



## Kailangan Nating Mag-Exercise!

The new CBAP General Director, Rev. Noel Pantoja bares his heart for theological training in an interview by John Pesebre.

**M**y first conversation with the new CBAP General Director Noel Pantoja is rather awkward and creepy. I met him climbing up the flight of stairs leading up to the CBAP office in Back to the Bible Building. I thought, "Why isn't he taking the elevator?" like I do. Apparently, he read my mind, saying "Kailangan ang pastor mag exercise (We need to exercise)." Creepy. But for some reason when that would happen to me I would always think that there is a Solomonic wisdom behind that kind of statement. *Kailangan ang pastor mag exercise.* Hmm. When I got instruction to interview him about his thoughts on training, I took it as an opportunity for all of CBS-Asia and CBAP to know his thoughts on how CBAP pastors and lay leaders would think about being trained. Then my thoughts returned to "kailangan ang pastor mag exercise." It became clear that what he said wasn't just the proverbial Yoyoy Villame, *mag-exercise-tayo-tuwing-umaga* banter, but actually cuts across his belief in training. Our new director desires that CBAP pastors would grow not only in physical strength and stamina but also in the spiritual, leadership and moral aspect.

I asked him the question,

*CBS-A: What do you think is the role of "training and theological education" for pastors and lay leaders for the future of CBAP?*



**"The role of training and theological education for our pastors and leaders is an indispensable component in accomplishing our mission and vision."**

*Noel Pantoja (NP): As CBAP envisions to catalyze a movement of churches that reproduce disciples, leaders and churches, we would be greatly needing the help of many trained personnel, pastors and church leaders in the field. The role of training and theological education for our pastors and leaders is an indispensable component in accomplishing our mission and vision.*

To page 2

## On the Road!

Stories of CBS-Asia RTC's in the Province

Buses going to Bicol are nice busses. They look beautiful



**on the outside and comfy on the inside.** Pastor Ruel Muje, who taught Old Testament in our Naga RTC, simply comments about being inside one of these busses, "Sarap matulog."

CBS-Asia happily sends professors to different provincial RTCs if needed, for week-long modular classes. This is one of the commitments of CBS-Asia to every host region who heeds the call for seminary training right at their very own locality (see banner article of this issue). CBS-Asia assures students that they will get the seminary degree they need. Highly qualified professor-pastors will teach them. These professors are dedicated to their task and to teach the course despite the obstacles.

Like Pastor Ruel. We sent Prof. Muje from his home in Valenzuela to travel 500 kms to Naga City for his teaching assignment. Prof. Muje recounts the obstacles that faced him, "Baha. Na cancel yung mga klase kasi may bagyo. Fiesta sa Naga. Pista ng Nuestra Señora de Peñafrancia. Sarado yung mga daanan. Hindi naka pasok yung mga estudyante. Binabaha ang vicinity ng GCF. Below sea level ang Naga."

To page 3

**From page 1**

At this point I remembered Pastor Noel referring to CBAP, in another article, as “God’s agency used in bringing my whole family and me to the kingdom of God.” That is why he adds, “This is home.” These are heartfelt words by our new general director. Reflecting on his own life, he shares, “Everything that I have learned and encountered in the past twenty years in pastoral ministry, is God’s manner and method of molding and shaping me as a person and servant in His kingdom.” Now God has commanded him to serve in CBAP.

He continues with the interview,

*NP: (TOWARDS A HEALTHY CONGREGATION) Personally, I envision more trained pastors and Christian leaders who would mentor, coach and inspire CBAP personnel in the field. This is to help and minister to the needs of existing congregations. We have done a great job as an association in penetrating closed doors and establishing new churches. Part of our job right now is to help these churches become growing and healthy churches. Only healthy churches multiply. Weak, struggling and dying churches cannot reproduce. One key component of a healthy congregation is a healthy pastor and healthy church leaders. CBS-Asia plays a major role in helping our pastors, church leaders, future pastors and church leaders become equipped in the ministry.*

*(ON CHURCH MISSIONS AND CHURCH PLANTING) There is a tremendous need for training new church planters, church planting coaches and launch team members in our church planting ministry. As we envision to plant churches in key cities of the Philippines and invest the Lord’s resources in these new works, I am praying for great returns in these investments. We want to see higher standards and raise the bar in church planting goals such as, 100 members in*

*three years; a self-supported church in five years; and a healthy church planting new churches. We also dream of seeing new Regional Training Centers in these new church plants, and to see the multiplication of disciples and church leaders. This can only be done if our church planters are*



**“As we envision to plant churches in key cities of the Philippines and invest the Lord’s resources in these new works, I am praying for great returns in these investments.”**

*competent, trained, equipped and encouraged to do the ministry.*

*(ON CB GLOBAL AND CROSS CULTURAL MISSIONS) As CBAP envisions to reach the Filipinos in diaspora and the unreached people groups in the last frontier of missions, we would need to consolidate our efforts to strengthen training ministries and expand our vision in training thousands of OFW’s, skilled workers, professionals in the market place, tent-makers and “new missionaries” to go to these fields.*



**“It is my dream to see CBS-Asia facilities, library, dormitories and chapel housed in the CB Center building in the near future.”**

Like an athletic coach Pastor Noel challenges us and does not depart from the exercise metaphor when he said in another interview, “Everyday is a new beginning and with it comes new and different opportunities God gives to expand the work. As we trust God in all things, CBAP churches, leaders and individuals must use all our creative powers and available God-given assets and resources; flex our muscles and energy [aha!]; harness untapped potentials from within and outside the organization; and never be afraid to take risks in doing things beyond the box of our traditions and limitations.”

*CBS-A: How do you want CBS-Asia to do its work?*

*NP: I commend the leadership team of CBS-Asia led by Rev. Nicky Joya and his team members for doing a great job in their ministry. As CBAP goes through the process of re-engineering and makeover, as it has been CBS-Asia’s mission and vision to train and equip pastors and church leaders, I envision a greater expansion reach of our training arm. With the help of available personnel and as the Lord provides more resources in the future, it is my dream to see this institution as one of the leading institutions in our country and Asian region to train and equip leaders in formal and non-formal theological training. It’s not so much about how I would like CBS-Asia do its work for CBAP, but I would like to see the whole CB movement here and abroad participating in the growth of our very own CB training institution. In turn, CBS-Asia would be the prime mover in all our training programs*

**To page 3**

**From page 1**

Despite the situation, the class pushed through. With storm and flood threatening their commitment, a small amount of students still attended classes. One CBAP pastor from a nearby Camarines Sur province suffered a major setback when his motorbike broke down because of the heavy rain. An incurable optimist, Prof. Muje observes that the small group of students “looked excited” as he taught the class.

The only frustration of Prof. Muje in the entire event was “walang time na maipasyal.” We take that to mean “wala siyang time na maipasyal [and aking asawa]” as he was joined by his wife, Beth, on his teaching trip. Beth we heard enjoyed being the photographer. “Sayang,” Prof. Muje interjects, “di kami nadala sa beach kasi umuulan.”

Praise the Lord for Prof. Ruel Muje and his wife Beth and the commitment of our students at the Naga RTC. We also praise the Lord for the generosity of Cris Manalang and family opening up their house as accommodation of every CBS-A professor that comes over to Bicol.

Thanks.



**From page 1**

*whether theological, missions, church planting and ministry vocation related works in the churches.*

*It is my dream to see CBS-Asia facilities, library, dormitories and chapel housed in the CB Center building in the near future. As students complete their theological education, I see the necessity of team building, face to face interaction, growing together and working together activities among students and faculty. It is imperative that in our times we realize these needs and put our hands together in prayer and in deeds to see that a training center building for CBS-Asia be set up in the heart of Metro Manila.*



Pastor Noel’s prayer for us at CBS-Asia and CBAP as a whole is that we may “see the world from God’s perspective. May we share a common vision that comes only from Him. May He show us the things that need to be done and have the burden in our hearts to participate. May we have

the passion to accomplish only His purpose. May He unite and give us the fervor and zeal to reach greater heights in Gospel ministry, allow us to set out in ways and places never trod before – for the advancement of his kingdom, the building of His church, for the honor and glory of His Name alone.”



**Rev. Noel and Jeni Pantoja. Partners in advancing the work of Christ through CBAP!**

Finally, I asked him,

*“Let us dream together to see it grow and expand in quantity and quality to prepare thousands of men and women in the future ministry of CBAP here and beyond.”*

*CBS-A: What exhortation do you want to give our constituency regarding “training and theological education”?*

*NP: I have stressed the necessity of training and theological education in seeing existing churches grow in health. There is no question that in any form of expansion, whether it is in church planting and all forms of mission work, training is a vital component. I pray that we would take advantage of these opportunities that God has given us in our association.*

*I would like to encourage our CBAP constituency to pray more and to support the efforts of CBS-Asia. For many years to the present time, this training institution has equipped and prepared our leaders at CBAP. Let us dream together to see it grow and expand in quantity and quality to prepare thousands of men and women in the future ministry of CBAP here and beyond.*

Tayong mga CBAP, let’s go for training and raise the bar: *kailangan nating mag exercise!* Let us not give up on training!

**Go CB!**

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# As if God Shouted!

## Pastor Norbert talks about the shooting incident

Last year news of the shooting of Prof. Norbert Manzano in Novaliches, Quezon City shocked us. Apparently robbers held them up at gun point and took their money and belongings. Because of their criminal impulse, these people mercilessly shot Prof. Manzano on the face and then fled.

In a way, Prof. Manzano lived to tell his story. We interviewed him about that ordeal, asking him a few questions.

**CBS:** What were the medical findings of the accident? What were your injuries?

**Prof. Norbert**

**Manzano (NM):** *The bullet went through my left cheek taking my two molars. It almost tore off my tongue by a thread.*

**CBS:** Sorry to ask you this but please describe to us the progression of ordeal you had from the scene of the crime to full recovery.

**NM:** *It was like a rush of everything. When I was hit I just fell as if something large and hard hit my face. All I can think of was my wife. I was already down and my fear was that she would be shot also. That moment was a revelation perhaps of my faith towards God. I lost all control of the situation and all I can do is to pray.*

*The accident had a numbing effect I guess. When I fell I forgot the pain. I also forgot all the questions in theodicy that I have and the fear of death.*

*Anyway, they brought me to the hospital and I was about to give up. I felt like I was going straight down the spiral. In fact, I fainted many times, perhaps due to the amount of blood I lost.*



*God "shouted" at me that day not in thunders and lightning but right at my face saying, "I'm here Norbert, I'm right here."*

*After I was operated and could breathe again, I felt a sense of peace although my adrenaline was still high. My uneasiness up to that time was the uncertainty of undergoing the same experience again.*

**CBS:** What was your greatest fear during those times? Why?

**NM:** *Worry? Getting back to what I was doing before. I thought I will never be able to speak or preach again.*

**CBS:** Was there a particular Scripture from the Lord that kept coming back to you during those times of hardships?

**NM:** *Job 13:15 rang in my mind—"Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face."*

**CBS:** Suppose you recovered but couldn't speak anymore, what do you think are you going to do?

**NM:** *Maybe kill myself (Laughs). Just kidding. Write would be the best alternative.*

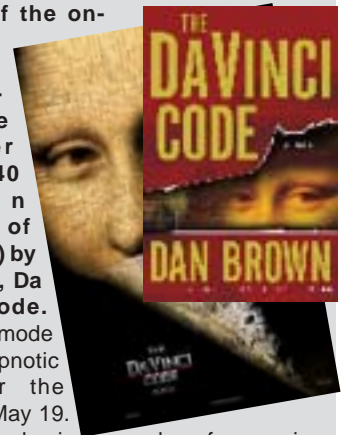
**CBS:** How has this experience changed you?

**NM:** *It authenticated my faith even more, and made me feel more alive. It did not answer all my questions, but it somehow satisfied me temporarily. God "shouted" at me that day not in thunders and lightning but right at my face saying, "I'm here Norbert, I'm right here."*

Policemen apprehended the perpetrators of the crime a few minutes after the shooting. The criminals are now being tried for their crime.

## The Da Vinci Mode

Many people seem to be in the Da Vinci mode these days as they await the showing of the on-screen adaptation of the all-time bestseller novel (40 million copies as of March 2006) by Dan Brown, *Da Vinci Code*.



Expect this mode to reach hypnotic level after the opening in May 19.

All seems to be in place for a major summer film blockbuster: highly acclaimed international cast and some of the finest actors in Hollywood like Oscar winners Ian McKellan and Tom Hanks and directed by an Oscar winner himself, Ron Howard. Also, also seems to be in place for a major revision and reconstruction of the historical Christ we all know. The film alleges among others that Leonardo Da Vinci was homosexual and that the Mona Lisa was a self-portrait of himself. But the allegation that must alarm Philippine Christianity is that Jesus, it says, had a wife and had a child. This information according to the book was kept secret by the Church ever since its foundation. The Lord Jesus it seems still has descendents today in France.

Dr. Randall Gleason of the CBS-Asia has gone around to campuses in Metro Manila and CBAP regional councils in Luzon and Visayas since late last year. He has been presenting a seminar entitled *Can We Trust the Bible?* as a response to "Dan Brown's demolition job" (as one local columnist puts it) of the historical facts of the Bible. Hundreds of people have already benefited from the seminars on Dr. Gleason especially the skeptics. Dr. Gleason shared to us that after his seminar a student in De La Salle University wrote him, referring to the *Da Vinci Code* as that "damned book!" Because of his seminar, people are becoming aware of the truth (or untruth) behind the *Da Vinci Code*.

It is important that Christians know about this book. The book alleges that Jesus impregnated Mary Magdalene (how he knows about this, nobody knows) and she gave birth to a daughter named Sarah – in France! (how she got there, nobody knows). But what we do know is that Brown, who made it to Time magazine's list of the 100 most influential people of the year, has used fabrications, inaccurate historical data and mythological tradition in his supposed to be book of "facts."

**If you want to know more about how to have a Da Vinci Code seminar in your CBAP region, call us here at CBS-Asia or text Mylene/09224846401 for details.**

# Praise God!