



Eroni Sotutu: A Man of Grace and Depth

The ball was moved swiftly down the field with poise and bursts of speed by a man who dodged the defense with a feint, or rapid acceleration, until he took the ball over the line to score. Eroni could have played any sport well, but coming from Fiji rugby was natural to him and his family, one of his brothers even playing professionally. However, in the early '80s, studies became his primary focus and, at the University of London, Eroni unexpectedly encountered Jesus Christ in a fresh and personal way; from then on he looked at life very differently. After completing his degree at the London School of Economics in 1985, he moved to the United States to seriously investigate living single for the Lord with The Servants of the Word. Eroni eventually made his lifelong commitment in 1991, and from that time onward, whether residing in London, Fiji, Michigan, or the Middle East, his heartfelt desire has been to love and serve the Lord.

This year Eroni is living in Beirut, Lebanon, where he leads a house of young men considering the life of The Servants of the Word. He's also serving in the mission and outreaches of The People of God and of Illuminator's Lamp, the two Sword of the Spirit communities in Beirut. When I asked him what he likes



about living in Lebanon, his response betrayed his tropical island roots: "Lots of sunshine and seeing the sea every day," he started off with. "It's a very relational, expressive culture, which is where I live naturally," he continued, as I remembered past conversations about the high value that is placed on relationships in Fiji's more traditional culture. "It's a place of ordered chaos – I enjoy this – life is not too boxed in. Spontaneity, surprises, uncertainty, and flexibility are all part of life in Beirut, but there's an internal order as well to life and to personal relationships." Eroni

went on to talk about his love for the Lebanese, particularly the Christians many of whom have chosen to remain in the country despite opportunities abroad so they can be witnesses in the Middle East to God's work. Finally, I asked him how he relaxed, and "the gym, watching sport, music, friends, good coffee, and sun – lots of it, preferably on a beach" were all high on his list.

Eroni carries out quite a variety of responsibilities. As the most-recently appointed Servants of the Word elder he oversees the pastoral care of the young men considering our life in the United Kingdom and Lebanon, and as a result spends much time in meetings, on the phone, and on Skype. In the two local

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Beloved family and friends,

All of us in The Servants of the Word wish you a blessed and joyful Easter season, as we once again join during the next fifty days with the Christian people throughout the world in celebrating the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. This year we have an additional reason for our Easter joy, because all Christians of both Eastern and Western traditions celebrated the feast on the same date – something that does not happen in most years. We hope that you will join with us in praying for God’s blessing upon all of his people throughout the world, and for the unity among his disciples that will speak so clearly of his presence among us.

As we celebrate Jesus’ victory over sin and death in this season, we also find it an excellent time to give thanks for the innumerable ways in which we have experienced God’s love and mercy toward us over this past year. We gratefully count you among the choice blessings that we have received, and we pray that you too may be filled with grace in this season, and throughout the coming year. Be assured of our loving prayers for you, even as we count upon your continued prayers for us! ▲

In Christ our risen Savior,

John Keating

**May you, your family and friends,
be filled with grace in this season,
and throughout the coming year.**

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communities he leads retreats for young people and acts in a consultant’s role to the university outreach. Added to all this, Eroni has an assignment that is unusual in The Servants of the Word, something he felt God particularly call him into: one-quarter of his work time is given over to extra prayer. His desire to take on this particular role speaks volumes about the spiritual depth of this man of God. We’re honored to have Eroni as one of our brothers. ▲

– Andy Pettman

A Promise of Lifelong Fidelity

Peter Jess Legaspi made his lifelong promise to live single for the Lord as a Servant of the Word January 9, 2010, in unique circumstances: for the first time in our brotherhood history, the actual commitment was made in Peter's home country, the Philippines.

Peter's lifelong commitment was a joyful event, and it took place seemingly against all odds. Well... despite two unexpected hindrances, as a matter of fact.

First, Peter was denied a U.S. visa despite repeated applications and visits to the consular office. When the brothers decided that he could make his lifelong commitment, not in our Michigan Brotherhood Center as is normally the case, but in Manila, they set the date for September 26, 2009. Then, it was on that day that the worst tropical hurricane in 40 years hit the city. Many areas of the metropolis were inundated, some by more than ten feet of flood water. It was a disaster of epic proportions. (Although relatively few lives were lost, the loss of property was unprecedented.)

Naturally, the brothers called off Peter's commitment ceremony, and in the following days all their efforts were spent in helping others who were stricken by flood waters and by lack of food and drinking water. Peter, while bemused by the sudden turn of events which postponed once again his lifelong commitment, reflected that the hurricane – locally named “Ondoy” – deepened his resolve to live all-out for God. “While



Peter on a recent whitewater rafting trip.

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I was helping out the victims of Ondoy,” he said, “what I realized was that everything in this world passes away, all can disappear or be destroyed so quickly. Only the really important things remain – such as love and friendship and service to people. And of course, God’s love abides forever.”

Despite all these setbacks, Peter finally made his commitment this past January. By a happy coincidence, one of the brothers in the U.S., Stuart Ferguson, was scheduled to visit Manila and was present at Peter’s commitment. Around 200 close friends of the brothers from the local community (Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon – The Joy of the Lord) and its various outreaches, as well as family and other friends, were in attendance.

When asked how he would personally describe making his lifelong commitment, Peter replied: “I’m grateful to the Lord for giving me the grace to respond to his call. I believe this is where the Lord is calling me, and where I can best love and serve him. I’m so happy to finally make this commitment, to be able to serve the Lord with my whole heart and to give my all to him. Of course, I’m fully aware of the challenges of living single for the Lord in today’s world. Can I remain faithful to my promise? Amidst all my concerns, I simply trust in the Lord’s grace and goodness.”



Peter speaking to students in Manila.

God’s grace and goodness are evident in the joy and peace that Peter exudes. He serves in our outreach to university students in Metro Manila, and is a youth worker in the Joy of the Lord community. His role as steward of one of our households also ensures that the brothers’ practical needs are looked after well.

What are Peter’s thoughts about living single for the Lord in the years to come? “I want to remain faithful to the Lord,” he says. He believes that the deep friendships he has with other brothers will make it possible for him to live his commitments well. “I want to be fruitful in whatever way the Lord will use me to advance his Kingdom. And my prayer to the Lord is that I may always find favor in his sight.” ▲

– Jake Yap

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