

Love is Everywhere:

Our Stories of Kindness



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Foreword

Under the weight of the pandemic, we desperately longed for a release. The stories in *Love Is Everywhere*, bare and simple, weigh in like a ton of feathers for their impact on life patterns.

We are shown that it is not release, not an extermination, that our True Nature asks for.

Rather, True Self stands up to the flipside of tragedy in every unfolding of goodness.

“*Love Is Everywhere*” gathers vignettes about kindness founded on love. How well we harmonize the weight of tragedy with the good things of life. Both come together into the one chalice of life.

Our storytellers are engaged in laying down the foundation for the most powerful energy in building communities ...love. Scientist Albert Einstein and Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh clearly prescribed the practice of love as “the most important thing we can do for the survival of our world”.

My friend, Dr. Serafin Talisayon, has done us a hearty service in giving us *Love is Everywhere*. He compiles story expressions of human nature, each anecdote

an encounter with God discovered in the grain of sand. Dr. Talisayon gets to the ‘spirit’ and ‘soul’ of things even as he takes on the task of unmasking the social and spiritual divides that have caused this pandemic.

The way to discover the visible and invisible worlds as one is illustrated by the writers speaking from their fresh encounters with their own original nature. Their innate goodness cannot but emerge from a place of gratitude for life. The storytellers seem to point to a path that leads to where between heaven and earth there is no distance. In Zen tradition, the ears symbolize enlightenment. The enlightened beings are those with long ears stretching like wings down the body.

In Carl Jung’s words, this harmonization is where “In my case Pilgrim’s Progress consisted in my having to climb down a thousand ladders until I could reach out my hand to the little clod of earth that I am.”

Surprise! A breakdown is now experienced as a breakthrough! Slowly, the pandemic shows a social purpose: *pakikipagkapwa* (fellowship) breaks into the beauty of *bayanihan* (cooperative undertaking), just where muck used to reside!

Sr. Sonia Punzalan, R.C., Ph.D.

12 July 2021



Sr. Sonia Punzalan, a Religious of the Cenacle, is a Zen Master in the lineage of Sanbo-Zen (formerly known as Sanbo Kyodan). As Roshi in Bahay Dalangin Zendo, she conducts Zen-Ignatian retreats and Mindfulness seminars for those choosing a way of

life. She has a Doctorate in Applied Cosmic Anthropology from the Asian Social Institute, an Asian social science graduate school of social transformative praxis towards justice, peace, and integrity of creation.

Preface

God is love. God is everywhere. These words represent mere concepts to many people. Concepts, or ideas, that escape us all too easily. Particularly in these days of the pandemic, our minds are captured rather by concerns of health, safety, and even fear.

We need to learn to make good choices of where to focus our attention. If we turn our attention to the many instances of kindness happening around us, our hearts are lightened by joy and gratefulness, and our minds are reminded that, indeed, love is everywhere. In the process, we minimize, though not entirely forgetting precautions, our pandemic concerns.

In this e-book, we have collected stories of kindness from volunteer contributors. They offer us their stories as reminders that love and kindness can happen to everyone everywhere.

The stories can be more than reminders; they may also inspire and encourage us to share our talent and skills, our time, ourselves.

The stories motivate us to habitually practice watchfulness for instances around us prompting us

to respond with kindness and caring. We become ever aware and more mindful of love until our response becomes, unknowingly, a habit. We become an influencer of love, God's love.

In time, the words "God" and "love" transition from mere words into a daily experience of, with, and for God.

This book's collective intention is to help bring about what Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, French Jesuit priest, philosopher, and scientist, envisioned:

While we master the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall also harness for God the energies of love. Then for the second time in the history of the world, we will have discovered fire.

May the infectious fire of kindness create and spread a love pandemic!

Serafin Talisayon
Quezon City, Philippines
5 July 2021

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Looking after One's Self

Forced isolation, living alone, and economic uncertainty have taken their toll on me during the lockdown. I am writing and sharing this with you (especially the ones who are fighting silent battles) to let you know that depression and anxiety know no boundaries and affect all walks of life. Depression is non-consensual. I have lost people whom I dearly love because of depression. I have lost myself at some point because of depression. We use emotions to construct our social reality. So, it's important to acknowledge your feelings, experience, and thoughts - all of it, whether good or bad. Having a mental illness does not make you less of a person. You could be struggling and still be loved; you could be less than perfect and still be deserving of compassion and kindness. Just give yourself time and be patient with yourself. Everyone has bad days. Give yourself a break.

I just had my first psychotherapy with a professional recently. It was long overdue, and it took a pandemic for me to finally make it happen. It's okay to ask for help. Seeking help is a sign of strength and not a weakness. This is the biggest favor you can do for yourself. Pick yourself up because there's nobody that could do that for you but yourself. You have this

choice. And it's time to take action. Slowly but surely. Slow beats not finishing. Slow beats not even starting at all. I know that I have a long way to go but I am glad I took the first step.



Sending light and love to those who believed in me and even to those who didn't.

Rebuild. Breathe. Live.

Sandy Noche
Quezon City,
Philippines



Multiple Caring Gestures in a Horrific Accident

In July of 2018, my kids (aged 25, 20, and 18 years) got into a horrible accident. My daughter Alex's Jeep was a total wreck and written off. It had flipped over several times. Praise God that all of them managed to get out of the vehicle alive.

We were all in shock and crying and just really panicking. Because the accident happened in a rural area, it took a while for the ambulance to arrive. While waiting, my son Carlo had to lie on the hot pavement. He was conscious but one of his arms was bleeding. Alex and my stepson Jackson were sitting not far away from Carlo; all three were in pain and in a daze.

I will never forget all the complete strangers who stopped and offered help. Some even stayed with us until the ambulance came. There was a young man who put a towel under Carlo's head to keep it steady in case there was a spinal injury. A young woman, who turned out to be a nurse, held Carlo's hand to comfort him. Some people held umbrellas over Carlo, Alex, and Jackson to shield them from the intense heat of the sun. Some random people rubbed and patted Alex's back and told her everything would be ok. Some approached me to hug me and told me my kids would be fine. Again, these kinds of people were complete strangers who took what could be precious time out of their day to stop and comfort us with their caring gestures and encouraging words. They will never know how much those actions and words meant to us. They will never realize how much those warm hugs meant to me.

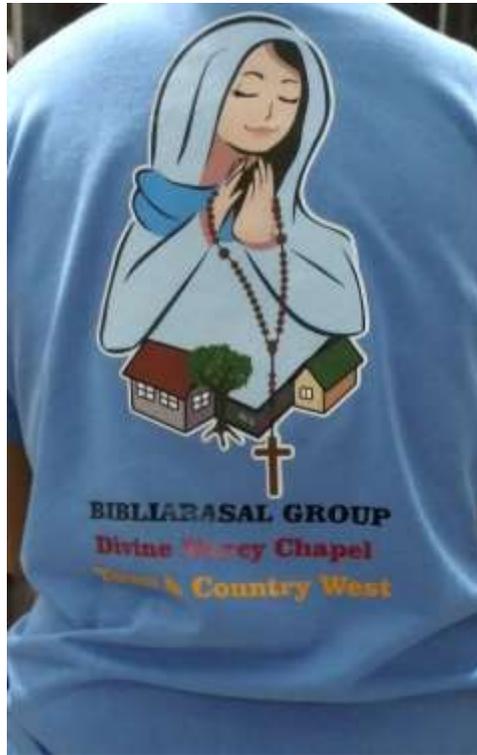
All my stories are about the kindness of people whom I did not know and who did not know me. But that did not hinder them to show a friendly attitude and good nature. Or compassion to offer genuine help. Our world needs more people like them for sure.

Clea Beachell
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada



The Shirt Producers Gave a Voluntary Discount

My Bibliarosal Sisters sponsored the New Year Mass at our Divine Mercy Chapel and we decided to have our Marian polo shirts done by TECHNOBOND TRADING. When the owners learned that most of our members were widowed with limited financial resources due to the pandemic, Technobond Trading subsidized 30% of the cost of our shirts. Thank you for your generosity. May God bless you a hundredfold.



Chona P. Magtuloy
Bacoor, Cavite, Philippines



A Stranger Showed Me the Way

It was my first travel to Europe.

After my plane landed in Milan, Italy, it was not difficult to get a taxi to the train station. At the

station, I managed to buy a ticket to Como. Como is a city north of Milan.

When the time for my train to depart was near, I was fumbling and panicking because I could not locate my train. The signboards showed the final destinations, but I could not see which one was passing through Como. I was desperate.

Then I remembered that the Italian language was similar to Spanish. I approached a man and asked him in Spanish, "Donde es el tren a Como?" He was looking at me quizzically but he somehow understood and walked me towards my train.

Later, I found out that my question if correctly translated into Italian should have been "Dov'è il treno per Como?". Fortunately, it sounded similar to my Spanish question. Or was it the word "Como" that gave him the hint?

Thank you, stranger, for your kindness in showing me the way.

Serafin Talisayon
In Milan, Italy



Providing a Home Away from Home

Manuelito (Tito) and Elvira (Elvie) Tolentino have been based in Wichita Falls, Texas, since the '80s. Tito is a retired member of the U.S navy support staff - PWD (Person with Disability) and Elvie is a physician. In the '90s, both Tito and Elvie had started inviting jet pilots training under the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training to their home for a tête-à-tête over lunch or dinner. As a former military officer, Tito was fully aware of the feeling of homesickness of these trainees who were away from their families for months or years. Tito and Elvie made sure these trainees experienced a "home away from home" by giving them company and offering their home as a transient place for them. These efforts had eased the transition of these military personnel into the Texoma culture and lifestyle. They organized social gatherings in their neighborhood and invited these trainees to join them. They also engaged the help of commerce and industry leaders in the Texoma region in hosting social events for these trainees. Little did they know that this simple act of kindness would merit recognition from the Belgian government. Tito and Elvie were awarded the Civilian Decoration of Knight in the Order of Leopold, on the proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belgium and by King Albert II, done by Royal Decree dated 17 Sept 2005.



Chona P. Magtuloy
Bacoor, Cavite, Philippines



Giving the Deserving a Break

This happened two decades ago when I attended a labor union conference in Brentwood Hotel, Baguio.

I noticed this hardworking, dedicated waiter who was assigned to our group in one conference hall. Allan, the waiter, was energetic and perky; and, I noticed, dedicated to his work. He declined our offer for him to take home unconsumed food as it was against hotel rules. I interviewed him and learned waiters like him were on call, not in-house, and they received pay below minimum wage.

He was married with two small kids. Since they were staying near the hotel, my niece and I decided to visit them. What we saw was heartbreaking. The “house” was a shanty with a tarpaulin for a roof. Inside that shanty was a folding bed where the two kids, a girl, and a boy, were sitting. Beside the bed was a small table in a small area that served as their kitchen.

That was in May and, come June, the daughter would be going to school. With Allan's meager income, how could he send his child to school? I got Allan's cellphone number and told him I'd get in touch with him again.

Once back in Manila, I called the owner of Quattro Grill in Timog, Quezon City, who happened to be my late husband's cousin. I recommended Allan and they hired him.

I called up Allan, told him the good news, and asked him to come over for an interview (for formality). Allan came to our house in Antipolo for briefing and instructions. I gave him a small amount for him to start with - transportation, to buy a pair of pants and shirt as uniform, etc.

Making the long story short, he was hired as a waiter in Quattro Grill and, with his first pay, had his wife and two children come to Quezon City for them to all live together in a rented apartment.

My niece bought a school bag and supplies for the daughter to help Allan during the adjustment period. I got good feedback from his employer that he was doing well in his job. He would call to thank me and reported that he was happy with his job and with his employer, too.

The last thing I heard, he resigned from Quattro to apply for work abroad. Haven't heard from him since then.

Aida M. Carrion
Antipolo City, Philippines



An Unexpected Gift: Medicines for My Sick Son

I would like to share one act of kindness that happened in 1994 (twenty-seven [27] years ago). I brought my eldest son Joshua (then two years old) to the Chinese General Hospital for his doctor's appointment, having been earlier diagnosed with Primary Complex. I bumped into a fellow T&C (Town

and Country West Subdivision) homeowner who was an accomplished medical representative at that time. We exchanged pleasantries and she asked me why I was queuing at the doctor's clinic. After our brief exchange, we parted ways. A few days after, someone was at my door and it was Liza, the medical representative, with a package of medicines for my son.

Such kindness and generosity will forever be etched in my heart. I am happy that for almost four years now, Liza and I have been together as Sisters in Christ, with the same mission - that of bringing more souls to God through our Blessed Mother.

Evelyn Ogot
Bacoor, Cavite, Philippines



Helpfulness of My Second OHANA

Before moving to Honolulu, I was a government employee in the Philippines. Ever since graduating from the University of the Philippines at Los Baños, I had decided to pursue public service - a fulfilling yet challenging path that my parents had taken as well. My mother was a public school teacher for more than

35 years and my father spent most of his career in the local government.

When my petition papers came to emigrate to Hawaii to be with my spouse, I knew my government service did not end with my leaving the country that had been my home for 38 years. Upon seeing an ad for the City and County of Honolulu for a Planner position, I took it as God's way of showing me to continue my pursuit of public service. I started the job in December 2019 and, a few months later, an unprecedented global health emergency happened and halted all the economies of the world. I was fairly new in our office but I knew I was blessed with a supervisor who was also an active member of the church.

My boss, Scott, has been a government employee for almost 30 years. He is sensitive to our professional and personal well-being. When we have to work remotely to minimize the spread of the virus, he never fails to check on us like what a father naturally does. He is our second dad. And luckily, we also found a second mom in Kellie, his wife. I think she has been working as long as Scott has. Kellie always brings home-baked pastries to cheer us up. I think it is her own way of checking on, and catching up with, us when we need to report physically in the office, which is once a week. She even started a

“Thanksgiving” chat board so we could help encourage one another during the pandemic since we don’t get to see our co-workers as often. I remember writing my first “thank you” message on that board to Kellie. I told her how grateful I was for her kindness and for always bringing yummy snacks to the office. She said my message made her smile and it made her more motivated in continuing the “Thanksgiving” Board that she initiated.

I may be away from my real parents right now and even though I miss them every day, having Kellie and Scott as my “second parents” in our workplace just proves that the love of “Ohana” (“family” in Hawaiian) is everywhere as long we open our hearts and fervently ask God to bring loving and caring people into our lives wherever God wants us to thrive and flourish.

Dee De Mesa
Honolulu, Hawaii, USA



Hospitality of Laotians

In the 1995 ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Summit in Bangkok, ASEAN opened its doors for Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar to

join the association. In 1996, I was appointed as the official delegate of the Philippine government to travel to Laos and Cambodia. Our mission was to visit the countries' foreign ministries to inquire what assistance the Philippine government could provide them in preparation for their entry into ASEAN.

After visiting and doing our work in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, our host was kind enough to give us a break: a side trip to Luang Prabang. It is a small city in the north with a rich cultural-religious history. There were wats, or temples, almost in every city block.

Upon arrival in our small hotel, our host arranged a Baci Ceremony for us. They tied strings around our right hand as a sign of welcome. They also toured us around the city and even brought us to small shops in the suburb where I bought beautifully designed native textile.

I was very thankful for the great hospitality of our Laotian hosts.

Serafin Talisayon
In Luang Prabang, Laos



Little Things Mean a Lot

It was a beautiful morning. The sun was shining brightly and I could see birds flying. I left the house and started walking. I arrived at work five minutes before the scheduled time, which was a good thing because I was not late. I would still have a good attendance record. My working hours went well and, at the end of another workday, I immediately packed my things. I bade goodbye to my workmates and rode a jeep. I was scrolling on my cellphone when I noticed raindrops on the road. I realized that it was beginning to rain. I didn't have an umbrella in my bag because I forgot to bring one. I got off the jeep and was about to cross the street in the now pouring rain when a lady, holding an open umbrella, suddenly stood beside me. She asked me to join her under the umbrella and offered to walk with me until we crossed the road so that I wouldn't get soaked in the rain. I felt happy because I never imagined someone doing that especially for me. I said thank you to her and she smiled sweetly as a reply. I got home safe and remembered the lady I met who let me share her umbrella while it was raining. It was a really memorable December day for me.

Jheana Mae Medialdia
Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines



Friday Inspiration

It was my first teaching stint, a requirement for the scholarship I was given in my master's program. As a discussion leader, I handled three classes every Friday afternoon. While some students participated in the discussion sessions, the majority failed to meet my expectations to the point that, sometimes, I felt like giving up already.

But thank God for the kindness of my friend who gave me pieces of advice as we walked back to our dorm at the end of the day. While she was younger than me, she already had vast teaching experience. This scene would happen almost every Friday of the semester but I never heard her complain when I started sharing with her the issues that happened in my classes. Instead, she would patiently listen and encourage me.

Somehow, her encouragement allowed me to go on and before I knew it, the semester had already ended. I survived because I found a friend who cared to listen to my woes and gave me practical suggestions. And I thank God for sending her to me just when I needed one.

Sheila Marie M. Encabo
Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines



An Angel in My Life

Not too long ago, I saw a parked car with a sticker on the back shield saying, “Don’t drive faster than your angel can fly.”

All of a sudden, I found myself remembering the living souls that have touched my heart along my life’s way - the angels in my life.

I was driving home with my eldest daughter on the eve of New Year in the 1990s. The Katipunan bridge situated near Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City was under construction during that time.

It was almost under the bridge that my car’s engine died. I raised the hood and tried to locate the trouble but to no avail.

A short man, about my height (5’5”) and, maybe, five years my junior, approached me and offered to help. I tried to discourage him from coming near the raised hood as it was a common practice of some opportunists to pretend to help but would instead give you more problems. It had happened to me once.

It was already a little past 11 p.m.; one more hour and it would be the new year. I was losing hope. Our residence was three towns away from Ateneo, in Angono, Rizal.

The man still stood there, five feet away from my car. He suggested that I press the horn. I reluctantly did without losing sight of him. I pressed and no sound came. He asked me to turn the headlight on. There was no light. And then he told me that the problem was with the battery. He told me that I didn't need to touch anything.

As I stood a short distance from him, he stepped closer to look at the car's engine. It was then I smelled him reeking of liquor. He took a pair of pliers from his small tool bag. He moved the terminal pole of the battery back and forth and tightened the screw. He asked me once again to press the horn; the horn worked. The headlight also worked. I revved the engine and voila!

I thanked him and tried to give him a little remuneration for his 'great' service. He seemed insulted and hurriedly left while I was closing the hood of the car.

When I took a left turn in a nearby intersection, my daughter saw the same man waiting for his public ride. She suggested that we give him a lift. I blew my horn to attract his attention. He looked in our direction and I motioned him to ride with us.

He was going home to Cypress Village, Madrid St., Cainta, he said. The village was along our way. While in the car, I thanked him again for being so kind.

He told us that he was working as a car mechanic at Toyota Dealership in Cubao. He related to us that he attended a baptismal event of his best friend's child. That was the reason why he stank of alcohol.

He added, "I couldn't stand seeing you stranded on the road on New Year's Eve. That was why I insisted to help you. Even if you were rudely driving me away." He smiled.

It has been more than 30 years but, every now and then, I still remember him and his timely help.

Thank you, Mr. Jojo Diaz, wherever you are.

Perfecto Idilio Magno aka Ed Magno
Markham, Ontario, Canada



Quarantined Sister-in-Law Looked After

Jhing is a former co-teacher at Jose Rizal University. I have known her as a kind and generous lady, and my story is an example of her kindness.

Sometime in March of last year, I received news that my brother and sister-in-law, who were seniors, both tested Covid-19 positive. They were taken to San Lazaro Hospital. After two weeks, my sister-in-law tested negative and was allowed to go home. Since she was by herself, she stayed in their condo unit to quarantine herself. We couldn't visit her because of the lockdown. We communicated only by phone.

Jhing, who lived on the same floor of the condo, learned from me that my sister-in-law was back and in quarantine in their unit.

Jhing would call on the phone and ask Jeana, my sister-in-law, to put a chair outside her door where Jhing put cooked food on for snacks, lunch, and dinner every day. As in every single day. Jhing also brought fruits, eggs, vegetables, and other basic needs of Jeana.

Jhing's act of kindness continued for one month until my brother recovered and completed his quarantine.

We are all so grateful to our dear friend Jhing.

Aida M. Carrion
Antipolo City, Philippines



Two Travel Sponsorships to Australia

In October 1996, I was very fortunate to be awarded two travel sponsorships.

My superior kindly gave me a travel grant to attend the Global Futures Forum in Sydney, Australia. I brought my own money but he gave me spare cash in dollars for my travel expenses.

At that time, I was interested in learning meditation and I had attended several sessions at the Brahma Kumaris center in Makati City. Brahma Kumaris is a spiritual movement promoting meditation. It is managed mainly by women. When I informed them that I would be traveling to Sydney, they decided to invite and sponsor me to attend a few days of meditation retreat in their center in Melbourne. Melbourne is only a short plane ride from Sydney.

In Melbourne, I gained new friends from many countries. I even got to know the members who were working in their community kitchen. The meditation areas and classrooms, as well as the dormitory-type individual rooms, were nestled in the middle of tall trees and serene gardens. Outside the dining area was a porch where one could sit and sip coffee over a small stream bordered by smaller trees and bushes. I was among friendly people. It was a very peaceful place.

I was, indeed, fortunate to be in the receiving end of acts of kindness that provided me happy memories and stories like this to tell you.

Serafin Talisayon
In Sydney and Melbourne, Australia



Angels in My Dorm

When I enrolled in my master's program, I had to stay in a dorm of the university because it was impossible to do the daily commute to and from our province. It was there that I met kind-hearted dormmates.

During my stay at the dorm, there were times when I was sick. Initially, I would cry in bed feeling sorry for

myself and wishing that I was home to be cared for by my family. But this feeling later changed when some of my dormmates extended help to me. In most cases, I would hear my name being called so they could tell me that they were sharing their freshly cooked food with me. They would even ask if I needed anything so they could buy them for me. And when I fully recovered, they were there with me to rejoice! It is amazing how God sends angels to minister to His sick child.

Sheila Marie M. Encabo
Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines



Raffle for Typhoon Victims

Our parish raised Php1.2million in one week in November 2020 by direct solicitation done by our parish priest. Fund-raising was for the purchase of water containers for recent typhoon victims. Before the pandemic, our parish would be able to raise this amount or less in one year via raffle. Amazing kindness and generosity in these troubled times!

Vivien Talisayon
Quezon City, Philippines



Blessings Abound!

We were living by faith for most of our married years in the Philippines, in Manuela, a subdivision in Las Piñas. There were times when paycheques did not arrive on time, and while my work at DBP (Development Bank of the Philippines) was stable, my net take-home pay was very little due to our mortgage. My husband worked with a friend who had just started a new business. So, we were living by faith. Our needs were met. Here are a few instances where kindness was shown to us:



My young daughter needed a set of uniforms for her new school, Kiddies Learning Center. An acquaintance at DBP, who lived outside of Manuela and whose daughter was also attending Kiddies Learning Center, unexpectedly asked if I wanted to take her daughter's school uniforms which she had outgrown. Of course, I said yes! Manna from heaven.



One weekend, two of our neighbors separately gave us lunch food (“ulam”). Both “ulams” (dishes) were munggo (sautéed mung beans). Manna from heaven.



One rainy morning after church (a chapel close to our home), our small family of four was huddled outside waiting for the rain to stop so we could walk home. A friend who lived close to the church approached us with an umbrella and said she meant to give it to us. Manna from heaven.



We did not have a car. Two of my neighbors offered to give me daily rides. One neighbor, Sis Nanette, worked at Metro Bank so I rode with her going to work in the morning. Another neighbor, Sis Cita, worked at PLDT. I rode with her going home.



This anecdote was when we had just moved to Manuela. On a jeep, I sat beside a sad, poor-looking old man. I secretly handed him Fifty Pesos. My net take-home pay, with a mortgage, was PhP89.00 a week. So to hand out most of my paycheque for a week to a stranger was a big deal for me. I have not said anything to anyone as I did not want any kind of recognition. Something/Someone in me prompted me to give him the money. This just came to mind again when stories of acts of kindness were being solicited. I think this will pass as one.



Just before moving to Manuela, we were living in a rented house by Boni Avenue in Mandaluyong. I was getting ready to go home after work one afternoon. I stood outside the DBP building wondering how I would go home. Would a “*pamasahe*” (fare) drop down from heaven? (Not sure at that time if I had enough “*pamasahe*” or no “*pamasahe*” at all). Living by faith moment. All of a sudden, an acquaintance drove by in his car and asked if I wanted a lift to Boni Avenue. But of course, yes! Manna from heaven.



Fast forward. We have a timeshare in a Maui hotel in Hawaii. We have been vacationing there for two weeks every year for over 12 years (before the pandemic). We have made friends with many staff members of the hotel. Over the years, their aloha spirit was shared with us. Small gestures showed their kindness; they went beyond what was required by the hospitality industry.



We have also made friends with residents of Maui. One time, we received from one of them a welcome basket of bread & snacks.



Many times, usually on our first few days at the hotel, as we were sitting around, we would have drinks, snacks, water, food delivered to us (free!) from friends. Seriously, manna from heaven.



Once, a day after our arrival when we were milling around the hotel food market, a friend spotted us and blurted, “Welcome home, Ate!” and she gave us free *turon* (banana spring roll)!



Another friend would always take us around town on her days off.



We received gifts of food often; we did not need to buy our lunch and dinner as they shared their home-cooked meals with us. On our last day, we usually had to give away lots of food still in our fridge.



Yet another time, we were getting ready to leave for home. We were waiting for our shuttle to take us to the airport. The shuttle was late. One of the bellboys noticed we were a little apprehensive. He got his personal cell phone (I had no cell phone then) and phoned the shuttle himself to follow up.



We talked and made friends with everybody - from the bellboys to the cleaning ladies and the guys who maintained the garden. So, every year we brought small bars of Canadian chocolates to many of our lovely friends in Maui.



While on an early bus in Maui in February 2020, a backpacker came aboard, paid \$20, and waited for change from the bus driver. She didn't know that only an exact change was accepted. She turned to the other bus riders to ask but no one had any change for her \$20. She could not hop off the bus because she had to meet somebody in downtown Lahaina; she would be late if she took the next bus. So my husband & I paid for her fare. She sat beside us, so grateful, and asked our names. She said she would mention the incident on her blog. Just grateful that we were able to help.

Back in our current home city ...



One winter afternoon, as we were driving home (going north), we were on the inner lane (two lanes were going north) when our car hit black ice and it spun 180 degrees onto the outer lane and then over the embankment. All of a sudden we were facing

south. If there were vehicles on the outer lane, it would have been a head-on collision. Two vehicles stopped right away to help us. A maneuver had to be done to turn our car back north but the car had to be helped out of the embankment first. Two strangers helped my husband. One was a woman. For her to stop in the dead of winter on an icy road was something. The kindness of two strangers helped us that afternoon. I didn't get the chance to get their names but we were profusely grateful for their help.



When the pandemic started, we bought groceries online. We wanted to give the driver/delivery guy a tip but we had no cash at home. The first time we got our online groceries delivered I made a big “Thank you” note that I displayed at our window upstairs to show him. We also gave him a bottle of water and three packs of microwaveable popcorn. He was so grateful! Every time we got deliveries, we would give wrapped cookies and a bottle of cold water until we were able to go to the bank for some cash.



Also on occasion during summer when it was too hot, I would wait for the garbage guy (every Thursday morning is garbage & recycling pick-up) and give him cold bottled water and some wrapped cookies or pastries for his snack.



We also give our Edmonton Journal delivery guy \$20 for his daily newspaper delivery. One time we also gave him a box of chocolates.



A couple of years ago (we were not able to do it last Christmas due to Covid), we gave the Pharmacy Assistant at Shoppers Drug Mart (where we get our meds) a \$10 gift card for Tim Horton's (coffee). Very small amount yet he was very appreciative of the gesture. He is a very nice person. He looks after us to this day for all our medical needs. A genuinely nice person. Our giving and his receiving a few cups of coffee made him and us both feel good.



The pandemic restrictions did not stop us to help five families this past Christmas (we are seniors with a fixed income but recently have been doing part-time work). We gave each of them a \$100 gift card from Safeway. This would help them buy food. At this time, with the pandemic and unemployment, it is the most practical thing to do.

Me'an
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada



Love Knows No Boundaries

The day is too short to be selfish. Take time to look around for the selfless ...

I would have been guilty of being negligent had I not gone over the messages on my cellphone to delete some of them to gain byte space.

I came across that of my friend Virginia (Virgie) Kato, who, together with her husband Hitoshi Kato, top my list of doers of acts of kindness.

Our friendship started way back in 2010 when the three of us were members of SINAG. This organization was composed of concerned Town and Country West homeowners in Bacoor, Cavite, who were against the housing project of then-President Gloria Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro for the NHA (National Housing Authority) employees. Model units were already in place but they didn't have the needed right of way to haul in heavy equipment and materials for the project to finish. We were successful in having their project discontinued thus preventing the damage that could have been done to our bridge and roads.

My friendship with Virgie grew deeper when I came to know of the couple's involvement in various love-oriented projects. Consider these:

The couple was living in Japan when they started helping OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) who had problems with overstaying their visas or had some issues with their employers. On one occasion, they were interviewed by NHK Channel in Japan regarding their noble cause, which they continued to undertake for years to come.

Years later, after having settled in Town and Country West, Virginia and Hitoshi started the Feeding Program for children of different barangays of Bacoor and nearby Zapote. It has been temporarily discontinued due to the pandemic. It was always a real treat for the children to eat in Jollibee and enjoy the restaurant's mascot. On top of that, they also received packs of school supplies. I learned that some Japanese donors would even come all the way from their country to personally witness and share the joy of the occasion when they distributed coin change to the delight of the children. Another case of Love Overload.

When Mt. Pinatubo erupted years before, they sent countless donations in kind, solicited from friends and associates, to the victims.

When the Taal volcano erupted, Virgie and Hitoshi also sent donations for the victims.

In the fury of Typhoon Rolly when countless of our kababayans (fellow citizens) lost their homes and properties, I was a witness of another act of charity initiated by this amazing, big-hearted couple. Virgie called me to ask if I could donate, and I immediately requested my son to buy sardines, noodles, and detergents, which were among their urgent needs. Used clothes were likewise given. Due to limited time, only a few friends were notified. Among the kind-hearted donors were Melcy Baluyan, Bhot Daguindal, Baby Villas, and Lorna Bachoco. The bulk of the donations came from the Kato family who always had stocks of goods available in their home for their various projects. The donations were picked up by the AKBAYAN for distribution to the victims.

Virginia and Hitoshi's only daughter Madylene, who is based and works in Japan, has a co-worker whose family lives in Tondo. The co-worker's family was among the victims of a fire that occurred in the district. The Kato family once again sent donations to the fire victims. Their financial resources may have been somewhat depleted but their hearts will always be full of love and our loving God will make a way to provide for His children's needs.

Keep on, Kato-san and Virgie! God will always be your conduit in this Love-Oriented endeavor. MABUHAY KAYO (Long Live)!!!

Dem Sibugan
Bacoor, Cavite, Philippines



Kindness of the Host

My host in Mongolia was a director in a mining company. In many ways, he really took good care of me during my stay. He:

- Fetched me from the airport although my plane arrived past midnight;
- Invited me to watch an archery competition where he was one of the contestants;



- Took me one evening away from Ulan Bator City to a native hut (ger) to experience Mongolian hospitality, drink fermented horse milk (airag), eat cheese made from horse milk, and converse with a Mongolian family;
- Arranged for my temporary room in Ulan Bator before proceeding with him to the mining company, a day's drive away from the city;
- Noticing my amazement at seeing yaks along the road, he stopped the car and allowed me to take a picture;



- Arranged for my accommodation in a small local hotel and picked me up every day from the hotel to the company facilities;
- Gave me a tour of the mining company facilities.



Serafin Talisayon
In Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia



One Short but Life-Changing Talk of Encouragement

I was in my second year in high school when my adviser talked to me about my first-quarter performance. He said that he believed that I could do better in class and could even become an honor student if I just strived harder. I guess he might have noticed that I was just in compliance mode and was not participating actively in class. Little did he know that I had been harboring insecurities since my first year.

But that particular talk made a lot of difference in my life. Slowly, I gained confidence and I made it to the honor roll that year. Eventually, I graduated from high school with honors.

Looking back, the talk might have just lasted for a few minutes ... a little effort ... a little kindness from my teacher to encourage his student but I realized that it was a turning point in my life. And so I thank God for him.

Sheila Marie M. Encabo
Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines



Volunteering for Meals on Wheels

When my wife and I were both studying at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, USA, we decided to volunteer our services for the “Meals on Wheels” Program of the Tompkins County Hospital.

Every Sunday, we drove to the kitchen service area of the hospital to pick up packs of ready-cooked food. Each pack had the name and address of the intended receiver. We then brought each pack to its receiver. Receivers were senior people around the city who were unable to shop or prepare their own food, or who could not go out during winter when the weather was bad.

Serafin Talisayon
In Ithaca, New York, USA



Four Stories about Giving and Receiving

What my mother *ad nauseam* would say has always resonated with me -- “It is better to give than to receive.” I hear it a lot but now as I reflect, it works like the circle of life or “gulong ng palad”. I find myself in situations where I am in the position to give, and in other situations, on the receiving end. It is funny because one never knows when such blessings

happen, and when one is propelled to give until it hurts. Allow me to share some of those moments in my life where I have been a witness to such a phenomenon.



Giving Here and Receiving Elsewhere

In the professional world, especially in academia when I was still a member of the teaching staff of a state university, we were often told to “give” our very best. Be the best teacher that you could be, be the best researcher that you could be, and deliver the best of yourself when doing extension activities. Intrinsically, as a new member of the organization, I would be very motivated to do so. Having been a graduate of that university, I felt it was only proper to return my services to my alma mater. But over the years of working for this institution, I realized doing my best wasn’t always going to be easy as it did not lend itself to some tangible rewards or some “pakunswelo” (consolation). Because of this and although I didn’t tire of giving my very best, I did feel it was not good enough. Why couldn’t I be promoted? Why couldn’t the institution change its system to allow more growth within the departments? I felt I was not given a chance to prove my worth. I had so many questions. I became disillusioned, feeling undervalued, and burned out.

The politics of the academe had taken its toll on me and I was feeling unhappy and helpless.

Then a new opportunity came about so I was able to leave that organization and move to another and higher education institution that rewarded me objectively based on the amount of effort I gave as a good teacher and researcher. I was able to flourish in this new environment where I was given recognition. I was also allowed to finish my doctorate. In short, everything that happened to me here made up for all the ill feelings I felt previously after I walked away from my former university. That was the blessing I received unexpectedly. I truly enjoyed being a part of this new institution so I served in many different ways to show how I could give back. But over time, the demands of my family life and other personal circumstances led me to leave this other university in favor of a decision to leave the Philippines for good.



Keep Giving and Giving

Overseas, my family and I had to make some lifestyle changes again. And because we felt blessed to have a new opportunity to start our lives afresh in this new land we would call home, my family and I gave back to the community as a way of appreciating this new

chapter in our lives. We participated actively in the Filipino community cultural events and activities, we served in our local parish church, we became active in the Filipino chaplaincy music and Eucharistic ministries. We also teamed up with some Filipino friends to set up a charitable trust that will help Filipino and non-Filipino migrants who needed support in their settlement issues. We opened up our home to people we didn't know – kababayans (compatriots) who needed a roof over their heads for a few weeks and food to eat, and families who needed financial and in-kind support as required.

My parents, who were with us at that time, found themselves also helping out, giving their time not just for me and my family by looking after their three apos (grandchildren), and joining our community activities. I did some tutoring and advice-giving for those with immigration issues. This new country we call home rewarded us unexpectedly with a smooth transition from being permanent residents (PR) to citizens. Our jobs were stable. By then, we felt we knew the answers to that mystery as to why we are rewarded now when in the Philippines we struggled a lot. *Di maka-agwanta sa buhay* (Can't endure in life). I started to believe that when you give, you do receive. But this is not to say we gave for the sake, or the outright expectation, of receiving. We just gave because we could, we wanted to help and we

believed we could make it happen. Living in this new country, we were blessed not to have experienced outright discrimination, and we were surprised that the community accepted and respected us. We were not rich here in this new country, but it allowed us the opportunity to build something for ourselves, like acquiring property which we would not have been able to do in the Philippines. We were able to donate to charitable causes, to serve the community, and, most importantly, we were able to provide a good life for the family. As we received, we gave back.



Giving to Others as a Family Practice

Finally, another change of circumstance had given us the reason and the opportunity to move to another country where I now live and work. The transition moving from country to country was also smooth, contrary to my initial apprehensions. Again, we continued with our sense of giving. We left the not-for-profit organization in the able hands of our peers, but in a personal way, we give here in this new country where and when we can. We have helped international Filipino students who have been impacted by Covid-19 by giving them food packs/parcels every other month. We were also able to donate food packs to a school that we support and their families in Batangas when the Taal volcano

erupted. We still support students of underprivileged families as personal scholars in the Philippines. Last Christmas we also donated something akin to a Christmas bonus to staff members of the school that did not get anything due to the pandemic. My husband and I continue to provide advice to Filipino migrants in need when we get referrals from our friends. We also donate clothing and other household goods to newly-arrived kababayans (compatriots) here in our area. We served in our church as a family/group choir before Covid restrictions. My children volunteer in my organization where I work supporting people with disabilities.



Gift-Giving by a Dying Mother

We give not necessarily expecting to receive. We give as much as we can. Even when my mother died, her passing was also peppered with a sense of “giving.” She instructed me to give some of her personal items away to people that mattered to her. So I wrapped up all the items (as much as what my luggage could fit and the allowed kilos could accommodate). During her funeral, I handed those items out to their respective recipients as her final gifts, to share a part of herself with them.

I guess I inherited this from my mother, *kahit simple lang, lagi may pasalubong* (There is always a present, no matter how simple it is). Another adage I heard a lot from her was “it’s the thought that counts.” Pero (But) more than the material things, I think the best gift that we could give is the gift of ourselves – our smile, our time, our skills, our kind words to the people that we love, or even to strangers who need our help. We never know what impact that these might give them. It may even change their lives. Of course, giving material things helps alleviate some of their concerns and may also support them temporarily. What I receive from doing these are non-tangible things that I truly appreciate as well. I am grateful that I am blessed to have a family that can share ourselves with others in whatever way we can. Again, I do not expect to always be in the position of giving, but because I receive, I feel I should continue the cycle. The more we give, the more blessed we become. *Ang pagbibigay, maliit man o malaki, ay mas mainam.* (Giving, whether in a small or big way, is better.) I wholeheartedly agree.

Mimi Rojo-Laurilla
Victoria, Australia



A Stewardess Was Chided for Being Kind to Me

It was a very foggy evening when our airplane was trying to land at the Haneda airport. Then the captain announced that we were being diverted to Fukuoka. There was an accident on the runway in Haneda and we could not land at that airport.

Upon arrival at Fukuoka airport, there were other planes diverted there. We waited long to disembark as our airline was arranging our accommodation for the night.

I invited the stewardess to play chess with me and she agreed. After several moves, the head steward noticed us and chided the stewardess. Perhaps she had other duties to attend to. We had to stop playing.

I felt good that she was nice to me but I felt bad that she was chastised for it.

Serafin Talisayon
In Fukuoka, Japan



A Welsh Lady and a Photo She Took

My family and I were vacationing in the Dominican Republic in 2018. One of the activities that we had was a tour where we visited some scenic places in the area. One of the stops was at a beautiful beach. We then went on with the tour till the day was over.

The following day, I was by the resort's pool when I saw a lady wave at me to catch my attention. So I walked towards her and sat down beside her. She told me that we were on the same tour from yesterday and that she took a picture of the beach. She excitedly showed me the picture and said, "Look! You and your husband!" So the picture was of the calm waters, the wide and sandy beach with Adam and me walking on it, two tiny figures close to the horizon. What a beautiful picture! And, most of all, I was really touched that this wonderful lady, Suzy from Wales, United Kingdom, took the effort to do something nice for us and took the extra step to reach out to me. We chatted for a while, just sharing stories about our lives. At that moment, we were just like old friends instead of complete strangers from different parts of the world. I will never forget that nice gesture of hers!



Clea Beachell
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada



Two Aunties Were My Second Mothers

I was seven years old when my youngest brother was born. Since he was a menopausal baby, my mother had difficulty with her pregnancy. Given her condition, my two aunties kindly offered to take care of me while my brother was a baby. Although we lived in the same compound and I had access to our house anytime I needed anything, I stayed in my

aunties' house with my cousins. I was one of the youngest so I was spared from doing household chores. Thus, all I needed to do was to look after my concerns.

At an early age, they trained me to prepare my school stuff, including my complete uniform, the night before so that it would be easy in the morning when all were in a hurry. They also helped me form good study habits. I had free tutorial sessions with my aunt who was a teacher. I must admit that it was not enjoyable at the start but I learned to reap the benefits later in my life. I will be forever grateful for their kindness to me.

Sheila Marie M. Encabo
Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines



Look for the Helpers

I would like to borrow my son's favorite quotation, a piece of advice that he gathered from his progressive education. Here he refers to Mister Rogers' Neighborhood that aired from 1968 to 2001 where Mr. Fred Rogers was saying as advice to his neighbors:

When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.”

Although it was intended for five-year-olds, the message of the show "look for the helpers" may be appropriate for the tragedies that have been happening globally today.

2020 was indeed a very eventful year. Classes were suspended in February due to the outbreak and Bonifacio Global City (BGC), where we were holding classes for the second semester at the Henry L. Sy UP Building, was experiencing a lot of COVID-19 cases because of traveling professionals living in different condominiums in the area.

The pandemic only heightened the already existing societal problems that required some positive action that made for real the whole-of-society I once wrote about as a self-help solution instead of waiting upon the government for what it could do for people. The question on my mind was “Why is the government relying on retired military personnel to head the pandemic response teams (which include the vaccination plans) instead of seeking the expertise of medical professionals, scientists, and development planners?” As a people, we certainly need to be

empowered to do our part in helping and reaching out to those in need similar to what various law schools in UP, Ateneo, San Beda, etc. as well as sororities and fraternities that decided to immerse themselves and make use of their resources even at the start of the outbreak to take care of providing PPEs, face masks/shields, alcohol and sanitation equipment to medical frontliners and other essential workers. Aside from being lawyers or doctors, these law societies assumed the role of frontliners providing legal services and representation for those whose liberties were encroached upon for allegations of violating an Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) health protocol.

Inevitably, the spirit of altruism became so infectious in my class at UP LLM. Aside from a collective effort to distribute the much-needed resources to frontliners in Metro Manila and the provinces, individual classmates took on projects personal to them. In September 2020, one acclaimed activity that was featured by GMA Kapuso network was what sparked to action “helper” Keij Ejercito, an answered prayer to an aspiring lawyer who was their building security guard, Kuya Johnny Abbang Jr, aged 31. “Helper” Keij Ejercito brought him new law books after observing how Kuya Abbang seemed to be interested in law, talking with her about it. This simple incident eventually led to raising funds for

Kuya Abbang to afford tuition in law school to live his dream. Law books are still being collected up to this day and are also benefitting others on their path to being a lawyer.

In November 2020, amidst the pandemic, Typhoon Rolly, followed by Typhoon Ulysses, visited the country that left Marikina, Cagayan and Isabela flooded fast, leaving some people stranded in their homes. My class helped out in donating to a UP BGC staff in Marikina and, thanks to the quick action of another classmate, fundraising also reached the Cagayan and Isabela students left stranded in evacuation centers. They needed books, supplies, slippers, food, and dry goods to sustain them over the next two weeks to a month until the local government could help them settle down again. Last January 2021, another batch of slippers and school supplies was given to the children in a village in Isabela.

Amidst all this, last October 2020, I suffered a mild stroke that affected the right side of my body, particularly my hand and foot. The last one to recover, they say, is the fine motor skill, which I have been patiently rehabilitating for the last four months. It was crucial to get this working because my livelihood involves writing. In my ordinary life, writing gives me joy and fulfillment, whether these

are scribbles I turn into full ideas later or, at this time, notes for my LLM thesis. I found another “helper” in the person of a physical therapist, Ms. Luz Rivera, who lost her food cart business at the start of the pandemic. I can only imagine that countless women like her are burdened by being the breadwinner and, at the same time, taking care of school-aged daughters and an ill husband, while her family lives off the only remaining forest* in Quezon City.

To “look out for the helpers” means to be optimistic that there will be individuals who will always rise to the challenge, the call to action by frontliners. It is also about those who are helping the helpers, those in the background among us all. Together, we will be able to withstand the various crises brought about by Covid-19.

Cristina Exmundo
Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines

*The only remaining forest in Quezon City is located within the University of the Philippines Arboretum.



Love Overload: Two Sisters' Journey

Some time ago, I was invited by Sister Chona to be a member of GC Gabrielle Lou Miguel. After explaining

to me in a phone call about its motivations and purposes — that of spreading and sharing stories of love – I accepted the invite with reservations knowing my storytelling limitations. But believing in the goodness of the Lord that He will make a way, I waited for His inspiration. And He did! His spirit led me to see how love manifests in simple acts of kindness.

Last February 21, 2021, while entering our Chapel to attend mass, I saw a man slowly and carefully navigating the stairs while pushing an occupied wheelchair. Getting closer to the pair, I found out that it was my friend Reina in the wheelchair and the man behind it was her brother-in-law, Mr. Borito, the husband of Reina’s sister, Rose. What a touching act of kindness and love! I was overjoyed seeing Reina after several months of anticipating news of her condition. I got the chance to follow through with this real-life “teleserye” (television soap opera) of a beautiful sister-to-sister relationship in the persons of Reina Magdasal and Rosemarie Borito. The scenes were in NKTl (National Kidney and Transplant Institute) and the Philippine Heart Center.

On September 28, 2020, they checked in at NKTl for an infected vein graft in the kidney of Reina. They stayed in the Emergency Tent for four days before Reina could be accommodated in a ward. “Sitters”

or “bantay” were not allowed inside, so Rose had to stay in the tent in the corridor, and she slept on a chair along with the other “sitters”. This situation lasted for 23 days. What a lamentable condition, but Rose persevered and made a sacrifice. All in the name of love. Add to that the daily ordeal, the emotional stress, of seeing her sister’s health condition.

On October 18, 2020, a pacemaker implant for Reina due to a failing heartbeat necessitated another trip, this time to the Philippine Heart Center. More problems took place caused by a recurring infection on the graft which delayed the heart procedure. Finally, on December 16, the graft was removed. Another long wait...

On January 4, 2021, the pacemaker implant was done. Reina stayed a few more days at the hospital to complete her antibiotic intake until ... January 13 – she was discharged!

Why did I have to go into detail about the two sisters’ journey? Because for me, that is what Love is All About ... Patience, Perseverance, Sacrifice, Selfless Services. Oftentimes, we equate love with expensive gifts, fat pay envelopes, “bonggang” (frivolous) parties, and other material things. We fail to appreciate the simple acts of kindness, the kind

words expressed, the warm hugs on a bad day, the pat of approval on one's back, and the countless sacrifices made by members of the family as shown by Rose in this endearing and touching story. These are the things that seem small but provide a big and lasting impact, priceless gestures that will take root deeply in our hearts and create memories that will last not just for a while but for a lifetime. If my little real-life story is not a case of LOVE OVERLOAD, I don't know what is.

Dem Sibugan
Bacoor, Cavite, Philippines

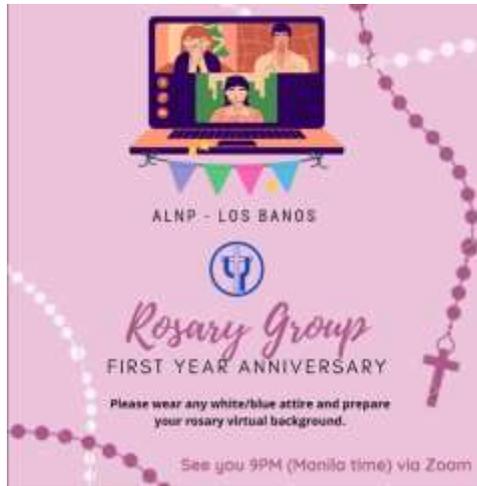


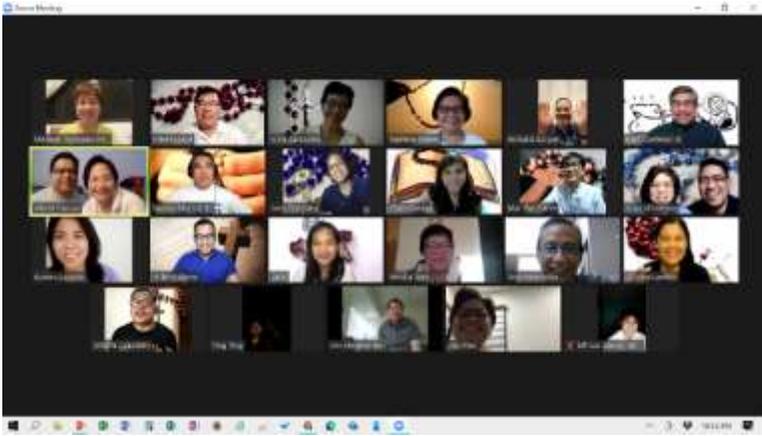
Praying With and For One Another... Across the Miles

Imagine logging into Zoom for a little over a year now and coming together to pray the rosary with one another, lifting prayer intentions to the Lord. Imagine getting to know people in those Zoom meetings for the first time or reconnecting with people after such a long time, knowing that the common denominator was being a current member or alumni of Ang Lingkod ng Panginoon Los Baños. Imagine getting together at 9 p.m. Philippine time which meant early morning in some parts of the US and Canada, early afternoon in Norway, early evening

in Dubai, or late evening in Japan, etc. Well, I have been blessed to experience this since the start of the lockdown last year due to the pandemic. Why has it been such a blessing even in the midst of the challenges and difficulties we have been experiencing all across the world?

All I can say is the blessing comes from knowing that the Lord found a way for people from different parts of the world who had one common denominator to pray with and for another. Through this, we have built and strengthened relationships with one another and the Lord. We continue to be encouraged to reach out to one another in love, praying for one another's concerns be it for strength to get through a jam-packed day (for those in areas just about to start their day) or praying for people we know who have been hospitalized due to COVID-19 and other ailments and so much more. We are also able to be one in thanking the Lord for answered prayers, big or small, or celebrating the gift of another year (even if it may be the 2nd quarantine birthday for some) thus allowing us to share in the blessing of a fellow prayer warrior.





Through this endeavor that came about because we found ourselves in a difficult situation whether we lived in a developed or developing country, we have grown in appreciation of the relationships we share as we spend time in prayer and fellowship with one another and in dealing with the challenges and difficulties that have come our way knowing that there are men and women who I can proudly call my brothers and sisters in Christ who are praying for me. Personally, this daily prayer experience has allowed me to deepen and strengthen my relationship with the Lord, as I entrust this pandemic situation and everything that I am going through because of it to Him. I am grateful for these men and women, my fellow prayer warriors, my brethren in faith who are examples of great trust and faith in the Lord throughout this pandemic. I pray that we may continue to find life and joy through praying with and

for one another across the miles even after the pandemic hopefully comes to an end soon

Manuel C. Manuel III
Bay, Laguna, Philippines



Alkansya [Piggy Bank]

One Saturday morning in April 2020, just a month after the pandemic lockdown, I was walking around the open space in our subdivision when I chanced upon William, one of our maintenance staff. I asked how he was, his family as well as his neighborhood. He told me that most of the breadwinners among his neighbors were daily waged earners who lost their jobs. Many were getting hungry. The relief packs from the barangay (two kilos of rice, canned goods, and noodles) were not sufficient. He and his family were very much concerned about their neighbors' children, especially those close to them.

William tried talking to neighbors who were better off to encourage them to help but he was turned down. He and his wife decided to help. I was so humbled when he narrated how they managed to do it.

William has two children, aged 10 and 9. Before the pandemic, they planned to go swimming at a nearby resort by Christmas. The children were looking forward to their family outing and each one of them had maintained an “*alkansya*”, a piggy bank.

When the couple decided to help, they discussed the situation with their children, as their only source for the outing was their savings in the piggy banks. He explained that with the pandemic, their planned outing could not be realized. Many of their neighbors’ children were hungry, and their own family was still fortunate because he still had work. His children agreed and they were the ones who opened their piggy banks.

With their savings of Php7,500, his family was able to distribute relief packs, each containing five kilos of rice (even more than what the barangay gave), canned goods, and noodles, discreetly to 40 families at night.

I was so touched by William’s and his family’s acts of kindness.

I shared his story with my family and other friends in the subdivision. We raised some money and I gave it to William. We also gave him the relief packs we received from the government. I learned from him that some homeowners also gave their share to him.

Thus, he was able to expand the number of families provided with relief packs, including the volunteer “tanods” (guards) who were guarding the borders to their community during the height of the lockdown.

He also shared that when his wife received her share of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP), she shared her blessings with the children in their immediate neighborhood by giving them cooked hot dogs.

A few days ago, I chanced upon him again and asked for updates about their community. He told me that the breadwinners were somehow able to find work. However, a rising problem is early pregnancies. Due to limited mobility, young people are mostly confined to their community; there are no other activities to channel their energies. On some occasions, when William had extra money, he bought milk for the children of these young mothers. He hopes these young mothers and their children would be provided with vitamins and milk.

Indeed, the story of William and his family attests to the truthfulness of the saying that those who have less in life are the ones who could easily empathize and generously help their fellow neighbors in need.

Caroliza Tulod-Peteros
Antipolo City, Rizal, Philippines



A Very Accommodating Host Family

When my first study trip in the USA was about to end in the mid-1960s, I was invited to participate in a conference at Colorado Springs where foreign students came together to compare notes about our experiences studying in the country.

My host was a family of artists. The father was a painter-sculptor and the mother was a painter-teacher. Their home was nestled on a rocky cliff overlooking the Colorado plains in the east and with a view of Pikes Peak in the west. They designed their house themselves.

When I arrived in the evening before the conference, the father was waiting at the bus station to fetch me. He also drove me to and from the conference site every day.

They had two children, a boy slightly younger than me, and a girl about two years younger than the boy. He gave up his room for me to stay in. One wall of the room was actually the rocky face of the cliff. Breakfast and dinner were pleasant conversation times. One could glance at Pikes Peak as we partook of our meals.

The children became my friends. On one weekend, they took me to the Garden of the Gods, a scenic place nearby with colorful red hills. They showed me around the place. We also climbed one of the hills. On the day of my departure, the host father drove me to the bus station. I was very grateful for the kindness of the entire family.

Serafin Talisayon
In Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA



Giving a Bike to a Health Worker

This pandemic showed me how less is more and how we ignore little things and the precious blessings we have. When the lockdown started and only health workers were allowed to go out, we had a few friends who asked if there were people who could lend bikes to health worker friends. Around February last year, I had already started sorting our material stuff, targeting to be as minimalist as we could; I felt like every weekend I was being tied to cleaning the house rather than resting. I had already told my husband that we should donate the bikes which we bought recently for the kids so they could learn how

to ride a bike. Good timing, indeed, so when the inquiry happened, I repeated to my husband that we should donate a bike since a nurse needed it more than we did. My husband, still kind of attached to it, said that he'd lend his bike to the health worker instead. After a few weeks, the nurse updated him on his use of the borrowed bike. He said he was no longer tired from walking for his shift because he could bike to work. He was thankful but he felt sorry because he thought he might have broken the bike. My husband went to see the condition of the bike. We decided to have it fixed and to give the bike to him; he was so happy. That moment of letting go of something that could be more of use to somebody felt so right in many ways. God has blessed us tenfold.

Renee Lynn Samaniego-Dytuco
Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines



Thankful to My Mother

My wife and I were very lucky; both of us received a scholarship to study microprocessors at the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, Italy.

We were twice lucky because I was awarded and just finished a project; the project paid me enough that we were able to afford to take along with us to Italy our son (aged 11) and daughter (aged 9). Our problem was who would look after them in our rented apartment while we attended our class?

Fate really smiled on us. My mother volunteered to accompany us and take care of our children in our absence. She even paid for her own airfare. She was very kind and caring. Thank you, *Nanay*!

A few years after that trip she passed away. See you later, *Nanay* (Mom).

Serafin Talisayon
In Trieste, Italy



Love for and from a Dog

Kindness is not exclusive to humans. Animals are just as capable of showing empathy and kindness as humans do.

During the start of the pandemic, I opted to take home the dog that lived in our office building. Her name is Bar. She was very kind to all of us who lived

and worked in the building, offering comfort and joy to all who saw her. She had been dubbed as an emotional support dog, after all. Bar often approached students to say Hi, to wait for a pat or a belly rub, among other comforting gestures.

Before the pandemic, she was the first thing that I saw when I went to work on Mondays. It just made my start of the week so much better when she'd run to meet me every single day hence and wag her tail happily as if she had lots of stories to tell me in the hours that I had not seen her.

I was already used to taking her home during the holidays due to everyone leaving the workplace during those days, but this time it was different. It was as if I would be adopting her for a much longer time. I would be her ward, her fur daddy, as millennials would call it. I would need to take care of her in our home, feed her, bathe her, and make sure that she was healthy and happy. It had also brought about kindness from some of my co-workers who opted to share in the expenses that Bar might need for her special dietary needs and grooming materials and supplies, etc. Sometimes I am amazed at how much kindness radiates with Bar around.

Our rescue dog training had already started in the campus as a program for the campus animals and,

once again, fellow dog handlers and a small group of animal lovers were very kind to us.

It has been almost a year now that Bar is at home with us. And I would very happily say that she has given back so much of our kindness to her. She knows when I am tired, stressed out, depressed with all of the things that I worry about and everything that the pandemic has brought about. Bar is an animal companion, yes, but I have grown to see her as family.



Christian Arranz
Pandacan, Manila, Philippines



Love Unleashed

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in February 2020, one of the sectors affected was the transport group. The 40 families of the tricycle drivers in our subdivision, Town & Country West, Molino 3, Bacoor City, were not spared. Aware of their predicament, a group of concerned homeowners launched a fundraising project dubbed Give Love, Just Love. I prepared a letter and distributed copies to the homeowners to inform them of the project's purposes with the following mechanics:

- Put up a Donation Box (we called it Love Bank) at the guardhouse where homeowners could drop their cash donations.
- Donations must be placed in a sealed envelope with the amount and name of the donor on the envelope.
- The duration of the fundraising was one week.
- A committee was formed to take charge of the counting of donations. It was composed of one representative from each of the beneficiary groups - the tricycle drivers, the guards, the maintenance crew, and one overseer representing the homeowners.

After one week the donation box (Love Bank) was opened. Lo and behold!!! Love was unleashed! The total amount collected was Thirty-Seven Thousand Four Hundred Thirty-Three pesos (PHP37,433.00)!!! What an admirable, touching response by the homeowners who opened the doors of their hearts wide so that others might experience hope and love at the time when they needed it most. It benefitted 49 families. Kudos to my co-homeowners who participated in this laudable endeavor. God bless your generous hearts.

Dem Sibugan
Bacoor, Cavite, Philippines



Kindness is Instinctive

This is a story of some of the acts of kindness of Ramon (Mon) Polintan, an elementary and high school classmate of mine.

After working for 10 years for a well-known advertising company in the Philippines, he opted to be a freelance photographer. It was a job he enjoyed very much – it was not routine, there were no required hours, he had no boss, he could choose his clients, he could choose locations. It was almost like

a carefree career that he missed putting aside the equivalent of SSS contributions that would have been deducted from his salary if he was still employed by another. The bitter realization came when he retired.

Despite the financial setback, certain things tug at his heartstrings. One day while walking his dogs in the subdivision where he lives, he came upon a group of three boys from a depressed area nearby who fancied his pets. On impulse, he bought the kids a liter of soda and food with his spare change. In a matter of a few days, the group grew to about 20 kids. There flourished a bond between elementary school-aged children, boys and girls, and a retired photographer who hardly had enough for himself. There were many afternoons they met at the park or playground. He brought them snacks, sports items, and games. The eagerness on the face of the children, the joy of partaking food, the enthusiasm in playing with one another were all gratifying to him. He now wonders how he stretched the peso but acknowledges that, with no children of his own and no younger siblings to “torment”, his paternal instinct was manifested in his personal “feed the kids program”.

Many years before, one late night while driving home, he came upon a couple of men sprawled on

the road with a motorcycle lying on its side close by. The men seemed to be consoling while helping each other. Without thinking that it could be a set-up for a robbery job, he made a U-turn to help and insisted for the hesitant men to be taken to a hospital. One of them, whose left eyeball was bulging, was treated at the ER. Learning that neither had money to pay the hospital, Mon paid the bill with Php500 he had set aside for groceries. He also offered to go back to the scene of the accident to retrieve the motorcycle. They loaded it in his van and Mon drove them home to a scary poorer side of town, some five kilometers away.

Just this past year, Mon had been noticing a dog leashed outside a fence in the neighborhood. Day in and day out, hot or cold, the dog was left there by the roadside, hardly fed and cared for by the owner. He spread a tarp over a bush to protect the dog, even partly, one rainy day. He brought the dog food. And when he could not stand the neglect any longer, he went to talk with a guy living on the premises. It was a caretaker who said Mon could take the dog home. He did and now, with two other dogs keeping him company, there were three to feed – and love and cuddle.



Blackeye, the rescued dog

A sad postscript is that one of his first two dogs went missing and has not come back nor found up to this time. Mon's friends all hope that a good Samaritan will return the favor of Mon's kind deeds.

Even before the act was popularly termed, Mon could have been already playing a part in the pay it forward concept.



Blackeye and his rescuer, Mon Politan

Note: Sadly, Blackeye went to dog heaven on July 1, 2021. Mon lost him to ehrlichiosis.

Edna Talisayon-Jimenez
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada



Moved by Empathy

Life suddenly slowed down and led me to a lot of discoveries, realizations, and appreciation of its beauty. The then toxic ride suddenly became a laid-

back journey leading us to uncertain destinations. Uncertainties made us excited about what lies ahead that no one knows but our Divine Lord.

Because of the internet, people nowadays seldom watch local television. Viewers decreased even more when channels, as well as programs, became more limited. Everybody shifted online and TV sets were used as mere displays.

I like turning on the television - be it watching the news, program reruns, or even to be just there as background of this seemingly odd and silent surroundings. During late afternoons, when all work and chores have subsided, I always find myself on the couch, watching this show just before the evening news. Then it became sort of a habit “before the evening news”.

The show was once packed with a studio audience who endured long queues, bringing along with them their bagful of hopes - to augment at least their basic needs. Now, these spectators are no longer there but the show continues. The show continues to give hope. It continues to reach out. It continues to shine.

The host is very wealthy but his heart is for the masses, the elders, and the needy. He didn't let the

limitations of this pandemic hinder him from reaching out to those who needed help. He thought that these were the times when people needed him most. So he found a way to be able to continue to give a part of himself. He reconceptualized his show. He has always been very vocal that he is not well-versed with modern technology. He doesn't have social media accounts, doesn't know YouTube, and is oftentimes mixed up with the words iPad, android, tablet, and the like. But he still made his way out there to lend a hand.

On- and off-cam, he is there to help. His show is just like life - impromptu, no scripts, some serious talks with bloopers in-between. Every day, he gets to give substantial amounts of money to people on the streets, to the evacuation centers, to the hospitals, and so many more. When you get the chance to watch his show, you will feel a mother's love for her newborn child who needs immediate operation; you will feel the urgency of random dialysis patients who do not know where to get money for their treatments; you will empathize with victims of calamities who are homeless, unemployed; you will be saddened by the plight of out-of-school children; and so many more people in need. With him, there is always an assurance for those who feel hopeless. "Wag kayong mag-alala, kami ang bahala sa inyo,

tutulungan kayo ng aming programa.” (Don’t worry, we will take care of you, our program [show] will help you). For someone who is going through a lot, these words mean so much.

The then entertainment show became more of a “public service” program. Some stories may be ordinary, some may be typical but it all boils down to the fact that a lot of people out there are struggling and they need help. And this host’s help knows no bounds. His heart is full of compassion and love for others.

The program host isn’t perfect, though. The past can tell us that. The person is not super talented either. He sang once for his album and just lip-synched from then on. His jokes have no appeal to the people of his status. But these imperfections are all clouded by his bigger intentions - he sings to convey the lyrics’ messages, he extends efforts (jokes) to lighten up the mood of this very tough life. Sometimes, when you get to internalize the lyrics of his songs, the messages are deep and eternal. When you get to hear his jokes, you will see the joy the jokes bring the viewers.

Others may say, “It’s all work and he gets paid for doing just that.” But not all people given this

opportunity to work and get paid will do the same things as he does. He didn't enter into politics to show the world that even without doing so, we could make a difference. Another takeaway from him, "*Sa iba, kapag tumulong, ayaw magpasabi kung sino sila, gusto nila hindi sila nakikilala. Pero para sa akin, kapag tumulong ka, ipakita mo, hindi para magyabang o kung ano man, para alam ng tao na mayroong nagbigay at hindi maitatago at pakikinabangan ng iilan lamang.*" (For others, when they help, they want to remain anonymous. But for me, when you help, it's better to show them who you are, not to brag or anything else, but to let the people know that there are people who extended support and those who received it will not keep them only amongst themselves.)

And for his upcoming birthday, he only asks for prayers - prayers for his good health and long life. Why? Because he wants his help to reach more and more people. Likewise, he also wants more people to be moved by the same urge, to learn to share what they have even in their own little ways.

Watching his show – “Wowowin, Tutok to Win” - is an eye-opener of our blessings in life - of how much we have and how much we can still give. It inspires us to make a difference and to see our purpose in life.

Now I realize that I am and have been a secret fan – a big secret fan! Kudos to you, Kuya Wil*, *kayo ang dapat sabihan ng “Bigyan ng jacket yan!”* (You should be the one to be told “Give him [or her] a jacket!”)

Maos JD
Quezon City, Philippines

*The program host is Willie Revillame.



Teaching a Client's Friend

Last November, my client referred a friend who had zero knowledge about life insurance and financial planning. My client connected her to me so I can educate her. It was like teaching a student about computer 101, wherein I had to explain each term and make sure she understood it.

Vie Panaga
San Isidro Rodriguez, Rizal, Philippines



I Didn't Doubt His Kindness

I was in Jeddah conducting a workshop in knowledge management for a bank's staff. As a facilitator, I always pay keen attention to my participants – their

needs, their doubts, their questions, and the quality of their interest and interactions.

One participant caught my attention. He was receptive to new ideas. He was very active in participation. He asked questions even after the workshop was over.

After the workshop ended, he invited me to dinner before I left for home. With him, he brought a friend with a bunch of books. It turned out that his friend was a publisher. He convinced his friend to give me some of his books. They were mostly religious books on Islam.

I was thankful to him and his publisher friend. Whether or not the publisher was introducing me to Islam, I didn't doubt his kindness and friendliness. I am grateful to have gained two friends from a faraway country.

Serafin Talisayon
In Jeddah, Saudi Arabia



Two Good Samaritans on an Isolated Road

One winter night years ago, I was driving to a friend's house for a get-together. From the main highway, I

had to exit onto a secondary highway. This secondary highway only had two lanes, one for each direction. It was undivided, with no light posts, no houses around. I think it was more of a backroad. Again, this was in the middle of winter, very cold and with snow on the ground.

As I was driving, I realized that I was going in the wrong direction. Since I was the only one on the road, I decided I would just quickly do a U-turn. So I did. But I miscalculated and I ended up in the ditch. Because of the slippery road and the snow in the ditch, I was not able to drive back onto the road. I was stuck! This was when I began to panic since I had no way of getting the car back up the road. There was no way I could have pushed the car out myself and it was impossible to walk anywhere for help because it was too cold.

A few minutes passed and, suddenly, I saw two vehicles coming. A pickup truck and a car. So I quickly got out of my car and waved at them to stop. And they did! They saw my car in the ditch and both vehicles stopped to help me. The person driving the pickup truck pulled my car out as the others pushed my car from behind. I was so grateful! These random strangers did not hesitate to help me! It was freezing cold that night but that did not stop them from

helping me, a complete stranger to them. I thanked them with all my heart and hugged everybody!

Clea Beachell
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada



Love is in Your House: Showing Love and Kindness to Our Old-Aged Parents

Last December 2020, our family had the chance to stay in my parents' house for twelve days. I did not bring any gifts because they had lots of material things already and were in the decluttering phase of housecleaning. Also, I didn't know what kind of things would make them happier at that time. So, during the first days of our stay, I just listened and observed them so I would know what material things or measures could give them more comfort, peace, and joy that was within my power to give. These are what we did for them:

1. We upgraded their cellphones to phone tablets because I noticed they were having difficulty in texting and video calling using their cellphones. I also bought accessories such as a tablet stand and installed a

tempered glass and protector. I was so happy with their reactions. These were their first Samsung tablets.

2. We installed an electric connection and water heater in their bathroom so they don't need to carry the hot kettle to have a warm bath (couldn't use a shower heater because water is not pumping up, so they still used the pail and dipper system).
3. We traveled to a lower-risk beachfront restaurant in Subic so they could relax and enjoy the beauty of nature for a while. We made sure everything was sanitized and disinfected.
4. We bought them canes with a chair because I heard my mom looking for a bench while we were waiting outside a drugstore.
5. We had a mini party set up in the house for my father's birthday last New Year's Eve with a colorful cake, wine, balloons, and lots of laughter❤️. We also set up a surprise Zoom session with his siblings so they could also greet him while we were having dinner. Screengrab photos were taken for remembrance.
6. We bought a new microwave oven (with reminders to use ceramic plates for safety) to replace the defective one because I

noticed they had to wash lots of pots when reheating their food.

Showing love in action that is responsive to the needs of our parents usually requires attention to detail, especially since they have specific and ever-changing preferences over many things (such as they don't want a helper inside the house due to their privacy). So, spend time with them. If you have available time, set it aside for them while they are here on earth.

We often show kindness to other people especially those in disadvantaged situations. While doing those things, let's not forget that our own parents are longing for that affection, too. For this, I thank the Lord for giving us more time to be with them. I know that we cannot ever repay everything but at least we want to show them that we love them in return for all their kindness, love, care, and sacrifices they made. Story sealed with love.

Anonymous
Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines



Small Extras, Huge Difference

While working at Kane Vet, I took my staff of 3-4 to lunch twice or three times a year on my own dime.

My way of thanking them for work well done. I was Accounts Payable Manager at that company for 17 years.



While working for the same company, I also periodically made ham, fried rice, and spring rolls to take to work for sharing with all of the staff. I'd prepare the food on the weekend and wake up very early the next day to fry the spring rolls and make the fried rice.



One day at a grocery store where we shop, an old lady was frantically looking for a dollar in her purse to use for a cart. She had a couple of quarters only. I gave her a dollar. She was so grateful. It was only a dollar yet the happiness you feel sharing a small amount is something you cannot quantify.



A neighbor would go home to Turkey every year and stayed there for at least a month. Every time she did, I looked after her yard. I watered her grass, flowers, and garden. She did the same for me when we went out of town.

Me'an
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada



He Trusted in Me Many Times

I met him when he was a regional director of a UN agency in Bangkok. I gave a workshop for his team. It seemed he liked my services because he hired me again. In this second engagement, I had to travel to India and Vietnam.

After he was promoted to the head office in Geneva, he hired me again a third and a fourth time. In the last time, I could sense some internal politics in the office that was not favorable to him. I was afraid for him but he appeared very calm and unperturbed.

I heard later that he resigned and he was appointed to a high-ranking position in another UN agency in Incheon, South Korea. Again, he hired me to give a workshop very similar to the very first one I had with his team in Bangkok.

I am very grateful for his trust and kindness. I was able to travel, gain new friends, and learn many things through him.

Serafin Talisayon
In Bangkok, Thailand; Geneva, Switzerland; and
Incheon, South Korea



Kindness from Many for My Dying Mother

The year 2019 was a difficult year for our family as Mommy's health started to deteriorate. She was in and out of the hospital until her death on August 28, 2019.

But throughout this difficult time, God showered us with His grace and provision. He sent relatives, friends, and officemates to shower us with kindness by praying for us, extending financial support, visiting us in the hospital to give a hug, and sending us encouraging messages to lift our spirits. God also blessed us with loving caregivers who cared for Mommy like she was their own mother and stayed with us until her last day. Moreover, Mommy's doctors, who had been treating her for about nine years, were like family and extended all possible help to us.

And so, I will forever treasure in my heart all these acts of kindness we received. And by God's grace, He has been allowing me to extend kindness to those in similar situations.

Sheila Marie M. Encabo
Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines



Thoughtful Justin Jay

Justin Jay is a six-year-old kid residing with his parents in Barangay Batasan, Quezon City, Philippines. During the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), he helped his family by selling cellphone loads to their neighbors. He kept the payments in a piggy bank. He planned to give what he saved as a gift to his dad when the lockdown was over. He also had an agreement with his dad to keep Five Pesos for himself from each of his sales. He kept his share in another piggy bank.

One day, he saw his *ninang* (godmother), a *barangay* (village) official, going past their house. He called her and asked her to wait. After a few minutes, he gave her *ninang* what he earned from the cellphone load transactions. He said that he would like to donate to the *barangay* what he managed to save to buy milk for children in their community. His mother was surprised by what Justin did and told Justin's father about it.

Justin's father called to check what happened. Justin told his dad that he pitied the children in their *barangay*. Unlike him, the children had no milk to

drink nor, in some cases, a father to earn a living. Justin begged his father not to get angry with what he did. Justin's father replied that he was, on the contrary, very happy with what Justin did. He even asked his son where he got the idea of donating what he saved. Justin replied by quoting what his mom said, "Nagmana daw po ako sa inyo, Dada." ("That I took after you, Daddy.")

His father said, "Yes, anak. Nagmana ka nga sa amin. We are very proud of you." ("Yes, son. Indeed, you took after us. We are very proud of you.")

Justin still sells and saves what he earns from the cellphone load business and plans to donate again his earnings to the barangay soon.

Alan S. Cajes
Pasig City, Philippines



Did You Know You're Being Kind through These Ways, Too?

1. When you whisper prayers even for people you do not know especially during this pandemic. Social media, like Facebook, are powerful platforms where people can respond to posts seeking prayers and

asking for healing for their loved ones. As simple as commenting “Amen” is an act of kindness in itself.

2. When post-covid patients donate their plasma platelets. Here’s hoping that their immunity can help current critical patients fighting for their lives.

3. Being kind to yourself every time you listen to your tired and stressed body, and you give time to pause, rest, and relax.

4. Every instance you share a portion of your time with someone. It can be as simple as social media posting of greetings during special occasions (birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas, mother/father’s day, etc.), liking posts, calling your friends, answering queries, and offering advice.

Maricel Manio Suertefelipe
Quezon City, Philippines



God is Kind. He Answers Prayers.

I lost contact with a friend with a gift of healing for several years. Way back then, I was told by our common friend (also a faith healer) that Ka Nhad

Alvaro's main source of income was metal construction. Several attempts to reconnect with him were all unsuccessful. So, I decided to leave it up to Him.

Then, sometime in December 2020, ALMAKAP (Alyansa ng Maggagatas-Katiwala ng Pilipinas) (an alliance of smallholder dairy carabao owners and small dairy entrepreneurs) scheduled the harvesting of corn forage in the first week of January 2021 to commence the second cycle of corn silage production. Considering the losses on corn silage caused by rodents damaging the sack and plastic bag containers and eating the corn kernels, we thought of constructing a rodent-proof corn silage warehouse.

The ALMAKAP's corn silage project in charge volunteered to request one of his friends who worked at the CLSU (Central Luzon State University) Carpentry Section to prepare a design for the desired "rodent-proof corn silage warehouse." Within two days, the design was ready and the bill of materials amounted to Php250,000.00! Construction cost was offered at 40% of the costs of construction materials. My direct and simple comment was, "We do not have that much money. While we like and appreciate the design, our funds are enough only for a low-cost version."

Christmas day passed and the new year 2021 was fast approaching. I continued sending requests to the Infinite Source for help and realization of the rodent-proof corn silage storage facility.

The new year came! This momentous day of 2021 become more eventful when my prayer request was answered! A slim-built man in full gear, riding a big motorbike, suddenly appeared in front of our house. I mistook him as a delivery man of items we were buying through online sellers. As soon as the man took off his helmet, he smiled at me and asked, “*Natatandaan pa po ba ninyo ako?*” (Do you still remember me?). With so much gratefulness to the Infinite Source, I replied, “*Siyempre naman, Ka Nhad!*” (Of course, Ka Nhad!)

As I let him in, we exchanged pleasantries and I narrated to him that I tried to contact him but all my efforts ended in vain. And that during the past few weeks I prayed for help from the Almighty God to help me find the right person to construct a low-cost rodent-proof corn silage warehouse for ALMAKAP. After lunch, we went to the project area for him to get a feel of the place and we discussed what needed to be done. Finally, Ka Nhad, together with his son and a nephew, were going to the project site on

January 12, 2021, to start constructing the rodent-proof corn silage warehouse.

The next task was to get the funds for the warehouse construction. Again, prayer requests were recited in earnest that the Almighty God's chosen source be conveyed to me. And as I opened my FB messenger in the wee hours of the morning of January 11, 2021, Ka Amado Mendoza (a close friend now residing in Canada) gave me a call. Thanks to the Almighty God, Ka Amado committed funds for the construction of the warehouse.

As I ponder on these events, ALMAKAP's project was conceived and implemented mainly to respond to the needs for quality corn silage at an affordable price of smallholder dairy farmers in Nueva Ecija, who were complaining of the exorbitant price of corn silage being sold by local suppliers.

Happy Love Notes for January 12, 2021: At around 9:00 a.m., Ka Amado called up and informed me that he sent CAD2,658.00 equivalent to Php100,073.70! Said amount was more than the Php80,000.00 I solicited from the Almighty God which meant there were extra funds to purchase seven-graded goats as another income-generating project. Concurrently, Ka Nhad sent an SMS that they were on the road to the project site and already in the Gapan City area.

Indeed, when unconditional love is given, much love is received in return. From all indications, LOVE IS EVERYWHERE!

Honorato M. Baltazar
Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, Philippines



I Was Invited to China Twice

We met online via LinkedIn, a big international network of professionals. We shared the same professional specialization. When I was visiting Hong Kong, we met and had a chat over coffee in my hotel. After several months, there was an international conference in Hong Kong. He happened to know the organizers and he convinced them to invite me as a speaker. That was when I met him for the second time.

After a year or so, I learned about an international conference to be held in Hong Kong. They were inviting authors to submit papers. Because the topic of the conference could accommodate a paper that suits very well my Chinese friend's and my experiences and interests, I proposed to him that we co-author and submit a joint paper. He agreed. To make the long story short, the paper was accepted

and he was the one who read it during the conference.

Several months passed. I received an email from him that he recommended me to be a speaker at another international conference, this time in Beijing. The organizers approved his recommendation and I got another speaking engagement where, again, my travel and hotel accommodations were paid for by the conference organizers. He was so kind to agree to translate my slide presentation into Mandarin.

Thanks to him I was able to visit the famous Tian'anmen Square, the Forbidden City, and the Great Wall of China.

We are still friends up to today.

Serafin Talisayon
In Hong Kong and Beijing, China



Donations

Lockdown! Everybody stayed home. No work, no jobs, no income until after the lockdown would be lifted.



To a Charitable Fund

I pitied the people who didn't have any savings; and the government, except the Office of the Vice-President Leni G. Robredo (of the Philippines), seemed to have forgotten about them. Amid the lockdown, she raised funds with the help of donors, partners, and organizations.

Thus, I found myself opening my bank account and donating money to her cause. I will not mention the amount for, to me, it is small compared to the corporations which donated, perhaps, millions from their coffers for CSR (corporate social responsibility). Well and good. My husband later asked me to give more than I had initially donated.



To the Church

I also donated to our San Oscar Romero Parish in Cainta for people who had nothing, even rice, to eat. I likewise handed our parish priest funds. I was sure he had no money to spend for his basic needs knowing there's no collection since the congregation attended online mass. He had to eat, too, as do all of us.



To People Affected by Typhoons

When a typhoon battered Catanduanes, I donated to the Rotary Club which sent the money to the Bicol region as a form of “*ayuda*” (assistance). I know how it is to be hungry especially after typhoons. I know because I, too, came from a poor family. And it is a huge blessing to have someone give you what you need.

Then, Typhoon Ulysses came and with the unemployment caused by the pandemic, money was doubly hard to come by. I donated to Caritas Manila for those affected both in Bicol and Cagayan.

People thanked me, but I told them, “To whom much is given, much is also required.”



To Siblings

I also gave to my siblings in Bicol whose businesses and livelihoods had been affected, not only by the pandemic but also by the typhoons, especially my brother who used to drive for us. He was sent home because there was no work for him in Manila. I had to send him his 13th month pay. Even my mother’s two siblings, I had to send money to because I was

told their coconut trees had been severely affected by typhoon Ulysses.



To the Church Again

This past December, I found myself donating again to our parish. I knew they must also celebrate Christmas. I heard that because only a few people went to Mass in person and attended only the online mass, their parish received little offering in terms of money. So, I knew I needed to give again to them so the parish staff would receive their salaries for Christmas. It was the only way to help them; it was the only way I know-how.

Grace Sapuay
Antipolo City, Rizal, Philippines



There's This Lady I Know

Who paid for an older couple's meal at a restaurant. Anonymously. Only the server knew.



Who, for several times, also paid for the coffee of the passengers of the car behind her at a Starbucks drive-

thru. Many people do this at both Starbucks and Tim Horton's drive-thrus as a way of paying forward.



Who had a friend whose mom had a terminal illness. The friend was busy looking after her at the hospital and doing errands for her. One day (it was either Mother's Day or the friend's mom's birthday), this lady bought a nice dinner for them and had it delivered to the hospital. Mother and daughter were both very grateful.

Me'an
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada



Caring Motorists

In 1983, my wife and I were awarded a month-long scholarship to study microprocessor technology at the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, Italy. We brought along our son and daughter who were 11 and 9 years old, respectively. My mother decided to come with us and take care of our two children during the day when we were away at the Centre.

During weekends, the five of us would take short sightseeing trips. On one weekend, we drove to Austria and visited Klagenfurt, Villach, and Spittal. On our way back, we passed through the mountainous border back to Italy via Plockenpass Strasse. It was a relatively unused mountain road through a forested area with few motorists.

It was early spring and there was still frozen snow overlaying the ground. Our two children saw snow for the first time and begged to stop by along the narrow road so they could get a sample. I parked our rented car by the side of the road and they excitedly went out to touch the snow. They asked if they could bring some and I said that was not a good idea because it would melt along the way.

A passing motorist stopped by, parked his car, walked towards us, and asked us what was wrong. They thought our car had stalled and they were ready to help us. This happened again with another motorist, and then again. I was pleasantly surprised at the concern, kindness, and readiness to help by these strangers.

Serafin Talisayon
In Plockenpass Strasse, Austria



A Very Kind Indonesian

I was invited to a study meeting in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. It was sponsored by a regional organization. In that meeting, I meet one of its top executives, an Indonesian.

One evening after one of our group fellowship dinners, we all strolled in a public park in the city center. It is called Alun-Alun Selatan (Southern City Square). They said that the planning of Yogyakarta city was based on cosmic and divine principles governing human destiny.

In the far end of the square were two big old banyan trees. There is a Yogjakartan belief that if one can walk blindfold from one end of the square to the other end, and end up in the space between the two trees, one will have a good life in the future.

My meeting colleagues tried it and they all veered off to one side or the other. The Indonesian executive cajoled me to try and so I did. While blindfolded, I just kept walking and walking. I could hear the Indonesian executive encouraging me on.

I succeeded!

A couple of years later, he invited me to serve as a team leader to plan, implement, and edit a book-writing project. There were nine of us co-authors and we met in Bangkok, Thailand, to plan the book. The project was successfully finished and our book was published by the regional organization.

The next year, he again engaged me to serve as rapporteur of an international conference held in Bangkok. I coordinated with all the conference speakers because my duty included editing their papers into a conference proceedings book.

I am very thankful for his kindness. It gave me opportunities to meet many professional friends, travel, and learn many things that enriched my professional experience.

Serafin Talisayon
In Yogyakarta, Indonesia; and Bangkok, Thailand



Helping Street Children Get By

I went to 7-Eleven to buy some snacks. On my way out, I saw four kids sharing pancit canton from one used cup for their lunch. I asked them why they were eating only that food and where their parents were.

They said that they didn't have money, their father was sick, and their mother was busy selling candies and peanuts on the streets to provide for whatever she could for their family. My heart melted seeing that scene so I bought bread and bottled water from the bakery adjacent to 7-Eleven and gave them to the kids. My heart is happy after seeing and realizing that we don't need to do anything grand to be able to help, but we can help people even in the smallest way possible.

Chrissalyn Marcelo
Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, Philippines



Giving Up a Business Class Plane Seat

In September 2000, I was very fortunate to be able to fly to Vienna, Austria, to attend a conference.

At that time, I was teaching part-time at the Asian Social Institute. Its lady president received a travel grant to attend a conference in Vienna. She was awarded a business class airfare. Out of her generosity and at her own initiative, she negotiated with the sponsoring organization to split the business class airfare into two economy class airfares so that she could invite a faculty member of the

Institute to attend the conference. The lucky faculty member chosen was me.

In return, I invited her to dinner one evening while we were in Austria. We also joined a weekend tour outside Vienna. My enjoyment came from an act of kindness that entailed voluntary personal sacrifice.

Serafin Talisayon
In Vienna, Austria



No Act of Kindness Is Ever Too Small

It had been a long day for me ... but I was grateful to have come across some bank officers as I stepped inside our building's elevator ... I surmised that they were even more tired than me but they managed to smile and say Hello warmly ... somehow, I felt some tiredness leaving me ... just realized how such simple acts of kindness could influence another soul ... no matter what time of the day it is and no matter what your situation in life is ...

Sheila Marie M. Encabo
Los Banos, laguna



Cupcake, Anyone?

We were in the middle of a meeting when the Chair brought in cupcakes and offered us some ... glad to have experienced such a random act of kindness at work ...

Sheila Marie M. Encabo
Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines



Living Lives for Others

I was in Germany preparing to travel to Iraq where I would be assigned to work last year (2020) when the lockdown all over the world (because of COVID-19) caught me, and my humanitarian organization in Germany where I was having an induction sent me back to the Philippines. I was trying to beat the March 18 lockdown at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. I arrived in Manila at midnight on March 17, just in time. There were no quarantine regulations yet then so I was able to get back home to Dasmariñas, Cavite, with no trouble.

The first weeks of the lockdown were eerily uneasy. Very few people were on the streets, everyone was tuned to the television or radio for updates, and

social media were the main venue for keeping in touch with friends and relatives. I had a cousin in the province who asked for help for his medical needs and, after one week, when I was able to get a quarantine pass, I was able to send him some money. The former parents-in-law of my spouse called her asking if they could come and stay for a while because work had stopped at the resort where they were employed. There were no more customers booked and food had run out. So my spouse asked me to fetch them from Imus, Cavite, where they were staying. I had no trouble going through the checkpoints because I had a military ID, being a reservist army officer. The elderly couple stayed with us for some time during the lockdown. When I brought them back to Imus after a month or so, we handed them some amount of money and the relief supply given to us by the barangay, the local government unit.

My eldest son, who was at that time in the US, observed how people in their area in New York went on panic-buying when the lockdown was first enforced. He felt very sad that many shoppers were left with nothing. I was touched by his sense of humanity and felt proud of him when I read his message on Facebook. He posted an appeal that, when going to the grocery shops, people should get only what they needed so there would be something

left for others to buy. We were lucky in the Philippines as I found out when the malls were allowed to open up again that customers could only buy grocery items in certain quantities. For example, we could only buy up to five small cans of sardines or two, if in big cans; or only two bottles of rubbing alcohol; or five pieces of facemasks, etc. Everybody else then had a chance of availing of similar goods.

I befriended our security guards in the residential village where we stayed; and sometimes I would talk to some of them to listen to their concerns, too. I would bring them, especially the night shift, coffee in packets or sachets, and some snacks. Sometimes my spouse cooked something (boiled bananas or pasta, or soup, or even rice and vegetables) to give the guards. We regularly supplied them with rubbing alcohol or hand sanitizers because we felt that as our frontliners they should be safe, too, from the virus.

As the person in charge of our household's groceries and other foodstuffs, I went to the grocery shops once in a while. I would see some people trying to beg. I was not sure how many of the people they approached gave them something. So I prepared Php20 or Php50 bills to give each one of them when I passed them by. I didn't have much money but I felt that I had to share even a little amount for people to get by. I knew that many lost their jobs due to the

pandemic. One time when getting out of a mall after I did my groceries, a young man approached me asking for some money, saying that his baby had no milk to drink. He had lost his job and had nothing to buy the milk with. I immediately gave him money without asking any questions because I understood his predicament. I once was a young man with babies to feed so I imagined the young man's stress and worry of not being able to feed his baby and his family.

When the lockdown was eased that I could already drive to the Metro Manila area, I'd see a lot of homeless people, their children on main streets. At the end of Macapagal Avenue, they slept along the side of the street. Along Roxas Boulevard, they slept on the islands. Along España Avenue, I would see some people with placards hanging on their necks asking for help because they had lost their jobs and homes. Again, I would have some bills ready so that when they knocked on my window I could give them something.

If this was the end of the world why would I cling to whatever money I had? It is better to share even a little with people who also need it to sustain them even if for a little while. Yet, even if it is not the end of the world, I feel that I have to be concerned with a

suffering person because he or she is a fellow human being.

But not only with fellow human beings. One day, one of our cats did not come back home, and I waited as I was the one who fed them. He came back the next day limping, and ate only a little. On the third and fourth days, he could barely stand up and he could no longer eat. I examined him and found that he had wounds on his feet and tail. There were maggots on his body. He was weak. I thought he was going to die, and I was wondering where to bury him when he died. I thought it was just a matter of time. On the fifth day, he was still breathing, and I told myself this little cat was still fighting for his life, so I decided to help him. I cleaned his wounds of the maggots, disinfected the wounds, and fed him. I even bought a baby bottle so I could force-feed him with milk and water, and I fed him with fish from my own hands. I did this ritual of cleaning his wounds, administering some cure, and feeding him for days until one day he was back on his feet again.

I actually didn't have a liking for cats even though I fed them when they were around. We didn't have any cats ourselves. One day, one big male cat came to our house and, sensing that he was hungry, I gave him food. The following day, he came back with a pregnant cat, and we fed both of them. Then the

male cat left, and the pregnant cat stayed and we continued to feed her. Then she gave birth to her little kittens. That was the story of how we got our cats. I didn't like them, but what to do? So we continued to feed them, and again they multiplied. Then the story of the cat who got sick and I had to nurse him back to health taught me a lesson that made me like cats, haha. It's not only us human beings who have the right to live, even cats, too, or dogs. Or even chickens, pigs, cows, etc., still I find it hard to be a vegetarian. But that's another story.

I've realized that life is really short. With the news of people dying every day from COVID-19, I realized that it could happen, too, to me at any time, and I asked myself what good have I done really in my lifetime? I realized that I haven't really done much. So, I decided to do some little acts of kindness at every opportunity not only for the sake of those I am doing kindness for but for myself, too, because then it makes life meaningful. Should we live our lives for ourselves only? Then what kind of a life is that?

Philip Emmanuel C. Peñaflor
Dasmariñas, Cavite, Philippines



Being Blessed to Bless

It was around mid-November in 2020 when I was taking a break from working on requirements for my classes. I found myself thinking about how my mom and I were going to be celebrating Christmas especially with all the challenges brought about by COVID-19. I realized that I had a lot to be thankful for – all of us in the family (including those based in the US and Canada) and our household staff were healthy; we had regular family video calls which my mom always looked forward to because she got to see her grandson whom she last saw in person when my sister’s family visited last January 2020 just before the Taal eruption in the same month. My Catholic renewal community, Ligaya ng Panginoon, was also regularly meeting virtually and different groups of brothers and sisters started online rosary and intercession times; I got to do a lot of Zoom and Messenger bonding and catch-up sessions especially with friends based abroad or even in different parts of the country; I was coping well with being a student thrust into the remote learning platform we were using during the semester; and so much more. I likewise realized that such blessings should not just be kept to myself or my family. With the pandemic and the spate of typhoons devastating the country, I

knew that so many people would not be able to celebrate Christmas as joyously as before.

I remembered one important lesson that I had been taught through the years and have tried to apply in my life as much as I can – “Remember that you have been blessed so you can be a blessing to others around you.” Even with all the challenges that 2020 brought, my family and I were still blessed. And what better way to celebrate the celebration of the greatest gift to mankind during Christmas than to share these blessings with those who experienced many more challenges and difficulties than my family did. And so I asked my high school batchmate who happened to be the Vice Mayor of the town I grew up in (although we have lived in the neighboring town for a long time now) and asked her if she could recommend a barangay where we could do gift bag giving a couple of days before Christmas. She said she would advise me regarding the barangay and so I set out to plan for this gift bag thanksgiving project.

With the generous help of relatives, friends, and former students, we were able to raise enough funds to prepare gift bags composed of health kits (e.g., face masks, face shields, towels, etc.) and food kits (e.g., rice, canned goods, noodles, etc.) with mineral water for 100 families in the chosen barangay. And so, on December 23, 2020, with prayers and well-

wishes from my mom who wouldn't be able to join us because she was a senior citizen who had to stay at home, I, together with a couple of our household staff and some of their children, went to the covered courts of the designated barangay. I met with the barangay officials who advised me which part of covered courts we were going to do our gift bag giving. Just seeing the glow in the families' eyes (since we had face masks on, they couldn't see our mouths turning into smiles) and hearing their simple Thank You was more than enough for me to say a thanksgiving prayer to the Lord for this opportunity even with the many challenges we encountered in putting everything together.

After the activity, I told the barangay officials that, God-willing, there would be other opportunities to do something like this in the future. On the lighter side of things, one of our household staff mentioned that a lot of the gift bag recipients were asking who we were and if I had plans to run in the next elections in the town. She was laughing every time she heard this being asked and shared that I was the Vice Mayor's high school batchmate and that we were not even residents of the town (but the neighboring town). This was not an opportunity to gather votes (hahaha) but to share our blessings. And share our blessings we did. We took time to have a simple celebratory lunch at home so my mom and I could

thank our household staff and their children for all their help and to celebrate the Lord's goodness in our lives. With this, I was confident that our Christmas celebration was going to be filled with gratitude for all His blessings and hope for what lies ahead as I continue to concretize "being blessed to bless" in my life.

Manuel C. Manuel III
Bay, Laguna, Philippines



Out of the Mouths of Babes

Our family was playing a card game called Exploding Kittens. It was when my grandson Miles was seven years old. It was my first time playing it so I was always losing. It got to a point where I was getting upset ("napipikon"). He came to me, hugged me, and said, "It's ok, Lola. It's only a game." Opppsss ... natauhan si Lola (*Grandma came to her senses*). A seven-year-old was teaching me sportsmanship. So on with the game. Later, Miles made a move that was obviously not the best one. His dad told him that it was not the best move. The little boy smiled a little and gave his dad a look that meant "It's ok, Dad. I want Lola to win." Wow! A very kind act. At the end of the game, I was a happy Lola seeing that my apo showed me values that I was still learning at my age.



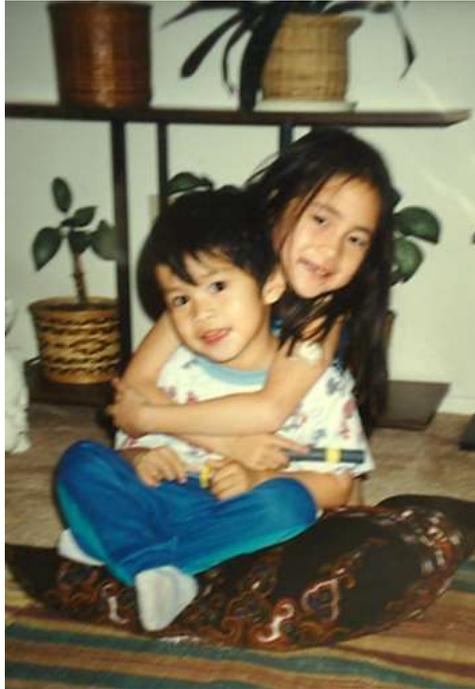
Author with her grandson Miles



When Alex, a grandniece, was in elementary, my husband and I set aside what we called “Alex Day”. It was to treat her at the end of the school year for a year well done. We’d drive around, go to malls to buy her a toy or something else that caught her fancy. We ate in a restaurant afterward.

There was a time we took her to a farmers’ market in St. Albert. She had her hair braided and her face painted. She also got balloons. We had snacks in a small place nearby. When we were getting our food, Alex wanted to get extra fries for his young brother Carlo. She said it was his favorite. Aww! Who could say no to this girl who thought of her brother who was not with us? This act of thoughtfulness of Alex

gave us more to digest than what we gave her that day.



Alex with her kid brother Carlo

Me'an
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada



Mrs. Josefa Gapasin, My Teacher in Grade V

Some occasional beautiful souls touched my life growing up. One of these adorable persons that regularly comes to mind was a teacher in Eulogio

Rodriguez Elementary School (ERES), Hagdang Bato, Mandaluyong, Rizal. I was in Grade V when she took me under her wing. She was my class adviser. Her name was Mrs. Josefa Gapasin.

As I remember, that was the time I lost interest in going to school. My report card in Grade IV showed an average of 79%. It was when I'd walk to school barefoot. I only had two old, soiled, and tattered shirts and two short pants. When the bell rang to announce recess time, I stayed in my classroom while my classmates rushed to the Lunch Counter (that was how we called our mini-store inside the school) to buy food. To relieve my hunger and divert my envy, I focused on reading my books like the *Philippine Readers* by Camilo Osias and *Greek Mythology*. I also practiced my spelling of English words and honed my drawing.

One day, I skipped my afternoon class and just stayed home. I was ashamed to go back to school because I ripped one of my two shirts. The hole in the shirt's belly was noticeable. One of my classmates came to fetch me and told me that if I didn't come to class, Mrs. Gapasin would personally come to pick me up with a long ruler, which she used as a pointer on the blackboard in our daily lessons. During those times, the teacher could really hit you hard with the ruler if that was what she promised to do. I reluctantly went

with my classmate and walked the one kilometer to school.

I could not remember anymore what Mrs. Gapasin told me. What I do recall is that she asked me to come to her house and have breakfast and lunch with her family before I proceeded to school. I could not recall how many times I did that. I am sure it was more than I can count with my ten fingers and ten toes.

That act of kindness of Mrs. Gapasin pushed me to study harder and attend school regularly. When the school year closed, I had an 85% mark to show my parents. My sixth year in the same school earned me 86% on my report card.

It was in 1959 when all this happened. After our elementary graduation, all the people and events in that stage of my life just became memories, an insignificant blur.

Sometime in 2000, our band D' ALZ which was made up of former high school classmates, was practicing in the house of one band member. It happened that it was near that of my former teacher's. One afternoon, with a little hesitation, I walked toward her house with a sad and lingering thought that she

might not recognize me anymore. She was then about 86 years old and I was about 45 years old.

I knocked on the gate, and a maid appeared and asked who I was. I told her I came to visit my teacher Mrs. Gapasin. She asked me to wait for a while. Some minutes later, a small old woman came out, she squinted her eyes, then her face lightened up, and she excitedly exclaimed, “Perfecto! Perfecto Magno!” Just like how she used to call me in school. She made me come inside the house and she asked about my brother and sister whom she also taught in elementary. How is Carlo? How is Kahirup? She even told me how bright they were in school.

She took an album where she kept all her class pictures. She asked me to tell her where I was in the Grade V picture. I timidly told her I could not tell anymore. I could not recognize myself anymore. She smiled and she pointed to where I was in the picture and said, “Here you are.” She even enumerated all the names of my classmates in it.

I confessed to her that I didn’t have a class picture because I could not afford the 25-centavo cost of it. What she did afterward surprised me. She tore off the Grade V picture from the album and gave it to me. I described her in my song, One Little Spark. It goes like this:

*There's one little spark you left in my heart.
It glows even though we've been so apart.
Your light guides my way, it does every day.
Your memory lives on and here it will stay.*

That was the last time I saw my favorite soul and idol,
Mrs. Josefa Gapasin.

Perfecto Idilio Magno aka Ed Magno
Markham, Ontario, Canada



(Hashtag)purposefulgiving

My daughter Clea and her husband Adam this year started to give back on a more regular basis. Every weekend, they visit a non-profit organization to help out even in a small way.

They have been to these charitable organizations to donate in kind:

- Edmonton Humane Society – shelters animals
- Youth Empowerment & Support Services (YESS) – provides immediate and low-barrier shelter, temporary housing, and

individualized wrap-around support for youth ages 15-24

- McDonald House Charities – provides accommodation to out-of-town families for them to be able to stay close to their sick child in hospital
- Little Warriors – focuses on the awareness, prevention, and treatment of child sexual abuse
- Edmonton Food Bank – feeds the hungry
- Elizabeth Fry Society – supports women and girls at risk of becoming criminalized

Edna Talisayon-Jimenez
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada



We Were Bumped Off Our Flight!

My family was visiting my sisters in Canada when news arrived that my mother died. We had to hurriedly book an earlier flight back home to Manila. We got a booking with a connection in Los Angeles.

We arrived at the Los Angeles International Airport for our flight very late in the evening. Upon checking in, they informed us that we were bumped off! I was, of course, very angry and disappointed, but my other

problem was where to stay that night and how do we get another booking?

I called up a friend whom I knew only the year before. He was very kind and helpful.

- Upon learning about our predicament, he picked us up at the airport and brought us to his apartment for the night. What a relief!
- The following morning, he and I drove to the ticket office. It seemed that he knew the manager of the airline because we were able to get a booking for the evening of that day. What a relief!
- While we were at the airport to rebook our flight, my wife and daughter were having fun in Disneyland. My friend's girlfriend volunteered to take them to the park.
- That evening, the couple drove us back to the airport.

We were very thankful to both of them for going out of their way to help us every bit of the way. They were like angels whom we call "*hulog ng langit*" (heaven-sent) in Pilipino.

Serafin Talisayon
In Los Angeles, California, USA



Kindness Flows through Everyone

Some say “kindness is contagious” and that’s exactly what I had experienced and witnessed when I was dining at my favorite fast-food chain.

As I was looking around, something caught my attention from afar—a rag vendor asking the security guard if he and his son could come in. When the guard let them in, the man went straight to the washroom after instructing his son to keep an eye on their rags.

I threw a glance at the young boy (whose age seemed to be 14 years) sitting at one corner and noticed that he had a special condition. He suddenly pushed back his chair, stood up, and went to the counter to ask for a glass of water. He then headed back to where his father left him.

Not long after, his father, who was probably in his 60s, was back. The boy handed the drinking water to his father. While I was sympathetically staring at them, I could feel their hunger and weariness, which they were trying to endure and lessen by just drinking water as it was all that they could have for free.

They were about to leave but it pained me to see them go just like that; I was touched and I felt for them. So, I approached and gave them a little

amount of money to get food to fill their hungry tummies. At first, “Tatay” (Father) refused to accept it but I insisted. He thanked me not once but many times while the boy kept clapping his hands in absolute delight and joy.

However, that encounter wasn’t merely with me. Because while I was watching them, there was another customer whose intention was the same as mine. When I went back to my table, that customer (a guy and probably a college student) approached them and asked them to dine with him.

This guy stood in a queue for ten minutes to order additional meals good for two. He was carrying a tray with two orders of chicken and rice, coke float, and fries. May God bless this young man. “Tatay” was again so pleased and grateful. He thanked him, bowing his head while his son seemed overjoyed, and even hugged the guy tightly.

Some of you may think that this was just a small thing but there's no such thing as a small act of kindness. It takes but one person, one moment, one conviction, to start a ripple of change. Indeed, kindness is contagious - an act worth passing on.

Ma. Cecilia C. Irang
Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija



You Can Never Outdo the Lord in Generosity

As I began my special day last June 7 and celebrate the Lord's goodness and faithfulness to me even amidst these challenging times, I went back to one scene in *The Chosen* that has left an indelible mark on me as I journey with Him. He has made me completely different from what I was before, encompassing me with His unconditional love and allowing me to grow in faith, hope, and love as I pursue His will in my life even with all my brokenness. Our loving and faithful God is truly a generous God!

That summed up my birthday experience throughout that special day. My heart was overflowing with joy, love, and gratitude for the gift of that special day, where I was able to accomplish a good number of things. For one, I was able to visit Daddy in the ossuary and take time to offer prayers in the Diocesan Shrine of St. Therese of the Child Jesus Parish (DSSTCJP) by lighting candles and lifting up prayer intentions shared with me. I really cherished the blessing of praying for the intentions of others.



One of the special highlights was I was also able to share my blessings with the less fortunate through a simple food pack and gift bag distribution by driving around different areas in the vicinity of my subdivision. Some of the people we passed by were really concerned about the heat of the sun and where they would be getting the food to eat for lunch (which at that time was nearing). Yet, even in the heat of the sun, they still smiled and showed their appreciation which buoyed my spirit and those of our driver and Mommy's caregiver who joined me in the distribution.



After this food pack distribution, the rest of the day was spent celebrating over lunch with our household staff (who helped me in putting together the food packs and in the distribution of these food packs) and celebrate with my mom through a simple dinner celebration. Before my day ended, I got to attend the daily rosary time with my Lingkod ng Panginoon (LNP) Los Baños brothers and sisters in Christ (transcending time and space) and a Pastarrific birthday honoring and celebration (where I discovered that pasta ingredients and related stuff can be used to describe me.)



As my day ended, I found myself being grateful for all I experienced throughout my special day. I was overwhelmed by all of the greetings from all time zones around the world; I was especially thankful to my mom and my two sisters, brother-in-law, and nephew (who greeted me over and over again in a video that brought laughter to me and my mom while watching it). Truly, you cannot outdo the Lord in generosity! I have been truly blessed and all I could say was “Thank You, Lord!”

Manuel C. Manuel III
Bay, Laguna, Philippines



Sharing Knowledge

As a finance specialist and advocate, it has been my pleasure to educate, and share my expertise about financial planning and life insurance with individuals and companies. Last July 2020, I met an engineering student online, and during our conversation, she mentioned her interest in investing. I invited her to one of the webinars of our company which she found very helpful having provided her some insights on financials. Since she asked more questions about investing, I invited her to a one-on-one Zoom meeting with me where I explained to her financial planning, life insurance, and investment. I explained in layman's terms and provided her examples of each topic.

She found our online meeting useful and an eye-opener, and asked if I could also share the financial information with her friends. She and her friends reside in the Metro Manila area. She invited them to another online meeting where I taught them financial planning and life insurance. Our connection has continued since then. Every time the engineering student asks other questions, I try to answer them all in a way she can understand. I also shared with her

some of my articles (blogger) and videos (vlog) to provide relevant answers to her questions.

Last November, a female client referred a friend who had zero knowledge of life insurance and financial planning. She connected her to me so I could teach the friend. She resides in the Metro Manila area, too. It was like educating a student in Computer 101, where I had to explain each term and made sure she understood it.

I also shared with her my videos (vlog) and articles (blogger) related to financial planning and life insurance. This is to reinforce her understanding and knowledge about the subject matter more.

My vlogs and blogger are some of the ways I continuously provide relevant information to them.

Vie Panaga
San Isidro Rodriguez, Rizal, Philippines



Taste of Switzerland

He and his family had been living in Geneva, Switzerland, for many years. Their two children were born there. They invited me to stay in their place

during one of my visits to the city. I accepted and what I experienced was unforgettable hospitality.

After picking me up at the airport, they showed me to a spare room to use in their rented house. It was a cute house with its own garden of trees, flowers, and vegetables. One evening, they treated me to a Swiss raclette dinner. It centered on melting Swiss cheese in a special portable heating device. We ate the cheese with pre-prepared sausages and potatoes. On another evening, we went to a restaurant in the old part of Geneva. He treated me to lunch where I tasted real Swiss lasagna (so much cheese!).

On one weekend, he drove me across the border to France where we went up a lookout in the mountain town of Monnetier-Mornex. It overlooks the city of Geneva.



When it was time for me to return to Manila, he and his wife drove me back to the airport. Unforgettable.

Serafin Talisayon
In Geneva, Switzerland, and Monnetier-Mornex,
France



Unexpected Blessings in Otherwise Impersonal Airports

Airports are “machines for mobility” and their identity lies in how we ascribe to them from our memories, according to geographer Tim Cresswell*. From my experience, there are airports where I received unexpected blessings of kindness from strangers.

*Tyers, Roger (April 12, 2017). Confessions of an Airport-lover. The ‘Non-place’ in a global village. Lifted from <https://www.sociologylens.net/topics/communication-and-media/confessions-of-an-airport-lover-the-non-place-in-a-global-village/15327>



Davao City Airport, 2003

I was checking in my luggage along with a box of fresh fruits (bananas, mangoes, and durian) harvested from my cousin’s backyard in a town about

three hours away from the airport. I was so happy with the gift. But my happiness was replaced with anxiety when the airline crew at the check-in counter told me that I had excess baggage and I needed to pay PHP600.00 for it. I was not prepared for the cost. Back then, this was already a big amount for me. I could not afford to pay it. Further, I could not just leave the box because of its emotional value. My cousin personally harvested the fruits to give me as a gift. What should I do?

An airline crew member probably empathized with me. She suggested that I talk to passengers without check-in luggage who were also going to Manila and ask if they could help by taking my excess baggage. Back then, there was no “tanim bala” (planted bullet), suspicion of drugs in checked-in baggage, or “terrorists” supposedly checking in “terrorist paraphernalia.”

So, I prayed that someone would be kind enough to help me.

Then, a male person carrying just a small bag approached the check-in counter. The lady at the check-in counter signaled me to ask him. I did and without question, he gladly accommodated my request. Problem solved! Blessings received.



Philippine Airlines International Airport and Melbourne Airport, 2004

A colleague from my organization offered me her slot in an international conference in Melbourne, Australia, as she had another overseas trip more important than the conference. It was an all-expense-paid trip, and a daily allowance would be provided as soon as the participant arrived in Melbourne. The hitch: I had only two weeks to have my visa processed. I submitted the requirements to the embassy. However, I got a call that I needed to renew my passport as its expiry would fall below the minimum requirement of six months to be allowed to travel.

My visa was approved and, lo and behold, I was able to expedite my passport renewal and got my passport a day before my scheduled trip. I left for the airport with only US\$20 in my pocket and about PHP5,000. So, I prayed. I told God that I entrusted everything to Him; that I only truly had little pocket money, and that He would take care of the rest.

At the check-in counter of Philippine Airlines International Terminal, there were two lanes. I chose the right lane and while waiting for my turn, a woman on the left lane asked where I was going. A

conversation started and she asked me to transfer next to her. In a short time, the woman and I got to know each other. *Ate* (“*Ate*” [*a-teh*] is a Filipino form of respect in addressing an older sister. It is also used to show respect in addressing an older female.) was from Bicol and a long-time resident/citizen of Australia. I told her that it was my first time to travel to Australia and that I would be billeted at a hostel inside the University of Melbourne; that I would be fetched at the airport. However, I had worries – what if I would not be able to find the person who was getting me? She assured me of her help; that she would not leave me and would bring me to the venue in case I missed the person. I was so relieved!

While waiting for boarding, I thought of exchanging a few Australian dollars for emergency use. When my new friend learned about this, she started looking inside her pouch and poured out the Australian coins she had including an AU\$5.00 coin. Our conversation continued for the duration of the trip as we were seatmates on the plane.

Checking out at the Tullamarine (Melbourne) airport took long because *Ate* had to pass through Customs. I went with her even if I had nothing to declare. I think we were the last passengers to leave. When we emerged from the gate between 6:00 to 7:00 in the morning, her family (husband and nephews with

their spouses) and my “sundo” (fetcher) were next to one another. What a pleasant surprise! Ate promised to give me a call at the hostel and assured me that she would see me again.

Around noontime, I got a message from reception. Someone would pick me up in 30 minutes. It was Ate and her family! They treated me to lunch and a tour of the Victoria market. They showed me possible gifts for my children. I just smiled and pretended that I had not found the ideal one. Deep inside, I knew I had only US\$20.00. When we turned the next corner, her nephew handed me a small bag with some souvenirs – like the lovable Koala bear! He told me to no longer worry about what to bring my children. My heart melted. I could only thank them and God!

We then traveled to the house of one of Ate’s nephews. We were served lamb steak and wine for dinner. Upon leaving, I was handed a big chocolate bar – another gift to bring home. I ended up sleeping in the house of her other nephew. They lent me clothes to wear. It was July and very cold, yet here I was, enjoying the warmth and care of my new “family”. They told me of their difficult journey, starting as immigrants in Australia; they were holding middle-ranked positions in the Philippines as engineers and accountants in a government agency. But in Australia, they were ordinary workers in a car

company. However, in just a short time, they managed to get a house and car (on a mortgage) and they were now living comfortably unlike in the Philippines.

The next morning, they brought me back to the hostel. At the end of the two-day conference, Ate's nephew and his wife picked me up and showed me a bit of the city when they learned I was just staying within the university campus. The next day, they sent me off to the airport with two boxes of pasalubong – one for me and the other for their relatives.

It was kindness overload, thanks to God's provisions.



Manila Domestic Airport (now Terminal 4), 2008

It was past 4:00 a.m. and I was queuing for my flight to Cagayan de Oro City. From there I needed to travel by bus to Bukidnon for a training session. I had a lot of baggage with me to check in – printer, training materials, and a big laptop (no slim Notebooks then). I was fifth in line. I noticed a woman standing beside the check-in counter talking to every passenger. She seemed to be asking something. When it was my turn, the lady behind the counter signaled the woman to talk to me. It was her first time to travel by plane to Cagayan de Oro and she did not know

that she needed to pay a terminal fee. She had no extra money for it. She asked if I could help her. I remembered my own predicament with my box of fruits. I needed to help her. We ended up as seatmates on the plane. We also shared a taxi from the airport to the bus terminal. She offered to give a small share of the taxi fare, but I told her to keep her money.

Upon arriving at the bus terminal, she asked me to wait for her in one of the stores. She would not be long. She also promised to help me find the right bus to Malaybalay, Bukidnon. I was wondering where she went. After some time, she came back and paid me the cost of the terminal fee. She had a friend in one of the stores where she borrowed money from. Then she carried most of my things to the bus that would bring me to my destination.

I realized I benefited more from her help. My help was returned more than doubled.



Manila Domestic Airport (Terminal 4), 2011

I was traveling light for an early flight to Davao City. While waiting for the check-in counter to open, a woman garbed in abaya approached me. She had a big suitcase with her. She needed my help. She had

just arrived from Kuwait and had no money to pay for her excess baggage. At this time, airport personnel were already asking passengers if they personally packed their own luggage. Reports of drug mules sneaking in illegal paraphernalia were already a concern.

I was wary. I was not sure if it was safe for me to help her. Then I remembered how I was helped by strangers in other airports. I prayed for guidance. Then I asked her further questions to ascertain her identity. She told me she was a domestic helper from Kuwait and that she just arrived the night before. She showed me her passport.

I decided to take her luggage. While on the plane, she narrated her harrowing experience at the hands of her employers. She was abused and took shelter at the headquarters of the Philippine embassy. She said there were many other women still in the embassy who were also maltreated. Then she handed me one Kuwait Dinar as her way of appreciating my help. I told her to keep the money, but she insisted. So, I kept it as a reminder of the plight of our women domestic helpers and their need for help.

Indeed, kindness received needed to be shared. And most of all, I thank God for the opportunity to receive

and share the blessings of kindness in unexpected places like the airports. These are memorable experiences. Tim Cresswell is right then. Airports are not just machines for mobility. Rather, these are places of opportunity to receive and share kindness.

Caroliza Tulod-Peteros
Antipolo, Rizal, Philippines



Rushing a Stranger to a Hospital

Biyernes iyon. Normal na sa sobrang traffic sa kahabaan ng Ortigas Avenue tuwing rush hour. Alas 8 ng umaga noon at pareho kami ng kasama ko na frustrated na dahil 30 minutes na kami naghahanap ng masasakyan. No choice kami, kesa ma-late ako sa trabaho, minabuti na namin lakarin simula sa bandang Rosario, Pasig, hanggang crossing ng Ortigas Ave. at C-5. Magbabakasakali na baka doon may masakyan na kami. Palinga-linga kami, baka may bus na nagbaba ng pasahero o baka may Grab na naka-park sa tabi at naghahanap ng isasakay. May nakita kaming isang Vios na sumampa sa gutter sa di kalayuan. Akala namin Grab car na nguni't hindi siya lumilitaw sa app kaya hindi na namin tinanong. Habang naghihintay kami, may tumapat sa harap namin na sasakyan at nagbaba ng bintana, isang

babae na mukhang papasok rin ng trabaho. Ang sabi nya "Ne, pakitingnan niyo nga yung sakay nung sasakyan na yun (sabay turo sa nakaparadang Vios). Parang nahihirapang huminga yung driver, hawak hawak ung dibdib nya!"

Dali-dali namin tiningnan ng kasama ko yung sakay nung kotse. Medyo may edad na babae at mag-isa lang siya, sapo-sapo ang dibdib at hinahabol ang kanyang hininga.

Parang itinaon talaga ni God na mapadpad kami sa lokasyon na yun sa tamang oras. (Nurse yung kasama ko at ako naman ay marunong mag-drive.) Iba kapag makakita ka ng tao na parang sa iyo nakasalalay ang buhay. Mabuti at sanay sa mga emergency situations ang kasama ko. Magmula doon sa spot na nakita namin siya hanggang sa maihatid namin siya sa The Medical City panay ang aking busina dahil sobrang traffic. Para bang yun na lang ang kaya kong gawin dahil hindi umuusad ang mga sasakyan. Mga 30 minuto din naming binaybay ang Ortigas Avenue dahil sa traffic. Pagkarating namin sa Emergency Room ng ospital, ang naging diagnosis ng mga doktor kay Tita Lyn ay mild stroke.

Laking pasasalamat sa amin ng kaibigan niyang si Tita Minerva at ng anak niya. Nagulat din kami na sa iisang condominium area lang kami parehong

nakatira. Simula noon ay naging magkaibigan na kami nila Tita Lyn at Tita Minerva.

English translation:

It was a Friday. Heavy traffic in Ortigas Avenue was normal during rush hours. At 8:00 a.m., my companion and I were both frustrated having already waited for 30 minutes for a ride. Instead of being late for work, we decided to walk from Rosario, Pasig City, to the intersection of Ortigas Avenue and C-5 Road where we were hoping to get one. We kept looking around as we walked, in case a bus stopped to let a passenger out or a Grab taxi was parked waiting for a passenger. We saw a Toyota Vios car drive over a gutter nearby. We checked our Grab app but the car did not show up. Suddenly, another car stopped next to us, and its lady passenger pulled down the car window and said, "Please go take a look at the driver of the Toyota Vios! She is holding her chest and looks like she has difficulty breathing!"

Quickly, we went to the car and saw an elderly lady grasping her chest and gasping for breath.

It looked like God led us towards the right place at the right time. My companion was a nurse experienced in emergencies, and I could drive. The rush of the moment told us that someone's life could

depend on us. I drove the lady's car, pressing the horn so many times as we rushed through the heavy traffic towards Medical City. After about 30 minutes, we finally arrived at the hospital's Emergency Department. The doctor diagnosed Auntie Lyn with a mild stroke.

Auntie Lyn's friend, Auntie Minerva, and her child were very thankful to us. We were delighted to learn that the condominiums we lived in were in the same area. From then on, we have become good friends with Auntie Lyn and Auntie Minerva.

Fatima Dimalanta
Quezon City, Philippines



The Kindness of Jesus

In "[The Promise](#)" I wrote about one of the most extraordinary experiences I had a few years ago.

This was proof that our Lord Jesus Christ was fulfilling the Promise He made to me while I was inside the Church alone when I was young. He said, "I will always be with you." Since then, I have been receiving messages thru dreams or, often, just

images with a very brief message or I hear a voice in my mind. When I was taken to a hospital due to mild stroke and while lying so weak I asked Him, “Lord, I am so afraid I want to hold your hand.” Suddenly I saw a white hand extended to me. I knew it was the Lord's Hand because I noticed the wound on it. All the dreams, hearing His voice, and feeling His presence, love, care, and protection are proofs that He is always with me. It is a continuing personal encounter and experience with The Lord in The Fulfillment of The Promise.

Socorro Rodriguez
Valenzuela City, Philippines



My Father's Legacy

I was brought forth and raised in a farmer's family. And I am proud to have had a father who was a great farmer and who greatly influenced my life. Who I am today, I owe it to him.

His life revolved around the land and his carabaos. Oftentimes, I envied our farm animals for he spent more time bonding with them, pastured them in the green meadows, and bathed them in the banks of the Cagayan River. This was a daily routine, and there were no holidays, and I joined him when I was free

from my school activities. I brought him his breakfast as he often left the house before the break of dawn while we were still curled up on our woven mat laid on the bamboo floor. The carabaos were my father's special assistants on whose shoulders lay the heavy burden of plowing the fields. I clearly understood my father's devotion to them for tractors were never heard of then.

My father did all he could to keep food on our dining table for that was his primary concern. And just like any other Cagayano farmer, he looked forward to every planting season, gazed at the horizon, and looked for signs when the rain would come. And when it did, off he went to the field to prepare it so we could plant what was in season, be it tobacco, corn, mungo, beans or peanuts, and some vegetables planted in between the furrows. Talk about multi-cropping, he did it all.

Aside from tilling his own land, he was a tenant of Mrs. Catabay, who owned a piece of land in "Labbang", a patch of alluvial land which evolved into farmlands through the years with the constant flooding of the Cagayan River. He tilled the fertile land even though he knew that Labbang, and all the plains alongside the river, were always subject to the vagaries of nature when crops ready for harvest would be wiped out in an instant by floods brought

about by unpredictable torrential rains and strong typhoons.

And it was in one big flood that happened during my youth when my father impressed upon me an enduring life lesson that has guided me throughout my life. It was all about honesty, and "*palabra de honor*" ("word of honor"), the unwritten contract between two parties agreeing to comply with the terms of a verbal agreement reached by both of them.

Many years ago, I was about ten years old then, heavy rain incessantly poured for three days and showed no sign of letting up, and threatened to flood the whole of *Labbang* which, when viewed from a promontory called "*Gatag*". *Gatag* was a picturesque monochromatic landscape of brown and green cornfields, and corn ears that jutted out from their stems and were just about ready to be harvested in one or two weeks. My father figured out that the rain would not stop, and he was alarmed that the river level had risen and could overflow into the fields anytime soon. The flood would put to waste everything that he had worked for. He then hastily assembled a crew of harvesters, just him, my brother, and I. We rode on our carabao-drawn "*kareta*", a two wooden-wheeled hauler, and raced to the field that afternoon to harvest the mature corn ears, even if it was not yet dry enough before it got inundated. For

if we failed to harvest on that fateful day, and left the corn ears submerged under murky floodwaters, it could have been rendered a total waste that not even a hungry carabao would want to eat these corn ears.

I felt pain as raindrops bigger than corn bits pelted my skin, as I struggled to stand when my legs were already submerged ankle-deep, under the rushing rainwater which liquefied the slippery muddy soil. I cried in silence as my small soft hands suffered cuts from the sharp edges of corn husks while I plucked the corn ears from their stems. I hid my face away from my father, as I did not want him to see my tears which blended with raindrops as they cascaded down my cheeks. I forced myself to carry on my bony shoulders the "*balulang*", a flexible woven container made of rattan, filled to its brim with corn ears which was almost twice the weight of my puny body then. I didn't have the temerity to complain, much less dillydally, for we raced against a raging river at that time.

We were able to gather a mound of corn ears, missing a few pieces here and there when darkness crept in as the sun faded away behind the Caraballo Mountains in the west. Being a tenant, my father divided the fruits of his labor using the *balulang* as a measuring instrument. He dutifully adhered to the sharing agreement between him and his landlord, the latter getting the bigger share.

The frenzy of the harvesting activity took its heavy toll on all of us, as we all got tired, cold, and hungry. But my father relentlessly barked his orders, "*palyanan nu ko anac ko ira*" (move fast, my sons) like a commander would order his troop of soldiers, as we transferred the share of Mrs. Catabay to the *kareta*. The sorry sight of the three of us, corn gatherers, as our teeth chattered and our bodies shivered for having been exposed under the rain for more than two hours already, could have led my brother to question my father why we got less for all the hard work that we had done. He even suggested that he could have easily added a few more *balulang* of corn ears to his share and his landlord would have not noticed it.

Under normal circumstances, a representative of Mrs. Catabay, who was about 60 years old or so then, would have been invited to partition the harvest. As we always did, even with any other produce that came from her land, every time my mother and I gathered them, we placed them in a "*labba*", a bamboo and rattan-framed container, which I placed on my head, and we brought it to her residence, a good three-kilometer walk from the farm. She would partition tomatoes, and other root crops, whichever plant was in season, while my mother and I sipped coffee and nibbled some biscuits she always

prepared for us, something that I had always looked forward to.

My father replied in a quivering voice, "*Afu ko anac ku, yan yo nakka ergowan mi kanni Mrs. Catabay. Yan yo vulunang ku. Pasensiyan tera laman nin*" (My son, this was the verbal agreement between me and Mrs. Catabay and I am bound to honor it. Let us bear with it.) His words of wisdom reverberated in the recesses of my mind that left no room for further debate as my father was focused on saving the harvest and bringing us home to safety and to rest our weary bodies.

To make the long story short, we accomplished what my father wanted to achieve, and we packed up our things, hurriedly left *Labbang*, and headed home with our share of the harvest. As we reached the *Gatag*, we met some of our barrio mates, all geared up with their carabaos and *kareta* on their way down to harvest their cornfields, too. But as much as they wanted to, as I looked back where we came from, I could see that they could no longer cross beyond the base of the promontory as "*Lalug*", a small lake separated from the river by a patch of dry land, had been conjoined like twins with the Cagayan River and merged as one vast expanse of a body of water. From that vantage point, I could see uprooted corn plants coming from upstream Isabela province, which floated together with assorted debris of tree

foliage and branches, logs, and timber from the Sierra Madre mountain range, and some dead animals probably overpowered and drowned as the river had overflowed beyond my imagination. I felt a pall of gloom, and I saw the sadness etched on their faces as they realized their big mistake and miscalculated heaven's warning of an impending disaster, and gazed at the river which had become a watery grave of what was *Labbang* two hours ago.

As we sat down with my father for dinner, that particular scene where he divided the produce, and not succumbing to the devil's temptation to cheat on his landlord, flashed back in my memory while I gazed at his weather-beaten face. That defining actor's act was like the highlight of a movie which was all that I clearly remembered from that frenetic rush of harvesting activity that afternoon, and impressed upon my young and malleable mind the values of honesty and being able to keep one's "palabra de honor". Values that up to this day have guided me in my life. My father did not preach, as a priest would do in the pulpit, on these time-honored values. Instead, he impressed them so deeply in my mind and showed them to me by way of a living example which hit me like a flaming hot iron stencil, a farmer's tool to mark ownership that seared the hide of a cow or carabao, and left an indelible impression on my being.

Every planting season, my father patiently waited for his cornfield to turn dark green, and tended to them to make sure that grass would not overcome them. When it turned yellow-green and corn ears began to mature, he would bring some home for us to cook by simply boiling them and adding a dash of salt into the pot until the corn bits became soft or by broiling them with the glowing embers in the *kalan* (stove) to our heart's delight, especially if they were the glutinous variety, "*lufug*", bursting into its gummy and soft texture, a gift to those with dental problems.

He would then trim the leaves, drying and saving them as fodder for our carabaos during the dry season. A good harvest filled the heart of a farmer with so much joy and, in thanksgiving, he would look forward to the celebration of our barrio fiesta held every 4th of August, where he would share his bounty with friends and relatives, thank the Lord for the blessings, and, at the same time, celebrate the birthday of his youngest son.

It was not very often though that the farmer reaped a good harvest for sometimes the scorching sun of summer dried up the land and stunted the growth of his crops. He got nothing at all when heavy rains fell and filled the Cagayan River, and if floodwaters reached the floor of the Buntun Bridge, that meant that no crops that were planted in the plains

alongside the Cagayan River, from upland Isabela to the mouth of the river in Aparri, was spared. These floodwaters would have even placed the residential areas of Tuguegarao and other low-lying towns of Cagayan Valley in great danger.

The economic loss from damages caused by natural calamities broke his heart, for his toils were rendered to naught, but this Cagayano farmer never cursed the heavens for the indomitable spirit lived in him. I knew that he understood that the weather was not within his control and he had learned to live with it all. He had accepted the fact that floods are not that bad, after all, for as rainwaters flowed down from the boondocks of Sierra Madre, they brought soil nutrients with them which became natural fertilizers that conditioned the loam soil to perfection which helped grow bigger corn ears. He worked silently under the heat of the sun with his bare hands that had turned callous and his sun-kissed skin that had turned almost golden brown.

*This is why I say unto you young man,
that you should eat every morsel on your platter
because a farmer had worked so hard
so that something could be served on the table.*

*Say it again?
You paid for it?
Young man, young man,*

*do understand that others have nothing to eat,
and you don't want to learn it the hard way
when your plate is empty and food is gone.*

When my father died, my family inherited some real estate properties from him. But the greatest inheritance I received from him, what I would proudly say is my father's legacy to me personally, is the value of PALABRA DE HONOR, which defined his life through his strong values of honesty and hard work, and which I have made as a cornerstone of my life.

Crispulo Bacud Tappa
Padre Burgos, Batangas, Philippines



Counting Our Blessings

For tulips and daffodils in spring.
For nice and easy summer days.
For the smell of freshly-cut grass.
And wafts of barbeque on the grill.

For awesome fall foliage.
And the leaves crisp under our feet.
For the magical hush that snow covering the ground
brings.

For a child's wonder as he gazes up a lighted
Christmas tree.
Or at tiny, dancing lights by the window gone frosty.

For a loved one's reassuring smile.
For a grandkid's spur-of-the-moment hug.
Or chocolatey kiss.
For friendship's warmth.
For having coffee or tea with the neighbor next
door.
For somebody's helping hand at work.

For a stranger who calls after us
for something we drop as we rush home.
For being forgiven our faults and
being able to forgive others.
For receiving and being able to give in return.
For being loved and being able to give love.
For finding beauty in the world we live in
despite the hatred and cynicism.
For the moments of peace and joy and love
we have in our hearts, in our lives
... we are grateful.

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