Someone once shared a wonderful analogy for God's grace. She compared it to a strong downpour. As a child runs out to play in the rain, he tries to catch as many raindrops with both hands. What he manages to gather in his hands is the heart's capacity to receive grace, and the rest of the raindrops that he couldn't collect vividly describes the abundance of God's grace.

This analogy not only describes the infinite grace available for man to help him become holy and reach Heaven. It also explains that we only need the grace that God intends for our conversion for a specific area of our spiritual life. The rest of the 'uncollected grace' will have their time and place in God's plans.

In a tropical country like ours, we are not only acquainted with downpours, but also super storms or typhoons. A typhoon is like a giant tornado that brings with it the combination of strong winds and a lot of rain. Some can come and go harmlessly, others on the other hand, become merciless weather monsters devastating man and the environment.

Thus, experience has taught us never to underestimate these tropical weather threats. Super typhoons like Milenyo, Ondoy, Yolanda and recently Glenda have left clear signal lessons: be prepared for the worse scenario and be ready even though these seasonal visitors to the archipelago are only gently passing by.

More and more, storm awareness measures have trained us to have a prompter response, better logistics in relief goods and refuge areas, etc. Some lessons, however, have been harsh like Yolanda where the ignorance to 'surges' became a tragedy for many. But we continue to rise again, more united and better prepared.

Even though tropical storms may bring many sad experiences, they are also 'social equalizers,' and 'spiritual boosters.' This happens when they become an occasion to wake every one up to unite for the common good. No one is spared from or can be indifferent to a typhoon. Even those who may not have been in the storm's path, experience it also through loved ones in the stricken areas.
This is one reason, I personally prefer natural threats over storms of corruption, immorality, injustice and violence that ail our society. Typhoons and surges are disasters that we can always heal from, become more united and build our society and the family together.

Moral storms, on the other hand, constantly attack us. Their corrupting and devastating effects on innocent, the poor and the family are unpredictable and unquantifiable. Although these trials are also occasions to purify and strengthen oneself from, they are often more difficult to edify oneself with and rise from with greater hope.

There was a movie whose tag line said: "Become the monster to fight monsters!" Applying this to ourselves, we could say: "Fight the storms of injustice, corruption and immorality with storms of grace!"

This is precisely why we ought to prepare and equip ourselves for a particular storm of grace: the visit of Pope Francis to our country this January. His trip will not be political in nature. It is both a personal and ecclesial manner of his Holiness to express a genuine and fatherly concern for those affected by typhoon Yolanda.

Thus, as with all storms, we ought to prepare for the torrent of graces that will hit us when the Pope comes. Given the shortness of his stay, Jan. 15-19, we can already organize ourselves with spiritual provisions now. What would this preparation consists of?

The first would be equipping oneself with **personal conversion**. This is achieved through already well-known means as deepening our life of prayer, embracing our daily crosses joyfully and peacefully, and frequenting and acquiring a transforming appreciation of the Holy Eucharist and Confession.

Second, would be to help equip others. This is none other than our growing zeal to make as many people (i.e. Catholics and non-Catholics alike) prepare for this storm of grace with the Pope Francis’ visit. The steps to take, more than the mere material or logistical preparations, is helping them discover what God may want from them through such a graceful event.

Third, is to personally discover how to be united to the person of Pope Francis. Perhaps, reading up on his life and works. Another could be personally coming up with a daily action plan to pray and sacrifice for his intentions. For example, these days Pope Francis has been encouraging all the faithful to enter the wounds of Christ by focusing on the corporal works of mercy (e.g. visiting the sick, those imprisoned, the lonely, etc.)

These and many other initiatives will definitely be a spiritual life vest or raft that will keep us ad others afloat to accompany Peter’s boat next year. — **Fr. Francis B. Ongkingco, School Chaplain**
THE POPE:
*His role, responsibility, mission and the best attitudes towards him*

1. **What do we believe about the Pope?**

   We call the Pope “Father”, just as Catholics call their priest “Father”, because the Pope represents God as our Father, who loves us, who made us, and who sent his Son to die on the cross for us. The Pope represents God our Father in a special way, because like a good parent he guards the truth of the revelation which Jesus Christ handed on to his apostles (followers), the chief of whom was Simon whom Jesus called in his own language Cephas, meaning “Rock”. We believe that the present Pope is the successor of Peter, the Fisherman.

   During his lifetime, Jesus made Peter the leader of his church on earth, to take over when Jesus died, rose again from the dead, and went to be with his Father in heaven. He said to Peter, after Simon had named Jesus as “the Son of the Living God”:

   “Simon, Son of John, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I say that you are Peter (the Rock) and on this Rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell will not triumph against it. Whatever you shall bind on earth you shall bind in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”. [Matthew 16:17-19] (CATEW FAQ)

2. **What is the Pope’s responsibility?**

   As successor of St. Peter and head of the college of bishops, the Pope is the source and guarantor of the Church’s unity. He has the supreme pastoral authority and the final authority in doctrinal and disciplinary decisions.

   Jesus gave Peter a unique position of preeminence among the apostles. This made him the supreme authority in the early Church. Rome - the local Church that Peter led and the place of his martyrdom - became after his death the internal reference point of the young Church. Every Christian community had to agree with Rome; that was the standard for the true, complete, and unadulterated apostolic faith. …

   Only in this capacity is the Pope "Christ's Vicar on earth." As the highest pastoral and doctrinal authority, he watches over the transmission of the true faith...Unity in matters of faith and morals, which is guaranteed by the Church's Magisterium, or teaching authority, with the Pope at the head, is one reason for the remarkable resilience and influence of the Catholic Church. ([YOUCAT 141](#))

3. **What is the biblical basis for calling the Pope “Vicar of Christ”?**

   Jesus, who is the Good Shepherd, told Peter “Feed my sheep, feed my lambs.” (Jn 21:15-17) It was upon Simon Peter alone that Jesus after his Resurrection bestowed the jurisdiction of chief pastor and ruler over all his fold. (*Pastor aeternus*)

4. **What is the mission of the Catholic Church led by the Pope?**

   The mission of the Church is to proclaim and establish the Kingdom of God begun by Jesus Christ among all peoples. (Compendium 150)

   The Church's first purpose is to be the sacrament of the *inner union of men with God*. Because men's communion with one another is rooted in that union with God, the Church is also the sacrament of the *unity of the human race*. (CCC 775; italics in the original)

5. **What are the best attitudes towards the Pope?**

   a. **See Christ in the Pope.** Love for the Roman Pontiff must be in us a delightful passion, for in him we see Christ.

   b. **Love, obedience, affection.** Your deepest love, your greatest esteem, your most heartfelt veneration, your most complete obedience and your warmest affection have also to be shown towards the Vicar of Christ on earth, towards the Pope. We Catholics should consider that after God and the most Holy Virgin, our Mother, the Holy Father comes next in the hierarchy of love and authority.

   c. **Know his thought and live it.** Faithfulness to the Pope includes a clear and definite duty: that of knowing his thought, which he tells us in Encyclicals or other documents. We have to do our part to help all Catholics pay attention to the teaching of the Holy Father, and bring their everyday behavior into line with it.

   d. **Pass on his words.** Welcome the Pope’s words with a religious, humble, internal and effective acceptance. And pass them on. (Replies a-d, from St. Josemaria)

   By Dr. Raul Antonio A. Nidoy. Doctor of Theology. Permission to copy is granted. Please generously share with others.

10 FACTS ABOUT POPE FRANCIS

- Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born Dec. 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, one of five children born to an Italian railway worker and his wife.
- He speaks Spanish, Italian and German.
- He reportedly had a lung removed when he was a teenager due to an infection.
- He rides a bus to work, wears an ordinary priest’s robe and lives with an older priest in a simple apartment where he cooks his own meals, rather than live at the luxurious residence he was entitled to as Archbishop of Buenos Aires.
- He has written books on spirituality and meditation and has been outspoken against abortion and same-sex marriages, according to the Catholic News Service.
- He is the first Jesuit to be named a pope. He entered the Society of Jesus and was ordained in 1969 during his theological studies at the Theological Faculty of San Miguel.
- He has chosen the name Francis — the first time in papal history that name has been used.
- He is the first pope from the Americas and the first from outside Europe in more than 1,000 years.
- Even though he has no Vatican experience, he becomes the 266th pontiff in the Roman Catholic Church's 2,000-year history.
- He was the second choice of the conclave that elected Joseph Ratzinger, known as Benedict XVI, as pope eight years ago. (Source: Huffington Post Canada)