



December 2021

Dear AWR Friend,

Greetings from the Philippines. I keep saying to my wife Kathy, “What a time to be alive!” This truly is the most exciting time of our lives! During the last five years, we have watched unbelievable events take place as a 50-year rebellion has finally come to an end. The assassins and rebels in Mindoro have laid down their AK-47-style automatic weapons and accepted forgiveness and amnesty by God’s grace.

When I mentioned to my son, who is a district attorney, about the amnesty given to the rebels by President Rodrigo Duterte, he said, “No government in the world gives amnesty to assassins!”

But it’s true. When we met with President Duterte, Elder Wilson thanked him for the amnesties given to the former rebels during his 36-minute conversation. We saw two miracles: no one gets to talk that long to the president, and normally, Americans would never have been allowed into the country due to COVID restrictions.

Let me share some of the highlights from this amazing trip.

AN UNPRECEDENTED EVENT

Our AWR team came to the Philippines—along with our General Conference President, Elder Ted Wilson—for a very special event: a historic baptism of former rebel assassins and several high-ranking government military officials. They are now reconciled and committing their lives to Jesus through baptism—and what a celebration it has been!

Our first order of business upon arriving in Manila—after the mandatory quarantine—was a visit with President Duterte and his wife. We were surprised by the invitation to the presidential palace, but understood the significance of this gesture. It had only been by his direct intervention that we’d been granted visas into the Philippines.

When we arrived, to everyone’s surprise, we were ushered inside without the usual security protocols, as the president said, “We don’t need to worry about them—they’re Seventh-day Adventists!”

President Duterte expressed his gratitude to Adventist World Radio and the Adventist Church for helping to end the communist rebel resistance on the island of Mindoro, which has brought about reconciliation.

Then Elder Wilson shared a spiritual message with the president and thanked him for the amnesty given to the assassins as they laid down their arms to follow Jesus.

And to think this was all accomplished by the power of God’s Word through radio!

AWR
50
YEARS
OF MINISTRY



From left: Duane McKey, Ted Wilson and president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte.



Elder Wilson encourages a large crowd on the final Sabbath of the evangelistic series on the island of Mindoro.

A MEMORABLE DAY

We then flew to the island of Mindoro, where a free medical clinic was being held with a group of volunteer doctors and medical staff. By the time the four-day clinic was over, more than 10,000 people had received medical care.

Our team held several short evangelistic series throughout the island, and that included Elder Wilson and myself as we both preached the *Earth's Final Countdown* series through TV, Zoom and in-person meetings.

On the final Sabbath, Elder Wilson preached to an audience of 2,500 scattered throughout an outdoor venue. Addressing the former rebels, he encouraged them saying, "All of us were rebels at one time, but now our old life is put away. Today, by God's grace, you are no longer former rebels, but new creatures in Christ! You are a part of God's great family that is looking forward to the Second Coming of Jesus!"

I then had the privilege of formally welcoming these precious men and women into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. "Your blue shirts say 'I Will Go,' and that is your new calling—to 'Go, preach and teach,' to help others find salvation, just as you once did."

It was wonderful to hear the 700 former rebels and their families all reply in unison, "Today, leaving the past behind, we accept that commission of Jesus! We will go!"

It was a memorable day, marking the end of a half-century armed conflict that claimed the lives of more than 40,000 people.

The chief of police in Mindoro said, "For years we tried everything to end the conflict. We offered to bribe the rebels with food and a stipend, but nothing we did ever worked. In the end, it was through the work of Adventist World Radio that this was accomplished."

The truth is that it was through the power of God. The passion these rebel soldiers once felt for their misguided cause is now being redirected by God's Spirit to a passion for Jesus and His coming kingdom.

The Sabbath celebration was the culmination of more than four years of airing God's Word throughout the island of Mindoro, reaching deep into the mountains to these hidden rebel groups, and God's Spirit did the rest.

By the time Sabbath was over, more than 700 had been baptized at our location, with 2,000 across the island of Mindoro—and more than 60,000 throughout the country!

AN UNEXPECTED SURPRISE

As the last meeting closed on the last Sabbath, we were in for a huge surprise! Without anybody knowing, the former rebels had spent hours preparing a program to show their gratitude. It was one of the most memorable, moving and beautiful experiences our team had during this trip.

Each of the former rebel family groups prepared a portion of the program. It was well organized and consisted of the following: One person would present a personal testimony and share how their life had changed. Another expressed gratitude, and another made an appeal. Each group had composed a



More than 60,000 were baptized as a result of AWR's *Earth's Final Countdown* series across the Philippines!



At the end of the meetings, a special program was organized by the former rebel families sharing testimonies, songs and words of thanks.

special song. Some of the songs were funny, while others were emotional, heart-wrenching and moving, but all were deeply spiritual.

The presentation took two hours with many tributes to AWR and the Adventist Church for finding and saving them, and much praise and adoration to Jesus. They also expressed appreciation to the military for their willingness to work with them.

At the close, the former rebels called all the church leaders to the front and every single former rebel presented a flower to each person and thanked us, shaking our hands and hugging us.

One of the former rebels came forward and gave his testimony. He said, “Today I made the decision to give my heart to Jesus because of what I have witnessed here. I came doubting, just to check things out and see if it was really real, and now I’m convinced and want to be baptized soon.”

By the end of the meeting there wasn’t a dry eye in the house as these men and women, known by the initials “FR” (Former Rebels), will now be known as Fully Restored.

AN UNUSUAL COUPLE

One testimony stood out from the rest, and it’s that of Rose, a four-star general in the New People’s Army (NPA is the official name of the rebel forces). I met her the day after my birthday—like the gift this whole trip has been. She’s the wife of Kal Martin, once a five-star general in the NPA. They were both highly ranked assassins—and both were baptized this past Sabbath!

They had been apart for three years and met again just days before their baptism. Due to the stress of jungle mountain life, Rose had taken the kids and made her way undercover to Manila, where she hid for three years. She was on the “Most Wanted” list in the Philippines, but now she and her husband have received amnesties from the government and both were just baptized!

But there is someone else who was also baptized last Sabbath—Rose’s mother! When Rose received her amnesty, she reconnected with her mother in Mindoro, and discovered that her mother had heard the Sabbath truth and had started an independent Sabbath-keeping church. However, upon hearing the Adventist message from Rose, she gave her heart to Jesus and decided to join the Adventist Church! Now she says, “Help me build a church in my village and I will bring them all to this new truth as it is in Jesus!”

A NEW LIFE

Rose’s life has turned around, and she is working with the Philippine government and is in protective custody. She has the gift of a photographic memory—she never forgets a face or a name—and is proving invaluable throughout the Philippines in helping to bring in pockets of rebel forces in different parts of the country. She knows almost all the rebels in the country by name, and is helping to end the assassinations still taking place on many of the islands.

But there’s more! The government has partnered with Farm Stew, an ASI ministry run by our friend Joy Kauffman. Joy and Rose will work together to teach the former rebels to be self-supporting by farming and running small businesses. The former rebels survived for years through killing, extortion and as hired guns. Now, as Seventh-day Adventist Christians, they must be retrained.



Rose and Kal, two former high-ranking assassins for the NPA, were thrilled to be among those who were baptized.



The former rebels signed the treaty with Adventist and government officials.

Things are moving so quickly that I said what I often say to Kathy: “What a time to be alive—look how God is providing! It’s unbelievable!”

This is God’s grace in action. These ex-assassins were once terrifying, and now they’re forgiven. Robert Dulay, our AWR coordinator in the Philippines, tells me that whenever he talks to Rose’s husband Kal and he recounts his past, Kal begins to cry uncontrollably in gratitude at God’s forgiveness.

Have you ever wondered what it will be like that first morning in heaven? As you walk out your front door and meet your neighbor, you may not know how terrible his or her life was here on earth—but all of us will be forgiven sinners! We at AWR have seen saints and sinners—and drug cartel leaders and assassins alike—come to Jesus through our broadcast and find grace and forgiveness, because “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:19)

All sinners and all forgiven! That’s what the gospel is all about! And what better time to remember this than during a birthday? No, not my birthday, but the most important birth that ever happened on planet earth: that of our Savior Jesus.

A TIME OF GRATITUDE

As our hearts rejoice over this amazing triumph of God’s Word, I just had to share it with you, because it is only through your support that what happened in Mindoro and what is happening around the world is possible. It is thanks to your generous giving! This is not something we can do alone. That’s why I like to say that it’s only as we work together that miracles like this can happen.

One of the greatest needs right now is for the 70 former rebel villages to have their own churches. We want to help and encourage these new Christians in their walk of faith. The cost for each church is approximately \$5,000, and Kathy and I have pledged to personally donate \$10,000 for two churches. They say that your treasure is where your heart is—and our hearts are with these new babes in the faith!

If you feel impressed to join us in supporting one or more churches, please do so. Any amount you give will be deeply appreciated and will be put to immediate use in this project or the project you indicate.

Yes, this month has been a month of rejoicing and gratitude for what God has done and is doing—and I can’t wait to see what He will do next!

Thank you for making such a profound difference in the lives of so many. What a joy it will be in heaven as all of us together—forgiven sinners—rejoice at the feet of Jesus. It’s what makes everything worthwhile, because there is no greater calling than leading others to Him.

Yours in the Blessed Hope,

Duane McKey
President



P.S. We are living in a time of miracles, when the darker this earth’s outlook appears, the greater the miracles of God’s grace will be. And the story of the rebels from Mindoro is one of these miracles. Thank you for being such a vital part of this story of amazing grace! May Jesus be the reason for your gratitude this holiday season and throughout the coming year.