

# **Pakikipagkapwa: "Anyone can help"**

Filipino's young professionals, teachers, students and families respond generously to Pope Francis' message for the forthcoming Second World Day of the Poor.

02/27/2019

Anyone can carry out works of mercy by caring for those most in need or who often live excluded from society. In response to Pope Francis' message on the occasion of the Second World Day of the Poor

and the celebration of the Year of Youth in the Philippines convoked by the Episcopal Conference, young professionals, teachers, students and families carried out an activity of cooperation in the district of Tondo (Manila) on November 18, 2018.

Nicknamed the "Pakikipagkapwa" (Second World Day to Help the Poor of Tondo), the project brought together more than 200 volunteers which included two medical teams made up of 80 doctors and medical students and 30 dentists and dental students.

These teams helped 2,000 families, who also benefited from attending catechism classes, reading of children's stories sessions, talks on adolescence, and oral health and hygiene lessons for parents, which took place while people waited for their turn to receive medical and dental care.

## **Initiative from lay people**

The Tondo Initiative is organized by the Family Cooperation Health Services Foundation, Inc. (FAMCOHSEF), a non-profit body founded in 1991 by professionals in various fields in response to a challenge posed by Blessed Alvaro del Portillo, who at the time was the prelate of Opus Dei.

This group was also motivated by Pope Francis' invitation to share in the World Day of the Poor through his apostolic letter *Misericordia et Misera*, published in 2016, during the closing of the Year of Mercy. "This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him" (Ps 34:6) was the motto of this World Day. In his message, the Holy Father told the faithful that these words of the psalmist should "become ours whenever we meet people who suffer and experience the drama of social exclusion, our

brothers and sisters whom we call poor.”

Keziah Duag, a young woman working in a human resources company, expressed the impact that meeting people in need had on her: “I realized that despite the difficulties they face every day, the desire to help others is not removed from their hearts. This made me think, 'What can I do for others? How can I help?’”

That is how Keziah met a 60 year-old development worker who had resigned from his job as a chef on luxury cruise ships to devote more time to his elderly mother and to help in the community and parish. On one occasion, this man took to a clinic a woman neighbor of his who had suffered greatly where she lived. “That man” Keziah explained “missed those trips with all their luxuries, but which in the end could not be

compared with being able to help others together with his family and his community. “

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