



The MENORAH

The Official Publication of the Fullness of Christ International Ministries

IMMERSED!: FOCIM HOLDS ANNUAL WATER BAPTISM FOR 2019

By Daniel Alberto G. Guinigundo



LAST MAY 18, 2019, Saturday, at 6 A.M. in the morning at the North Susana Executive Village Clubhouse, 12 brothers and sisters publicly declared their faith in, and commitment to, Jesus Christ by undergoing FOCIM Immerse, or the water baptism program of FOCIM. The candidates were also baptized in the Holy Spirit to further equip them in the ministry.

The following took part in Immerse:

1. AJ A. So
2. Akia F. Custodio
3. Cielo C. Elipse
4. Cyrill John Y. Cabasag
5. Fe C. Faune
6. Joanna Patricia D. Bolaños
7. John Lorenze M. Sabado
8. Katrin Jessica I. Distor
9. Kay Queen A. So
10. Kieth Isaac G. Santos
11. Mary Jane G. Borile
12. Monalisa B. Delos Santos

Prior to the water baptism, the candidates attended a dedicated seminar on the foundations of Christian faith, as baptism is an important foundation for the Christian life. Conducted by Bro. Diwa C. Guinigundo, FOCIM's Senior Pastor, candidates were likewise given a time for questions as they enter into their new life in Christ. After a short prayer and the water baptism itself, the candidates, along with some leaders and elders of the Ministry Team fellowshiped over breakfast. With one of the biggest batches to undergo baptism, the Church will continue to evangelize and disciple men and women to be Christ's followers to take part in building His kingdom.

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GOING DEEPER INTO THE WORD: BLITHE USHERING MINISTRY CONDUCTS THIRD WORKSHOP ON EXEGESIS

BY RHODORA C. FAUNE

LAST MARCH 10, the FOCIM Blithe Ushering Ministry conducted a workshop led by Bro. Daniel Guinigundo entitled “Deepening into the Word”. Members of the Ushering Ministry as well as other FOCIM members who expressed interest in knowing more about God and the Bible attended the workshop. “Deepening to the Word” is not your typical Christian workshop; it focuses on some interpretation skills to better give clarity to the Word. In the third installment of Bro. Daniel's workshop series, he focused on the value of learning the literary and the historical-cultural context of the biblical passage under study.



As a recap to the previous workshops conducted, Bro. Daniel reiterated the many reasons why most Christians merely read the Bible but fail to understand, much less study the Bible, such as its relevance to the life of Christians today, the lack of time, as well as its credibility. He also emphasized that studying the Bible is not only essential to the growth of Christians (1 Peter 2:2), but also to their effectiveness as Christians (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

SOME OF THE LESSONS SHARED DURING THE VERY INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP:

History of the Bible

After giving a detailed yet brief history of the Bible, Bro. Daniel emphasized that the Bible has been translated into many different languages and different versions. It was done so that ordinary people can understand it. Though there were issues found in some versions, none of them changed in any way, having preserved the crucial themes, narratives, and spirit of God's Word.

Literary Context

"Misconstruing a passage neutralizes the Word of God. It robs Scripture of its authority and influence. The entire reason we go to the Bible in the first place – to get God's truth and apply it to our lives- is thwarted when we ignore the context."

Bro. Daniel defined context as the situation within which something exists or happens that can help explain it; the text or speech that comes immediately before and/or after a particular phrase or piece of text that influences how it is used and what it means. With regards to literary context, Bro. Daniel acquainted to the attendees the difference between immediate and broader context in view of the passage under study. To understand a passage, one must try to see how it fits into the larger literary unit (s) in which it occurs: the chapter, the section of the biblical book, and the book as a whole. To grasp God's Word and breathe meaning to our present lives, we must understand the meaning of the text in context and apply that meaning to our lives.

Historical-Cultural Context

Bro. Daniel began their lecture by pointing out that God spoke His message in specific, historical situations, i.e. to people living in particular places, speaking particular languages, adopting a particular way of life. Thus, we cannot simply ignore the people and the events taking place in history and jump directly to what God wants to say to us. He highlighted that the way we listen to God must honor the way God chose to communicate. Thus, we bible readers should not be too arrogant to think that God cared nothing about the original audience but was merely using them to convey a message to us.

Knowledge of the historical-cultural context of the passage under study offers readers a window into what God was saying to the biblical audience; since we live in a very different context, we must capture God's original intended meaning as reflected in the text and framed by the ancient historical-cultural context. Once we understand the meaning of the text in its original context, we can apply it in our lives that would be just as relevant!

It was indeed a very productive afternoon as the Ushers and the rest of the attendees were given a deeper perspective on certain truths about the Bible. As "gatekeepers" of the Church, it is essential for every usher to be firmly rooted in God's Word. The topics shared to the attendees allowed them to have a more comprehensive view regarding the Bible. Most importantly, biblical reading, through the understanding of the Bible's contexts, allow people to understand the relevance of His Word and His teachings today.

FOCIM LAUNCHES FIRST TOUCHING HEAVEN CHANGING EARTH CONFERENCE FOR 2019

BY WOODROW WILSON C. YOUNG

THE FIRST “Touching Heaven Changing Earth” event for the year 2019 was held last February 9 in King’s Court, Makati City. The event was organized by the BSP Christian Fellowship in partnership with Promise Governance Institute and the Mighty Dove Foundation. Dr. Mila Lily Mercader, author of the Kingdom Operation series of books, started the event as the first speaker. Her message focused on the Marketplace ministry - going out beyond the four corners of our church and spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to the marketplace. This means that our duty as Christians is not limited to going to church and having fellowship with fellow believers during Sundays. More than that, we should be reaching out to pre-believers by sharing God’s Word every day that we are in the marketplace. Dr. Mila also shared that as God’s children, part of our birthright and rightful inheritance is prosperity and success in the marketplace.

Our success allows us to infiltrate the mountains of the marketplace.

Prior to the next speaker, the FOCIM Worship team led the Praise and Worship and further lifted the spirit of the congregation. Bro. Diwa Guinigundo, FOCIM’s Senior Pastor, delivered the second message which centered on how God is moving mightily in the Philippines. He shared that our nation has been dedicated to the Lord many times in the past, even going back to the 1987 Constitution. As a result, God has poured out blessings after blessings upon our nation. This is evident in the fact that the Philippines have had 20 consecutive years of uninterrupted economic positive growth without experiencing recession. Lastly, prophecies have been made declaring that the Philippines will be one of the wealthiest nations on earth.



SPEAKERS

BSP CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PROMISE GOVERNANCE INSTITUTE AND THE MIGHTY DOVE FOUNDATION

DR. MILA LILY MERCADER
AUTHOR, KINGDOM OPERATIONS



BRO. DIWA GUINIGUNDO
BSP GOVERNOR, PASTOR - FOCIM



DR. MICHAEL MCKINNEY
FOUNDER, PROMISE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY



REV. DEXTER LOW
AUTHOR AND PASTOR, LATTER RAIN CHURCH



The third speaker was Dr. Michael McKinney, President and Founder of Promise Christian University. The core of his message was our responsibility as spokesperson for Jesus Christ. He stressed the undeniable fact that we have been invited to be the oracle of God in this generation. With this invitation, we should always depend upon God in our mission of bringing the gospel to the marketplace. Dr. Michael encouraged the people that it is time to raise up the marketplace for Christ as ambassadors of God's highest kingdom. After his message, he asked all pastors to gather in front to pray for all the people present for a declaration of excellence, prosperity, and success in the marketplace.

The fourth and final speaker was Dr. Dexter Low, Senior Pastor of Latter Rain Church in Malaysia. The highlight of his message is the importance of establishing the "Ecclesia" – God's government here on earth. To achieve this,

the Church should serve as a model for the marketplace so that these two will go hand in hand towards establishing God's kingdom. The dichotomy of having full time Pastors in the marketplace should be removed. Lastly, we need good people to be in power to execute reforms for nation transformation.

The first "Touching Heaven Changing Earth" of the year was truly a significant event and a big step towards conquering the marketplace for Christ and nation transformation. Through this event, we have been challenged to be the voice of God and infiltrate the mountains of the marketplace. Furthermore, we have been reminded of how God has moved mightily in our nation. God loves our country and the prophetic declarations will come into fruition soon. We now look forward to the next "Touching Heaven Changing Earth" with so much excitement.

DEFENDING THE FAITH: GEN-C LEADERS HOLD ANNUAL YOUTH CAMP ON APOLOGETICS

By Woodrow Wilson C. Young

THE PRESENT and future youth leaders of FOCIM gathered last March 20 for the annual Generation for Christ Youth Ministry Leaders Camp at the Lampstand. In order to train and prepare young leaders in circumstances wherein questions would be raised regarding the Christian faith, the topics during the camp centered on "Apologetics". The Camp started off with the Opening Remarks delivered by Sis. Pam Young. In her short message, Sis. Pam gave a brief background on the concept of Apologetics, to mean "defending our faith". She emphasized that Apologetics is rooted in our desire to faithfully represent the reality of God. In a more specific point of view, "Christian Apologetics" aims to remove obstacles or doubts related to our Christian faith. Sis. Pam also shared a few details regarding the importance of Apologetics.

The Camp had four speakers focusing on four main topics. The first speaker was Sis. Angelica Dionisio, who discussed the concept of God's existence. In her message, Sis. Gel emphasized the need for Revelation from God and that God as the Creator wants to communicate with His creation. Furthermore, she discussed the types of Revelations and touched on a few important truths about the Bible. Sis. Gel also shared details on the Scientific foreknowledge of the Bible. The next speaker was Sis. Dhors Faune and her message focused on the historical accuracy of the Bible. Sis. Dhors facilitated an interactive type of discussion as she divided the attendees into three groups and assigned Bible passages along with alleged Bible contradictions for group discussions. This approach proved to be very effective as it encouraged each group member to analyze and provide inputs regarding possible conflicts found in the Bible. After a series of healthy discussions, all young leaders realized that the alleged contradictions were false and that all details in the Bible are in harmony. Bro. John David Dionisio took his turn as the third speaker who talked about Morality and Ethics in relation to God's existence. In his message, Bro. JD made it clear that moral values are the foundations of God's moral character and that true morality is based on the unchanging nature of God. Further, he stressed that the main idea of Ethics based on God concerns the relationship of man to His Creator. The last speaker was Bro. DJ Bello, who talked about defending the faith. To get the attendees more involved, Bro. DJ asked selected leaders to engage in a role-playing activity. He presented different scenarios wherein our Christian beliefs are challenged as the selected participant assumed his / her role as Jesus' sworn witness and defend the faith with gentleness and respect. After the role playing activity, Bro. DJ provided inputs as to how we can improve our approach in defending our faith in different places such as in school or in the marketplace.



GEN-C YOUTH LEADERS

To help recall the many concepts and principles of the four topics, all attendees were treated to a friendly game of "Jeopardy". All in all, the event proved to be as productive as it was enriching. Ultimately, the camp was the perfect venue to instill the mindset for all young leaders that the best way to defend our faith is to imitate our savior, Jesus Christ.

ASCENDING A HARD TRAIL: GEN-C LAUNCHES ITS NEW VERTICAL SERIES FOR 2019

By Nigel John C. Delgado



Sis. Gellie Arada, Sis. Patricia Unite, Bro. Abe Guinigundo, respectively - Gen-C counselors speakers and Gen-C youth

THIS YEAR'S first installment of the Generation for Christ Youth Ministry's Vertical Youth Series was held last March 16 at the Lampstand. The first of the series is aptly named "Ascent: A Hard Trail" as it focuses on the journey of young believers and the cost and expectations that come with following Christ. Sis. Pamela Young, one of Gen-C Youth Ministry's Spiritual Growth heads, in her opening remarks, recapped last year's "Base Camp" youth series and gave a quick overview of what is in store for this year. This was followed by a powerful testimony by one of Gen-C's youth leaders, Sis. Danika Bello. Through her testimony, she made the young people realize that the trials and struggles we go through as Christians will bring us closer to the Lord. To close her testimony, Sis. Danika performed her wonderful rendition of the song "When the Fight Calls" by Hillsong Young and Free.



Testimony and song presentation - Sis. Danika Bello

The message was delivered by three Gen-C counselors. The first speaker, Sis. Gellie Arada, shared that God chose a narrow path for each of us. She reminded the young people to avoid relying on their own understanding and instead focus on Jesus Christ as the ultimate guide and author of their lives. Sis. Patricia Unite took her turn as the next speaker, with her message centering on the importance of sticking to the route set by God. She reminded the young people to never lose focus on their goal as followers of Jesus despite the distractions brought by the enemy. Further, Sis. Patty gave warning that struggles will definitely come. Nevertheless, she encouraged the young people to never give up and be still knowing that God is in complete control of our lives. The final speaker was Bro. Abe Guinigundo, who talked about the "hard trail". In his message, Bro. Abe explained that the struggle we experience is real but vital to our growth as Christians. He talked about the good news, that God loves us, and the bad news, that sometimes, we may not be aware or feel His love. The truth is that the hardships and trials we experience are part of God's love, as these are necessary for the perfecting of our faith and revelation of our destiny.

It was truly a spirit-filled event for all the young people present for the launch of the vertical series. A number of new faces were even seen among the attendees, which made the event much more meaningful. More importantly, they were reminded that the "Hard Trail" is part of God's love that guides us in our "Ascent" towards our heavenly purpose.

FOCIM honors its Wonder Wo-MOMS!

Last May 12, 2019, FOCIM honored all of the mothers, both physical and spiritual, in a special lovefeast service, with Bro. Dan Abraham G. Guinigundo as the speaker, and the Blithe Ushering Ministry as the host of the special Mother's Day program after the service.







FEATURE: A CASE FOR FAITH — SUNDAY SCHOOL SERIES

Bro. Abe Guinigundo

Have you ever had a question about your faith that has gone unanswered for the longest time? The Menorah asks Bro. Abe Guinigundo to shed light on his new Adult Sunday School Series, entitled “A Case for Faith: Answering Tough Objections to Christianity.”

How did this whole series start?

Funny story. I was coming from work one night with my brother, who asked me to accompany him to OMF Literature in Mandaluyong. He wanted to purchase a new Bible. That time, I wasn't even planning on buying a book, as they can be quite expensive. But of course, God works in mysterious ways. So I went down with him to “look around” and fortunately stumbled upon an entire shelf Christian Apologetic literature. Back then, I had already read “A Case for Christ” by Lee Strobel, a novel which I believe reinforced my faith because of its logical and scientific approach to the question: “did Jesus really exist and if He did, was He really the Messiah?” The book is an easy read despite being quite comprehensive. I would recommend it to anyone, wherever they are in their faith walk.

Anyway, a particular book caught my eye, entitled “A Case for Faith.” To my surprise, it was also authored by Lee Strobel and appeared to be a “follow-up” to his earlier novel, which, by the way, became a New York Times Bestseller. So there, I picked it up and as they say, the rest is history.

"“did Jesus really exist and if He did, was He really the Messiah?””
Lee Strobel



Bro. Abe Guinigundo

Is there any inspiration behind your approach?

Any religion, if it is to be found credible, must encourage reason and logic. I think people underestimate the impact of a rationale response to a burning question. In our case, it is a faith question. Many Christians, or for that matter, any person subscribing to a certain religion, have some questions about their faith that they would like answered—some might be confused about certain doctrines, others might find apparent contradictions in their Bible and real-life situations.

I, myself, have had some questions that I couldn't find a satisfying answer to. As believers, we ought to pursue every inquiry into our faith without fear that we might not like the answer waiting for us at the end of our search. And so I found myself with the burden to search not only for myself, but also for the other members who may be dealing with similar questions. Everyone wants to know the “why” behind the problem that they are facing and I took it upon myself to at the very least provide them with answers that not only satisfied their souls, but also their sense of logic.

Without delving into specifics, can you give us an overview of what to expect?

Well, as of this writing, I have already tackled the most popular objection against Christianity, which highlights the bitter and undeniable existence of indiscriminate evil and suffering in the world despite the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing, and loving God. Although I borrowed Strobel's answers, I decided last-minute to create my own outline and added personal touches to give more context to our members.

Some objections up for discussion are the following: “A loving God would never torture people in hell,” “Why does God kill innocent children?,” and “Why is Jesus the only way to God and salvation?”. These are just the principal inquiries and we are sure to take up more “sub-questions” along the way.

THE ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL IS HELD EVERY SUNDAY, 8:15 A.M. TO 9:00 A.M.

HAVANA NIGHT: HOURS OF FUN AND FELLOWSHIP

BY BRO. ELSO U. CABANGON



If the staging a year ago of the “Eat, Pray and Build” event was highlighted by the raucous exchange of “hugot” lines, this year’s “Havana Night” would be remembered for the noisy acclamation of a durable FOCIM love team called “BingSu”. The second of what shaped up as an annual event organized by the Couples Ministry and staged last March 23rd at the spacious Groove Central Dance Studio in Cubao, was a heady brew of good food, unlimited lively dancing and talents galore, the talent consisting of turning mushy dialogue from a Jollibee commercial into laugh lines.

The contest on who could best reenact or approximate the dialogue of the Jollibee couple was participated in by Bro Bing and Sis Sophie Guerrero (BingSu); Bro Daniel Guinigundo and Sis Kat Distor (KatNiel); Bro DJ Bello and Sis Cielo Elipse; Bro Milton and Sis Raija Amayun; Bro CJ and Sis Hannah Cabasag. Judging of the performances was by audience applause. Judging from the prolonged clapping and chanting of “BingSu! BingSu! BingSu!” especially from the FOCIM-QC contingent, the award went to Bro Bing and Sis Sophie, who also just recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.



Other awards winners were Sis Yumi Capalongan and Bro Angel Dionisio as Best Dressed, while couple Bryan and Ruth Suarez who were invited by Sis Didi Marcelo, took the "Early Bird" prize.

Senior Pastor Diwa C. Guinigundo and wife Sis Apple were unable to attend due to Bro. Diwa's official travel abroad, but Pastor Diwa sent a video message where he put in biblical context the need and necessity for such an event as organized by the Couples Ministry. He said: "For couples, this kind of hideaway from it all is necessary so that the biblical principle of the husband loving his wife and the wife submitting to her husband can be fulfilled. When couple spend time together, they grow together. They are nurtured together. They are blessed by God together. So they grow even more in the fuller knowledge of God and His word."



When couple spend time together, they grow together. They are nurtured together. They are blessed by God together. So they grow even more in the fuller knowledge of God and His word."

Bro. Diwa C. Guinigundo



The success of Havana Night owed itself to the incredible team efforts by couples Bro Bodge and Sis Roanna Santos who also masterfully co-emceed the program, Bro Woods and Sis Pam Young, and the mother-daughter tag team of Sisters Didi and ML Marcelo. The Santos couple took charge of the entertainment side, in the process drawing in the assistance of Brothers DJ Bello, Nico Capalongan and Keith Santos! The Young couple who originated the Havana Night theme/concept, also handled the arduous tasks of organizing the venue and attendance reception,

handling communications/ invitations and financial accounting. The Marcelos attended to the otherwise messy part of engaging and monitoring the food caterer for the event.

Those were not of course cut and dried division of labor, as more than 300 facebook messenger messages posted since January this year in their chat group attested to their inputs in every issue they faced. But, always guided by the Holy Spirit, the group overcame all hurdles, worked through arguments, and produced an event that was memorable, ennobling and happily blissful.



#WELOVEBINGSU

By Roanna G. Santos



Hearts beat fast. All eyes glued to the closed door as it slowly opened to unveil a beaming bride, ready to walk down the long red carpet.

Kailan man, Nasaan ma'y ito ang pangarap ko.

As the soft and sweet music filled the room, she took her first, second and every step unhurriedly. Her smile revealed a sense of inner joy, albeit feeling nervous.

Kung tayo ay matanda na, Sana'y di tayo magbago.

The beautiful bride in her pristine white gown and groomed grey hair is my Mom, Sophie. She and my Dad, Bing, had just celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary on Sunday, March 3, 2019, at the Marco Polo Hotel in Ortigas. They were married 50 years ago on March 1, 1969. What made this occasion extra special was the presence of my oldest brother, Kuya Bobby, and his wife, Ate Marites, who came all the way from the United States to join the rest of the family. During the planning phase, my Dad strongly reminded us - three siblings - to have a ceremony that would resemble a church service or a celebratory fellowship.

There was an actual Praise and Worship with me and my sister, Shelly, leading the songs while our sons, Luke and Keith, played the guitars and drums. Our Senior Pastor and dear Uncle, Diwa C. Guinigundo, who officiated the wedding ceremony, shared this message:

"This is a continuing narrative of Bro. Bing and Sis. Sophie's walk with God. They built their home on the foundation of Jesus Christ, the Living Chief Cornerstone. Brothers and Sisters, this is my challenge to you: Do you need 50 years of experience to crystallize this kind of story which proves that nothing gives a life like one established in Jesus Christ?"



The Guerrero family

I couldn't agree with Uncle Diwa more. Our parents had clearly established the kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ in our family. Evening family devotions, weekly Bible studies and Sunday fellowships were a staple for us. We grew up memorizing verses from the Bible, singing worship songs, attending countless of prayer meetings. Mom and Dad did not only share their love for God through words, but they also modeled it for us especially through their marriage. Like any other relationships, there were certainly a couple of challenging moments, but ultimately, we had risen above them – and it's all because of God's grace. Those trying times sharpened our saw and strengthened our faith in the Lord. We were deeply blessed when Mom and Dad had also decided that they would donate all monetary gifts they'd receive to the building of our church's sanctuary.

King David said in 2 Samuel 7:18, "Who am I, Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?" Just like King David, I am in deep awe of the Lord. How often does one get to witness a golden wedding anniversary or 'renewal of vows after 50 married years?' Not very often! And to experience one in the lives of my own dearest parents was a grand bonus from the Lord.

Now that my parents are in the prime of their senior years, with 6 grandsons in total, I can only pray that the Lord will allow them to be much stronger and healthier so they can live longer and fully enjoy the fruits of their labor. I hold on to God's promises in Isaiah 46:4,



*"Even to your old age and gray hairs
I am he, I am he who will sustain you.
I have made you and I will carry you;
I will sustain you and I will rescue you."
~Isaiah 46:4*

"Ang aking pangako Na ang pag-ibig ko'y laging sa 'yo. Kahit maputi na ang buhok ko." The song continued to play as our beautiful bride savored every moment walking down the aisle to meet her handsome groom waiting for her at the altar adorned with lovely flowers. Ask anyone who came to celebrate with us that night. They would tell you the same thing: My parents were beaming with joy and love for each other! That special moment was a true testament of God's faithfulness. His words are indeed alive in Deuteronomy 7:9,

"Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments."



#weloveblingsu

Not the Korean dessert this time.

5-DAY HOLIDAY IN TAIWAN: HIGHLIGHTS & TIPS FOR FIRST TIME TRAVELLERS

By Hannah Cecilia S. Luching

WE LANDED at Taoyuan International Airport on a winter evening on the second week of March of this year. Despite the harsh weather, we were blessed to enjoy the breathtaking landscapes, warm warm people, and all the exciting activities Taiwan has to offer. Dubbed as the 'Heart of Asia', Taiwan is often overlooked by tourists but definitely a destination worth discovering. Unlike the Philippines, Taiwan is an island nation with just several small outlying islands and densely populated with wet summer and dry cool winter. If you've never been to this country, you should consider taking a trip there. Below is the highlight of our recent sojourn to the Heart of Asia.

Places Visited:

Chiang Kai Shek Memorial.

Probably the most popular landmark in Taiwan. It has excellent landscape, amazing structures with several open gardens. You may also want to see the changing of the guard every hour.

Huashan 1914 Creative Park & Songshan Cultural Creative Park. Perfect for travelers looking for unconventional picture perfect spots, interesting art shows and exhibits and also a good place to sit down for a cup of coffee.

Nantou County. Our personal favorite! The county is 4 hours away from Taipei and the only county landlocked by mountains. The place can only be reached by a local bus or a private car. It's a two hour zigzag ride coming from the Taichung railway station but prepare for a breathtaking views. Places to visit are the following: Cingjing Farm, Cinjing Skywalk, Carton King, Old Swiss Garden, Snow Mountain and the Old England Manor.

Taichung City. A city located at central Taiwan and two hours away from Taipei by train is gaining popularity to tourist. If you are looking for the best exciting activities and a mix of modern and old attractions then this is the place to be. Places to see: Summit Resort or Xinshe Castle, Houli Flower Farm, Rainbow Village, Lavender Cottage, and Gaomei Wetlands.



Why is Taiwan perfect for first time travelers?

Visa free. It was first announced by Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in the Philippines (TECO) on November 17, 2017 that Philippine nationals are eligible for a 14-day non-extendable free visa which only requires a (1) roundtrip ticket from Manila to Taiwan, (2) accommodation booking, and (3) at least six months validity of the Philippine passport. Taiwan has extended the visa program until 31 July 2019 which is roughly two months away from now. Don't panic. You can still book a ticket before the deadline due to a number of promo fares offered by Cebu Pacific, Airasia and Philippine Airlines. Taiwan is only 376km away from Batanes group of island and it will only took about 2 hours to travel via plane and given its close proximity to our country, it is considered to be a popular getaway for Filipinos with a tight budget.

Cheaper than Korea and Japan. Dreaming of going to Korea or Japan while chasing snow and suddenly realize that you're on a limited budget? Worry no more. Taiwan is relatively cheap compared to the above mentioned countries. Aside from the fact that your wallet needs saving it will be extra stressful to consider applying for a tourist visa from both Korea and Japan. Let's admit it, money is a big factor in fulfilling your #travelgoals but allow me to break down that misconception for you. First, you don't need to present an x amount of money in your bank account nor a need to expose all your treasure to the Embassy in order to acquire a visa because basically visa is free. Second, plane tickets can get as low as P1,500 up to P7,000 for a one way fare coming from Manila which is even cheaper than getting a plane ticket to Batanes.

On top of that, a decent hotel accommodation for two person with free breakfast will cost you as low as P1,500/night in Ximending district. If you love a little adventure you can try Taiwan's cool and modern hostels, which is the best in the world I tell you, or shared-accommodations suitable for backpackers. A dorm type room will cost you P700/night which is really cheap. Lastly, an inexpensive meal in a restaurant will cost you about P250/meal with a generous serving. Street foods also come with big servings but will only cost you about P70-P120 per order. So if you are the kind of traveler who possesses excellent budgeting skills you will ace Taiwan.



A food haven. Once you step your foot in Taiwan you must forget about the word "diet." I tell you, it's hard to resist any of the treats you will find in the streets, markets, and restaurants because of two things – affordability and presentation. The key to understanding a place's culture and history often lies in its cuisine. On top of the list is Taiwan's famous Bubble Teas where you can find literally everywhere and I am not exaggerating. Bubble tea is the unofficial national drink of the Taiwanese and for P60.00 you can already have a large size drink from different local tea shops all over the country. Taiwan is also home to a must-try soup dumpling and by far the most popular dish known as 'Xiao Long Bao'. Price vary per restaurant but definitely cheap. Next on the list is the Taiwanese crispy fried chicken which is basically a boneless chicken fillet with excellent crispy texture. Found them at night markets in different seasoning but usually comes large in size. Two people can share with one order amounting to P70.00, not bad right? The country is an island surrounded by sea thus sea food is hard to miss and so we come to another famous dish known as the Oyster Omelet which I personally dislike because of its slimy texture. If you're still not convinced that Taiwan is the place to be when it comes to food then you must try its street food because every single one of them is absolutely worth it. Believe me when I say that Taiwanese street food is world famous, I've experienced it firsthand. Other food that is famous in Taiwan are stinky tofu, pineapple cake, pan fried buns and beef noodles.

Friendly locals and Safety. I grew up thinking that all Chinese people whether living in mainland China or offshore share the same personality – too loud, impolite and rude but I was wrong. Taiwanese people are generally nice, friendly and extra helpful. Let me give you some examples, our tour guide and driver during our Taichung day-trip is a pure Taiwanese and he is extremely polite. He would offer to take our picture because he knows based on his personal experience that Filipinos love taking pictures and including everyone in the shot. They are also very helpful and I can attest to that. During our trip, we went to Qing Jing province where transportation is not readily-available and a fewer people are on the road. In the middle of our commute we got lost and we are the only people walking on the street on a rainy winter morning. A Taiwanese couple who runs a restaurant business nearby saw our dire situation and offered to call our hotel. Much to our surprise they started to run their car's engine and said they better escort us to our hotel because it's quite a long walk from their place. You must also be aware that English is not widely spoken in the country therefore google translate is a must-have app but despite the language barrier, Taiwanese people will really find ways to aid anyone seeking for answers and help. They may look reserved, composed and quiet but they are warm and kind-hearted by nature.



Taiwan - Heart of Asia

We now go to our second point - safety. Overall violent crime rates in Taiwan are among the lowest in the world. I have a friend who recently went to Taiwan on her first solo trip abroad and she survived in fact she enjoyed travelling on her own. During our 5-day stay we literally walk the streets at night (almost past 10pm) going back to our hotel and we never encountered pickpockets. Thus, Taiwan is extremely safe travel destination.

Efficient Mass Public Transportation System. The metro system all-over Taiwan is mostly underground. Getting from point A to point B is easy and you will have no problem navigating because all signages are written both in Chinese and English. Route maps are posted everywhere to guide you through various exits and absolutely accessible for stroller and wheelchair users. On top of that, each station has its own clean and well-maintained facilities such as rooms for lactating women, wash rooms divided by gender, powder rooms, and some of them have built a library inside. Trains are always on time and the tracks are separated from the platform area. When traveling with huge luggage railway stations provide lockers that come in different sizes where you can drop and store your luggage for a minimal fee. Lockers now in the metro are all electronic thus it is now easier to store and retrieve your luggage. This will save you time and is very convenient. Taiwan also boast of their High-Speed Railway (THSR) system which is very much the same with Shinkansen or the bullet trains of Japan. The technology was exported from Japan and the line travels from north to south with 12 stations. So if you are planning to go to Kaohsiung in the south coming from Taipei in the north it will just take you 2hrs to reach your destination instead of 5hrs by regular train and 8-9hrs by bus. Aside from trains, there are other excellent option for getting around in Taiwan, but we personally prefer to use the MRT rather rideshares, buses or taxis because it is cheaper and more convenient.

Taxi drivers in Taipei are honest and with installed taxi-meters. However, this is not the case if you travel outside Taipei. Outside the city, taxis catered for tourist on a day trip and have a standard flat-rate depending on the number of attractions you are going to for a day.

Tips for first time travelers:

1. Make sure your passport is valid for at least 6 months.
2. Prepare for a language barrier, make google translate and other translation apps handy.
3. Book a hotel accommodation near the main districts or shopping districts for accessibility. As a traveler you must stick close to the most convenient transportation links eg. Ximending in Taiwan, Myeongdong in Seoul, Dotonbori in Osaka, etc.
4. To avoid being offloaded at any airport, have a copy of the return ticket and hotel booking ready. A printed planned day-to-day itinerary will also save you from all the stress.
5. Buy entrance tickets in advance to avoid long lines and crowds. This way it guarantees you entrance to the attraction especially when traveling during peak season.
6. Rent a portable Wi-Fi in your travel destination which can be easily collected and drop of at the airport. 4-5 mobile device will stay if connected while traveling and way cheaper than subscribing to our local internet provider. Your options are Klook, Kkday and Flytpack.

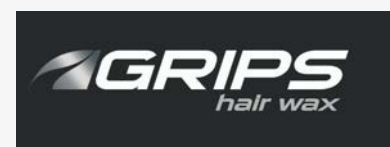
FOCIM LAUNCHES FIRST MOVIE PREMIERE FOR PROJECT SANCTUARY

By Woodrow Wilson C. Young

THROUGH God's amazing favor, FOCIM's "Project Sanctuary" took a big step with its latest fund-raising activity - an exclusive screening of the blockbuster movie "Avengers: Endgame". The event was held last April 25 at the Robinsons Magnolia Cinema. It was truly a blessing for the Church to have had such opportunity as "Avengers: Endgame" was one of the most anticipated films in 2019. Tickets were sold out weeks before the screening date. On top of this, several sponsors offered their full support to the project.

During the screening date, a short program took place prior to the showing of the movie. Sis. Maria Luisa "ML" Marcelo, one of the project heads, gave the opening remarks and took the opportunity to introduce FOCIM to the guests as well as invite them to Sunday Service. Afterwards, Bro. Daniel Guinigundo delivered a short message from FOCIM Senior Pastor Diwa Guinigundo who was on an official trip then. A few moviegoers were then treated to a surprise as they found simple gifts from under their seats such as Starbucks GCs and dinner vouchers. As expected, the movie was excellent and all moviegoers had an enjoyable time. God indeed poured out His blessings as the committee confirmed that the funds generated from the project exceeded the target. We all look forward to supporting the succeeding projects geared towards building the Lord's Sanctuary and advancing the Kingdom of God.

FOCIM would like to thank our sponsors



PITONG LETRANG SALITA

By Rosalie C. Faune

P-A-T-A-W-A-D

ilang ulit kong binibigkas
ang pitong letrang salita
dahil patuloy akong binibigkis
ng mga tanikala

P-A-T-A-W-A-D

dahil sa kagustuhan kong lumigaya
higit kong pinili ang saktan Ka
pansamantalang nilimot ang pangakong
sa buhay ko, Ikaw ang masusunod

P-A-G-I-B-I-G

ito ang pitong letrang salitang ninais kong makamit
dalawang salitang magsindami ng letra
ngunit nakahihigit ang isa

sapagkat tanda ng pag-ibig ang pagpapatawad

P-A-G-I-B-I-G

ang pitong letrang salitang
dahilan ng lyong pagpapakasakit
sa mundong pag-ibig sa Iyo'y ipinagkait
sapagkat aming kagustuhan ang iginigiit

P-A-T-A-W-A-D

dahil hanggang ngayon
patuloy kitang nasasaktan
nilimot ang aking sinumpuan
sa pagpili ng sarili kong kaligayahan

P-A-T-A-W-A-D

sa pauli-ulit kong pagsuway
sa mga salita Mong sa akin ay gabay
sinsambit ng mga labi kong mahal kita
subalit sa buhay ko ay di ko naipakikita

P-A-T-A-W-A-D

Ilang ulit ko pa bang bibigkasin
ang pitong letrang salita
nang sa sarili kong mga tanikala

ako ay makalaya

P-A-G-I-B-I-G

ang umuunawa sa lahat ng mga patawad
sa kabila ng paulit-ulit na paghingi nito
wala Mong sawang ipinadarama ang tunay na kahulugan
ng pitong letrang salitang IKAW ang pinagmulan

P-A-G-I-B-I-G



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