

From the Chaplaincy



AWAZING GRACE

By Fr. Francis Ongkingco

“James, how’s traffic along EDSA these days,” I asked over our ‘zoommeet’ since I was planning to travel north for some pastoral assignments.

“Sometimes it’s a breeze, Father. And on other unexpected moments, it’s a burden! But mostly a breeze since lockdown measures have lessened public transport in EDSA.”

“Then I don’t think I will need Waze to navigate away from congested parts,” I sighed with relief.

“It really depends, Father. Sometimes you’re lucky and sometimes not! But most of the time, EDSA is pretty smooth sailing. But Waze does come in handy once in a while.”

“Changing the topic, what have you been up to during the lockdown?”

“Oh, I tried my hand at photography. As a boy I’ve always wanted to learn how to take photos. Right now, since I can’t really go out that often, I take daily photos of what’s outside my window.”

“It’s like doing time lapses?”

“Yes, but more of taking three shots with a few seconds between them and posting them in IG.”

“And what was your latest upload?”

*“I entitled it: **The Wind Blows Where It Wills**. I asked people to try and guess in the three photographs where the wind was blowing.”*

Then James shared the three photos. It showed a massive church, behind it was a tall and enormous column of a cloud and in the foreground, was a bushy ornamental bamboo plant.

“That’s quite a composition for a beginner,” I was entranced by the quality of his shots.

“Can you tell me where the wind is blowing in the first, second and third photos, Father?”

I looked at each photograph carefully and said: *“in the first, the wind is blowing behind in the clouds, in the second, it’s making the bamboo sway in the foreground. But in the third photo, I can’t exactly say where...,”* I studied it more.

“Well, that’s because the answer is: it’s blowing inside the church!” He interrupted my search.

“Not fair! You can’t just shift from something real to the spiritual, James!” I complained.

“Why not? Am I not free to imagine that there is also a strong spiritual wind blowing from the church?”

“And what did your IG followers say,” I wanted something to challenge his position.

“That it’s so mind-blowing!!!” He laughed out loud.

[SIGH!]



James’ shots and his ideas continued to echo in my head. I realized that somehow – this is spiritually speaking of course – that the Holy Spirit blows in the three stages of man’s life: past, present and future.

Somehow, we can look back and see how through our past life God had actually had it all planned for our own good. And **if we are sincere about our conversion, even our past errors and faults were mysteriously allowed by God to humble us and help us to trust in Him more.**

The future is never certain nor known to us. But we can, as God's children, be sure that He is preparing things well: 'in my Father's mansion there are many rooms, and I am preparing a room for you!' These are the most reassuring words of Jesus about our future. But the future will ultimately depend on how we allow the Spirit to blow in the present.

The present is where we are called to sense and facilitate the Spirit's presence. He will not force Himself into us, but waits for us to open a clear way for His grace to enter and convert us. **We have to help Him Waze His way into our hearts and minds by removing obstacles to prepare a clear path for Him into our hearts.** Thus, we become docile to His promptings, lights and presence.

Indeed, the grace of our conversion blows in mysterious ways, but it shouldn't be all too enigmatic if we *help* the Paraclete with those constant words of Scripture: "Speak Lord, your servant is listening!" And He will enter and aid our transformation until we hear those consoling words: **'YOU HAVE REACHED YOUR DESTINATION: HEAVEN!'**



**'In my Father's mansion there are many rooms,
and I am preparing a room for you.'**