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Dear friends,

The week of Easter is one of the most important weeks of the year at Iloilo Baptist Church. It starts on Palm Sunday and ends on Easter Sunday night. Three events were held during this week and we wanted to give an idea what it was like..



Bro. Mario is slapped several times during the scene. Because the timing for the Roman soldier to slap him without causing injury is very difficult, he is often slapped very hard. In addition to the scourging and slapping he gets kicked on the side.

In the scene where Jesus is carrying the cross he get whipped and kicked. Pictured above, the Roman soldier lifts up his head and pulls him by the hair.

Sunday night March 29. The first night of the Passion Play

Workers have been preparing for several months for this event which is presented over 4 nights during the week. This is the 21st year for this event and the purpose is to reach unbelievers. The actors put in a lot of hours preparing—the most hours. There are between 16-18 practices leading up to the first night and practices are about two and a half hours long. About half the actors are newer Bible College students. The main actors like Jesus, Pilate, and the 12 disciples, are more experienced.

Jesus is played by Mario Mallorca who has been on our staff for 30 years now. He was older when he graduated from Bible College and is 56 years old now. Playing Jesus is difficult because He is very hard to imitate. Around 2007, when Mario was a younger staff member, he tried out for the play. The only person they needed was Judas. He wasn't too excited about being Judas but he wanted to be part of the play enough that he accepted the role. He is married and has two young boys. The older one, Ben, was about 7 years old and was discouraged when he learned that his father was Judas. He would tell his friends (and his dad) how much he didn't want his father to be Judas.

When the Christmas musical was held later that year he tried out as one of the Wise Men and was chosen. Ben was so happy. Within a couple of years he did his job so well that he played the part of Jesus. Since that time he has never missed being Jesus even though he has been sick several times. We don't even have a backup for Jesus like the other characters and if Mario is not able to participate we would have to call off the play.

The scenes aren't real of course, but he gets bruised quite a bit playing the part. He gets hurt in both the practices and the four presentations. We try to minimize hurting him but performing the scenes well involves some pain. The scourging is not done with a regular whip but with one similar enough that he often has marks on his back and arms from it.

He doesn't get hurt on the cross but is sometimes bruised by the time he is on the cross. After "dying" he is taken down off the cross..



The first night the actors, choir, and orchestra did very well with several hundred people being led to Christ by the soul winners. There were 774 visitors the first night. After the Passion Play, one of our pastors preaches and gives the plan of salvation. More than 200 of them were given the plan of salvation by the personal workers.



Monday March 30- Blood Donation

Every year our church holds two to three blood drive events at the church. The lack of blood here can sometimes result in loss of life. Besides the blood donation drives, we have a list of all our students, including their blood types. When the blood supply is very low, we send some donors to the Red Cross to donate. The Iloilo City Police Office has blood drives four times a year and they invite us to be a part of it. It is a good thing for these students to experience ways like this that they can help others. Below are some of the students that went to donate their blood.



The advisory group that organizes this event consists of people representing senior citizens, the academic community, the city government, foreigners, and the religious sector. They are known as the Iloilo City Police Office Advisory counsel. I have been a part of this group since 2016. Last year the group raised a fairly large amount of money to help the families of fallen officers and equipment the city needs that is not in their budget, such as body cams for the police officers. Some of these people are very creative and all are cooperative. They almost always ask me to pray before we start and ask God for wisdom in how to encourage and help our police officers.



Bible College students were happy to donate their blood.



The advisory council was started nationwide in 2016 so that police stations could get ideas and projects to help them win the hearts and minds of the people. It is very effective, and the police officers are grateful for the group. The officers of this city are exceptional in keeping our city safe and efficient. The station commanders of the 10 districts come to the council's quarterly meetings unless they have an emergency. A few years ago, Iloilo City was named the 8th safest city in Southeast Asia which has a population of seven hundred million people. These officers take pride in their work.

Several of the police officers are believers. The current Police Chief in Iloilo City is Police Colonel Wilber Parrilla. He recently moved from Cebu City where he was a member of the Bible Baptist Church—the church that Missionary Bob Hughes started in the late 1950's. He also loves to play basketball and is in our basketball league for law enforcement teams. Below is Col. Parrilla. speaking to our church during Family Day.



Tuesday March 31- The 2nd presentation of the Passion Play.

Here are a few of the scenes. The first one below is Bro. Mario (Jesus) healing a crippled man.



Healing a man possessed with a demon.



A scene where a father brings his dead daughter to Jesus, who brings her back to life.



The Last Supper.



Washing the feet of a disciple



Gethsemane



Pilate judging Jesus



Many visitors were led to Christ by personal workers



Wednesday April 1- IBC ALUMNI MEETING

We had one of our quarterly alumni meetings. One session we plan is for some of the graduates who have started Bible Colleges. Below are 23 of the men who were in that session. We always have a combined program for all the graduates and divide them up into geographical areas where the pastors plan more churches.



Below is Earnest Paul Ajito who is going to South Sudan as a missionary. He grew up in our church and his father was our youth director for 14 years. He has already made a survey trip to South Sudan and is now on deputation. In this session he is speaking to the pastors who have Bible College.

Youth Conference April 1-3 Wednesday to Friday

Opening Service was on Wednesday with over 1000 delegates



Some of the 150 young people who surrendered to go to Bible College on Friday night



Sunday April 8

We had our last presentation of the Passion Play. It was the end of a very busy week.

Please pray for one of our staff members, Jocelyn Geamal, who is having a very serious operation this July 20. She has been a coworker here since 1985—41 years—and has been one of the best and most fruitful workers in the church and Bible College.

Also we are saddened to know of the homegoing of Dr. Wendell Evans, who was the President of Hyles-Anderson College when Becky and I were in school there. He was a friend who helped me several times when I most needed one and I owe him so much. Everyone loved to watch Dr. Evans lead the singing. The picture below was taken in 1975 while I was a student. He was an example of what a leader should be. He was very humble and had a compassionate heart.

One of my closest missionary friends who attended Hyles-Anderson College a few years after I did, told me this story. This missionary friend said that while he was in college, a good student became so discouraged that he decided to leave school. My friend found out on a Friday and begged that student to wait until the following Monday, promising to take him to see Dr. Evans for advice. The next Monday my friend found that student and was glad he hadn't left. He asked that student to go with him to see Dr. Evans. That student surprisingly said that he already had gone to see Dr. Evans and had decided to stay. When asked what Dr. Evans did that changed his mind he replied that Dr. Evans talked with him and ended by getting out from behind his desk, going over, and getting down on his knees to look up at that student with tears in his eyes and begged him to stay. He told the student that he would regret it if he quit. After that, the student was so touched that he promised him he would stay and he did.

Dr. Evans was an amazing Christian who impacted my life. I am so grateful to him.



We just received the news of the Homegoing of Dr. Don Sisk. He was a great friend and mentor. When Becky and I were young missionaries he did much to help encourage us. It is hard to explain the impact he had on World Missions and also on Becky and me. I can't imagine what it must be like in heaven as he meets so many people who are there because of his life. In our next newsletter we will share how God used him on the mission field. We will miss him dearly.

God bless,

Rick and Becky Martin