10,000 goes to the building fund for the Project Sanctuary

Indeed, 35 years of God's faithfulness is worth celebrating. FOCIM anticipates more celebrations as we are about to complete our Six-Story Sanctuary during an unprecedented time. FOCIM's 35th Anniversary celebration was a joyous occasion that definitely lifted our spirits in this time of uncertainty caused by the ongoing pandemic. But more than that, our 35th Anniversary celebration should be a powerful reminder that we should strive to become this generation's Elijahs of God. We need the anointing of Elijah to carry out the prophetic words "relocate, build, and expand" and to deliver on God's mandate upon FOCIM. We now look forward to the celebration of FOCIM's 36th Anniversary in the company of each other, standing ecstatic and victorious as we worship the Lord in our new sanctuary.



EDUCATION IN THE NEW NORMAL

by Jamesha Daphnee J. de Guzman

The bustling streets, the smell of coffee, the crowded jeepneys, and the sound of your favorite playlist as you walk past people in uniforms are indeed nostalgic of the mornings that students spend on their way to school. The unexpected shift from the noisy classrooms to lagging zoom videos and the constant inquiry of audio clarity has changed the youth's perspective of education. On March 9, 2020, students were having a regular school day and even rejoiced when the city mayor declared a one-week suspension of classes. Everybody rushed out of school to go home, while some chose to hang out with their friends to enjoy a week off from school. Little did they know that one week will turn into a year and beyond.

A few days later, the number of COVID-19 cases rapidly increased, making the government declare the first Enhanced Community Quarantine. This has put the lives of everyone on hold. However, as days and weeks went by, institutions, businesses, and even the regular Filipino citizens realized that it was time to find alternatives and adapt to what is now called the "new normal" because the pandemic is not going anywhere sooner or later. With this, adjustments were also made by the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education regarding the modes of learning as the country suffers from the onslaught of the pandemic.



Several institutions offered modular learning, which required hard copies of the lessons to be delivered or picked up by the students or their parents. To further aid the learning of the students, especially those in their early years of education, the Department of Education utilized free television channels as a medium of instruction. On the other hand, most universities heavily relied on online platforms to conduct their classes. However, considering the lack of access to internet connection and its poor performance in several areas in the Philippines, many learners are struggling.

"Having online class is not easy especially in this time of pandemic. Simula kasi ng nag umpisa ang online wala kaming wifi noon, so bali ako ay nag papaload lamang upang maka attend ako ng online class. Mahirap din sa panahon noon dahil kadalasan napakabagal ng internet connection namin minsan hindi ako makahabol sa discussion. Kahit ganoon ay maganda ang online class para sa akin dahil kahit nasa bahay lang ako ay madami akong natutunan at safe para makaiwas sa Virus."

– Arcela Gelogo, online learning

"This generation attests to how devastating a pandemic can be since it affects almost everything particularly, politics, the economy, healthcare, and education. There are stringent regulations to continue this so-called education as students amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Being part of this experimental online learning, I felt deprived of the opportunity to experience what college might be like. I felt deprived of making new friends, discovering new passions, finding invaluable happiness, and achieving my full potential. Our current education system has become more inaccessible as it requires the student to have a good internet connection, a quiet atmosphere, and tools that can be used for online education. However, regardless of the circumstances, I am confident that God has an unforeseen plan and reason for why this occurs. We have to be patient and rely on his word as his word stated in 2 Peter 3:8 "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day." This passage tells us that God is not late to fulfill His promises; he is allowing everyone to change, just as he did during Elijah's time to end the drought in Israel (1 Kings 18:41-46)."

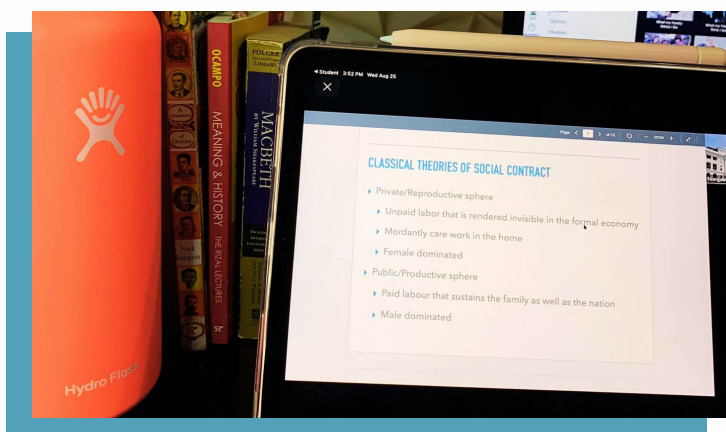
- Denz Tan, online learning

"Blended learning para sakin is nakatutulong for my other activities in life specially kasi pumasok ako ng semi pro scene sa isang game. At the same time struggle din dahil yung mga subject na need talagang ma discuss is hindi ko napapasukan kasi blended is when you don't need to attend class pero kailangan mo gawin yung activities etc na pinapagawa ng advisers, teachers mo, which is mahirap para sakin dahil may mga bagay na hindi ako naiintindihan kahit na basahin ko pa siya, like math."

- Henri Luching, blended learning

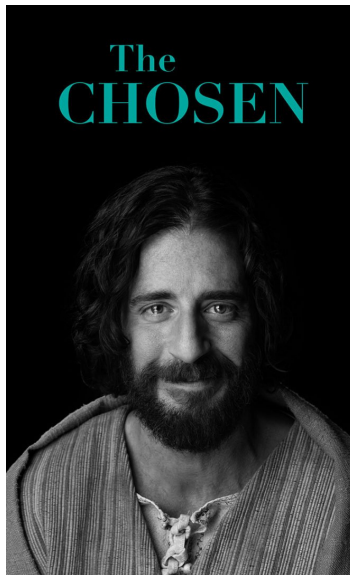
Indeed, many students and teachers long for the face-to-face setup despite its difficulties. However, it is important to remember that distance learning is not as easy as it seems when compared to face-to-face classes. Enduring hours in front of a device can also be exhausting especially when experienced on a daily basis. To add to this, not all areas of learning are easily understood in an online/modular set-up. Saying that distance learning is difficult is not an exaggeration and most certainly not a complaint. It is an acknowledgement that the educational system has a lot to improve on. Despite the limitations, many students continuously persevere to maximize their learning experience, often at the expense of their mental and physical health. Similarly, teachers put in the extra effort to make lessons as understandable as it was during face-to-face learning while trying to navigate through the complexities of technology in which many are not accustomed. Furthermore, both students and teachers do not only attend to their academic needs but also to the needs of their families as the Philippines fight against COVID-19. Hence, mental, spiritual, and emotional support is needed now more than ever.

Evidently, distance learning is not for everyone since it requires a conducive area for learning which is not available in many homes. Hence, a few months after the lockdown, the #AcademicFreezeNow became a movement on social media, calling out to institutions and the government to discontinue classes in a time of pandemic. While the concerns of the students are valid, this failed to consider the struggles of the teachers. If schools and the government declare a suspension of online/modular classes, schools will be forced to let go of teachers and other staff. Considering the high unemployment rate during the lockdown, adding teachers to the list would make life difficult for many Filipinos. Hence, an alternative call to action emerged, which is the #LigtasNaBalikEskwela. This pushes for the government's accountability for its response towards the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the safety of students and to make quality education accessible. Furthermore, it also pushes for no tuition fee increase and a no-fail policy in consideration of the struggling students and families at a time of pandemic. While CHED appealed to schools not to increase tuition fee, DepEd, on the other hand, turned down the no fail policy. Currently, as the Philippines strive to reach herd immunity through the vaccination roll out, distance learning persists. Still the issues mentioned above are present and education inaccessibility remains a growing concern.



BINGE JESUS: A Review of The Chosen (TV Series)

By Dan Abraham G. Guinigundo



Now on its second season, The Chosen series has taken the world by storm.

The person of Jesus Christ is elusive, but certainly not unknown. Aside from the obvious Biblical texts, thousands, if not millions, of accounts and portrayals of His life and ministry have been made and are continuing to be made. What comes to mind are the likes of Jesus Christ Superstar (1970) and The Passion of the Christ (2004), all of which have made Jesus a popular subject for film and the performing arts.

The Chosen, with its viral tagline, “Binge Jesus,” brings something new to the table. First launched in late 2017 (Pilot), the series aims to go beyond the already familiar life of Jesus and into the unfamiliar life stories of His disciples, the so-called “chosen” ones. This, of course, is quite ambitious. The existing historical accounts are all Christ-centric, and what is known of Jesus’ followers is limited to their role in His ministry. The Chosen is therefore equal parts history and fiction—and viewers are loving it. Its Season 1 was first made available through its own mobile app and was launched through a crowd-funding scheme. By early 2020, the creators of the series decided to make it viewable to the public for free without restrictions due to the growing pandemic. To date, Season 1 has been viewed over 150 million times around the world.

Episode 1 of Season 1 (“I Have Called You By Name”), released in April 2019, paints a bleak yet vivid portrait of the Israelites before the arrival of the Messiah. With this episode, The Chosen separates itself from its contemporaries in that the focus is entirely on Jesus’ would-be followers: Mary Magdalene, Simon, Andrew, Matthew, among others. What becomes obvious is that these people are at best ordinary, each with their own sets of problems and worries, and not at all exempt from the corruption of the world. The director of the series, Dallas Jenkins, always makes it a point to show the humanity of the chosen ones, and how they were all in desperate need of a Savior.

What perhaps comes as a surprise is the central character of Nicodemus, a revered Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, who ironically appears sparingly in the New Testament (only thrice in the Gospel of John). Nicodemus, played by Erick Avari (Independence Day, The Mummy), sets the stage for the coming of Jesus after a failed exorcism attempt, which shook his own beliefs in Judaism. In him viewers can relate to their own episodes of doubt and the pressure to conform to tradition and status, even if their religious convictions lie elsewhere.

Without revealing more, The Chosen is gritty, emotional, and a cultural marvel. The up-close perspective of the individual lives of Jesus’ followers gives the viewers a deeper appreciation of the Gospels without being a hard-sell. The musical score brings everything together—its catchy and also very edgy, which makes the series reminiscent of the typical binge-worthy Netflix series.

The entire Season 1 of The Chosen is available for free viewing on YouTube and other popular streaming website. Season 2 began airing on April 4, 2021, Resurrection Sunday, and is available for viewing through its app.

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