



**In pursuit of the American
dream, we found**

An Even Greater Dream

**By Rogelio "Rogie" Ignacio
and Marissa Ignacio**

We all have our stories to tell. Ours is a story of wonderful, divinely inspired coincidences that assured us God is moving. He employs His entire creation to direct our lives, especially for those who believe in Him. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

When I was a teenager, I was a shy boy, a loner, and an introvert. During the summer of my freshman college years, I watched a movie, *The Nun's Story* starring Audrey Hepburn, by myself. I remember the character of Sister Luke making an impression on me and I went home feeling in love with such a young woman. That night, I knelt at my bedside and prayed that the Lord and His angels guide me to meet that girl who would be my girlfriend and, eventually, my wife.

Within a month, I became friends with a classmate, Marissa Aquino. We became intimately involved and eventually fell in love. We made plans to get married after graduation and when we already had jobs. But after getting our diplomas for B.S. Architecture in the University of Santo Tomas, we got the news. Her immigration visa had arrived, and her parents wanted her to migrate to America. I got scared but didn't show her. We planned for me to follow her and get married there. We contacted a travel agency to help us with the documentation requirements.

A month after she left for California, I applied for my first U.S. tourist visa. I got denied. The following month, I applied again. And I was denied again. Two months later, I was ready to apply a third time. But before I did that, I went to the church of Christ the King where Marissa and I used to visit. I knelt on the altar steps and prayed that I would pass the interview and that He would bless our plans to get married in the States to correct our past mistakes. I remember invoking the name of Mama Mary for intercession.

In November 1986, I passed my third attempt and was granted a six-month tourist visa with a validity of one week to travel. I immediately made plans to fly and surprise Marissa in California. We got married at the St. Joseph Church in Pinole on March 7, 1987.

Living the American Dream

For the next five years, we lived the good life. We both worked as draftspersons, had three vehicles, a three-bedroom house, and most of all, we had two children, Kamille and Jonathan. We were living the American dream when the recession in Northern

California hit. Marissa got laid off before I did. Soon, our savings were depleted and we were unable to pay our mortgage. We faced the possibility of losing our house.

We decided to return to the Philippines where the economy was booming and start a business. In the spring of 1993, Marissa, Kamille, and Jonathan returned to Manila and I was left alone in our foreclosed house. It was a perfect storm. I was depressed and eventually got in a car crash that totaled my pick-up. But miraculously, I only ended up with a cut on my forehead.

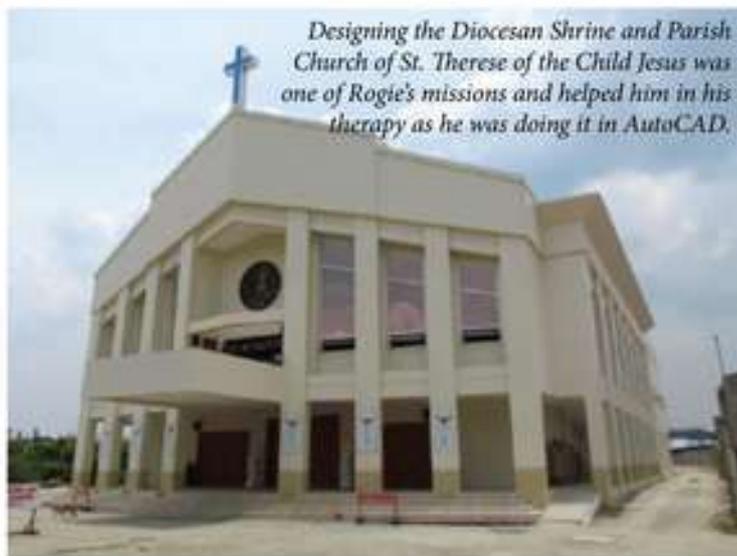
I was diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder. Later, this illness would worsen to bipolar disorder bordering on schizophrenia. My mental health was unraveling, but God had a plan. One morning in June 1993, I woke up to a voice of an old man coming from the radio. He asked if I truly love him. He told me to return to the Philippines

and he would give me and my family a mission. He would make me a millionaire. I had a sense it was the voice of God the Father. I cried, knelt down and prayed, "Lord, You know how much I love You. Here I am. Use me."

In Sickness and in Health

When we returned from California to Cubao, Philippines, our parish became the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish. After a Wednesday Mass in honor of Mama Mary, I stayed in church to pray for discernment on the mission God wanted for my life. I was about to leave when a magazine left on a pew caught my attention. It was a *Kerygma* Magazine. I took it home and read it. It inspired me to serve in the Catholic Church, but I didn't know how.

I was treated for clinical depression and found



Designing the Diocesan Shrine and Parish Church of St. Therese of the Child Jesus was one of Rogie's missions and helped him in his therapy as he was doing it in AutoCAD.

work. Eventually, Marissa and I started a construction business, which became successful.

But in 1998, the Asian financial crisis caused many businesses to collapse, including ours. We were unable to collect from our clients and we closed shop. I ended up in the basement of Medical City. After several electroconvulsive therapies, I was discharged.

The first person who visited me at home was Renemar Recinto, husband of my sister-in-law. He was a lay minister at the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Cubao and invited me to join them.

I became an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion and my life changed for the better. Through seminars, talks, retreats, and symposiums, I grew deeper knowing our Catholic faith.

In the New Year of 2000, we moved to a new house in Antipolo. For the next fifteen years, we lived there as the children became young adults and graduated from college. Both Marissa and I were active servants in our parish. I served pro bono as an architect for the design and construction of the diocesan shrine.

I worked as an operations manager of a medium-sized design-build company in Makati. Marissa had a build-and-sell business with two lady partners. However, it was not all bliss.

At the start of that period, I was asked to join as a partner in a construction business with another architect and a lady accountant. It was working fine, except that I discovered that my two partners were having an affair and they were using the office as a love nest. I was deeply bothered by the arrangement. I tried to stop the relationship, but it only caused me to fall ill and have an episode again. Marissa was also devastated. She almost gave up on me. A priest has

already advised her that an annulment could be a solution. But her mama told her, "Remember your marriage vows, for richer, or poorer, in sickness and in health until death do you part." So through the love and support of relatives and friends, my family was preserved against the works of the evil one.

In March 2004, Marissa was invited to attend a family tree healing Mass presided by Fr. Mario Bije. She had a conversation with Fr. Mario after the event and the priest asked her to bring me to the healing center in Project 6, Quezon City so he could pray over me.

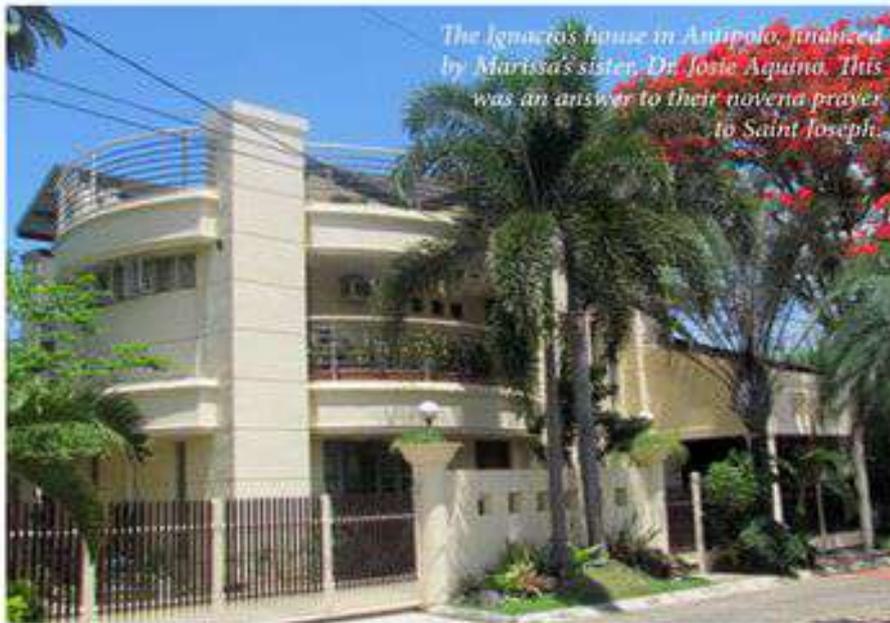
In a small room, Father Mario and two other servants prayed over me. They said that an evil spirit was attached to me so they casted this out in prayer. At the mention of the healing of ancestors, I smelled the scent of burning candles and sewage in the air. The healing session was over in an hour or so, but I continued to seek healing

through prayers, consultations, and visits at the center. Since then, I've never had any major episode of a nervous breakdown.

Returning to America

The children's decision to go back to their country of birth made Marissa and me to decide to return to the U.S. with them in 2014. Jonathan lives in Los Angeles, California working as an animator. Kamille is in Vancouver, Canada working as an assistant educator in a Catholic school. Marissa and I are based in New York City. She works as an intake coordinator for a nonprofit community center, while I'm a construction project manager in a local government agency.

Here in New York, the Full Tank series of Bo Sanchez became my connection to God's Word. In



The Ignacios house in Antipolo, financed by Marissa's sister, Dr. Jolie Aquino. This was an answer to their novena prayer to Saint Joseph.

one episode, Bo said, "You know, you don't have to be a millionaire to serve. You don't have to win the lottery to find your mission. Right here, right now, offer what you have to the Lord, and He will use it for His glory." That struck me in the heart.

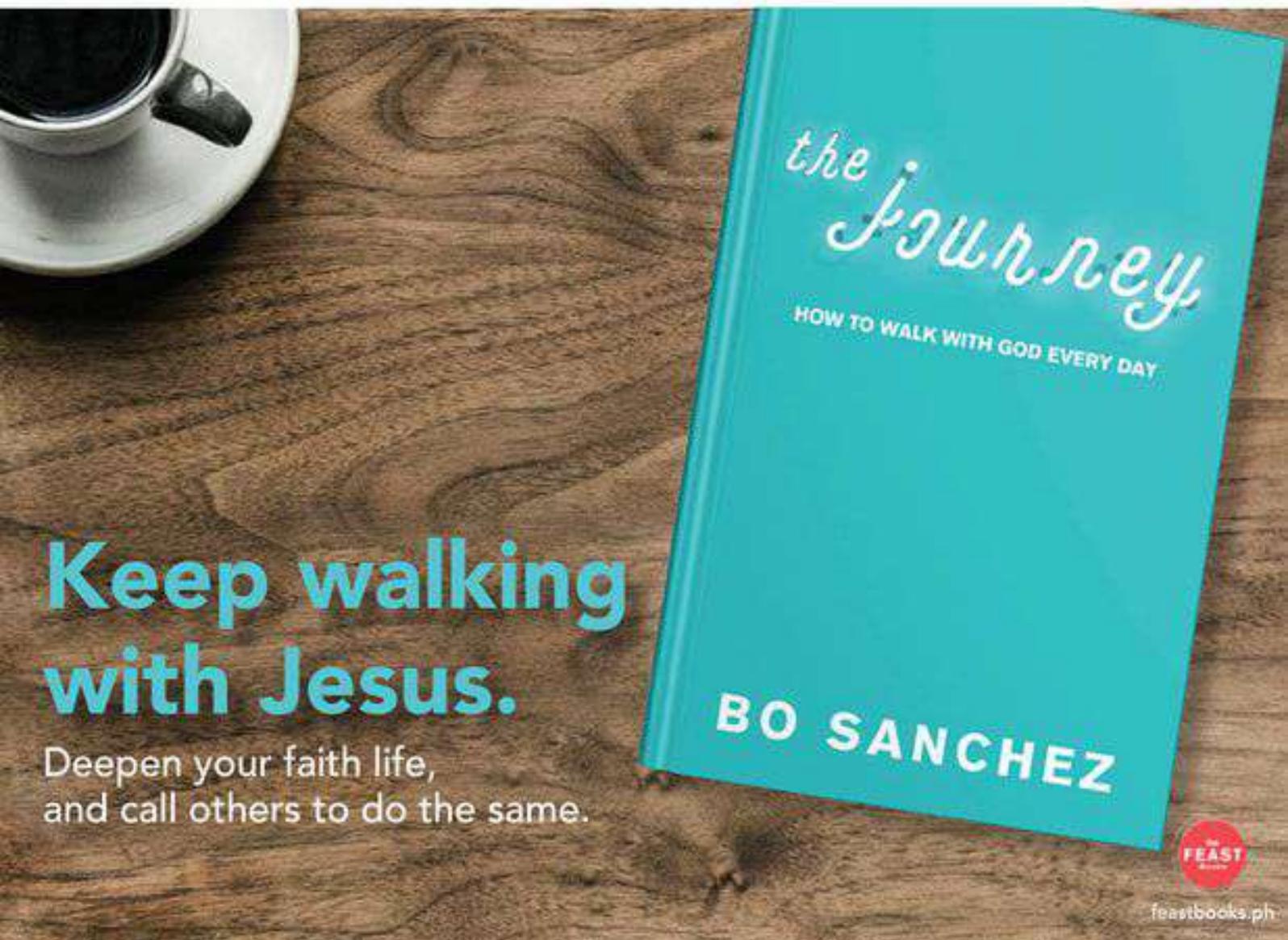
After a life of service to the church in the Philippines, I felt the need to give and serve more. Bo's message became the tipping point. I commented on his Full Tank video and offered to serve as a fundraiser to various international foundations that would benefit the Kerygma Family, now called The Feast Family.

I didn't expect him to answer because of the volume of messages, but he did! He gave me a contact number of Hermie Morelos, who referred me to Randy Borromeo, the current president

of Shepherd's Voice Radio and TV Foundation (SVRTV), the umbrella organization of The Feast Mercy Ministries. After several months of communications, I became an official fundraiser and grant writer for the organization in 2020.

The Lord, they say, works in mysterious ways. I believe that when I found that *Kerygma Magazine*, the seed of service was planted in my heart. It took twenty-five years for the seed to grow into a tree, and now it is ready to bear fruit. I do not want to preempt the future, but faith tells me that this fundraising mission will be successful and will benefit the many foundations of The Feast Mercy Ministries.

God is alive and He has a divine plan for us. And the source of it all is His great and wonderful love for us. 



Keep walking with Jesus.

Deepen your faith life,
and call others to do the same.