



Jim Orbe: “Mr. Ako” is Always Ready to Lend a Helping Hand

In August, The Servants of the Word appointed Jim Orbe as an elder and member of the assembly of brothers that takes governing responsibility for our brotherhood. The first Filipino brother to take on that role, Jim has a special concern for our brothers in formation.

Among our Servants of the Word in Manila, Jim is known as “Mr. Ako.” *Ako* is Tagalog for “me.” “Mr. Me” might sound like an egotistical moniker, but in Jim’s case it signifies just the opposite. Whenever there’s a call for a volunteer – to speak in a seminar for one of our associated ministries, to help out in post-disaster relief work (an all-too-common need in these calamity-prone islands), to clean up after an event, to take someone to the airport at 4:00 AM – Jim’s hand goes up: *Ako*. In the midst of a meeting, when a difficult or inconvenient or uncomfortable task arises that cries out for someone to take responsibility for it and heads drop and feet begin to shuffle, Mr. Ako will invariably step up.



In addition to his pastoral responsibilities, Jim plays a vital role in our mission. As Director of the Manila sector of Christ’s Youth in Action (CYA), an outreach to university students active in about half a dozen universities in the Philippine capital, he oversees our largest evangelistic outreach, preaching and teaching God’s word among students, training them to take on leadership, and equipping other members of the staff to do the same. He also serves as a member of the regional youth committee for The Sword of the Spirit in Asia, and as a coordinator in Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon, the local branch of The Sword of the Spirit.

Jim holds an M.A. in Religious Education from the Loyola School of Theology, and his love for and constant reference to the scriptures is well-known in CYA. But Jim leads as much by example as by instruction. Ask his co-workers what characterizes Jim, and they’ll point to his discipline, his dependability, his steadiness. “If he says he’ll do it, it’s done,” says Lorna Campos, a senior staffer for CYA. “And he’s also a good listener,” she adds. “When I’m under pressure or perplexed about something, he helps me keep my balance.”

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Jim is especially effective in working with young men, normally a difficult field to cultivate in evangelism. “He’s inspired me to evangelize men and taught me how to help them encounter the Lord and choose to follow him,” says J.R. Quiring, who leads CYA at the University of the Philippines.

Jim can speak from his own experience about making that choice. In the early ’90s, at the young age of twenty-three, he was head of sales for a small but highly successful company providing industrial hardware to contracting firms.



Beloved family and friends,

Another year has sped by, and the joyful season of Christmas is once again upon us. As 2009 comes to a close, we in The Servants of the Word look back upon yet another year of God’s amazing goodness and mercy toward us. He has truly been for us “Emmanuel” – “God with us” – in ways too numerous to count.

It has been my privilege as I have visited our houses through the course of this year to see our brothers flourishing and our mission work advancing – in Asia and in North America, in Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. We have had the joy of seeing some very fine young men come to live with us and to investigate our life, and the even deeper joy of witnessing the lifelong promises of two of our excellent American brothers, Brian Laba and Brian LaLonde, early in September. One of our

Filipino brothers, Peter Jess Legaspi, will soon be making his lifelong promises, as well.

As we gratefully count all our blessings, we thank God for you – our families, our friends, our faithful benefactors. Your love and support continue to be an enormous blessing and strength to us as we seek to love the Lord and to make him loved. May you be filled with every grace and blessing in this holy season, and throughout the year to come! ▲

In Christ our Incarnate Lord,

John Keating

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Jim Orbe and Ken Noecker at a recent celebration.

His professional prospects were bright indeed. Then a couple of clients invited him to a retreat of Ang Lingkod ng Panginoon, a movement of single professionals. “I encountered Jesus Christ in a powerful way, and that changed me,” he says. Soon after, Jim got to know The Servants of the Word and quickly found his spiritual home with the brothers.

The prayer and confident hope of The Servants of The Word is that Mr. Ako will continue to inspire others by his example as well as his word. ▲

– John Yocum

Blessings Come in Threes

In August 2009, “the Brians” made their lifelong promises to The Servants of the Word. After living with our brotherhood for ten years, each gladly decided to make his commitment permanent. A third brother from the Philippines, Peter Jess Legaspi will make his commitment in early January in the Philippines. Three new lifelong brothers to The Servants of the Word – what a blessing!

Each of these three brothers has wholeheartedly responded to God’s gracious initiative in his life by making a commitment to live as Servant of the Word. Brian LaLonde, when asked about doing this, says: “It’s just good to be committed! It’s the best when people ask, ‘What do you do?’ and I get to tell them that I’m a Servant of the Word. I can say: Look at this gift God has given me!” Brian Laba’s reason for making the commitment is simple: “Because the Lord opened the way and invited me to choose to make it for himself.” Peter Jess, with similar inspiring simplicity, tells me: “This is the place for me to best love and serve the Lord.” The confidence and the joy with which these young men are “wasting their lives on the Lord” beckon the rest of us to rekindle our joy and delight in following Jesus Christ!

Brian LaLonde was born and raised in Michigan, in the small town of Essexville, along with his older brother and younger sister. He studied computer science at the University of Michigan where he got involved in University Christian Outreach (UCO: the student ministry in the US that many of our brothers serve). Shortly after graduation in 2001 he moved into our brotherhood house in Ann Arbor and began his work in student ministry. Brian’s heart for the lost and his evangelistic zeal make him particularly effective in reaching out to the marginalized. His creativity and artistic penchant enrich our life greatly, whether he’s designing websites (our current Servants of the Word site will show you what I mean), playing the bass guitar, or occasionally inventing a tasty new entrée with cinnamon. Facebook will tell you he likes backpacking, ecumenism, screen printing, web programming, and social networking, but really that doesn’t begin to adequately describe the youngest lifelong member of the Servants of the Word!

Peter Jess, born the same year as Brian, grew up in Taytay, Rizal, in the Philippines with his two older sisters. He studied mechanical engineering at the University of Santo Tomas (UST). As with the Brians, Peter first got to know The Servants of the Word during a summer household in 1998. Although I haven’t seen him in years, Peter’s resolve and his tenacity in following the Lord into this call to live single have been a continual inspiration for me as well as for many of the brothers in the US. Our perseverance and strength is increased by his presence in our midst!

Brian Laba was born in Pontiac, Michigan, but “his people,” as he will regularly tell you, are the Polish. He grew up in a northern suburb of Detroit with his two older sisters and one younger and studied environmental resources at the



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The brothers from the Monterrey household on Christmas retreat in Zamora, Michoacan, Mexico send their Christmas greetings.

student outreach work at UST in Manila, oversees the outreaches in Southern Luzon, and is the steward for one of our households in Manila.

University of Michigan. Although Brian has not worked professionally in his field of study, his knowledge of the environment makes him an excellent companion for any outdoor adventure. Brian is a gifted public speaker and teacher, a daring cook, an avid reader, and an indomitable ultimate frisbee player. His *joie de vivre*, contagious laugh, and good sense of humor have won him many friends in our brotherhood, communities, and outreaches.

All three of these brothers are involved in full-time student ministry work and have been for many years. Laba, currently living in our newest US household in Grand Rapids (Michigan), oversees our university outreach work both there and in Ann Arbor. LaLonde, based in Lansing (Michigan), is in charge of the outreach there and in Hillsdale (also in Michigan). Both of them spend a lot of time driving back and forth between these outreaches. Legaspi leads our

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In these three fine young men we recognize the Lord’s provision for our brotherhood. They have fast become some of the comrades, the friends, and the faithful brothers we Servants of the Word need to live out the fruitful and abundant life that Christ has called us into. I met both Brians in their first month in Ann Arbor more than twelve years ago and since then have watched them grow in maturity and stature. Who would have known in those early years as we talked about Christ in our lives that this same Lord had a plan to yoke us together for his work?

Needless to say, I am deeply grateful for Brian, Brian, and Peter and give glory to my Father for giving me such brothers! 🏹

– Nico Angleys

WE APPRECIATE YOUR HELP

The Servants of the Word gets its support through the financial earnings of the brothers as well as by donations from our benefactors. Many of our brothers work for sacrificial wages or for no pay at all. Please consider if you can become a financial sponsor of The Servants of the Word. Your prayers and support are appreciated in our work with young people and our community development work.

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