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Sunshine Club: Let the sun shine through

Sunshine Club, a group of ladies in the Philippines, is helping provide food to families in need during the quarantine period.

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Since 2006, a group of ladies in the south of Manila have been operating Sunshine Club, providing daily lunch packs to public school children at the Kalayaan Elementary School (Pasay City).

On March 17, the whole of Luzon was placed under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) and our operations were temporarily halted. Some days into the quarantine period, we learned that many of the public school families had not as yet received their ration of food and basic necessities from the barangay. Considering that most of the parents were minimum daily wage earners, the situation was serious.

These families have become personal friends through our community-based Sunshine Club. We could not neglect them during this crisis period. We had to think of a way to address the situation.

The limited movement imposed by the ECQ made it difficult for us to send them help. Distribution of groceries at the barangay level involved logistical and social

obstacles. Purchasing goods in bulk was not possible, as the government installed measures to control hoarding.

The only thing I could think of was to give cash. From a recent survey, I learned that most of these families earned a mere P5,000 (\$100) a month. I set a goal: P1,000 per week for 60 families. I figured that, with help from friends and family members, I could make this work. I started making phone calls and by March 20, I managed to raise P60,000 quickly. Encouraged by this, I was determined to pursue the goal for the following weeks.

Through the help of four mothers in the community, we identified the 60 family beneficiaries and immediately transferred to them our initial fund on March 21. We were able to sustain the effort and after three weeks

Sunshine Club had given P180,000 to the families. The effort is on-going.

In addition, we identified 35 other families in the community to receive a one-time P1,000 assistance. We intend to do the same next month if the quarantine period extends.

Sunshine Club has 7 student scholars in its program who receive a monthly allowance of P5,000 for their college needs. Each has a sponsor and I asked these sponsors if they could continue sending the monthly allowance during this period even if classes are suspended. They agreed.

Working from home, we have thus far managed to provide P250,000 assistance to a hundred family beneficiaries.

Chain of generosity

Learning about the social teachings of the Church from the formation activities of Opus Dei, I decided that I could not just sit back comfortably and not think about our poor. I can make use of my resources, connections, and ask friends for whatever little donation or help they can give. I asked some young people and some of our scholars to make simple infographics. An online poster we released reads: "Every little bit, when put together, always adds up to much. Nothing is too small when it comes from the heart."

This has been our experience in Sunshine Club through the years. Our feeding program thrives through the help of friends donating P1,000 a month to provide "sunshine" to needy children. I was thinking that during this crisis, I could count on the help of these same donors who knew about our children beneficiaries. True enough, they

responded and that gave us a good jumpstart. I know that I can ask them for more in the coming weeks. This crisis allowed me to practice my “apostolate of asking” and to develop deeper and more meaningful personal friendships.

It has also led me to reflect that with small doable efforts we can make a big impact on the lives of many who are in need. These poor families could go hungry. Hunger could lead to many complications, perhaps even lawlessness.

The lockdown conditions have limited me to work from home on my iPad and my phone, but our Lord continues to pave the way for this social project. We gather our family together daily at 3pm to pray for our donors and our beneficiaries.

Nini Veloso

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