

Issue No. 5: 30<sup>th</sup> December 2008

*Mabuhay!*... that is the Filipino word used to express “greetings”, which is also used to exclaim “long live” or the Filipino version of live long and prosper.

I am writing *en route* from Davao to Manila in the Philippines, from where I will proceed on my return flight home.

My third visit to the Philippines has proven to be another success for the furtherance of God’s Work at this time and for the growth of the Church there. It was certainly a privilege to be able to again meet the warm Filipino brethren, whose radiant smiles confirmed that they too were very happy to see me again.

There were 16 brethren in attendance for the December 27<sup>th</sup> Sabbath service at Angeles City, after which we all rejoiced at the baptism of Israel Quiambao. Before my sermon, two messages were given by member Oliver Villanueva and Local Church Elder Rodrigo Matabaran. Both of these presentations were timely and excellent and the latter has already been compiled in article form and is being reproduced in this issue of *The Philadelphia Witness*, so that you may be able to read and study it.



Members meeting in Angeles City for Sabbath Service on 27<sup>th</sup> December

For the Bible Study held two days later in Davao City, the 21 brethren in attendance witnessed and rejoiced at the ordination of the longest-serving member in the Philippines Andres Yparraguirre, who was raised from Deacon to Local Church Elder. Mr. Yparraguirre will be assisting Mr. Matabaran in ministering to the very scattered brethren throughout the Philippine archipelago. The rejoicing continued as I ordained Joselito “Troy” Torrecampo to the office of Deacon. Even here, we first had two messages given, this time,

by the two Filipino ministers, which were followed by my main message.



Members meeting in Davao City for Bible Study on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2008

The common thread that prevailed throughout all messages was **the urgent need to prepare ourselves, both individually and as part of the complete and unified spiritual organism, which is the Church**; it was emphasised that *this*, together with ensuring that we effectively complete the other most important task of knocking on the door of *every member* in the Laodicean Church of God (PCG), is **THE GREAT COMMISSION** given to us by Jesus Christ, that we **must** accomplish at this time, during the remaining period of this Laodicean era, between now and the beginning of the 1260 days of the prophesying of the two witnesses.

Members attending in both Angeles and Davao were very eager to have me pass on their most sincere loving greetings to Pastor General Robert Ardis, as well as to the rest of the ministry and all brethren worldwide.

With much love, in Christ’s service



Daniel Frendo

### Articles

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## ACTS - Enhancing our Sense of Urgency

by Driggs Matabaran

In 1 Thess. 4:16-17, the Apostle Paul said, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

This scripture as inspired by God is one of the reasons why we are here in His Church. God’s people – His called-out and chosen ones - must be ready to meet and marry Jesus Christ and be with him forever for eternity. These verses and so many related scriptures in the Bible are a source of encouragement to us to be urgent in fulfilling our responsibility to prepare ourselves for this event, which we have been hoping would happen soon.

But the question is, are we really ready for this event? How urgent are we in preparing ourselves to meet the returning Christ, if indeed we are God’s faithful ones in this end time? How do we manage our lives now to be part of “His wife (that) has made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7)?

It is the purpose of this article to look into our preparation process in a way so as to enhance the sense of urgency as we assess and re-align our lives. The following four points have the word ACTS for its acronym, and attempt to briefly expound what we should be doing.

### Assess, Analyze & Act

Events and developments on the world scene have to be assessed and analyzed vis-à-vis the prophecies outlined in the bible. In the on-going economic realities, we need to brace ourselves and institute necessary measures to cope with the increasing cost of living, to ease financial burdens and to find ways to discipline ourselves in all aspect of our lives – physical, social and spiritual.

Physical, because we are still flesh and blood, so we need food, air and water to survive. Social, because we are living in this carnal world and we have to interact within it in our work and business; we are still living in this world’s society while exerting extra effort not to conform to its ways. Spiritual, because

we believe and have faith in the plan and promise of the Great God of the universe; we have to keep and abide by His laws.

We have to *assess* whether we are handling our physical lives so that we live in the best of health as much as we possibly are able to. Look at the manner in which we manage our diet. The manner we prepare our food. In the way we manage our personal and family finances. As much as possible, we should always plan and pro-act. Ask God for wisdom to guide us to make right decisions, more so now, that a lot of uncertainties in this world’s socio-economic condition are brewing and becoming worse and worse day by day.

We ought to *analyze* our physical resources and capabilities to then take the necessary action and measures necessary to mitigate the effect of ongoing economic downturns and eventualities; how to keep ourselves physically healthy at the least cost possible; how to do our respective work and business without conforming to this world’s corrupt, greedy and evil system.

We have to take *action* depending on how we carefully look at, assess, evaluate and analyze things. There is no reason for assessing and analyzing if we are not willing to take positive action that can solve and address our predicament.

Then, most of all, we should always assess our spiritual lives. How are we doing in preparing ourselves for the Divine Wedding and entry into God’s kingdom? We have to strive to grow spiritually despite our human imperfections, so that we will achieve the ultimate human potential, to become God as God is God.

Are we really worthy to become pillars in God’s temple in the real sense of the word now? If we are not at the level God expects us to be, are we doing something about it? If we do have some deficiencies, what are we doing to improve our spiritual lives? Do we look at ourselves critically so that we may analyze why we may not yet be in the optimal spiritual condition, with lots of shortcomings that need to be tackled and overcome? Have we taken serious action to improve? Is it clear to us what necessary steps we should take to improve our spiritual lives towards the perfection that God the Father and Jesus Christ desire in us? We should start by asking ourselves, what have I done to follow God’s spiritual and physical laws to their true intent? These questions have to be answered

in an action plan that we should draw and accomplish in this life immediately.

### Continuing Commitment

As we look at our spiritual and physical needs, we should be continually renewing our commitment to God, as per our baptismal covenant with Him. We are not here just because we want to be a member of a church, or because we want to be saved and be protected physically during the Great Tribulation.

God called and drafted us because He wants us to do His Work. This is His purpose of having us here in His church now. Otherwise, He could have called us much later. At this time, He wants us to warn His people in Laodicea and to wake up the scattered sheep from their deep sleep. And we have to do it as He instructed, with a free will, without expecting anything in return. In certain cases, we even have to sacrifice ourselves to do things He wants us to accomplish not for our gain but for God's glory. Now, in this end-time confusion of His people, He wants His flock - those who are lost due to their blind shepherds who have transformed themselves into wolves - to return to Him.

How can we do this amidst the difficulties we are facing now and in the days ahead? For a committed person, there is no excuse of doing what one wants to do. Hence, we have to ponder on our personal commitment to the Great God of the universe every day of our lives. We should always remind ourselves of our first love toward His truths and His plan for us.

We should stand to the commitment of doing God's Work amidst trials and persecutions, to accomplish His Work amidst hardships. To actively shout and cry to God's people who are confused and lost, and still searching where His true Church is now.

Let us listen to what Christ said in Mat 16:18, "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Yes, Christ has only one Church, not so many splintered churches at one time. Christ strongly emphasized He has only one church, not many churches teaching differing beliefs and doctrinal variations; and finding where it now is, is a great challenge for those who are serious about their religion.

God's people have to find His church so they can deliver their commitment to support God's Work in whatever means - their skills and talents, fervent prayers, material and logistical support; and observing and carefully following God's financial laws in tithes and offerings. Our continuing commitment is a manifestation of how deeply we appreciate our calling and of our joy and happiness in obeying His spiritual laws and statutes.

Let us be reminded that God especially selected us even before we were born. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph 1:4).

Yes, the Great God of the universe had individually chosen each one of us even before the foundation of this world! Can we believe this? If we fully understand the depth of this verse, then the more we will strive to relentlessly support God's Work in this end-time.

God drafted us to do His Work. It is not we who volunteered ourselves to be in this Church! We need to understand this. As such, we should grasp the degree of responsibility that is on our shoulders and act. "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom 8:30)". We should keep in mind the glory of God's promise to keep us going.

God's salvation process is on-going in our individual lives. It is a process of continuing commitment until we reach the goal to become members of God's divine royal family.

### Tracking of Time

"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36). This clearly instructs God's people to watch what is about to happen and come to pass.

How do we know what to watch? The only reference we can use here is His Word, the Holy Bible. Watching implies vigilance and vigilance implies a certain degree of urgency.

Urgency relates to time and, in the biblical context, watching time relates to prophecy. If we desire to enhance our sense of urgency, as real Christians we

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should track the time and watch prophecies unfold in respect to world events.

For the past months until now, we have been much engrossed in the possibilities of the timeline that Mr. Robert Ardis presented in the booklet *Whoso Reads Let Him Understand*. We carefully studied God's prophecies of Daniel 12 and looked closely at how the timeline fits in the scheme of things that God desires and finally decides.

When December 10, 2008 came and more days passed thereafter without seeing things we had expected to see, like the two witnesses and their miracles, including the divine interventions in our physical illnesses, we started to ask ourselves and rethink, what is going on?

If things around us seem to be unfolding not in the way we expected, should we despise prophecy then? Should we be discouraged, disappointed and feel deceived? Do we turn our backs on prophecy, quit being in God's Church and denounce our faith?

Let us let God's word answer these very serious questions, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. **Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings.** Prove all things; hold fast that which is good (1Thes. 5:18-21)."

God, through the Apostle Paul, strongly admonishes us not to despise prophecies. He knows that in the end time, His chosen ones will be disappointed and discouraged when some events that were expected to happen do not happen as is written in the Bible, or as His servants understand and teach they would at a certain time. This is why He warns us not to despise prophecy. Please take note that even Paul expected that Christ would come and establish the kingdom of God here on earth in his time! So did Mr. Armstrong in 1975!

Did this discourage them and cause them to abandon and denounce their faith? No! History proves what they did. We should not anchor our faith on events or timelines! We should realise that the Apostle Paul, Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Ardis are human and they can be wrong. Only God is perfect and thus cannot be wrong. But then, we should also consider that even God can change His mind for a reason, or delay things to happen according to His purpose. The fact that something is already written in the Bible does not mean that He will not change His mind about the way

He brings prophecy to pass. God works in very mysterious ways!

We should remember that based on God's word, Mr. Armstrong predicted the fall of the Berlin wall, the unification of Germany and the institutionalization of the European Union among others. But this did not happen in his time. He was already dead when, what he predicted way ahead based on his understanding of the Bible, happened! God did uphold what Mr. Armstrong had said and written... after his death. And that bolstered the faith of God's people, even after his death. However, a few years later, what happened? Where are God's people? Are they united now in upholding the faith once delivered to His end-time Elijah?

We should anchor our faith on the hope that God will establish His kingdom here on earth to eventually put an end to all the sufferings and evils of this world! To bring lasting peace and prosperity! To eventually make us part of His royal family as king-priests under Jesus Christ, the Lord of Lords and Kings of Kings!

Some prophecies in the bible, the numbered days of Daniel 12 and the possible timeline, as computed and based on these scriptures prepared by Mr. Ardis, are there as a guide and means for us to deeply understand God's Word; to allow us to carefully study, meditate and learn so we may grow in grace and knowledge in order to understand and appreciate God's Truth.

Yet, there are still more truths we need to understand. There is still more knowledge about God's plan of salvation for us to learn. We will not stop learning through all eternity. Even if we will become spirit beings in the government of God, there are lots of things we need to learn about God's plan, about the universe which we will rule under Christ's leadership.

We should bear in mind that prophecies and timelines being possibilities are not an end in themselves. These are just a means for us to appreciate and understand the deep things of God - a means of strengthening our faith and not the other way around. And there are still more deep things that we need to know *as God allows*, according to His purpose, time and place! And He will only reveal that to His faithful servant, as He sanctifies His people through the revelation of His truths and prophecies (John 17:17).

We need to understand how God thinks. We should understand His patience. If we are to become citizens of His kingdom, we must learn how to submit to Him

and accept His will and His plan for us. We should continue watching the time and world events and be vigilant and always prepared, whatever people say.

## Sustain

Lastly, we should sustain supplication; sustain vigilance; sustain building our faith. Yes, we need to sustain the vital things that we need to do in this end-time. Sustain our focus on building and strengthening our faith.

Due to missing out on the basics, not fully comprehending what faith is all about, most of God's people are now lost. They forgot what faith is really all about. They focus on the physical, instead of being assured of that which they have hoped for all these years. They focused on what they could tangibly see and feel, instead of believing what they could not see.

They just forgot the true definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1 - "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Now God's people are engrossed on constructing buildings, on digging the earth, on starting schools, on showing and feeling worldly love and cares... love that they can *feel* by mutually admiring themselves as they show "human" love for each other, instead of appreciating first of all God's love for the new truths He would reveal to them if they respond to His wake up call. Then, they would be able to very clearly understand His plan... how the Feast days fit with God's plan of salvation, and how this fits into the numbered days prophesied in the Bible.

Instead of showing love and care for the lost brethren by warning what is to befall them, some prefer to shield themselves and want to lose contact with God's people – even to the extent of losing contact with their own families. Others have redirected their effort of convincing the whole world instead of saving first God's people who are lost due to Satan's deception. They are wasting resources of "loving" the world instead of focusing on building the faith of His lost, confused and scattered people.

Christ asked, "When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). This is a question that each one of us should always ensure that He will fulfill. As always, the most difficult thing in this life is how to sustain. That's the reason why so many of our brethren are lost and fall away. We need to sustain embracing our first love until we are turned into spirit beings. It's really difficult to sustain

upholding our faith; that is why we should ask God for the full measure of His Holy Spirit in us to be able to accomplish this.

Then we should sustain supplication. The Apostle Paul always reminded us – **Pray without ceasing** (1Thes 5:17). We should continually ask humbly and pray earnestly to God without let-up. All the trials, all the sufferings, all the persecutions can be solved through deep, sincere and heartfelt fervent prayers. For God, nothing is impossible, we just have to always wait on Him, for His time when to do things.

In conclusion, let us now look closely at Rev. 17:14, more particularly the last part of that verse "... and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."

Those who stand for God the Father and will fight with the King of kings and Lord of lords are the faithful few. In Mr. Armstrong's time, based on the number of *Plain Truth* subscribers, millions of people had been called. Of those millions, only around a hundred thousand were chosen. Of those chosen, a miniscule few remain faithful to this day. Let us finish this race to the end, no matter how tiny this little Church is.

A very deep sense of urgency is now vitally needed so we can shout aloud to wake up our lost, blinded and sleeping brethren, so that with God's help and direction, we can gather the lively stones that will complete the building of God's temple before the Marriage Ceremony is performed. This has to be done before the establishment of God's kingdom here on earth. This is how urgent the task that is being placed in our shoulders is.

As God's faithful, with one strong voice, we have to shout and cry out loudly the Midnight Cry – The Bridegroom has come!!!

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## Laying on of Hands

by Frank Borg

The '*laying on of hands*' is a crucial and foundational doctrine of the Church of God (Hebrews 6:2). It is a doctrine with profound meaning and significance, so we must know it and deeply understand it!

What exactly does the '*laying on of hands*' represent and how is it applied in God's true Church?

As we shall see from Biblical examples of the '*laying on of hands*', this ceremony symbolizes a *transfer* or an *assigning* of "something". The *hands* (of God's servants) which are used in the ceremony are not important, but there is something significant and special each time the *laying on of hands* takes place. At the outset, it is imperative to understand that the authority for this ceremony comes from God (Num.27:18) and the *laying on of hands* ceremony is performed by one of His servants as a *visible sign*. As already mentioned, the physical hands don't actually do anything! It is God, through the power of His Holy Spirit that does the transferring and the assigning! The ceremony of the *laying on of hands* is the endorsement and confirmation of God's purpose.

When God was delivering His nation out of the land of Egypt, Aaron and the righteous leaders that followed him *laid their hands* on certain of the sacrificial animals. Let us take a look at an Old Testament scripture which demonstrates this '*laying on of hands*' ceremony: "And Aaron shall *lay both his hands* upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:21-22). In this case, the '*laying on of hands*' ceremony was a sign and a reminder to the unconverted nation of Israel that, at Christ's second coming, He will *assign* blame to where it belongs; all of man's sins will be *transferred* upon the head of Satan the Devil.

Another example found in the Old Testament that demonstrates the '*laying on of hands*' was to fulfill the biblical *transfer* of birthright promises: "And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph,

and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long into this day. The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads, and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth" (Genesis 48:16-18). The United States and Britain would not have received the birthright blessings if it were not for the *laying on of hands* ceremony. The *transfer* and *assigning* that took place in this ceremony shows just how important the *laying on of hands* is!

The '*laying on of hands*' ceremony was used in the Old Testament for the *transferring of authority* during the *ordination* of servants to a position of responsibility: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and *lay thine hand upon him*; And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he *laid his hands upon him*, and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses" (Num. 27:18-20, 23). In any ordination, authority is *transferred* through the *laying on of hands* ceremony. Moses laid his hands upon Joshua as a *symbol*, or a *sign*, that God Himself was placing Joshua in an office of responsibility.

The New Testament also records a number of examples of the '*laying on of hands*' ceremony. At this juncture, it is appropriate to emphasize that the phrase '*laying on of hands*' in the original Greek language (Strong's 1936 and 5495) indicates that this ceremony symbolizes the '*transfer of power*'. This complements what we have already seen and will help clarify further illustrations and examples of this most important ceremony.

In the New Testament, we see examples of the *laying on of hands* performed immediately after baptism: "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had *laid his hands upon them*, the Holy Spirit came on them..." (Acts 19:5-6). This *laying on of hands* ceremony is always performed by an ordained minister. It represents the *transmittal* of a portion of His Holy Spirit, by God Himself, to the individual who just got baptized (Acts 8:17).

The ordination into the office of deacon, or deaconess, is done through the *laying on of hands* ceremony (Acts 6:5-6). Before ordination, God requires that certain

qualities and fruit are displayed in the individuals life: “Likewise must the deacons be grave [*honest and honorable*], not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these be first proved, then let them use the office of deacon, being first found blameless”. God *transmits* a further portion of His Holy Spirit to the individual being ordained. This takes place during the *laying on of hands* ceremony and helps the individual to perform and carry out *physical* tasks related to the smooth running of the congregation.

Acts 13:1-3 documents examples of men being ordained into the office of minister – this is a *spiritual* office of service to God and His people: “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said ‘Now separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and *laid hands* on them, they sent them away.” Before ordination of a man into the ministry, deep meditation, close contact with God, and fasting takes place by God’s servant. God ultimately decides every ordination, and the ceremony is then performed through His servant (Num 27:23; Acts 8:18-20). God, through fruit, circumstances and other conditions (1 Tim 3:2-7) will indicate when the time is right for an ordination to take place. One can only be placed into the ministry through the *laying on of hands* of the elders before him. It is crucial that this authority and government in God’s Church is recognized - it can be traced back to the foundation of the Church when the original twelve apostles were called, chosen and ordained by the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ.

1 Tim 5:21-22 indicate that diligence and care is to be taken before an ordination takes place, making sure that God’s will is being carried out: “I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. *Lay hands suddenly on no man...*”. Scripture clearly demonstrates that ordaining a person into the ministry should never be done in haste, indicating the implications and seriousness of this ceremony.

God wants to see fruit in the life of a man (Matt 7:16) before the ordination into the office of an elder: “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober [*self controlled and discreet*], of good behavior [*orderly and modest*], given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker [*argumentative or contentious*], not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient, not a brawler, not covetous, one that

rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity...not a novice [*new convert*] ... moreover, he must have a good report of them that are without” (1 Tim. 3-7). With ordination comes the *transmittal* of authority (Acts 13:1-2). God *assigns* a further portion of the Holy Spirit to the individual who has been chosen by God to serve in this spiritual capacity. The office given to an ordained person is bestowed upon the individual by God through the *laying on of hands ceremony*.

Other examples given in the New Testament of this ceremony include anointing during sickness (James 5:14). We see an example of this recorded in Luke 4:40: “Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he *laid his hands on every one of them*, and healed them”. This example demonstrates a proper step we should take as we rely on God for healing (James 5). It shows that we are truly submitting our bodies to Jesus Christ and, in faith, relying on God for intervention and healing. As *hands are laid* on the individual during anointing, the minister humbly asks God to *assign* healing to that individual according to His will and timing.

The *laying on of hands* is also performed on other occasions, such as the ‘blessing of the little children’. This is a custom which is performed once on young children and traditionally takes place during the Feast of Tabernacles. “Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should *put his hands on them*, and pray” (Matt 19:13). During this ceremony, the minister asks God to *assign* special care and protection over the young child that is being blest.

The *laying on of hands* is also administered during the marriage ceremony. Marriage is God-ordained and represents a loving God-plane relationship. The *laying on of hands* during the marriage ceremony demonstrates an acknowledgment that the marriage-covenant is an agreement which is bound and sealed by Almighty God who resides in heaven. Authority is *transferred* unto the wedded couple whereby the husband is to lead his wife in love, and the wife is to submit herself unto her husband (Gen 2:24-25; Eph. 5:22-25).

What a blessing that God’s Church understands the deep meaning and significance of this most vital and basic doctrine of God! Now it is up to us to inculcate this truth in our minds, see that it is applied the way God intended, and ensure that we give this ceremony the proper respect it is due!