

October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020

My Dear fellow St. Matthew parishioners,

Please allow me to share my story of how God completely changed my life from being hopeless to having a purpose in life. My name is Prisca Bungiranto, and I have been a parishioner since 1992. I recently lost my beloved husband of 20 years, Steve Marks, unexpectedly. There is not a day that I don't think of Steve and miss him. It has been a very difficult and painful journey to bear alone, especially during COVID-19. A visit or even a hug became very impossible to ask for. When I fell into the darkest despair in my life and lost my will to live, God saved me and gave me hope. I would not be where I am today to share my story with you, if it had not been for God's unconditional love and mercy. God is my Savior.

After Steve passed, I was angry, depressed and hopeless. I felt lost when my whole world crumbled in front of me and my faith was shaken. During my difficult grieving journey, Fr. Nguyen has helped me and brought me much closer to God. Through his prayers and guidance, I found my peace and comfort in God. I am forever grateful.

When Fr. Nguyen encouraged me to "Keep praying" and be patient to wait for God's answers, I learned how powerful prayers are. Through prayers, I learned to always put God first before anything and when I do that, everything else will follow and come through. I often ask God, is there a hope for me after losing Steve and how will I go on from here? The answer I always hear is: Yes, there is always hope because I AM always with you. When I trust God with all my heart, He guides me, protects me, heals me, gives me strength and hope. He loves me and cares for my life. When I decided to surrender all, let God take control of my life and put God first before everything else, I went from being hopeless to having a purpose in life. God is Amazing!

When God saved me, I believed He had bigger plans and purpose for my life. St. Matthew church means a lot to Steve and to me in every aspect of our lives, personally and spiritually. It is our parish home. Steve had always enjoyed working with electronics, music and cameras. When I heard St. Matthew needed a camera and sound system for live streaming Mass, I saw an opportunity to sponsor a camera to honor Steve's loving memory. I started the "I ♥ SM" project (SM stands for St. Matthew) and invited my friends and family to join me to sponsor a camera's fundraising goal of \$2,500. I was overwhelmed with the love, support and positive responses from everyone involved. Within three weeks, almost \$8,000 was raised which helped to offset the costs of a camera and sound system. The result was beyond my expectations; it was a miracle. I would like to thank all parishioners who participated in and supported me unconditionally.

This project means a lot to me, not only it gives me hope, but also helps me cope. Every time I see this camera, I will remember how much Steve meant to me and loved me. I would like to keep this opportunity open and invite you to participate in the "I ♥ SM" project when the timing is right for you. Any funds raised will help with any projects that are in the pipelines for St. Matthew. If you would like to donate, please make the check payable to "St. Matthew" (in memo line write "I ♥ SM" project) and drop it in the offering basket at Mass anytime.

Thank you for allowing me to share my story. I hope my story will inspire you to keep praying and never give up hope. Life is so precious. Each day is a gift, cherish your loved ones each and every day. May God bless us and our families and keep us safe.

Very grateful,

I ♥ SM

Prisca Bungiranto