

July 2023

Dear Praying Friends,

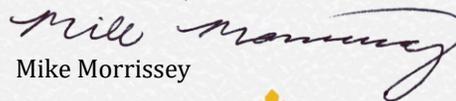
I cannot remember the last time I struggled so much with a prayer letter. I have typed, deleted, and retyped; yet I continue to struggle. The last two months have been some of the most fruitful that we have ever experienced in our ministry here in Dapitan, yet they have also been extraordinarily difficult. Our emphasis on the Sunday school is beginning to yield visible results in the area of attendance and, most notably, in the area of baptisms. Due to a strong Catholic heritage, combined with a very clannish culture, baptism in Dapitan is a HUGE step! I can't tell you how many times I've had fully grown adults tell me that they would need to "ask permission" before they could be baptized. A few months ago, a 52-year-old woman told me that she wanted to get baptized but would need to talk to her brother first because he is the one who pays for her maintenance medication. I would have been incredulous except for the fact that I have lived in Dapitan for a long time, and nothing surprises me anymore. That being said, SINCE OUR LAST PRAYER LETTER, GOD HAS GIVEN US 15 BAPTISMS! However, these victories, as is typically the case, have come at the cost of some very fierce battles, most of which we really can't share. There are other things that can be shared but are very difficult to explain to an outsider. There is one struggle in particular that we face here in Dapitan that I have never mentioned in a prayer letter because I have always been afraid that some people wouldn't understand. However, I feel very strongly that God wants me to share it in this letter. Allow me to begin by telling an unusual story. A few weeks ago, we had a veteran Filipino missionary to India visit our church. The first day at lunch, he made a very interesting statement. I can't remember his exact words, but he looked at me across the table and said something similar to the following, "As soon as we landed at the airport, I could feel the same evil spirit here that we deal with in India. I could sense the same occultic presence." His statement came as no surprise to me. We've been here for just under six years, and he was putting into words what I have known for a long time: Dapitan is a stronghold of Satan. There is an oppressive spirit here that is palpable yet indescribable. Anyone who knows me, knows that I am not by nature prone to depression, but here in Dapitan, when the oppressive spirit comes down hard and heavy, I struggle with depression. My greatest struggle is not the constant Satanic attacks; it is the soul-crushing oppression that accompanies them, and the last two months, it has been very heavy, reaching a fever pitch in the last week and a half. In my opinion, the central issue in this battle is not so much the blessings on our church, but rather the "Every House" campaign, which we finally were able to launch last week. In six years of ministry in Dapitan, I have never been in a more open battle with the forces of evil! There is nothing subtle about this battle, and I'm asking you to pray. I am not complaining, nor am I hoping for pity. I am asking for prayer—fervent, intercessory prayer. Please join us in praying that God would give a great victory through this battle.

Dividends on Your Investment

I don't have space for a long story, but let me give a quick highlight from last week. Leading up to last Thursday evening, July 6, I had been struggling in my personal soul winning. I was still going soul winning at our scheduled times but wasn't seeing much fruit, and if God was opening other opportunities, in my stressed frame of mind, I wasn't seeing them. But all that changed, starting Thursday night, when God allowed me to lead a man to Christ at the Dapitan Plaza. On Friday night, God gave me another one right outside my front gate, and on Saturday morning, God gave me 18, rounding the week out for an even 20!

Speaking of our "Every House" campaign, allow me to give you a brief update. After I sent out our last prayer letter, God began showing me that there was something missing from the packet that we were planning to deliver to every house in Dapitan. While my booklet on being born again makes salvation very clear, it does not deal with the doctrine of the Catholic mass. In my experience in a strong Catholic city, the greatest misunderstanding of the average Catholic is not regarding the fact that eternal life is a gift. Their greatest misunderstanding is rooted in the false teaching that Christ is reoffered as the sacrifice for sins at every single mass. They have been taught since their earliest childhood that they must go to mass in order to get their newest sins forgiven. I often ask people out soul winning why they are still doubting their salvation when they already believe that Jesus paid for their sins on the Cross. Their answer is almost always the same: "Because I still sin." That statement and the underlying misunderstanding that it represents is a result of the doctrine of the mass. They do not understand that Christ paid for all their sins—past and future! Consequently, last month I set out to write another Visayan tract built around Hebrews 10:12, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." With the help of God and a competent staff member, I wrote the entire tract in a single day, and now our campaign packets are complete! Thus far, we have completed one barangay, passing out 561 packets. We now have just 49 barangays to go! ☺ Thank so much for your prayers, and PLEASE keep on praying.

Yours for souls,


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Missionaries to the Philippines

"For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." 1 Corinthians 16:9