

Why charity begins at home

A conversation with Fr. Albert Avenido

by NICKEE DE LEON-HULD
AJPress

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." - (1 Corinthians 9:2)

THE wave of destructive typhoons which have been pummeling the Philippines for the past two months is truly disheartening. First, came Ondoy (international name: Katsana) which brought torrential rains and seven-foot deep floods to Metro Manila, followed by Pepeng (international name Parma) which devastated Northern Luzon with floods and landslides. The aftermath of the two consecutive super typhoons was enough to weaken one's knees.

Both displaced thousands from their homes, destroyed property amounting to millions of dollars and as of press time, collectively took the lives of about a thousand people. There is no telling when this series of storms will let up, especially with a third typhoon, Ramil (international name Lupit) being expected to make a landfall over extreme Northern Luzon on Thursday.

Pinoy abroad and our foreign allies were quick to respond to the plight of our people back home. The catastrophic floods brought by Ondoy and Pepeng were quickly displaced by another deluge - a tsunamic wave of donations, both in cash and kind, were sent and coursed through various volunteer organizations, including ABS-CBN's Sapig Kapamilya, Ayala Foundation-USA, UNICEF and Catholic Relief Services, to name a few. They have been spearheading rescue and relief operations for our disaster-stricken kababayans since September, after Ondoy first ravaged the National Capital Region.

Here in Los Angeles, relentless efforts have been made and are still being made by several organizations. Pooling their resources together, they were able to devise channels to acquire and release relief goods and cash donations to the Philippines. One individual who has been tirelessly doing legwork for relief aid is Fr. Albert H. Avenido, Associate Pastor at St. Pancratius Church and the Archdiocesan Priest Liaison to Filipino Clergy in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.



Photo courtesy of Fr. Albert Avenido

Over informal lunch, the *Asian Journal* had an opportunity to chat with Fr. Albert. Here, he shared his knowledge and experience about the logistics of acquiring relief good provisions for the typhoon victims through Catholic organizations here in LA.

Although their intentions are pure and unconditional, it is not inconceivable for our *kababayans* here in the US to have room for doubt when it comes to making donations. It is a known fact that such acts of generosity can also become opportunities for people with less-than-noble desires to take advantage of the situation.

To alleviate this fear, Fr. Albert spoke openly about his background and about the system devised by the Filipino Catholic ministries which they strictly abide with when it comes to relief good donations.

In the past, Fr. Albert worked as a Social Action Director in the Philippines. The Social Action Center is the service arm of the Catholic Church in the Philippines. They respond to the needs of the Filipino people brought about by events as natural calamities through relief and rehabilitation operations. Because of this, Fr. Albert is fully experienced and knowledgeable when it comes to relief aid.

Foremost in Fr. Albert's explanation is the nature of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines - National Secretariat for Social

Action(CBCP-NASSA) also known as CBCP-NASSA Caritas Filipinas Foundation, Inc. NASSA is an umbrella organization on a national scale that seeks relief aid from other countries which they then distribute to Diocesan Social Action Centers (DSACs) through Relief and Rehabilitation programs. At present, the system is centralized and distribution of relief goods are being held at St. Paul Manila campus.

Social Action directors from dioceses hit by recent typhoons are asked to converge in St. Paul Manila where relief goods are dispatched. Here, relief goods are distributed to DSAC's, depending on the size and level of needs of their respective dioceses.

Here in the United States, the Catholic Church normally channels their donations through Catholic Relief Services (CRS). In the Philippines, however, CRS channels their relief donations through CBCP-NASSA network. While CRS is working on an international level, NASSA gets to the grassroots. CRS-Philippines and NASSA work closely together to ensure that the donations reach those who badly need them.

To put it succinctly, Fr. Albert simplified the process by enumerating the steps involved in the system that they're working with. The process begins with donors bringing their relief goods to drop-off

centers (Goldilocks stores and parishes). After donations have been collected, Goldilocks' trucks will deliver them to the warehouse, where processing begins. Here, donations are received, sorted and packed in these categories: men, women, boys, girls, food, shoes and linens. After the goods have been segregated and packed, they are loaded to 40 and 45-foot containers and shipped to CBCP-NASSA Caritas Filipinas Foundation, Inc. where they are dispatched and distributed to calamity stricken dioceses.

Of course, none of these efforts would be possible without the generous support of volunteers, donors and partner organizations. Major partners in this relief operation include Goldilocks, Sonny Santa Ines (President, Knights of Columbus, Southern California Chapter) Mr. John Bowen's Cerritos Warehouse, World Class Freight, Inc., LTH Logistics, Inc., Parishioners of St. Pancratius Church and St. Bernard Church, the Filipino Clergy of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Asian Journal and the Philippine Consulate General of Los Angeles.

Rest assured, Fr. Albert has gone through the due process of acquiring the required legal documents from the Philippine Consulate General's Office to legitimize their relief operations under

▶ PAGE A4

USCIS reminds individuals to get travel document before leaving US

by DYMPHNA CALICA-LA PUTT
AJPress

CERTAIN individuals need to apply for travel documents before leaving the US to make sure they will be able to enter the country again when they return, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) said.

These are individuals who have been granted temporary protected status, those who have a pending asylum or legalization application, and those with a pending application for adjustment of status.

"USCIS reminds individuals that they must obtain Advance Parole -permission to re-enter the United States after traveling abroad- before traveling abroad," it said in a statement.

Without this permit to enter, the individual may not be allowed to enter the US when they return.

"Attempts to re-enter the United

States without prior authorization may have severe consequences since individuals requiring advance parole may be unable to return to the United States and their pending applications may be denied or administratively closed," it also said.

By law, certain individuals must apply for a travel document and have Advance Parole approved before leaving the US, it added.

Not included in this group are those who have been readmitted as refugees or granted asylum. They need a Refugee Travel Document instead.

The Advance Parole document must be filed using Form I-131 which is available in the USCIS website. Instructions on how to accomplish the form can also be found in the website.

"Applicants planning to travel abroad should plan ahead since Advance Parole processing times

take about 90 days, depending on the USCIS office location," the statement said.

Meanwhile, the USCIS also said that undocumented individuals who are in the country illegally will still be barred from re-entering the US even if they have obtained a travel document before leaving the country.

"Aliens who depart the United States after being unlawfully present for certain periods can be barred from admission to lawful permanent resident status, even if they have obtained Advance Parole," USCIS said.

In addition, it said individuals who have been unlawfully present in the US for more than 180 days, but less than one year, are inadmissible for three years while those who have been unlawfully present for one year or more are inadmissible for 10 years. ■

Fil-Ams urge...

PAGE A1 ◀

Goldman Sachs has had a policy, despite deriving from 8-15 percent of its profits from its California investments, of providing little or no philanthropy in California. This is unlike all of the other major banks, such as Bank of America.

Goldman Sachs is also well behind other major financial institutions in its foreclosure assistance to HUD-certified home counselors seeking to prevent foreclosures. And it is well behind in technical support it gives to assist small businesses and micro businesses. It also has a long history of ignoring the needs of our nation's 15 million Asian Americans. ■

Pacman looks fit, ready...

PAGE A1 ◀

Antillon, the upcoming Rodolfo Sumabong of Cebu and "Pacman," the three-year-old Jack Russell Terrier.

Pacquiao had to be restrained by his assistant trainer Buboy Fernandez from running another lap because chief trainer Freddie Roach, who was not around, had wanted

no more than 20 minutes.

"That's the problem with Manny. Once he breaks that sweat, he just won't stop. He's like that little thing that you turn on and it gets going and going and going -very difficult to stop him," said Ariza.

Pacquiao then did his abdominal exercises as he lay on a mat and was shielded from heat of the sun

by a towel held across by seconds, ex-world champ Dodie Boy Peñalosa and Jojo Sta. Terera.

He declared himself fit and ready for battle.

"So far, so good. I'm happy with my training," said Pacquiao, even if he had to leave Baguio City in a huff before midnight of Sunday for fear that a new super typhoon might catch up with them up there.

"I'm faster that Cotto so I will use

that speed the proper way," said the 30-year-old champ, who had a brief rest back in his hotel before proceeding to the Gerry Peñalosa Gym in Mandaluyong for sparring.

Pacquiao is in his final days of workout in the Philippines, and by Saturday he would have done five weeks, and in the evening will push for Los Angeles where he'll train two more weeks at the Wild Card Gym. ■



REEVES & ASSOCIATES

A PROFESSIONAL LAW CORPORATION

The Leading & Most Trusted Immigration Law Firm in the U.S.



THE FIRM'S PARTNERS

*CHOSEN BY THEIR PEERS AS SUPER LAWYERS FOR 2006, 2007, 2008 AND 2009

16 Attorneys Devoted Exclusively to the Practice of Immigration Law
It Doesn't Have to Cost More to Hire the Very Best.

free in-office
consultation

(702) 227-9888
www.reeves.com

LOS ANGELES

SAN FRANCISCO

LAS VEGAS

MANILA