

# Months of Tears

June/July 2012

Dear Friends and Prayer Partners,

Tears are an amazing thing. They come for many reasons, from grief to joy to simple eye irritants. For the last few months we have witnessed a lot of those tears here on the islands -- for a lot of different reasons.

First there have been the *tears of joy*. Since I last wrote to you, a flood of good things have happened here. By God's grace, during the Philippine summer (April-May) we were able to complete three camps at our Santicon campsite: one for 59 kids, one for 55 youth, and our family camp for over 100 adults and kids. Besides this, two other outside groups also used our campsite, which was a blessing. All in all during the last three months I participated in seven camps, conferences, retreats or other special activities, six of which I either spoke at or helped coordinate. At the same time we were by God's grace able to maintain our agricultural work and expand our radio ministry to include two more programs. It was a busy Philippine summer!



*Tiyo Ador preparing for his long-awaited baptism. Leo Bolante is assisting me.*

Another one of the joyful tear-jerkers these past months was the baptism of Tiyo (Uncle) Ador on Easter Sunday. It was at Tiyo Ador's house I held the first Bible study on San Miguel Island when I visited in 1995. When we formally began the ministry in 1997, he began attending Bible studies and services regularly but never took the step to be baptized - until just this April. Then along with 8 others (mostly young people), he stepped forward to publicly declare his faith in Christ. What a joy to witness! Patience truly paid off!

These past months also witnessed *tears of repentance*. Although our youth camp was not focused heavily on the topic of repentance, the element was there in the teaching as we shared about the need to get one's heart right with God and commit to following His plan. I was quite shocked on the last day of the camp when there was hardly a dry eye in the place as one after another of the youth confessed sins in their lives and chose to leave them behind to follow Jesus. Two youth after the camp set aside personal plans in order to join instead our one-year internship program as well.

In the midst of the tears of joy and repentance, however, there were also *tears of grief*. One of our elders and main church leaders, Rudy Bueno, contracted what the doctors think was a form of blood cancer, and within two months went from being a strong apparently healthy servant of God to just skin and bones. He died on April 26. Rudy's unexpected departure left everyone in shock, and left the church with a big hole in its leadership as well. This hole has forced me to very sadly have to rethink my plans of turning over much of the ministry this year. Yet in the sadness of Rudy's death, we have also witnessed God's grace. Just before dying Rudy said that he had been taken to a big room by Jesus Himself and told that it was his. Rudy said he didn't feel worthy of its beauty. Rudy's last activity before falling sick was to lead a Bible study in the community of Salvacion, and his faithfulness has since become a huge inspiration to many. Some brethren have even recommitted their lives to the Lord as a result. So even in deep tears of sadness there can be blessing.

Tears sometimes hurt, and yet I'm finding that life is really full of them. Jesus wept, and I believe still does as He looks upon a world that has strayed so far from Him and hurt itself so badly in the process. But He also cries when He sees someone in the midst of all the confusion sincerely lift his or her tear-stained eyes to Him and put faith in Him.

It's that belief that keeps me going, and I really thank the Lord for those of you who through prayers, support, and other encouragement have helped me keep going through all the years -- and all the tears -- to keep reaching out to those on these islands crying out for hope. May the Lord also fill your eyes with His tears of joy as you continue to walk with Him.

Looking Up,

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## *Weeping Before the Lord*

The Bible is full of people who wept before the Lord and saw His answers. Hanna wept before God in 1 Samuel 1 and was given a son, Hezekiah in 2 Chronicles 32 and Jerusalem was saved. Hebrews 5:7 says that Jesus, "in the last days of His flesh, offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears," and He was heard. Heartfelt prayer reaches the ears of God.

Thanks to those of you who have been continuing to lift the work here up in prayer as well, for I know how critical that is. In the coming months I believe that it is even more critical than normal as we face some big challenges. Here are a few key things for which to pray as the Lord so leads you. Thanks again so much!

- 1. The Leadership Crisis** -- Rudy's departure has left a big hole in the ministry. Now one church I had hoped to turn over is without a pastor, which means I must step in doing services in two churches each Sunday, while Leo handles the 3rd church. Besides this, various difficulties have caused other potential leaders to have to backtrack on ministry involvement, which has further reduced ministry "punch" here. Please pray that:
  - ❖ **God will raise up new men** to fill the place of those who have left -- soon.
  - ❖ **God will give me strength also to fill the holes until we can get others to do so.** Honestly I am struggling with adding all this to an already overflowing schedule. Thanks!
- 2. Radio Ministry** -- it continues to expand. I am now on the air with 4 different teaching programs each day ranging from 4 - 30 minutes as well as the weather forecast for our news each morning and evening. Our youth interns have also just started a new radio program aimed at reaching the high school students. We still broadcast 17 hours a day. Yet we need prayer for:
  - ❖ **Wisdom from the Lord concerning how best to run this ministry** so that it encourages both the Christian listeners and can attract as well those who don't yet know Christ. Pray for clarity on how to balance the large amount of time we have to invest in this ministry.
  - ❖ **Definite and visible fruit from this ministry.** Pray specifically for the programs, "Parola," "Lunchtime," "Kids' Story Time," "Simoy ng Pag-asa," and "Karanungan para sa Buhay."
- 3. Youth Internship** -- we have six interns from our island churches now working with us this year. This is our largest number to date. Please pray as we seek to help them grow in their relationships and service to the Lord. Pray also that the Lord will use them to bless others.
- 4. Livelihood and Agricultural Development** -- this was intended to be a central focus when I returned. However, lack of leadership has limited progress, though there has still been some encouraging results in both areas. Please pray that God will give us wisdom and success in this important area of the ministry. Thanks!
- 5. Personal walk with the Lord** -- everyday I feel the beckoning of the Lord to walk closer to Him and to sit at His feet to get to know Him better. There is really nothing I want more than just that. And yet with so much going on everyday, like Martha, I often feel the pull of the kitchen as well! Please pray that I can guard that sacred time with Jesus above all else, and that in the process He will reveal Himself more to me with each passing day. Thanks so much for praying!

**For more photos of the summer activities, feel free to check out:  
[www.fianews.wordpress.com](http://www.fianews.wordpress.com).**