

Thanksgiving Speech of Fr Firmo Bargayo Jr SJ on his ordination day

2 June 2018 | Oratory of St Ignatius of Loyola, Loyola House of Studies, Manila, Philippines

Fr Arnel, my Spiritual Director asked me, “What do you do when you see a falling star?” I shrugged my shoulders. I had no answer. And then he said, “You wish.” Fr Arnel asked me this question after I told him about a certain falling star in my life.

My mother came to my elementary graduation. But she was drunk, as she often was. She pinned a medal on me, but on her way down the stage, she fell. From then on, my friends teased me as “the son of the falling star.” That incident crippled me. I could not speak in front of people. Even during a recitation in class, I would feel terrifyingly shy to recite, and even cried one time.

But, my life changed when Couples for Christ changed my mother. I knew then that God was present. In my mother’s new life, I witnessed a God who granted wishes, a God who made wishes come true.

My mother was already suffering from diabetes at the start of her conversion. I remember finding her crying one morning. I asked her why, and she said, “Hangtod singkwenta lang daw ko (My life will only be up to fifty).” She dreamed of an angel warning her that she would not reach the age of 50. So, in her dream, she wished to God that God might extend her life beyond 50. And she was so happy because in another dream an angel told her that God had granted her wish, that she had been given an extension of 10 years!

Mama’s health was already failing when she was nearing 60. She called me one time. She said, “Ganahan unta ko makita akong anghel ulit para muhangyo ko usab nga sumpayan ang akong kinabuhi aron makatambong gyud ko sa imong ordination. (I wanted to meet my angel again, to wish for another extension because I want to be there for your ordination).” Mama died soon after that.

But I believe that God granted her wish. I’m here. I’m now a priest. And I bet that was my mama’s deepest, fondest wish of all. Mama may not be here physically. But I know she is here. She is witnessing this beautiful moment of God’s grace in my life, this divinely granted wish.

I am a son of a falling star. What I was too embarrassed to admit before, I now say with deep affection: my mother is my falling star. And now, I can wish to my falling star that I may become a good priest... a priest who dares to love without ceasing... a priest who dedicates his life only for the greater glory of God. And maybe, a priest who might also be a granter of wishes especially to those who think they could wish for a better life, because in their poverty, they had never tasted what that means.

Rev Fr Jereme and I would like to thank Most Reverend Bishop Abet Uy who ordained us today... Bishop, thank you. We also thank our Dominican deacon... Rev Hilario, thank you.

We thank Fr Danny Huang who accepted us in the Society of Jesus... For all our father provincials: Fr Jojo Magadia, Fr Tony Moreno and Fr Jun Viray... thank you.

For all our Formators... Fr Mon Bautista, Fr Jun Bugtas, Fr Ritchie Genilo, Fr Peter Pojol, Fr Earl Baredo, Fr Joe Quilongquilong, Fr JunJun Borres... Thank you.

For all our Spiritual Directors, our counsellors... Thank you.

For all our teachers and professors... Thank you.

Pwede po bang tumayo lahat ng mga galing Sapang Palay... at pati na rin yung mga galing sa Payatas... Pwede po ba natin silang palakpakan... They taught us what it means to be a true servant of God. Tinuruan po nila kami kung paano magmahal at magsilbi sa Diyos at sa kapwa... Para sa inyo po... Maraming maraming Salamat.

Maraming Salamat din po sa mga tumanggap kay Fr Jereme sa Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Mission Station sa Kalookan.

For Ateneo de Zamboanga and Jesuit Service in Cambodia... Thank you.

For all our friends who continue to pray for and inspire us to persevere in this vocation... Thank you.

For Couples for Christ and Ligaya ng Panginoon... Thank you.

For all our benefactors... thank you.

Pwede po bang tumayo ang aming mga magulang... Sila po ang nagturo sa amin kung paano maging bukas palad. We become who we are now because of their great love for us... For our families who keep on loving and supporting us... Thank you very much.

For all the young and not so young Jesuits who always edify us... Thank you.

For those who made this celebration more beautiful and meaningful... to our Jesuit scholastics and brother in Loyola House of Studies... Those who help us from Arrupe International Residence and San Jose Seminary... Thank you.

For Tinig Barangka and friends... Thank you.

For all of you who are here, you serve as our reminder of God's love and mercy... Thank you very much.

Fr Jereme and I will keep this blissful moment in our hearts forever. We pray that we may grow in love with God deeper and deeper each day. May he make our dearest, fondest wishes come true.

Let us all stand... Let us not forget that we have a Stella Maris—our Star, our Mother who always protects and guides us in our way towards God.