

# **“The Unlimited Mercy of God” – Armencius Munthe, R.I.P.**

Another memento mori. Three in a row for us in 8 days. Just two weeks ago (ThTh #579) Armencius was our reporter for “Platzregen on the move in Indonesia.” I passed on to you his words that cheered our community: “On July 7 here in Sumatra I was asked to present a Bible Study for a conference of 500 Methodists. I did diagnosis/prognosis with Philippians 2. Many were amazed at what they heard.”

After that euphoria came now this “Remember!” from his son Paul, like his father, a Lutheran pastor:

*Dear beloved brothers and sisters, Today, Saturday July 25, 2009 at 21.30 our Lord Jesus Christ has called our father, Armencius Munthe, back to His peaceful Kingdom. He passed away after he has suffered some heart attacks and stroke since Saturday last week. The funeral service will be held on Tuesday 28 July 2009 in Medan. We thank you for your prayers and for your lovely help and support in his ministry. We kindly ask you to continue pray for us especially for our mother. In His love.*

*Paul Munthe*

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Armencius has been dear to Marie and me since our first meeting back in 1986 at an LWF gathering in Strassbourg. We learned that he too was an “Old Hamburger,” having done his grad work with the same theological faculty at the University of Hamburg (Germany) that had earlier be-doctored me. We intersected with him and his family during two of our mission volunteer gigs (1999 & 2004) in Indonesia. I did a “Crossings” demonstration

for the faculty and student body at “his” seminary. He asked me to contribute something for his “Festschrift” publication when he turned 70. Which I did. Armencius was a presenter on the program for our Crossings Conference last year here in town. When you do pray for “our mother,” as son Paul requests, her name is Floriana.

For today’s ThTh here’s Armencius’ own telling of his life story. He sent it to me when he was 72. I’m glad I held on to it. You will be too.

Weeping with them that weep—but not without hope.

Ed Schroeder

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## **The Rev. DR. ARMENCIUS MUNTHE**

“The Unlimited Mercy of God” Medan, 2004

### **CHILDHOOD**

#### Separated from Parents

I was born on February 12, 1934 – on Monday – in the village of Pangambatan, in Karo District. It is a small village located in the tourism area of Sipiso-Piso Waterfall – a beautiful tourism spot in Northern Sumatra. Aek Bolon, a small river that flows through the village, is the source of water for the famous waterfall. This village is located at the border of Simalungun and Karo District. Although this place is in the administration area of the Karo Districts Government, most of the Pangambatan villagers are from Simalungun tribe. Simalungun is the commonly spoken language and most of the villagers – who are mostly farmers – can also speak the languages of Karo and Tapanuli.

My father was Djalias Munthe, and my mother, Honim Girsang. I am the eldest of six children (five sons and one daughter).

According to my mother, when I was one year old my grandfather (my father's father) took me from Pangambatan to his village in Lingga Tonga in Dairi District. The reason was because he needed a companion at home. I was reared by him until I was seven years old. When it was time for me to attend school, I returned to my parents' house in Pangambatan.

### Father Died and I Stayed Six Months in a Refuge

I completed the Elementary School (SR) until the third grade because in our village the school was provided only up to the third grade. Then I moved to Seribudolok which was about 10 miles away to continue on to fourth grade. Some friends and I had to stay with relatives. We brought our supplies from our village and cooked for ourselves. For the first year I stayed with an older cousin, Mora Saragih, who was still single at that time.

We would visit home once every six months to replenish our supplies. The first time we went home, my friends didn't want to go back to school anymore. I was tempted not to go back, I stayed three days longer than I should. My father was curious, but I lied by telling him that we still had three more days off from school. My father understood. But when I still didn't want to go back to Seribudolok until the third day, he became very angry. He took a broom and said he would hit me if I didn't want to go to school anymore. He was very different from my friends' fathers who didn't care whether their children went back to school or not. This scared me, so I changed my mind and decided to return to school. (Not until later in my life did I thank my father for his insistence. If he had not been so strong, I would probably be a farmer still living in that village like my other friends).

The second Aggression with the Dutch in 1947 brought us much

sorrow. My father was shot to death by the colonialists. He was the head of the village and a major sergeant in the Civil Army. This unfortunate incidence started when the villagers started a fire to burn the village. To help the situation, my father went around and called out to the villagers not to burn their own villages. It was November 27, 1947. My father was on his way to call out people who were in their hiding places when he was caught by the Dutch. They killed him. Since the situation was not safe yet, he was buried in the field in a hurry with no casket or any funeral ceremony. Meanwhile, the Pangambatan villagers were ready to take refuge. My family went to Lingga Tonga, in Pakpak Dairi. We walked on foot for two days through the Sibuatan mountains. We stayed in Lingga Tonga for six months.

When the situation was safe again, we returned to Pangambatan. The district government of Karo moved my father's tomb to a special cemetery near our village. I then became like my friends who had quit school earlier, working in the field.

There was a time when I felt the desire to go back to school again. When I told my mother about it, she agreed. The reason I thought I wanted to go back to school was my weak physical condition preventing me working physically. Before long I was encouraged to go back to school since I was no longer expected to help in the field.

I became very motivated to study after those few years out of school. I stayed with Teacher Dj. Petrus Purba (later became Pastor Dj. Petrus Purba). He used to be a teacher in our village before he moved to Seribudolok after the refuge. There were about 15 students from Pangambatan and Purba Saribu who stayed at his house. We listened to his sermons every night. Finally I "marguru tardidi" (Baptism class) and received my baptism and confirmation at the church, Huria Batak Kristen Protestan (the

Protestant Church of Batak) in Seribudolok on June 11, 1950. My mother didn't know I was baptized. Otherwise she would have prepared a big meal for the occasion. I recall after the church service my friends and I went for a walk on the main road – Sutomo road today. At that time, all of my family hadn't been baptized and still believed in pelbegu religion (heathen).

I graduated from the Elementary School in 1950. It took me eight years to complete instead of the usual six years. This was because of the aggression, the death of my father and living in a refuge.

## **TO THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL**

### No Hindrance for God's Plan

After graduating from elementary school, I registered at a Junior High School, SMP 1, in Pematangsiantar and graduated in 1953. During my SMP, I liked to read "Immanuel" – the monthly magazine of HKBP (Batak Lutheran Church). I learned about the Good News, the Church and the Theol. School from that magazine.

After my graduation from SMP, I read an advertisement in the magazine about the registration for new students in Sipoholon Seminary. I submitted my application and reported to Pastor A. Wilmar (who was the General Secretary of HKBP-Simalungun at that time) only to be told that the allocation from the HKBPS was only for two people and they were already decided, Umbersius H. Simbayak and Gustaf Saragih. When I left the office I met Gustaf Saragih who mentioned that he was not interested in going to the Seminary.

With a little hope, I returned to the General Secretary's office and reported that Gustaf didn't want to go to Sipoholon Seminary although he was already registered as a candidate. The Secretary did not seem to believe me and asked to send for Gustaf. I was then asked to bring a letter to Gustaf. When I met him, he

insisted on not going to the Seminary. It was his family who later came and reported formally that Gustaf was more interested to go to a School of Forestry.

That was my chance to study at the Seminary, replacing Gustaf. I went home to Pangambatan and told my mother about it . A Theological School was a strange thing for my family since they were not Christians yet.

(Considering our family's finances, I had never thought of continuing my study until college, much less of ever studying in Germany. I also enjoyed traveling to several countries, as well as being one of the Church Leader of GKPS.)

Some of our relatives even looked down and accused me of being insolent. "Na so mambotoh dirini do ambia on, bapana pe lang adong be, lao homa hu sikola pandita. Lang anggo ibuat sikkola na martulahe" ("This person is being insolent, his father has died. Why doesn't he just attend a school that would grant him a scholarship?"), they said. There was a scholarship or "tulahe" if you entered into the High Teacher School (SGA) at that time. My mother was the only person who told me "Goodbye" when I left for Sipoholon.

I left for Sipoholon on September 27, 1953 even though the school already started on September 15, so I was late. Before leaving, I talked to my uncle, Iskander Simanjorang, a son of my great aunt. He was the one who always encouraged me to enter Theological School. He himself had continued his study to the Junior Teacher School (SGB) in Pematangsiantar and received a scholarship. "I will contribute some of my scholarship to you only if your study goes well," he said. His words really encouraged me.

(He kept his promises and sent me some money for two months. God's blessings came later and I received my scholarship from

the Seminary in my second year. What I learned was, even if our good intention for others seems small, it could encourage them to move forward).

The night before I left, my uncle offered to conduct a service for me. He preached from Ephesians 3:20. (...Him -God- who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine)

I left for Sipoholon on a horse-drawn carriage from Sirongit market, near Tarutung carrying a suitcase and other supplies. Riding on a horse carriage was a luxurious thing at that time. I was met by my friend, Umbersius H. Sumbayak who was already there in Sipoholon and also was welcomed warmly by a professor, Ds. F. Siregar, who spoke Simalungun fluently because he once taught at the Pastoral School in Pematang Raya. I was so happy to meet them.

When I started to study, I realized I had missed some of the lessons. Some friends helped by giving me their notes so I could catch up. (Sipoholon Seminary was an institution that managed several education fields. One of them was a Secondary Theology School which required a five-year study. The graduates would be Junior Theology Bachelors who could be ordained as pastors. That was the school I attended).

I studied in Sipoholon for just one year. In 1954, the Secondary Theological School moved to Pematangsiantar because the University of HKBP Nommensen had just opened and consisted of a Faculty of Theology.

The professors at the Faculty of Theology were mostly Germans and Indonesians who graduated from German universities. There were also some from the USA, India and Norway. Their culture had changed our way of studying and discipline. Besides, I was encouraged to study hard. I graduated from the Secondary Theological School in 1958.

## To be a Pastor: For Money?

I was ordained as a HKBPS pastor on June 15, 1958 and started to work as a Junior Pastor in a parish in HKBPS (Huria Kristen Batak Protestan Simalungun) Medan. I only worked the job for two months because the council of Theological Faculty's professors had asked the Leaders of HKBPS to send me to continue my study at the Nommensen Faculty of Theology in Pematangsiantar in order for me to get my full Bachelor degree. The Church Leaders agreed through an Executive meeting.

This new assignment shocked me. I intended to decline by meeting Pastor J. Wismar Saragih, the Vice Ephorus of HKBPS in Pematangsiantar. I planned for my strategy and argument to decline the assignment on the way to his house. My main reason was our family financial situation. My father had died, my mother was just a farmer and my younger siblings still needed financial help.

When I met the pastor at his home, I tried hard to persuade him not to ask me to continue my study. While I was speaking, he allowed me to give my arguments until I had no more word left to say. After that he prayed. Finally I got his advice. He sent me to the door and reminded me that continuing my study was for the progress of Simalungun. Later I admired him as a person who had encouraged me. I owed him.

After completing my study in 1961, the Church Leader of HKBPS appointed me as a Parish Pastor in Saribudolok HKBPS. I enjoyed the job and started to mingle with the congregation. Unfortunately, I was there only for six months because the Church Leader of HKBPS asked me to continue my study in Germany, as recommended by the Council of the Theological Faculty's Professors of Nommensen.

This time I didn't decline the assignment as I had done before.



I remembered Pastor J. Wismar Saragih's words that to study was surely for my own progress and for Simalungun church's future.

## **STUDY IN GERMANY**

Belawan – Bremen: Five weeks

I went to Bremen (Germany) with Umbersius Sumbayak. We departed through Belawan by a trade ship, Hoechst. It took us five weeks through the Suez Canal. I remembered that for some days all we could see were just the ocean and sky. I experienced the fierce waves of the Pacific Ocean which until that time I only heard of from my history lessons. The waves rocked the ship from side to side although they weren't dangerous. Finally, we arrived in Bremen safe and sound. Entering one of the big harbor cities in Germany was a strange experience for me. Everything was new for me. We were met by a Mission's car and then headed for Wuppertal, Barmen.

### School Preparation

Although we had studied German in Indonesia, we had to attend an intensive course in German for several months in Wuppertal – Barmen. It was the center of Rhineland Mission Gesellschaft. We lived in the Missions-haus. After the study, I moved to Hamburg where the State University of Hamburg was located; it was about 400 kilometers away.

During my college years I lived in the Missions academy dorm with some other foreign students. Each of us had our own room. Breakfast and dinner were provided for and we all ate together in a room while we all ate lunch at the university canteen.

Hamburg University: For knowledge not degree

Studying at the Theological Faculty of Hamburg University opened my mind to new things. The professors, study facilities and

discipline of study were very good. One subject was taught by two professors and assisted by four assistants who held Theology Doctorate degrees. The library was fully equipped with all the books that we needed.

During my study in Germany, the students who had scholarship were given chances to visit the churches there. At our long vacation, the RMG assigned us to go to churches that held mission festivals. Besides preaching, we also explained about the mission activities in Indonesia to the congregation.

Finally I completed my study in Hamburg University in 1965, exactly according to the time decided. I did my thesis, a library research project, which was entitled *Die Deutung des Christenleidens im Ersten Petrusbrief* (The Meaning of Christian Suffering in 1 Peter). The title was inspired from the lectures of Prof. Dr. Leonhard Goppelt about the interpretation of the Epistle of Peter. The main point was, even though we had sufferings in our lives, we shouldn't lose faith. God provides in many ways which we never think of.

From Prof. Leonhard, I learned about the philosophy of simplicity and philosophy of studying at school. He always stressed on "Back to the Bible." Besides, he was always an efficient person (went to work by train, never used a car). He also taught us about studying for knowledge so that we could solve problems and not for getting degrees. I have always admired him; every time I travel abroad, I always look for his books. In the USA, some of his books have been translated into English. A strong discipline made me pass. I could defend my thesis and graduated well. In Germany, before having our thesis examination, we had to have some written tests from the subjects like Old Testament, Church History, Practical Theology and Ecumenics and it took three hours for each of them.

Before returning to Indonesia, RMG asked me to teach Indonesian to Pastor Dr. Ulrich Beyer who would be a professor at the Theological Faculty of HKBP Nommensen in Pematangsiantar. Later Dr. Beyer was sent to London to study English. So I was assigned to accompany him, to teach Indonesian and also to learn English at the place where he studied for two months. Dr. Beyer left for Indonesia while I was in London. RMG gave me another month to study English.

In a short time of two months Dr. Beyer had mastered the Indonesian language well. I heard that when he first gave his lecture, he gave it in Indonesian which had surprised everybody since it was his first time he had ever visited Indonesia. He mastered the language quickly with perseverance and discipline.

### Longing for ministry

After completing my English language course in London for three months, I returned to Indonesia by Hoechst, the same trade ship that I took when I left, also the same route we took. I longed to go back to serve the congregation in Simalungun which I had not seen in four years. I missed my mother, a strong woman who struggled alone after our father's death when my youngest sibling was still in her womb. She worked hard for her children, including me until I completed my Master's degree in theology. I missed my fiancée, Floriana Tobing. We had been engaged before I left for Germany. I missed my dead father who was shot to death by the Dutch in 1947 when he was fighting for his countrymen. I missed my siblings who always prayed and encouraged me. I missed my uncle, Iskander Simanjorang, [and] Tigaraja Nagasaribu who encouraged me to study at Theological School.

My longings grew more when the ship was closer to Belawan. By the last days on board I was so bored. I could not wait to disembark. I praised God when we finally arrived at Belawan.

I was met by my relatives from Medan who came with some people from our village, including my mother. My fiancée, Floriana Tobing, was waiting for me at GKPS Hang Tuah. They were all so happy to see me and welcomed me with tears in their eyes.

## **MINISTERING A CHURCH**

### A Short Ministry

When I came from Germany, the Church Leader of GKPS appointed me as the Evangelist Pastor – the one to do all evangelizing work in GKPS and had to live in Hang Tuah, Medan. Pastor Umbersius H. Sumbayak was the Parish Pastor at that time.

Our country's economic situation was not good. The value of money was declining, inflation was high and the social condition at that time was very much adversely affected by the September communist uprising. Some in the congregation were suspicious of one another. They needed a more intensive teaching of faith. Not long after, I noticed that the number of congregation members who longed to go to church increased.

Although ministering to a church had been my longing, my ministry in that position only lasted a short time. I was an evangelist pastor for only six months. The Church Leader of GKPS – through initiative of RMG -assigned me to Banua Niha Keriso Protestant (BNKP) to be a teacher in Ombolata Seminary in Gunung Sitoli, on the island of Nias [off the western border of Sumatra]..

Hang Tuah was a historical place for me. I married Floriana Tobing there on June 15, 1966. Floriana was one of the first nurses from the Batak people who was sent to Germany in the 1950s. She was working as a nurse at Bethesda Hospital Seribudolok when we got married. We were married by Pastor Lesman Purba, the former General Secretary of GKPS.

Three months after we got married I was assigned to Nias. The congregation of GKPS did not want me to leave them, in fact some of them planned to make a petition to the head office of GKPS. They might have thought that after studying abroad why should I minister in another church. I tried to explain to them when we met that my assignment was a response to an inquiry by RMG and that I was glad to go there. They understood and cancelled their plan to petition the head office.

### **OMBOLATA SEMINARY**

On foot for one and a half days

Our assignment to Nias was like a “honeymoon” gift, within the providence of God’s plan. He was preparing something good for me. We left by ship from Sibolga to Nias, a place I had never been to and only heard of in stories. We were accompanied by Pastor C. Sipayung to Ombolata.

Ombolata Seminary was an education center like Sipoholon Seminary in HKBP. I was to teach the pastors, overseers, elders and deacons. The materials to be taught were related to the Bible, church and Christian Education (PAK).

Dr Toepperwein – a RMG staff member–was already working there as the Seminary Director. There were also some pastors from Nias who worked there as well as some staff.

The traditional kings of Nias welcomed us with open hands and really appreciated our work. They often sent us fruit at harvest time and also “jambar” – the gift of meat at festivals. Those were signs of their welcome to us.

While working at the Seminary, I used to visit and preach at the services among the churches there. Once we visited a congregation in Sirombu, in western Nias by walking for one and a half days. We were sending vicar pastors for their internships

at that time.

During my three years assignment in Nias, I became n HKBP pastor unofficially in Gunung Sitoli. At that time Nias was under the administration of HKBP Sibolga. Due to transportation problem, the pastor of HKBP Sibolga often assigned me to minister to their congregation in Gunung Sitoli. I used to conduct the matrimonies, sacrament ceremonies and Sunday services there.

Nias was still underdeveloped at that time. There was only one car owned by Dr Topperwein at the Seminary. It was our only transportation to and from Gunung Sitoli. The roads were still stony and I had to ride a bicycle for nine kilometers to Gunung Sitoli to buy groceries.

Our working contract ended in August 1968 when our second child was born. But due to the security on the ship, it was extended for another three months. Besides precious experiences we had at Nias, it had also become the place of birth for my two sons, John Elisa and Markus Leonard. We left Nias in November 1968. Before leaving I suggested Pastor Waldemar Hasugian, S. Th. from HKBP to be my successor.

## **MANAGING EDUCATION**

Utilizing the Dormitory and the SPW

I did not know where I would be assigned after Nias. My motto was "Wherever I am assigned, God is preparing something good." After returning from the GKPS head office, I received my new assignment from the Church Leadership to be the Director of GKPS Education Center in Sondiraya.

There was already a High School in the education complex equipped with a dormitory. The Evangelist School for Women (SPW) had got its facilities as well. Sister Elisabeth Steinhard was the dorm head and the SPW Director was Sister Ursulla Woermann.

The urgent concern was to utilize the GKPS dorm and operate the SPW. It was difficult in the beginning to find students who wanted to stay at the school dorm and to find female students for the SPW. Sister Elisabeth once came and asked us to accommodate a girl in our house since she was the only student at the female dorm. There was also very little interest among the Junior High School graduates to become evangelists.

I had to speak directly to the congregations and explain to them about utilizing the facilities. Praise God, after our visit to GKPS Purba Tongah for a service, some female students were encouraged to be women evangelists. That is why many of the church's first women evangelists came from the village.

We didn't do many things during our two year stay there. I had to move back to the head office and received my new duty in 1970.

### **A MERCY TO LEAD GKPS**

To be one of the leaders in the Church Leader of GKPS was not my dream at that time. I was so young, 36 years old. It seemed impossible since most of my predecessors had much more experiences and knowledge than I did.

I was appointed to be General Secretary of GKPS at the Synode Bolon (General Synod) in 1970. I really did not understand why they chose me. I was young and never worked at the head office. Before that, my career was in education field as a teacher.

I was so touched, confused and thankful to God for His blessing for me. Touched, because of how the synod participants trusted me with the job. Confused, because I had never held such a position before. I had been teaching, but not working in administration. I was thankful because I believed it was the grace of God – He was planning something good for me.

My first years as the General Secretary were difficult since I had no prior experience at all. The difference of opinions among the seniors in the Church Leadership Council really bothered me. In two years we hardly smiled in our meetings. It was even impossible to discuss about my pay raise. Thank God, that situation did not last long. God always has many ways to help us in the midst of our troubles.

I held the position as the General Secretary of GKPS for seven years. I worked with Ephorus Pastor Lesman Purba for two years and with Ephorus Pastor SP Dasuha for five years. Pastor Lesman died at his young age when he was attending a meeting in Hungary in 1972. As a general secretary I learned a lot about secretarial jobs in the head office as well as church management from him.

I was then appointed as Ephorus [=Bishop] of GKPS at the 1977 Synod. It was not an easy work. There were so many problems faced by GKPS at that time and I was only able to solve some of them.

There are not many things that I can share from my twenty five years work as one of the GKPS's Church Leaders. One of them was the acknowledgment of our society developmental institution on a national scale which received a Kalpataru award among many others. The service of our hospital, Bethseda Hospital had reached the rural areas, especially in the prevention field which was very much in alignment with our policy at that time. It was obvious that our society development programs had not reached the point of what we desired. That was the reason why they needed to be improved.

In the ecumenal area, we developed broad relationships with other churches and partners both domestic and foreign. We were involved in the leadership of the Lutheran World Federation



(LWF) and World Council of Churches (WCC).

At least there was some fruit of what I had worked for although I did not record them as my rewards. I often referred to Martin Luther and William Loehe (a German Lutheran pastor in the 19th century). Martin Luther said, "Good works have no name." William Loehe, an outstanding Director of Mission who lived two centuries ago said, "My rewards are for me to serve."

### **BECOMING AN ORDINARY STAFF IN GKPS**

"Power and Money are not everything"

I thanked God that I could accomplish my twenty five years' duty as a decision-maker in GKPS. Then I became just an ordinary staff member who had to submit to the new leader. The GKPS Church Council appointed me as a professor at the Abdi Sabda Theology School in Medan. Becoming a professor was a right assignment for me since I could serve by preparing qualified ministers.

Once I left the church administration staff, automatically I had to return everything that was provided for me before—house, car, driver and other things which were always supposed to be the symbol of power. After that I had to use public transportation ("sudako") and moved to a small house. I used to have secretaries who handled my letters; now I had to write them on my own.

I had to be able to do many things on my own. The lesson for me was I learned more things that I didn't know before. Operating a computer was one of them. I just realized that operating a computer was the main requirement to enter into global communication. Without computer knowledge I would not be able to use the internet, a global communication medium that connected me to my friends wherever they were.

To become ourselves is difficult. Everyone has to undergo it, not to avoid it. The key is, "My rewards are for me to serve," that saying of Wilhelm Loehe which I always model after.

One thing that made me more enthusiastic after I no longer had "power" was an opportunity to write and deliver the Word of God to all levels of people. I preached at government offices, private, social and political organizations and churches directly or through the media. My opportunity to serve became broader than the time I was just one of the leaders.

I was awarded an honorary Doctorate title when I was just an ordinary staff member. The Academy of Ecumenical Indian Theology, an education institution in Chennai (formerly called Madras) India awarded me the title in 1997. This institution awarded doctorate titles to other church figures in the world. Bishop Christian Krause (The President of the LWF), Bishop Horst Hirschler (Germany) and Dr Ishmael Noko (The Secretary General of Lutheran World Federation) were also awarded the same title by the institution.

It took me some time to think and write my speech for the degree ceremony. I finally found my theme, "The Unlimited Mercy of God." The content of the speech was about my way of life which I presented based on Ephesians 3:20.

Unfortunately, I was not able to attend the inauguration ceremony. There was a fire in the jungle near my home town of Medan with smoke covering the sky. I was already in the waiting room of Polonia Airport in Medan when it was announced that the flight had been cancelled because the thick smoke endangered the flight. I then sent my speech through the internet and had one of the academy staff there read it for me. The institution then sent me a record of the ceremony on a CD by mail.

I received the unlimited mercy of God even though I had no power

and money.

## **ENTERING RETIREMENT PERIOD**

“The unlimited mercy of God”

After serving in GKPS for 41 years, I retired in February 12, 1999. This was an unlimited mercy of God. I received my notification letter from the Church Council sent by mail.

During my retirement, I received greater mercy. I became one of the editors of the World Bible Translation Center (WBTC) in Fort Worth, Texas, US in 2000. In the following year I became the Representative of Crossways International, Minneapolis, USA for Indonesia.

We have translated so many English books into Indonesian that churches now have more choices of reading in order to improve their knowledge and faith.

Although I am retired, I still have some ministry in my own ways and styles. I have a very busy schedule. I still teach at Abdi Sabda Theological Seminary (Medan) as a part-timer with a regular schedule also as the head of the Seminary's library.

The people that God has given me have been special blessings for me. During my retirement, I enjoyed spending time with my grandchildren, Theopil Henry Halomoan Munthe (12 years old), Tamara Cecilia Munthe (6 years old) and Tabita Ria Elisabeth Munthe (3 years old), and Steven Munthe (10 months). They love me so much.

I am blessed with three sons and one daughter. They are John Elisa Munthe, who is married to Rebecca Ulibasa Situmeang; Markus Leonhard, married to Kurnyati Purba; Pastor Paul Ulrich Munthe, M.Th. (the only pastor in our family, who is now the head of GKPS' Research and Development Department) married to

Darty Ramayanti Purba; and my only daughter, Hanna Ruth Munthe, married to Lamsihar Pasaribu. My children's visits have always been a joy for me. My wife, Floriana, has surely been my friend in joy and sorrow. She is the woman who understands my needs, always comforts and creates a warm atmosphere at home. They are all my blessings.

For my friends who are already retired, let us give more from the talents that we have. Let us say, "My rewards are for me to serve." It is true in Psalm 23:6 that God's goodness and mercy will be with me the rest of my life. Let our lives be for God's glory.

Medan, April 2006

Armencius Munthe