



BLESSED CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR



TESTIMONY from a Theology over Pizza Regular By Gonzalo Urena



Some of the TOP regulars at our last 2014 gathering

Theology over Pizza (TOP) is my ministry's weekly program that creates a safe space for people to ask their faith questions in order to help them grow in faith and see the relevance of Christianity. Here is a testimony from a TOP regular:

Every person seeks an environment that they can be free to engage in a discussion with other individuals who offer a different variety of perspectives on faith, philosophical ideas pertaining to the world

around them while drawing on their own life experiences. Theology over Pizza (TOP) is that space that offers such an experience to York University students, alumni and working people alike. TOP is a very unique forum where ideas and perspectives are shared as opposed to being debated and ridiculed so participation from everyone is very much encouraged.

Let me briefly delve into what makes TOP stands out to those who may have an interest in joining. An intellectual free flowing exchange of ideas pertaining to the Christian faith is what drew me into TOP nearly two years ago and continues to draw me back (and the delicious pizza is always nice too)! Within this space, both Christian believers and non believers alike are free to ask questions pertaining to anything from interpreting biblical scriptures, origins of the books in the bible, stances on denominations, to the importance of faith, current events and the challenges of having any faith at all in our world just to name a few of the topics that are raised. Most of all, everyone is welcome so TOP is not mutually exclusive to just Christians only as people of other faith and non faith backgrounds come in to share their own unique perspectives. A Christian prayer for the world is always said at the end as it allows us to pray as a community of believers, yet for those who choose to abstain for whatever reason; their reasons are respected and upheld. In short, one can be free to share their thoughts here while learning from others for education is a nonstop lifelong experience.

I would strongly encourage Theology over Pizza for anyone looking to find something way beyond the ordinary of just a club hangout. After all, knowledge is power and as it states in the good book: "*For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.*" **-Proverbs 2:6**

***Gonzalo Urena** is a York alumni, who regularly attends Theology over Pizza for over two years now even though he is no longer a student at York!
Gonzalo now works in Event Planning & Management.*



Gonzalo Urena

A Day in Campus Ministry By Chaplain Chong

It started like any other Thursday. I drove into York, parked, picked up the meeting room keys from the Master's Office, and pre-ordered pizza from my regular pizza place on campus, as it's Theology over Pizza (see previous page) night. I got into the club's office at the Scott Religious Center and turned on my laptop. I was hoping to finish off an article for *Christian Courier* that day. Before long, a student, a regular drop in, showed up and we chatted about life and faith.

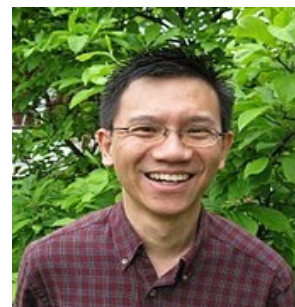
Later, I noticed this middle aged lady walking around the religious center hallway looking lost. I asked if I could be of help. And this turned into another long conversation on ethics, religion and Christianity, as it turns out she was an Ethics instructor at York and had never knew the religious center existed! After passing on my business card to her and bidding her farewell, I finally started eating my lunch (an hour late) while chatting with the student who waited patiently for me. I did not get much done on my article.

By 3pm, I went to my weekly appointment with a believer who has not quite got back into the church. That day, the usually cheerful guy was sombre looking and, with tears in his eyes, showed me the text message on his phone—he just found out that his beloved aunt has passed away. We talked. He asked me to pray for him. And I prayed. As much as I could, I encouraged and counselled him. But after an hour, I had to leave to set up for Theology over Pizza.

It was the last meeting for 2014. People brought their favourite desserts to share. In addition to pizza, there were cookies, brownies, and chips. Then, as always, we opened up for questions. Students asked about climate change and about hell, among other things! About 17 showed up that night. We closed, as always, with prayers, and, unsolicited, a student prayed for the ministry, thanking God for bringing her into the group.

After cleaning up and locking up, I drove home and arrived by 10pm. I checked my emails, and read an email from a student thanking me for hosting Theology over Pizza as it helped "opened [her] mind to varying perspectives" and "challenged [her] to re-evaluate some assumptions [she] associated with Christianity." Knowing her, I suspected those were negative assumptions about Christianity she was ditching and this was a sign of spiritual growth.

I have only picked out the day's highlights. Of course, not everyday is so eventful. This day had sadness and joy, programmed events and fortuitous encounters, sharing of hearts and minds, prayers and conversations, minds opened and lives touched. It was a spectrum of campus ministry condensed into one day. I thank God for days like this that remind me why I am in ministry.



Chaplain S. Chong

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THANK YOU & Merry Christmas!

