



Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon Community

God is light,
and in Him
there is no darkness.

LNP CONFERENCE
17 February 2019
9am - 4pm
St. Paul Pasig

COMPILATION OF SPEAKER'S NOTES

Compiled by Randy Feria - Feb 18, 2019

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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE CONFERENCE

- Randy Feria

A Family Meeting:

You may have noticed that the earlier teasers that were released announcing the community conference indicated that we were inviting you to a family meeting. It really is.

There are occasions when we gather our family for fun and celebration. Birthdays, Vacations, Anniversaries, etc. There are occasions also when we gather our family around our dining table to discuss serious and important matters. We discuss our plans, we discuss our concerns, we discuss family rules, we discuss matters that are important for our family life. This is such an occasion, and so it is a serious and important conference. We hold an annual community conference to gather our community, our family to discuss about serious matters that is relevant to our life as a community.

Theme: God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

This year's community conference carries the theme "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." Just for me to know that you are still listening and for better recall, when I say "God is light", can you please respond by saying, "in Him there is no darkness at all."

Our theme stems from our overall community theme for the year, "**Pierce the darkness with My light and truth.**" The call to pierce the darkness is not new to us. We have been forewarned several times about the darkness. Hindi na po bago sa atin ito.

Allow me to quote several prophetic words that were spoken to us:

A. The Lord has warned us about "days of darkness" and "hard times". I quote ...

We understand this to refer primarily to a time when circumstances will become very difficult in the world, and especially so because of a deep moral darkness.

This will be a time when Christians also find things very difficult, especially because of the moral darkness and confusion, some "social" and legal persecution and because of the general difficulties.

But it will also be a time when Christianity surprisingly reassert itself as a powerful force and when Christian expansion through evangelism reaches unequaled proportions.

The time of darkness is not very far off. In fact, it is already beginning. The moral disintegration of western society is well underway, and we witness daily the ravages which result. But the days to come hold worse, "agony, terror and sickness of heart" which God's people will have to endure.

Brothers and Sisters, Sinulat po ito in the 80s but we know now that this moral disintegration is here and has gone beyond just the western society.

B. In the “Nation at War” prophecy, it was stated that ...

We should live as a people who know that this is a time of spiritual warfare; we should be prepared for spiritual warfare. We should be trained to do spiritual combat through prayer and intercession.

C. In the Bulwark prophecy, it was stated that ...

We have been called to join together with others so that we can form a “bulwark,” a wall of defense and protection for others, in the face of difficult times Christians will face.

D. In a call to serve in “Stemming the Tide of Evil”, it was stated that ...

We are called by the Lord to dedicate our lives to the effort of “stemming the tide of evil” which is overflowing our society and ravaging the church.

Hindi na po bago ito. The Lord has spoken to us time and again. The Lord has warned us time and again. Nakikita na po natin ito. Nandito na! Nandito na ang sinasabi ng Panginoon sa atin.

This year’s community conference theme

In this year’s community conference, the Lord gives us two Scripture passages that are very much related to our banner theme “Pierce the Darkness.”

The first verse is this. “God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”

This is taken from 1Jn 1:5.

This is a declaration that God is light and that in Him there can be no darkness. It is a reminder to us that as He calls us to pierce the darkness, it can only be done with Christ’s light and truth. We might be caught up and become too concerned with piercing the darkness that we might run the risk of doing it out of our own effort. If this is the case, we will fail. This declaration is a call to focus on enhancing Christ’s light within us. With Christ’s light within us, we are better equipped to respond to the call to pierce the darkness. *In fact, When Christ’s light shines brightly in our personal lives and in our community, the light cannot be kept hidden and it will naturally radiate to the world around us. Kapag nasa atin ang Liwanag ng Panginoon, hindi ito maitatago!*

The second verse is this: “Awake, O sleeper, rise to life, and Christ will give you light!”

This is taken from Eph 5:14.

This is a call to action. It is a call to rise to life and in doing so, Christ will give us light.

Objective of the Conference:

Based on these verses and the discernment of the leadership team, we want to highlight through this conference that we need to **seek to enhance Christ’s light within us and through it pierce the darkness** in three main areas: **our personal life, our community life, and in society.**

We will tackle this with the following themes:

1. Live in the Light
2. Live in Love
3. Live in the Spirit
4. Awake, Sleeper, Rise to Life!

II. LIVE IN THE LIGHT

The first section of our conference is entitled “Live in the Light”. This section calls us to focus on our personal life. We realize here that we were once in darkness but were called out of it when we encountered God’s love. This led us to a personal relationship with Him and to a life of discipleship.

As we are called to live a life as a disciple, to live in the light, it is just right to reflect on our personal lives right now, ensuring that there is no darkness within us. If there is, especially those that are hidden and done in secret, we ought to bring it into the light, confess them, and change our ways.

Live in the Light

- Chito Morales

1) 2019 Community Conference

- a) I like the teasers made by the conference team: **Usapang Pamilya**. Not too formal but serious. It conveys something important we want to understand as a family, **‘mayroon tayong mahalagang pag-uusapan’**.
- b) I also think that our conference theme - **“God is light and in Him there is no darkness”** is both penetrating and reassuring, and at the same time, seeking for a deeper response from us individually and collectively.
- c) Let us bow our heads and say a short prayer – “Father in heaven, we pray that the light of Christ may shine brightly as we renew and commit to live in the light; to live in love, and to live in the Spirit. In so doing, to carry the light and truth that will pierce the darkness in us and around us”.
- d) The first presentation will focus on our personal life – I will share briefly on **(1) the nature of God as light, (2) the obstacles to living in the light and (3) recommendations on how to live in the light consistently.**

2) God is Light and in Him there is no darkness – 1John1:5

- a) William Barclay said “It is certainly the case that our individual character will be determined by the character of the God we worship”. The letter of John begins by laying down the nature of the Father who was proclaimed by Jesus – **“This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, there is no darkness in Him”.**/// **The God we worship is not only the source of light. He is the light.** What does this truth tell us about the nature of God?
 - i) As light, **God is glorious, majestic, and full of splendor.** He is pure, holy, and perfect. “The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it”- (John 1:5).
 - ii) This God who is Holy and perfect in power, in love, and in purity, desires to be seen and to be known. **He desires to reveal His light and to share His light to those in darkness.** That is the reason why God the Father sent his only begotten son so that we who are in darkness may receive everlasting life.
 - iii) As He is known, **He desires to let His light to shine brightly in our life to remove the stain of sins** and to make us pure and worthy of the call He has given us. “Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord, walk as children of light”. (Eph 5:8)

- iv) As light, **God desires to show the right paths for His people to follow.** To guide us and lead us into the path of life. “you make known to me the path of life; in your presence, there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11).
 - v) **GOD IS ALL OF THE ABOVE AND MORE...**Holy, majestic, full of splendor; HE desires His light to shine, to show the way to His people, and to free us from sin and to make us walk in His light.
 - vi) Are we becoming the children of light that He desires us to be?
- 3) **We are Ligaya.** We are called to Live in the light, to be the light, to let others see the light through us. And yet the reality is that we are not always shining brightly as we should be. Like the story of the 5 foolish virgins in Mathew 25 who brought their lamps without enough oil, we also wait for the Lord but sometimes we run out of oil to keep our lamps from shining. What causes our lamps to run out of oil?
- a) **Weariness of Hope** – This is a term mentioned by Pope Francis in the recent WYD in Panama during his homily at the mass in the Cathedral Santa Maria La Antigua).
 - i) Pope Francis said; **“It is a temptation and is felt when – as in the Gospel – the sun beats down mercilessly and with such intensity that it becomes impossible to keep walking or even to look ahead. //Everything becomes confused//... it comes from looking ahead once reality “hits” and calls into question the energy, resources and viability of our mission in this changing and challenging world. It is weariness that paralyzes. It comes from looking ahead and not knowing how to react to the intense and confusing changes that we as a society are experiencing”**.
 - ii) “There are many reasons for weariness on our journey as priests, consecrated men and women, and members of lay movements: from long hours of work, which leave little time to eat, rest and be with family, to “toxic” working conditions and relationships that lead to exhaustion and disappointment. From simple daily commitments to the burdensome routine of those who do not find the relaxation, appreciation or support needed to move from one day to the next. From the usual and predictable little problems to lengthy and stressful periods of pressure. A whole array of burdens to bear”.
 - iii) Lord, kailan ba matatapos and problema na pinagdadaanan ko? Bakit parang lalong bumibigat, Lord? May kabuluhan ba ang service ko? Bakit parang wala namang pagbabago sa sitwasyon ng member ko? Parang paulit-ulit, nakakapagod na.
 - iv) Are we weary of hope? Have we run out of “hope”?
 - b) **Spiritual dehydration (naghihina, walang-gana, at katagalan pwede ikamatay)** – happens when there is a lack of renewal from God’s presence. When one loses connection to the source of living water. When one is running on empty tanks. What are the symptoms of spiritual dehydration?
 - i) **When the Quality & quantity of our time of prayer is significantly reduced.**
 - (1) When we no longer feel guilty that we have missed regular communion with God. We justify that we are doing equally important things e.g service, work, charity.
 - (2) Then, it becomes the norm: a life where God is missing in our daily life, and worst, He is no longer missed.
 - (3) C.S Lewis in his book Screwtape letter said “Indeed, the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts”. And when that happens, what’s next is our...

- ii) **Inability to hear and see the movement of the Lord.** Oftentimes, in my one to ones, I ask after each sharing - be it a sharing of difficulty, victory, struggle, or a simple day to day routine - What is God saying to you (ano ang sinasabi ng Panginoon sa pinagdadaan mo)? Where is God in your situation (nakikita mo ba ang Kamay ng Diyos sa mga nangyayari sa buhay mo? Sadly, in many instances brothers & sisters looked surprised with the question as if it is not related with their sharing or they probably would not have thought about it. On the contrary, it is perhaps the most important question we should be asking in every situation we face.
 - iii) Worst, because we are not listening or we are not as mindful or as sensitive, the voice of the Lord is replaced by the subtle but constant lies that make us complacent and in the process, **we lose our bearings**. It is not surprising that when our heart is empty with God's Word and with His holy presence, our heart will be filled up by the things of this world.
- c) Over time, **we lose our radical edge**. We lose the fervor of our first love, we live ordinary Christian lives.
- i) John Henry Newman says (from an excerpt A Newman Treasury):
 - “An ordinary man thinks it is enough to do as he is done by;
 - he will think it fair/ to resent insults,
 - to repay injuries,
 - to show a becoming pride,
 - to insist on his rights,
 - to be jealous of his honor,
 - when in the wrong refuse to confess it,
 - to seek to be rich,
 - to desire to be well with the world,
 - to fear what his neighbors will say.
 - He seldom thinks of the Day of Judgment,
 - seldom thinks of sins past,
 - says few prayers,
 - cares little for the church (if I may add, for his country),
 - has no zeal for God's truth,
 - spends his money on himself.

Such is an ordinary Christian, and such is not one of God's elect.”

All the saints, from the beginning of history to the end, resemble each other in this, that their excellence is supernatural, their deeds heroic, their merits (qualities) extraordinary and prevailing.

They all are choice patterns of the theological virtues (living a life of faith, hope, and love); they all are blessed with a rare and special union with their Maker and Lord...

- ii) **Are we not called to live saintly lives (in our term – radical discipleship? – Hindi ba paulit ulit sinasabi ng Panginoon –**
 - (1) **“Do not hold back – Surrender, Offer, Sacrifice” (2017 LNP banner);**
 - (2) **“In the days to come, says the Lord, you must love as you have never loved before. As you have loved Me, you must love Me above all...” (LNP 40th anniversary).**
 - (3) **“Expand our hearts, our Reach, our Mission” (40th anniversary, 2015)**

(4) “Lead a life worthy of the Calling, for a Mission greater than us” (2016 banner).

iii) Are we responding like ordinary Christians or as God’s elect?

- d) With the intensity of God’s call, we also sense the **intense spiritual attack** in our personal lives; in our family and in our community.
- i) The more we experience temptation the greater is the tendency for us to hide in darkness. The result is we fall into sins – some into very serious sins. I know of a brother who has an intimacy issue with his wife and he felt his needs were not being met. He kept it from his wife and he failed to bring it up with his leader. The problem led him to engage in sex outside marriage. The sin led to a difficult marriage relationship and tremendous guilt. Finally, grace prevailed, he brought it up to the open and he went through a painful but freeing process of repentance. The grace of the Lord can only manifest in the light. Stay in the light.
 - ii) Brothers and sisters, we are not at all immune from committing serious sin because we are in Ligaya. We are in Ligaya not because we are holy, but rather we are in Ligaya because we are being transformed, purified, and made holy through the way of life and the mission He has given us.

4) How do we live in the light? How do we keep the light shining brightly in our lives? How do we ensure we have enough oil in our lamps so our lights will not be extinguished?

a) Living in the Light requires Intimacy with God (it is the antidote for the weary and the dehydrated)

- i) The call to live in the light is a call to holiness, and true holiness comes out of intimacy. True intimacy comes out of knowing God.
- ii) A Christian writer said **“All holy, righteous, radical, heroic living can only naturally come from a place of intimacy and understanding of God’s relentless (walang-sawa), perfect and unconditional love for us as His children”**.
- iii) **Intimacy with God is more than just having a dedicated time of prayer but it is practicing the presence of God in our daily routine** – turning the mundane into holy moments (conversing, seeking, listening); turning your complaints and impatience into cries of praise, it is about developing an attitude of gratitude regardless of the external circumstances.
- iv) As we train ourselves to practice the presence of God in our daily routine the Lord will become more and more personal and present amidst the noise and distraction.
- v) **Intimacy with God is fundamental to greater obedience. Greater obedience result to greater sacrifice** – ibibigay mo ang lahat, wala kang ititira.
- vi) God is at work in our lives. Let us continue to seek His light and to desire deeper intimacy with our Lord.

b) Living in the Light requires Transparency and accountability with our brothers (for men) and our sisters (for women).

- i) Transparency and accountability is the final line of defense for us.
- ii) **As Ligaya, we have a special responsibility to live in the light and make sure there is one person, other than our wives (or husbands) who knows the deepest issues of our hearts.** John Keating gave a term for it – “Soul brother”- “Soul sister”- someone whom you can freely open up and you will not feel judged. He can correct you. He can be firm in speaking the truth and you will be blessed (Qualify this part).

iii) **This requires humility. This is good for our souls.** This serves as a strong protection for us.

(1) Personal example: Why did I not want to share it with my Pastoral leader? I wanted him to think highly of me? Don't share it when it is too late. It could be very humbling

iv) When we live in the light, we can hear the demons howl (Alulong)... satan cannot work in the light. We disempower satan. His evil plans fail.

c) Living in the Light demands being radical disciples ("God's elect")... as a family

i) **Our community life is designed and intended to raise up radical disciples.** We are called to be inter-generational disciples. We are called into this family called Ligaya and this Ligaya family is broken down into different smaller families – Morales family, Escarro family, Estrella family, Rivas Family, Marcojos family, and so forth...

ii) We must preserve the light in our family by ensuring that each member of the family is living in the light and together, we can shine brightly.

iii) If we find ourselves successful at work, service, career, or even in our different roles in community but fail in our marriage/family or in living out our God-given vocation - we would have failed.

iv) **Radical families will bring about radical mission and discipleship.** We are all in this together, no one is left behind. That is our goal and our aspiration.

v) We have many and different challenges in our marriage and family but the grace is sufficient for those who trust and seek God's help and direction.

vi) **The grace is sufficient for those who will be faithful to our way of life** (e.g., 5 bundles of family life).

vii) Here, I would like to specially call out all the fathers and all the men. The scripture is clear that we cannot lead the body of Christ if we cannot care well for our families.

viii) The stronger our families, the brighter the light of Christ will shine in our lives.

ix) But know this, our family is not the end goal. As we always say **our family is for community, and our community is for building up the kingdom of God in our country.** The stronger our family, the stronger our community, and the stronger our witness to the world who are living in darkness. Let us bring out the light of our family and our community outside that more people may see and embrace the light of Christ – and thus build the Kingdom of God.

5) In Closing:

a) God is light, in Him there is no darkness.

b) We understand that we have challenges and shortcomings in embracing fully the light of God.

c) God continues to give us the grace to be intimate with him, to expose the darkness of our personal life and to seek his light to shine brightly in our lives.

d) May the Lord be pleased as we allow him to use us to pierce the darkness with his light and truth.

Personal Reflection

- **Melmarx Marcojos**

Ephesians 5:8-10 "For you were formerly darkness but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord."

For our reflection this morning, let us revisit the 3 aspects of living in the light that Chito shared with us. And as I lead us into this time of reflection, stay with the questions that are relevant to you and allow God's grace to bring about positive change in your life.

How intimate am I with God?

- How's the quality of my prayer life?
- Do I consistently protect my daily time of prayer with the Lord?

The emphasis here is "quality". Am I really being present when I have my prayer time with God?

We are all busy. The UDs are busy. The singles are busy. The full time moms are busy. Our businessmen brothers are busy. Sinong hindi busy? Those who are not are the exceptions. But is busyness a justifiable excuse in not having time with God everyday?

- Do I read Scriptures and other materials that allow me to know Him more and what He is doing in my life?
- Am I quick to confess my sins to the Lord? And for us Catholics, do we regularly go to Confession so we can be reconciled with God?
- Do I take courage to avoid occasions of sin in my life?

Occasions of sin - those events, activities, or places that lead me to committing a sin against God.

E.g. You know that if you sit beside this classmate, you'll end up sharing answers with him. So are you avoiding to sit beside him? Or every time you visit this website, even if it is harmless, you know that there will be ads that lead to pornographic materials. Are you avoiding even these harmless sites?

- Do I listen to Him? Am I obeying His will and direction for me?

A real disciple listens to God and obeys what He says. Are you doing that?

- How can I strengthen my intimacy with God?

How intimate am I with my PL and MG/WG?

- How's my openness with my PL and MG/WG?
- Do I share with them what is really going on in my life?

- Do I share with them my successes, achievements, triumphs, and accomplishments in my family, work, livelihood, community, and service?

Examples:

1. Promotion - therefore, higher title
2. Building a new home in Clark or Tagaytay?

- How about my difficulties, struggles, hardships, trials, and failures?

Ephesians 5:11-12. "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret."

- Am I humble and open in sharing even areas of struggle in holiness, righteousness, and sexual purity with my PL and MG/WG? Or do I have hidden sins that only I know?

Sin is the most important obstacle in living a radical life of discipleship. Do we talk about it with our PL and MG/WG?

Example: I discuss with my sons during our 1-1 their areas of sin.

- Are there broken or strained relationships with brothers and sisters that I have not reconciled with regardless of who was at fault?

Have I asked for forgiveness from those whom I have offended?

Am I willing to forgive those who offended me?

Do my PL and MG/WG know about these broken or strained relationships? Or do I share after I have overcome them?

- What can I change so I can be more confident in sharing my life with my PL and MG/WG?

How intimate am I with my family?

Is my family centered in God?

- Do we talk about God in our family? Maybe during meal times or fellowship times?
- Do we share with each other our experiences of God in the family, in school, in community, or at work?

Do I tell my parents or my siblings what happened in our CYA or Lingkod Prayer Meeting? Or what God did in our District Retreat?

- Do we pray together?

Do we pray for one another so that our hearts are still burning with love for God?

- Do we do mission together?

Do we reach out to family friends? Or do I invite the children of my parents' best friends to CYA or Lingkod?

- Do we correct each other or encourage each other to be more radical in following the Lord in our lives?

As a child, do I remind or encourage my parents to keep their prayer time and be faithful to their service? Or do I share with them my struggles of joining CYA or Lingkod? Or do I update them on how I am growing in my prayer life or avoiding my favorite sin?

Example: One of my sons asking me how I am during our 1-1

- Are we faithful as a family in living our way of life like Day of Prayer, Lord's Day celebration every weekend, 1-1 of husband and wife, 1-1 of parent and child?
- How can we improve intimacy in my family?

HOW INTIMATE AM I WITH GOD?

HOW INTIMATE AM I WITH MY PL AND MG/WG?

HOW INTIMATE AM I WITH MY FAMILY?

Living in the light is about intimacy with God, my PL and MG/WG, and my family. When I keep myself in constant connection with God, share everything in my life with my PL and MG/WG, and remain faithful in living out Christian discipleship in my family, I am living in the light. And when I live in the light, darkness has no place in me for the light shines in the darkness and darkness cannot overcome it.

III. LIVE IN LOVE

The second section of our conference is entitled “Live in Love.”

The Lord did not only call us individually but called us as a people and brought us into a community to better live a life of discipleship in communion with God and with each other.

In community, we are called to live in unity, encouraging each other in our way of life but also being accountable to each other in living our life of discipleship.

As we are called to live as God’s people in our community, it would be good to reflect on our life together and our accountability towards each other. Brothers and sisters, Are we truly loving each other? Are we honoring and respecting one another? Are we faithful to our commitments to one another? Do we have unresolved issues with our brothers and sisters? Are we helping each other to live in love as Christ loves us, that is, sacrificially?

Live in Love

- Toby Estrella

Introduction:

1. In the first presentation, we were reminded of how God’s light penetrates and consumes the darkness that pervade in our lives. By His mercy, we are made new and given many opportunities to be intimate with Christ.
2. We also recognize that growing in personal holiness should not be limited within us. Our lives should be lived in the context of community life that teaches and allows us to love one another.
3. And Christ is the center of our community life. And so, our way of life should radiate to others as well so that more will know of Christ.
4. In this second presentation, we will mainly focus on (a) Our call to love one another; (2) That Christ should be seen in our relationships; and (c) The blessings of living in love in community life.

I. Our Call: To love one another as Christ loved us

(a) Ligaya’s call

- i. In the beginning of Ligaya, the Lord spoke to us that **we will see His face in the love we have for one another**
- ii. **“You have asked to see my face. I will show it to you. As you grow in love and service for one another, you will see me. For I will be among you. You will see me. I will be in your midst acting among you. You will see my face in the love you have for one another. xxx”**
- iii. In other words, living in love or loving our brothers and sisters is our response to the love of Christ.
- iv. Because we have experienced His love, we are obliged to share it (another word for obliged is that we are grateful), to express it to others so that they too will

- experience in a profound manner Christ. In doing so, we become His face.
- iv. St. Clair of Assisi said, **“We become what we love, who we love shapes what we become.”** Paraphrased: **“We become who we love, who we love shapes who we become.”**
 - vi. That it is the essence of being a face of Christ to one another. We encountered Christ and have learned to love Him. Now we gratefully share his love to our brothers and sisters, and we are transformed.

(b) The call **to love one another is integral** in our life as disciples of Christ

- i. **“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” (John 15:9-12)**
- ii. As a Christian community, we bind ourselves to a personal commitment to one another.
- iii. But the reality is, it is difficult to *simply* love one another. Iba-iba tayo ng pagkatao.
- iv. Minsan tinanong ako ni Jun Cruz sa district retreat naming: Masaya ka ba sa Ligaya? Oo naman, ang mabilis kong sagot. Alam mo, Toby, hindi lahat ay perpekto sa Ligaya. Walang perpekto sa Ligaya. Masasakatan ka minsan, maguguluhan ka minsan. Pero look up to Jesus for He is the one who can make an incomplete person complete.
- v. Kung ang pagkatao lang natin ang huhubog sa Ligaya, matagal na tayong nagkahiwalay-hiwalay.
- vi. Hence, love is integral in our community life. Love gives us the capacity to embrace one another, to serve, to submit in obedience, mend broken relations, and even correct one another.
- vii. What kind of love is demanded from us? Agape love that is selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love. As one writer said, agape perfectly describes the kind of love Jesus Christ has for his Father and for his followers.

(c) Our call means **loving relationship is key in community living**

- i. We did not choose who will be our brothers and sisters in community. Yet, what sustains us in our loving relationship with one another. One of the key expressions of this is our MWG.

Sharing re: joining MWG of mature members

- ii. By God’s grace, we flourish in community through the loving relationships we have based on service, the posture of “not counting the costs and instead the willingness to go the extra mile”, honor and respect, forbearance, spirit of loving the unlovable, speaking the truth in love, and submitting ourselves to pastoral care.
- iii. Our loving relationship is expressed in many ways:
 - It is in Ligaya and the SOS that we are privileged to experience speech that builds up, faithfulness to commitments, respect for order and authority, and manifest readiness for service.

- It is also in community that we are reminded, admonished, or corrected when we are wrong, and where we received guidance, encouragement, and support.

(d) **The Lord did not only call us individually.**

- We recognize that God called us as a **people** and brought us into a community to live a life of **discipleship**.
- If we consider ourselves as part of a people, we should not act only for our own personal interests, but we need to consider the impact of our decisions and commitments to our brothers and sisters like our SOL, vocation, career, migration, service, etc.
- We are not simply committing ourselves to a certain set of activities or obligations, but to a personal sharing that reaches to our daily life.
- Instead, we live the same way of life together, participate in a corporate life, make our lives available to our brothers and sisters, and offer our lives for our mission in the Church and in the world.

(e) **We are called to live in unity**

- We are accountable to one another in our life of discipleship.
- Unity is not about unanimity, acting in unison or the absence of disagreement. We recognize that we are different in many things, i.e., lifestyle, preferences, political persuasions, etc.
- Our unity is the foundation of our life together. How:
 - First*, **Christ has reconciled us with God by the blood of his cross** (Col 1:20). He has therefore united us to himself, so we are made one with the Father.
 - As a result*, he brought us into a relationship with one another, **making us brothers and sisters in one body** (Eph 2:15–16).

“Even when our differences tear us apart, we recognize that we belong to the people of the redeemed, to the same family of brothers and sisters loved by the only Father.” (Pope Francis)

- (f) And because of our call, we **freely commit ourselves** to our brothers and sisters in Ligaya and **knowingly accept the mission** our Lord has entrusted to us as a people.
- Knowingly means a concrete choice, an informed decision – ex. When you executed a notarized document, you cannot deny the voluntariness of the execution
 - When we profess our loving commitment before God and our brothers and sisters, we cannot simply take it back or turn our back out of convenience, or when there is a disagreement, or when we don’t get what we want

If we are called to love one another in response to God's love for us:

II. Others should know of Christ

(a) Our love for one another is **not meant to be enjoyed and kept among ourselves**. Hindi dapat tinatabunan o tinatakpan ang pagmamahal natin sa bawat isa!

i. **“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35)**

ii. Remember how you were first attracted to community? Di ba at one point, you experienced being served in the events you were invited to and ultimately in the care of brothers and sisters?

iii. Pag may celebration or major events sa atin, sino ang unang gustong mag-honor at mag-perform for you even in front of your family members, officemates or schoolmates?

iv. Or pag may emergency, our family members are overwhelmed by the presence and support of our brothers and sisters in the hospital, or the generosity when fund raisings are initiated, or we become prayer warriors for a sick member (like what happened to Arnold and Vivien)

v. Christ is proclaimed by our actions, brothers and sisters!

(b) **Loving one another is our prophetic witnessing to the world**

i. **“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)**

ii. We are a prophetic people called to live radically so the world might know God particularly during these times of distorted facts, unrelenting attack on our faith, family life and values, our youth, the Church and our leaders.

iii. Our missionary spirit requires us not only to preach but to witness with our lives. We evangelize, we make Jesus attractive to others by our very own lives of loving one another. That's our testimony.

“The Church's missionary spirit is not about proselytizing (*preaching or converting*), but the testimony of a life that illuminates the path, which brings hope and love. The Church (*or Ligaya*) is not a relief organization, an enterprise or an NGO, but a community of people, animated by the Holy Spirit, who have lived and are living the wonder of the encounter with Jesus Christ and want to share this experience of deep joy, the message of salvation that the Lord gave us. It is the Holy Spirit who guides the Church (*or Ligaya*) in this path.” (Pope Francis, Message for World Mission Day, May 19, 2013)

III. In living in love in Community, we are blessed

How?

(a) **Fullness of life which flows from our loving of one another**

- i. In Saint John's Gospel, the Lord speaks of the purpose of His coming. He tells us that He has come so that we might have life to the full (*Jn 10, 10*)
- ii. **Fullness of life in Christ means living in union with Him, our roots are deep in him, building our lives on him, and becoming stronger in our faith filled with thanksgiving. (Colossians 2:6-7)**
- iii. Not everything is complete in our lives even if we are in community, i.e., we lack in material resources, we get sick, we go through trials, we lose our jobs, we fail our subjects, goals are not met, etc., but we experience fullness because we encounter Christ through the service, concern (*malasakit*), sacrifice of brothers and sisters
- iv. Full may mean “*busog*”, but another way of saying it is “*may buhay na may saysay dahil sama-sama tayo at hindi ikaw nag-iisa*”

(b) Holiness in Life

- i. “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:17)
- ii. Pope Francis said that we can be holy because we have the examples of the saints. The existence of the saints tells us “that the Christian life is not an unreachable ideal.”
- iii. In community, I dare say that we grow in holiness as well as shown by the quiet yet remarkable lives of brothers and sisters like Tita Belen, the late Mike Joseph and Rogel Plata, and many more.
- iv. When I asked my children who they think are holy people in community, it was assuming that can readily mention names like their Tito John Keating, Tito Jake Yap, Tita Mae Legaspi and probably Tito Raoul Roncal. 😊
- v. Our pastoral leaders are saints. Of course, they are not perfect, but they sacrificially care for us, train and guide us, foregoing their time, resources and convenience so that we will be faithful to Christ and the life he has called us to live.

(c) Abundance of giving and receiving

- i. It is the *act of* sharing one’s self and not merely material things.
- ii. Since we experienced the generosity of brothers and sisters, we too become generous. If we experienced compassion and sympathy, we too become considerate and benevolent. If we experienced forgiveness, we too become gentle and understanding.

(c) Increases our faith and hope

- i. It was shared in our last sector assembly that faith means you believe first then the miracles follow. It’s not the other way around where we should wait first for a miracle before we believe.
- ii. On the other hand, hope is when God has promised something, and you put your trust in Him
- iii. Why does loving one another increases our faith and hope? It is because you see brothers and sisters living their lives heroically – brothers and sisters lovingly serve and care for one another despite their personal challenges, sickness, financial struggles and many more.
- iv. We also discover that the more we invest in our relationships, commitments, in loving one another, the more we grow in faith in the Lord and the more we experience the grace that comes out of these relationships.

(d) Greater capacity to love others

- i. After receiving love, the only response is to give that love back as one body, as one people
- ii. **“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.” (St. Teresa of Avila)**

IV. Conclusion

- (a) Brothers and sisters, we received a particular call – We have been called to love one another as disciples to be the face of Jesus to one another!
- (b) Our community life is not only for us. It is our personal testimony to our family, children and society.
- (c) Eph 5:14: “Awake, O sleeper, rise to life, and Christ will give you light.”**
When we allow Christ’s light to shine in our community life (we are defined by our relationship with Him and our brethren), the light of Christ cannot be kept hidden and it will naturally radiate to the world around us.
- (d) World’s Light Is Artificial
Regrettably, our call to be the face of Jesus is being diminished by the trappings and modern values of this world. Our call to be a light, to be the face of Jesus, to one another has therefore never been more urgent than it is today!

Pope Francis described the lure of the world as the “light of the world” where he warned us that the light the world offers us is strong. He likens it to the firework of a camera flash and that it is artificial.

So, to counter the artificial light of the world, Pope Francis points to our **Christian identity** which is an identity of light, not of darkness. Not as a fleeting camera flash but that of discipleship lived in community where we mirror our master and not ourselves; where we reflect His light and not the “light of this world”; and where we use our talents, skills and resources to love God and serve our brothers and sisters in love.

Amen!

SHARING BY TED TE, EMON ILUSTRE, AND RIENNE ANGELES

Wrap up of Personal Sharings:

- Randy Feria

Live in Love! In all three sharings, we see different elements of our way of life.

We are called to love one another and care for each other, especially those who are in need. We see this in Rienne's sharing and the experience of the Angeles family.

We are called to listen to our leaders and in doing so, hear the word of the Lord spoken through them. We see the fruit of this in Ted's sharing wherein his conversations with Chito led to his resolve to live single for the Lord

Finally, we are called to encourage each other and be accountable to one another. We see this in how our brother Emon took the sharing of a brother and the words of a speaker seriously and accepted it as God's whisper that eventually led him to see God's hand in everything.

Brothers and Sisters, Live in Love!

IV. LIVE IN THE SPIRIT

The third section of our conference is entitled “Live in the Spirit.”

We are called not just to be a community of disciples, but disciples on mission. We are called to be a leaven to our society. We are called to defend the gospel and be witnesses to the ends of the earth. We can do this only with Christ’s light shining brightly and with the power of the Holy Spirit visible in our lives.

Live in the Spirit

- Raoul Roncal

1. Introduction

- a. In the morning we heard our bros give us a perspective of the call the Lord to live a holy life.
- b. It may be very clearly that the task of holiness is very daunting and demanding.
- c. Although, it is something none of us would deny desiring, we often feel inadequate in responding to the call.
- d. The passage we would like to reflect on is this passage:
 - i. "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit," Eph 5:18 (RSV)
 - ii. This passage follows as series of teachings on living a life of holiness and living in the light and avoiding darkness.
 - iii. Let us get insights on this passage about how to handle to call to holiness.

2. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit..

- a. Do not get drunk with wine— this is excessive drinking or allowing wine or Alcohol to excessively affect us. But Paul in this passage is not mainly concern with drunkenness, St. Paul is using this as a description, although a negative one, of what it means to be “filled with the Spirit.” If Alcohol can affect us excessively the Spirit can also ‘excessively affect us.’ This time Paul is telling us with the Spirit you can “excessively be affected.”
- b. What does it mean to be filled, to be excessively affected by the Spirit?
 - i. There is no room for timidity. —Timidity is often a result of a concern for ourselves and what others would say about us. We are called to go beyond ourselves for the sake of overcoming the darkness around us.
 - ii. There is no room for limitations. —It is the Spirit of God moving us. So we can expect that God will always call us to go beyond what we could do on our own or even as a community.
 - iii. We will experience not being satisfied with what we can accomplish — We will experience desiring more of God and of the mission he has for us.

3. Application of the Principles of being filled with the Spirit or to live in the Spirit

- a. In our evangelistic work we should not be timid in evangelising those around us. And we can never say that someone is beyond hope (no limits). And we should never go tired in evangelizing.
- b. In our involvement in social transformation. We should not be afraid on going against what we believe is against our faith. We cannot be timid in confronting

- injustice in our country. We should also expect that we will always find something to change in our society. Let us not be afraid.
- c. Let me explain this point of the need to go beyond our comfort zone to respond to movements of the Spirit by looking at the story of the good Samaritan:
- i. "And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live." But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise.'" **Luk 10:25-37 (RSV)**
 - ii. Insights about this parable:
 - i. The question was who is my neighbor, or who should I love?
 - ii. We begin with the man who was robbed. You would think that this is a simple lesson of teaching them who to love since he began with the man who was robbed. And you would think that he is trying to describe what kind of person to love i.e. someone who is in need , who is very poor etc.
 - iii. But the story has three characters, which points to the punch line, that is, the important question is the person who is supposed to love. How should much love are we capable of.
 - iv. That is why Jesus twists the question by asking " who was neighbor." Or how much can you be neighbour
 - v. And the most unlikely person a samaritan is the one who ends up loving .
 - vi. Practical Example: ROME, Nov. 13—Pope Paul VI gave his bejeweled, threetiered gold and silver tiara to the world's poor today in a dramatic gesture before 2,000 bishops at a ceremony in St. Peter's Basilica.
 - vii. At the close of a solemn liturgical mass in the ByzantineSlavic Rite, the Pope rose from his throne, descended a few steps and placed the gleaming tiara on the altar.
 - viii. An announcement by Archbishop Pericle Felici, Secretary General of the. Ecumenical Council, said the Pontiff had been moved to his symbolic act of charity by discussions of world poverty during the current session of Ecumenical Council Vatican II. It was noted also that many of the Fathers of the Council in nine weeks of debate have urged the church to forgo pomp and "triumphal" clothing and ornament and embrace poverty.

The tiara is a tall, generally conical ceremonial crown of beaten silver with three superimposed, gold circlets encrusted with diamonds, sapphires and rubies. It was given to Pope Paul by the Catholics of Milan, his former archdiocese, for his coronation as Pontiff in June, 1963.

It is of more modern design than the tiaras of his predecessors, slimmer, almost like the tip of a projectile, rather than the traditional beehive shape. Estimates of its intrinsic value range between \$15,000 and \$80,000.

4. Conclusion:

- a. In the same way the Lord is asking us to open our hearts to allow the Lord let his Spirit inspire us to love!
- b. Because the question is not who to love but how much can we love. And clear call is to love excessively.

V. EXPRESSIONS OF PIERCING THE DARKNESS

We now want to understand what we are doing as a community and further plans on how we are to act as our community towards the call to Pierce the darkness with His light and truth.

Piercing the Darkness with God's Light and Truth

- Andy Juan

I. INTRODUCTION

-We've heard a lot at this point- all these presentations are meant to either hold vision for those among us who are relatively new, and to serve as a reminder for those of us who've been around but tend to forget, who get confused because of the many noises and voices trying to get our time and attention- Conferences like this aim to get us all into a common bearing.

- Raoul just now talked about the implications of living in the spirit- of not being timid and not imposing limitations to what God can do. And he ended by reminding us of our call to love- to love excessively as the Lord does. It puts in context our own motivation in responding to the Prophetic mandate. My task is to share with you the mindset and some courses of action that we would like to take as individuals and as a community as we respond to God's word to us. But first I'd like to have us take another look at who we are what we have been called to do.

II. OUR MISSION : THE SPRINGBOARD OF OUR DISCUSSION

-It is very clear to many of us that we are A Community of Disciples on Mission, a Mission that calls us to live, work and strive, by the power of the Holy Spirit so that Others might have true life in Christ.

- What does this actually mean? Well, we gain better understanding when we focus on what we are called to be and what specifically we are called to do to fulfil this Mission entrusted to us. 'Hindi na po tayo kailangan lumayo pa, it's very much described in what we teach in Community of what constitutes our Mission.

WHAT ARE WE CALLED TO BE AND TO DO TO FULFILL OUR MISSION

A BULWARK

We are called to be a bulwark that defends people in time of spiritual warfare and should be open to be an instrument for God's work in difficult times. It is very obvious that in today's environment, we need to actively **DEFEND** Christian truth and morality, both in Church and Society

A PROPHETIC PEOPLE

We are called to be a people that lives the Christian call radically as disciples so that the world might know that God has sent His Son Jesus Christ. We do this by our **PROCLAMATION** of the Kingdom of God in our words and through our lives so others might come into conversion to Christ. We also fulfil this mandate by **GATHERING** others into communities and movements so that they can effectively live the Christian life through supportive environments

A SERVANT PEOPLE

We are called to **serve the Church and society** by working to **stem the tide of evil and promote holiness and righteousness** in the daily circumstances of our lives. As disciples

working for truth and justice, we hope to be a **LEAVEN**, and thus influence the situations we are in.

To sum up -We have not been called to community life and relationship with one another **simply for our own sakes, but for the sake of a mission** the Lord has entrusted to us. And it is clear in our Mission statement that we need to be **outward looking way beyond the confines of our community**

III. HOW THEN DO WE PIERCE THE DARKNESS AROUND US?

A COMMENT ON THIS PRESENT DARKNESS

- As mentioned in the Opening Introductions of our conference, this is not a new word for us- since the beginning of Covenant communities, the Lord has continuously warned us of '**Days of Darkness**', **Hard Times and Difficulties**, more recently, **a Tsunami of Evil**- all pointing out to a time where the enemy and his cause seem to be prevailing thus resulting into a time of despair or even a sense of weariness for His people
- Some of this darkness are in **our own personal lives**. As earlier mentioned, 'once we were darkness, but now in the Lord we are light' and that is why we were reminded in the first talk and the rest of the passages in Ephesians 5 to live as children of light, to learn what is pleasing to the Lord and watch carefully how we live, as the days are indeed evil.
- Much of this darkness is in **the world around us**-presented as Lies and deceitfully hidden to sow **doubt** and **moral confusion** leading to **an inability to distinguish what is right from what is wrong**. This **Spiritual Blindness** needs to be **UNMASKED** and **EXPOSED** to God's **LIGHT** through **His WORDS** and the **TESTIMONY** of His people

1. Strengthen the Bulwark

- We have been called to join together with others so that we can form a "bulwark," **a wall of defense and protection for others**, in the face of the difficult times Christians will face.

-The call to form a bulwark is a call to be **a sign to others of a new way of life and a new culture**, based on the Gospel and adapted to the conditions of our times.

-It is a call **to be instruments of God's work in the world in the face of difficult times**, and to

proclaim clearly the Gospel in all its implications so that we can serve as **a light in the darkness** and **a leaven in society**

-HOW IS THIS ALL MADE POSSIBLE-WHAT HAPPENS IN THE BULWARK? It is our **Christian formation**, done through TEACHINGS AND our **Pastoral Care system** (which Toby spent some time describing earlier) that makes this new culture, this new way of life take place in our lives- thus, **Discipleship, Committed Relationships, Christian Service and Mission** become daily life possibilities for each of us. (Share how pastoral care has been experienced in bringing us from one level to another through constant teaching of prayer time, scriptures, sacraments, saying no to sin, etc.; Recall FHS' counsel on protecting and guarding community life through the way we care for our people)

- Many years ago, some of us coordinators were talking about the **Ligaya mind** (anchored of course on Christian teaching and our SOS orientation)- how often we need to check on/ask each other on whether we have the same take on specific situations- why? Because of our **COMMON** formation (or the way we were brought up), meron tayong particular way of speaking, behaving, carrying ourselves, understanding or even processes of doing things-

- e.g. the way we evaluate things, events, media; our code of conduct including speech; (Cite the leadership's surprise and disappointment when points of view significantly differ in looking at EJK – pastoral statement of Sept 2016)
- I sometimes wonder if that Ligaya mind or perspective still exist? Lalo na ngayong lumalaki na tayo. Do we still **call spade a spade**? Or has things **become relative for us, especially in the area of what is right and wrong**? I know it's not an easy discussion. BUT IT SHOULD BE AN EASY DISCUSSION IF WE SUBSCRIBE TO THE SAME MORAL BASIS- SCRIPTURES, TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH, GUIDANCE OF OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY LEADERS
 - The Role of all our Pastoral workers will be very important if we want to strengthen the bulwark. It is important that **we have a common mind and a common orientation** as Christian disciples especially when it comes **to moral issues or even our way of life expressions**. Unity of mind may have been the ideal word **-In Essentials, Unity, in non-essentials, Liberty, in all things, Charity!** as we have been reminded in our 2017 Conference. Moral Issues are one of those where we ought to have unity.
 - The morning presentations already challenged us with a set of questions that hopes to have us reflect on how we give and receive Pastoral Care. THAT IT REQUIRES OPENNESS AND SUBORDINATING OURSELVES. My word to all of us is simple- we have decided to be part of this bulwark, enter and undergo formation, and participate in a particular mission. We need to take on **the mind of a disciple, who has made a pledge to lay down one's life for Christ and for one another** and to be used by Him. We also need to take on **the warrior/soldier mentality, fully knowing that we are called to be 'a Nation at War'**. We were warned that it will not be easy, that what it requires is a giving of our all.

2. Serve in “Stemming the Tide of Evil.”

- We are called by the Lord to **dedicate our lives to the effort of “stemming the tide of evil”** which is overwhelming our society and ravaging even the church.
- We are to respond to this call first of all **by living together a radically dedicated life of discipleship which does not compromise with the evil around us**, and by committing ourselves to one another to be a mutual support and strength in this battle (this is basically what we heard in the 2 presentations this morning).
- We are to respond to this call secondly **by proclaiming the Good News of life in Christ**, both to Christians who have grown dull of hearing or have become lukewarm in their following of Christ, and to those who do not yet know Christ. And **we proclaim the reality of life in the power of the Holy Spirit** to Christian brothers and sisters who have not yet experienced that power.
- So our work of evangelization and bringing them into community or other supportive environments continue to be critical and important. Our outreaches like Lingkod and CYA will continue this thrust among our Singles and College students, while Pathways will intensify their efforts and focus more on younger or newly married couples. More strategic targets such as the one we are doing for lawyers (TGLP) and hopefully in the future for doctors, are all aimed to fulfill the mandate entrusted to us by the Lord. Our brethren serving in Tahanan are pursuing the same, though in a much more challenging environment. The goal remains to introduce Christ and bring them into a personal relationship with Him and with other brothers and sisters.
- These are all good things, and hopefully, in the eyes of the Lord, these have been pleasing efforts of faithfulness to our Mission all these years. But shouldn't we be open to **other expressions of evangelization that is clearly surfacing that warrants our attention?** One where the Tide of Evil seems to be more pronounced and evident? Chito made reference to the words we have heard from the Lord in recent years- all calling forth for more courage and sacrifice for a mission bigger or greater than us, of not holding back. During our 40th anniversary, we were told to Expand our hearts, our reach and our Mission- a seeming

reference to an Expansion of our tents as in Isaiah. In past conferences, we quoted an SOS prophetic word – Built for More. **Isn't Ligaya meant to do more?**

-What has certainly caught our attention in the last couple of years is our own role and duty as Catholics and Christians to speak out on current issues in Society. **What is our Christian Social Responsibility** given what we see and hear are happening around us? It has hit a certain climax when our own President started attacking God, our Church and our own Bishops (all these on top of the earlier things we, along with other groups have already expressed disagreement – EJK, the disregard for human rights, the vulgar speech and disrespect for women).

Some among you have expressed your concerns or fears- shouldn't we **stay away from politics** or these kinds of issues? Wouldn't this distract us from our Core Mission?

The OLC has been cognizant of these concerns. But **What do our Church leaders say?** Our Church's leaders have called upon us to participate and to get involved in the affairs of our society and the country as a whole. Pope Benedict in Verbum Domini (The Word of the Lord) expressed:

"It is the primary task of the lay faithful, formed in the school of the Gospel, to be directly involved in political and social activity. Hence they need suitable formation in the principles of the Church's social teaching."

And Pope Francis in his own Pastoral Exhortation: Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel) clearly states:

#182- *"The Church's pastors, taking into account the contributions of the different sciences, have the right to offer opinions on all that affects people's lives since the task of evangelization implies and demands the integral promotion of each human being"*

#183- *"No one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without influence on societal and national life, without concern for the soundness of civil institutions, without the right to offer an opinion on events affecting society."*

It is for this reason why we have formalized **our Christian Social Ministry – Families for Truth, Justice and Peace** as our vehicle of getting ourselves involved using our Christian/Ligaya orientation along with our gifts and charisms. We are presently working with many groups, particularly Laiko, under the guidance of Bishop Pabilio, Pilipino Movement for Transformational Leadership (PMTL), where we are a founding convenor, working with Atty. Alex Lacson and other faith-based organizations (Familia, BCBP, CFM), and lately, with Bawa't Isa Mahalaga (B1M), an organization founded by former Chief Justice Malou Sereno, made up mostly of Evangelicals, but very much ecumenical in their approach.

A lot of FTJP's initiatives and activities are aimed towards it's 3 main goals:

one-**conscientization, or raising the public consciousness towards the social responsibility of the Christian faith,**

second-**encouraging spiritual warfare and building intercessory networks** among various groups and

thirdly, **direct involvement into socio-political affairs**, where we stand with our church leaders in campaigning against the changing of the present constitution and educating the public on the consequences and dangers of Federalism, especially the House version. We are also finding ways of helping out in Voter's education, both as preparation for the May electoral exercise as well as the long-term value thinking of most Filipinos- especially among the poor

and uneducated, in choosing our future leaders. Many of you have expressed a desire to do something, to influence this mind-set, to help. You will hear more from FTJP, through Dennis Castillo, Coordinator in charge as he works with the District and Sector Coordinators in getting our members active and involved.

3. Defend the Gospel

-We are called by the Lord **to speak His word to the church today as it faces the battle of these very challenging environment**, and that, **our life itself should have a prophetic character, reflecting the urgency of the times**

-The Lord also wants some among us **to articulate and present a picture of the condition of the church and of our society**, and **what needs to be done in response, so that others can also cooperate with God's action. We should defend God's word publicly against its enemies both inside and outside the churches.** (e.g VBG as adviser of FTJP and other groups; developing a menu of topics for Apologetics to equip pastoral workers through our experienced brothers – JCY and RR)

-In addition, there are some specific ways the Lord has called us to stand against particular evils facing his people today:

-For one, we should do something **to combat the "fog" in the church and society which obscures people's understanding of the Gospel and of Christian truth.** (Song Quote: **"This age it seeks to destroy, clouds my mind, robs my heart of your joy"** e.g. in past conferences, we tackled topics on **Moral Relativism** and **Practical Atheism** where truth is deemed relative and where God, while looked at as existing, doesn't matter much or isn't missed at all. Today we continue to tackle the **'Me' Generation**, the continuous pre-occupation for one's self and well-being, as contrasted to the call of Discipleship to lay down one's life for the cause of Christ and to serve the Church and His people)

-Secondly, we should also **live and uphold Christian family life, and the elements which make it possible.** We should **teach publicly and witness about men's and women's roles** to see if we can make some contribution to saving something in this area. (e.g. Gender Issues and sexual orientation topics are probably some of the most controversial discussion points among many today, especially our young. There are just a lot of ideas and concepts of what manhood and womanhood is. Related to this are similar questions and attacks on sacred institutions such as Marriage and Family Life. While many modern thinkers may not agree- we hold on to our basic teaching in our courses that Men and Women are created Equal, yet have distinct Differences but often times Complementary in our Roles in Family and even in society)

4. Actively Intercede and do Spiritual Warfare

-We should live as **a people who know that this is a time of spiritual warfare**; we should be prepared for spiritual warfare. (Eph 6 - we are not contending with flesh and blood; Use the armour of God)

-We are under attack, and will continue to be attacked- expect this (Personal Life, Family Life, Relationships in Communal life; St. Peter's warning of being alert and vigilant as the devil is like a lion waiting for someone to devour)

-We should be **trained to do spiritual combat** through **prayer and intercession.** 2 Chronicles 7: "14 if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (Recruit Prayer Warriors to take their place in the battle (NOW/Seniors), Regularize MWG/District Intercessory Groups)

IV. MAKING WAY FOR OUR MISSION EFFORTS: SOME PRACTICALS

- Bring back and **Institute Mission Sunday**
- Institute **Open Door Sundays** as our main Evangelistic Event (as one Mission Sunday Expression)
- Hook programs such as **Marriage Courses and Parenting Courses**
- Harvest Institute** plans to offer 1 Day seminars to parishes and communities on various topics: **Discipleship, Evangelization, Preaching & Teaching, Defense of the Gospel, Leadership Dev't** and many more. This is our effort of sharing more of what we have to the Wider Church – reach out to Rey Feria and look at the flyers available at the registration table
- (First Sunday of the Month-e.g. Go out as MWGs, Pairs, Clusters to serve in TNP, Parish, Works of Mercy, Strategic Evangelistic Event, Volunteer for PNP outreaches, FTJP involvement)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

-**'Which ones do we Prioritize?'**, we were recently asked. Where do we go? Do I drop this in favor of...? 'Sabihin n'yo lang mga leaders...Our reply: **ALL are important.** 'Sa isang guerra, hindi mo alam kung saan manggagaling ang bala! You don't know where the enemy will attack, how he will strike. So our rescue operations should be ready to cover as much ground as we possibly can. Our Mission Continues. Our evangelization and community building work as well as our Christian social responsibility all stem out of our relationship with Jesus and our love for God's people. The call to Action is Now!

Relate the questions our grandchildren or the next generation may ask us 20-30 years from now- **'You knew they were doing something wrong and you did nothing? 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing' (Edmund Burke)**

KUNG TALAGANG PAGOD NA KAYO- **2 Quotes- FHS –'Die with your boots on!' and JHK- 'Let's all get to heaven exhausted!'**

- **'We are a part, not the whole'**- we heard that in the context of God's big work of bulwark building. Our part in all that the Lord is doing these days may be significant or may be very small, but that part has been assigned by the Lord, and we are to commit our lives and resources to its fulfillment. Look, 'ilan ba tayo?' We are no more than 2,300 adult members, including our University students. It's like David and Goliath. Our numbers are no match given the intensity of the warfare and the many fronts our battles are being fought. But we also know that the Lord has blessed us with certain gifts and charisms that we can use to serve the wider church and to advance God's agenda in modern day society- our knowledge of evangelization, gift of committed relationships, our teachings and what has been taught to us for over 40 years, the weapons of spiritual warfare and intercession. Like the multiplication of loaves and fishes, let us offer what we have and watch God do the rest. But as the start of the conference suggested, lest we think that it is our light that will pierce the darkness, know that the Lord Himself is the Light. And He Himself is the Warrior. Our prayer is that we may reflect that light to the people and situations around us by our words and our actions and make a difference for God's cause.

- **But not all is dark and gloomy:** "This present administration poses a difficult challenge to the Church today—but also **a tremendous opportunity for participating in the building of the nation.** By sharing Catholic social principles, using them to read the signs of the times and the lessons of history, sharing these signs and lessons, and defending and demonstrating the role of the Church in public life, the **Church can do much to inform and turn public**

discourse and establish a stable ethical anchorage amidst the violent and authoritarian tendencies of state policy and practice. ...But most of all this administration provides **an opportunity for witnessing to Christ—for channeling to his people his love for the poor, the weak, and sinners, and for emulating his willingness to pay the price for this love.**” (Quoted from An Agenda for the Church in the Present Political Climate, authored by Eleanor Dionisio of the John Carol Institute on Church and Social Issues, presented to the CBCP last July 2017)

-For such a Time as this, as one of the songs we sing echoes. For one reason or another, God deemed it that we are alive during these times. We live in very important times. We live in very dangerous times. But we also live in a time of Grace. And **we are called to give our all.** Once again, our individual and corporate decisions will make a difference in the lives of many, and in the lives of the present and the future- our children and our children’s children. Let us stand up and be counted in the **Mission of saving lives** - saving lives for the Kingdom, saving lives for Holiness and Righteousness, saving lives for Truth, Justice and Peace. Saving lives, as our Lord and Master Jesus Christ has commanded us to do.
'If not now, when? If not us, who? **Let us Pierce the Darkness around us with His Truth and with His Light!**

May the Lord Himself Lead Us!

VI. AWAKE, SLEEPER, RISE TO LIFE

In our fourth and final section, we reflect on the 2nd key verse given to us for our conference.

Eph 5:14 : “Awake, O sleeper, rise to life, and Christ will give you light.”

Recall that this is a call to action. It is a call to rise to life!

In this section, we want to do a couple of things:

- First, we want to turn to the Lord who is our light and who is light, and we want to worship Him.
- Second, we want to intercede for our nation and to pray out loud, “Lord, heal our land!”
- Third, we want to pray for the Holy Spirit to empower us that we may boldly live radical lives of discipleship and be a leaven to our society.

*** Prayer Meeting led by Jun Cruz**

VII. CLOSING REMARKS

God is light, and in Him there is no darkness!

We are blessed today to have heard the presentation of our leaders. Clearly there is a call for us to do the following:

1. To Live in the Light ... it is a call to personal holiness.
2. To Live in Love ... it is a call to love one another in community and in unity, to encourage and support one another and to be accountable to each other.
3. To Live in the Spirit ... it is a call to be disciples on mission, a call to be a leaven to society and to defend the gospel.
4. Finally, To Arise and Rise to Life. As we experience the prophetic words about the present darkness right now, we are called to rise, to rise to life.

Perhaps it will also be during our time where we will experience the second part of a prophetic word I read at the beginning, and I quote:

“But it will also be a time when Christianity surprisingly reassert itself as a powerful force and when Christian expansion through evangelism reaches unequaled proportions.”

I encourage you brothers and sisters to continue talking about these things in your districts and in your MWGs, and act as the Lord urges you to. God bless you!