



Standing FIRM in Their Faith

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Pastor Pancho speaks about the comfort of God during one of four Sunday services.

When Millie Juarez was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2001, the year that followed brought a dizzying blur of hospital visits, chemotherapy, and tests of faith. It was a season of clinging to God's promises and fighting off despair for the Juarez family—especially her husband, Pancho, senior pastor of CC Montebello.



Fellowship takes place outside the converted warehouse after the service.

“Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us.”

2 Corinthians 1:9-10

“Her disease was diagnosed pretty late in the stages of a ravaging cancer. She was given a very low chance of survival—around 20 percent,” said Pancho. “Basically, we were told to make preparations. Our whole world collapsed.” But, through the collapse, Pancho stayed by Millie’s side, during her treatments, hospital visits, and bouts with fatigue and illness.

“We experienced what we read about in the Bible—the peace of God that passes all understanding—that was the only thing we had. It was a peace that sustained us.”

“Blessed be ... the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.” 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

“Although my private world was collapsing, I shared with the congregation the severity of the damage,” Pancho said. “I asked them not to feel sorry; that it was a lesson I was learning.” The staff of CC Montebello and other CC pastors rallied in support of



Open Bibles and open hearts are a defining element of CC Montebello.



Ministering the full counsel of God to a packed sanctuary.



Pastor Mark Castillo gives announcements while Petey Kim, the worship leader, looks on.

the Juarez family fulfilling all of Pancho’s responsibilities for five months with the exception of Sunday mornings, which he continued to teach.

“For the first three months of the chemotherapy, it appeared that the chemo was decimating her more than it was healing her,” he said. “The chemo made her lose her hair; the steroids made her gain weight; and she became weak and tired. Those were my times of loneliness and despair. I grabbed every promise that I had ever read in my 27 years as a Christian,” Pancho recalled. Those promises were his source of hope and assurance.

While Millie battled cancer, Pancho and Millie saw the Lord work in mighty ways, especially through the power of prayer. “I lived the things I preached,” he said. “One specialist blurted out, ‘Only prayer can heal you,’ which I took literally and asked the congregation to pray. Everywhere I spoke around the world and at conferences, I asked in return that they would please pray for my wife, that God would heal her.”

Pancho said he knew God would answer their prayers, even if Millie went home to be with the Lord. They found out—through emails and word from other Christians—that people all over the world were praying for Millie. One woman from CC Montebello visited a Baptist church in South Dakota and saw Millie’s name was on the prayer list. She brought the list back as a testament to the vastness of the prayers being offered.

Two years after her diagnosis, God has answered those prayers. Millie has been off chemo treatments for nearly a year. “I

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Pastor Pancho Juarez



CC Montebello's Children's Ministry in action at "Kid's World."



Three generations enjoying the moment at the "Warehouse Café," the on-site coffee shop.

thought, if God wants to take her home, she would be completely healed, but because God has allowed her to stay here with us, she is partially healed," Pancho said.

Millie's condition began to improve in June of 2002—in one shining moment of hope, like light at the end of a dark road. After Millie's last chemo treatment, the doctor told them there was a major improvement in her condition. "That was the first time he told us we could take a deep breath," Pancho said, "We cried in our car in the parking lot as we had done before. This time, they were tears of great exhilaration, joy, and elation."

On their way home, Pancho remembered a verse he had read during his personal devotion time, Isaiah 43:1-5, and realized it had been a promise from God about Millie's illness. "Especially verse 5, 'Fear not, for I am with you.'"

Enduring this personal trial has helped Pancho to be more compassionate in ministry. "Through this, my ministerial life has been acutely sensitized to the pain of so many suffering people in the church," he said. "We had many cancer patients and families coming to our services."

People who watched their struggle and saw Millie's health improve were encouraged that the Lord does answer prayer. Speaking of cancer patients, Pancho remarked, "It's a sad brotherhood. You see lonely people; you see sadness, brokenness, hopelessness, and despair." While coping with their own battles, the couple attempted to minister to other sufferers as well.

"They are offered the best medicine any civilization could provide, yet their soul is left unattended. We knew we could talk to them," he said. "It was a strong testimony that we were Christians and what we were all about."

The battle isn't over yet, but Pancho and Millie feel they have seen victory. Millie must go for another year without any new cancer activity to be declared "in remission." They are thankful to God for her improved health and the subsiding fatigue that has debilitated her for more than three and a half years. "That's another victory here; God is just glorious!"

A Mighty Work

A month after Millie began her recovery, Pancho saw the Lord work in another mighty way. His mother, who for 26 years had resisted the Gospel, came forward at an altar call as he concluded his message and accepted Christ as her Savior. "I had shared with her for 16 years," he joyfully remembers. Over the years she tired of Pancho speaking to her about Jesus, but she was eventually won over by the witness and example of his life.

Those who serve under Pancho say his witness has inspired them as well, and they have learned much from ministry through his example. "He has not wavered in his love and care for the body at CC Montebello and abroad," said Loren Lew, associate pastor at CC Montebello. "He continues to faithfully minister while balancing a home life that is quite busy. I truly admire his diligence to both the Lord and his family."

Patrick Garcia, who oversees the radio ministry, described Pancho as disarming. "Often times, when meeting a pastor, there is a bit of timidity, a bit of fear," Patrick said, "but Pancho brings you into his world as if he has known you for years. He makes you feel at ease, and I hope to be that way."

Many visitors comment on the friendly and loving atmosphere at CC Montebello, a body of 4,000 people from a variety of cultures and backgrounds—mostly Hispanic. "We're the closest Calvary Chapel to L.A., and we're a block away from East L.A.," Pancho said. One of their many local outreaches is the annual "Harvest Celebration: A Halloween Alternative," on which



Observing and absorbing during a Bible study at the "Cross-Eyed Generation," CC Montebello's Youth Group.



Pastor Pancho in his early days.

The history of CC Montebello

CC Montebello had its beginnings in 1990 as a small home fellowship in the town where Pancho Juarez attended high school. The home fellowship grew to 200 members within two years, moving to several facilities as they grew. On July 12, 1992, Pastor Raul Ries dedicated CC Montebello. Pancho had served at CC West Covina under Raul's leadership and received his training there; he and Millie had begun attending in 1979.

In 1995, the congregation of 800 adults moved into a 98,000 square-foot warehouse. They purchased the building two years later in August of 1997, and now have a congregation of 3,000 adults and 1,000 children.



The Juarez family - left to right - Bianca, Sebastian, Alexandria, Zoe (foreground), Millie, Pancho, Jasmine.

machismo image of gang members by wearing the flower-decked shirts," he explained.

CC Montebello also ministers across the country at various crusades, outreaches, and mission trips and supports long-term missionaries and a mission in Mexico. Pastor Pancho helps oversee several Spanish-speaking Calvary Chapels in the U.S.

nearly 10,000 people converge for a free night of carnival-type rides, a petting zoo, and concerts.

"One of the unique things you'll see in our church is former gang members wearing Hawaiian shirts," Pancho said, laughing. "After becoming Christians, they try to learn humility and shed the hard,

and is heavily involved in missions in South America. In July, Pancho and a team from CC Montebello journeyed to Osaka, Japan, for a week-and-a-half-long outreach, taking along Priesthood, a Christian rap group. In addition to their frequent trips to Japan, they also support a long-term missionary in Okinawa.

Pancho and Millie have four daughters, including a set of twins, and one son, ranging in age from 9 to 23. While the blessings at CC Montebello are evident, it is obvious Pancho's greatest gift from God has been his family, especially his wife. ☺

CC Montebello

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Change-of-the-guard between "Kid's World" service coordinators, Dan Carbajal and James Arista.



A Vietnam veteran shares his Marine Corps and Christian experiences.



Associate Pastor Loren Lew, left, enjoys a moment with Police Chaplain Bob Trietler and former police officer Rico Di Napoli.



Pastor Pancho honors Army Spc. Paul T. Nakamura, who died serving his country in Iskanderiyeh, Iraq. Nakamura, 21, was part of an ambulance crew transporting an injured soldier when his vehicle was hit south of Baghdad.

Paul "Toku" Nakamura, Spc. U.S. Army, was killed in action in Iraq on June 19, 2003. As a medic, he was transporting a wounded soldier when they came under fire in Baghdad. Paul was a part of the congregation of CC Montebello. Pastor Pancho remembered him in this tribute:

"The Christian life, as described by Paul the apostle, is likened as unto a soldier. In Philippians 2:25, Paul mentions his friend Epaphroditus and describes him as 'my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier.' Spc. Nakamura was a soldier for the United States, but most importantly, he was a soldier unto the Lord. This young man demonstrated the greatest sacrifice as he gave his life for all of us, so we could live free. His sacrifice allowed two of his comrades to live. 'Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.'" John 15:13