

## GOD'S WILL IS FULFILLED ONE SANDWICH AT A TIME

Manny Pacquiao serves cold cuts to his neighbours and uppercuts to his opponents.

He's the Filipino version of Superman; elected congressman for his province in May, wealthy beyond imagination and believed to be the best pound-for-pound boxer in the world. The latest display of athletic prowess occurred Nov. 19, when he crushed Antonio Margarito to capture the WBC super welterweight title, taking home a cool \$15 million.

But the fighter's most amazing attribute is not seen inside the ring, or even inside the walls of parliament -- but *outside* his house. Bob Arum, who has visited the Philippines to observe Pacquiao, says: "He sits in front of his house giving money away to people; they go for blocks ... food and money, food and money." (USA Today, Nov. 11, 2010)

"Those around Pacquiao fear he will give away his fortune, but ... he believes that's part of the higher purpose ... that God has put him where he is for a reason -- to benefit mankind, to do good."

It is this grasp of God's will that propels him to extraordinary heights. Manny resists the urge to bow at the altar of personal rights and pleasures. Instead he lifts his eyes heavenward and simply asks, "What do you want me to do, God?" He then calmly goes about the business of stepping out the will of his Heavenly Father.

God also has a customized plan for each of us. And it is there, at the centre of His will that we, like Manny, experience the deepest satisfaction possible this side of Heaven.

The pathway to this personal experience is laid out in a riddle presented by Jesus and clearly comprehended by Manny: "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 10:39).

The peculiar Pacquiao is having the time of his life, not by hoarding finances or constructing mansions; but by devoting his days to *losing his life* for the sake of God's purposes.

His antithesis is another boxer -- this one of dubious distinction -- Iron Mike Tyson. The self-proclaimed "baddest man on the planet" won his first 19 professional bouts by knockout, 12 of them in the first round. To borrow a hillbilly expression, he had "life by the tail." Maybe that's why it turned and bit him.

Bad times for Mike began in 1990, when 42-1 underdog Buster Douglas knocked him cold in the 10<sup>th</sup> round. In 1992, Tyson was convicted of sexual assault and served three years in prison. A boxing comeback was attempted after his release in 1995, but prison had obviously corrupted his taste buds and he was disqualified in a 1996 fight after biting off part of Evander Holyfield's ear.

Tyson declared bankruptcy in 2003, despite having earned \$300 million in his career. His motto: "I found life -- I lost life."

Manny Pacquiao would testify of the opposite: "I lost life – I found life." It reminds me of another wise man, Jim Elliot, who proclaimed: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

While some remain convinced of Manny's fiscal "foolishness," I am equally confident that this diminutive fighter is fulfilling God's plan for his life -- one sandwich at a time.