

Gospel:
John 6:1-15
17th Sunday in
Ordinary Time

Jesus Feeds the the Hungry: Pondo ng Pinoy Helps the Needy

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Today's Gospel is about Jesus feeding the crowd of more than five thousand people with five barley loaves and two fish.

The Gospel clearly reflects that Jesus' heart is for the hungry and needy people. He loves us and cares not only for our body but most importantly for our soul. He doesn't want us to be hungry, incomplete and empty. He comes to satisfy and provide us of our needs. Likewise, the Gospel is an invitation for us to trust Jesus, a trust with a belief that is He is sufficient; He alone can sustain not only our physical needs but especially our spiritual need. As St. Paul says, "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:19)

In the beginning of the Gospel, Jesus saw the large crowd coming to Him. He, then, asked Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?" He said this to test him, because He himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little." (John 6:5-7).

Perhaps, Philip was wondering how they could feed so many people with a scarce amount of money. Philip had forgotten that Jesus is the Son of God who is in control of every situation. He had overlooked that Jesus had healed all kinds of sickness, cast out demons, and brought the dead to life; and for Philip, feeding the multitudes by multiplying the five barley loaves and two fish would be impossible. This is another invitation of Jesus to all of us: "We must have faith in Him for nothing is impossible with God." (Luke 1:37)

Then came Andrew who told Jesus, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what good are these for so many?" Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, then distributed it to the people and everyone had had their fill and collected and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from five barley loaves and two fish. (John 6: 9;11-12) Jesus performed this miracle to show to them that He is a gracious God whose provisions are abounding and that He could supply everything they need.

Jesus' expression of generosity calls each one of us to follow His example of sharing ourselves with others. Jesus could have just prayed to His Father to shower them manna from heaven without involving anyone else; but He made Philip, Andrew, and the boy as the instruments of feeding the people. Jesus wants us to realize that we are God's channel of His blessings, and all that we receive from Him is given to be shared with others especially the needy.

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Mga Kwentong Ka-Pondo

Of Becoming a Receiver, More than a Giver

by **Joanne Chua**

Former Program Officer for Projects
National Management Office

I came to Pondo ng Pinoy more of a believer of the discipline of Community Development than that of the Catholic faith. I decided to work for the Foundation in order to share the little knowledge I have with the hope of contributing to its growth as an accountable development organization. Little did I know that I was in for a spiritual ride to which I would be more of a receiver than a giver.

My journey began when I was introduced to the Pondo ng Pinoy spirituality and the Catholic Social Teachings where I began to realize that the Church was also an advocate of Community Development. My hard-held assumptions on Catholicism such as it being an opium for the masses that reinforce the poor's disempowerment were suddenly challenged. The Catholic faith began to be relatable as principles of preferential option for the poor, care for creation, collective action, empowerment, justice, community participation, well-being (fullness of life), praxis (see-judge-act), and organizing (through BECs) were found to be recurring themes in the Church's prescription for social action. This was made more evident to me through some of the memorable experiences I have had with Pondo ng Pinoy.

One of them is a housing project where I had a chance to meet the partner-beneficiaries. I remember how the community proudly shared their story, beginning from a disaster they experienced as informal settlers in an *estero* to becoming residents of a safe village with decent housing. They spoke of their struggles and victories in molding their village into what it is now; how through their prayers, active participation, *bayanihan*, courage and perseverance, they were able to transcend difficulties ranging from discrimination from the barangay to internal conflict and indebtedness. I could recall how we all ended teary-eyed as they recognized the strength they had in themselves which keeps them hopeful about what lies ahead.

I would also not forget how a parish was able to successfully build the capacity of the community leaders who would go to the office, file their funding application, and address all our many comments, no matter how tedious and provided they consult their members.



Joanne coordinating with diocesan representative on Jubilee Sheltering Program in the Diocese of Malolos during one of the project monitoring visits.

Memorable too are the projects that challenge existing systems, such as one that bridges the fisherfolks' organization to the fish vendors' self-help group. This project cuts the supply chain short and is expected to result in an increased benefit for both the small-scale fisherfolks and fish vendors, affecting the hefty benefits of the middlemen. Significant to me as well was hearing from a project that was able to formally train urban poor beneficiaries on agriculture and successfully convert an idle land into a productive organic farm. I couldn't also not mention the Pondo ng Pinoy coordinators who were hands-on in supporting proponents and beneficiaries to complete funding applications—coordinators who tirelessly conduct dialogues with people on the ground in order to capture their plans and help them develop their proposals in a manner that capacitates and strengthens.

These are just some of the stories that for me served and continue to serve as a reference to the standpoint and potential of the Church in general, and Pondo ng Pinoy in particular, to positively transform the lives of the marginalized. And looking back, these are the very stories that made me more interested in the Catholic faith. And through this interest and the help of my NMO colleagues during our Monday community prayers, I began to learn and receive a spirituality that I would forever be grateful for. Being an anxious person as I am, I cannot put into words how the power of prayer, of believing in God's great love for me, of valuing little but regular acts of kindness, and of trusting God's will has contributed to my own personal transformation. This journey has also renewed my commitment to remain a humble community development practitioner and learner, which through Pondo ng Pinoy I realized was a way to express one's love to God and to our brothers and sisters.

As a final note, I thank all the people who journeyed with me—people, who like Jesus when He approached the Samaritan woman at the well, took a chance on me and trusted me, a then "Church outsider," people who took the challenge of facilitating transformative change and people who openly shared their faith stories with me. May you all continue to be instruments of God.

Mga Ganap Ka-Pondo

Jesus wants us to realize that we are God's channel of His blessings.

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In our present time, Jesus is visible in our midst and continues to feed the crowd through Pondo ng Pinoy. Last June 12, 2021, it celebrated its 17th anniversary. Who would have thought that by a mere donation of crumbs (25 centavos), Pondo ng Pinoy has gathered over 450 million pesos worth of crumbs since 2004? We call it a miracle: "Multiplication of the Crumbs." It has fed thousands of malnourished children through Hapag-Asa, supported over a hundred projects in recent years, and helped more than 200,000 people through its projects on livelihood, education, health and nutrition, housing, and disaster response.

Pondo ng Pinoy does not only provide physical nourishment but most importantly, Pondo ng Pinoy nourishes people's spiritual needs through its spiritual and value formation. "It brings hope and fullness of life to all, especially the poor."

Pondo ng Pinoy could have asked for rich people to provide funds to feed the hungry and help the poor. But just like Jesus, it teaches us that whatever state we are into, rich or inadequate, we are capable of giving. And just like the five barley loaves and two fish, we can multiply the meager amount into plentiful blessings to feed the needy. No matter if our contribution is just a crumb, for as long as we give it with love and with repetitive acts of compassion, solidarity, and sharing to the needy, it is acceptable and pleasing to God. "Anumang magaling kahit maliit basta't malimit ay patungong Langit."

Jesus feeds us. He helps us. He has given us abundant blessings. Indeed, it is a miracle; but it is twice a miracle if we allow God to use us to feed and help the needy. Let us continue to support and share our God's blessing to Pondo ng Pinoy!



Formation sessions conducted by Pondo ng Pinoy Desk in Nueva Segovia from March to May 2021

