

Typhoon “Sendong” Relief Operations

Relief Goods Distribution and Medical Mission

Dec 31, 2011

Dear Fr. Couture,

Greetings in Our Lord from Cagayan de Oro!

We are wrapping up our immediate Medical/Relief Mission today. Regarding this effort I am writing this brief report with an outline of what we are trying to do to keep the Relief going, make best use of donated funds, and provide the necessary spiritual follow-up.

The Gensan Medical team comprised of Judith, Sheryl and 4 GS volunteers along with a Military truck and squad of soldiers, arrived in Cagayan de Oro Tuesday morning ca. 11:00 AM. The Davao contingent comprised of 4 volunteers and myself arrived around 7:00 AM. The GS team carried medicines, tools, clothes and 20 bags of rice while the Davao team brought tools, 64 boxes of food stuffs like noodles and crackers, as well as many bags of clothes. Unfortunately, the Doctor who promised to come from GS fell ill and could not make it.

Tuesday was spent in scouting the affected areas to determine the best place to set up. The city schools are full of refugees, and the city has a very large presence of NGO organizations giving aid, Congressmen bringing aid and Governmental aid in various forms. The most visible government aid is the water stations set up to provide water, since the water pipes along the flood corridor were knocked out of service. Crowds of people wash clothes and take baths at these water hoses along busy streets. After visiting the schools, we recognized the different types of relief organizations were at work, and space necessary to our operation wasn't available, as well as the fact that our own faithful weren't located in these places. Accordingly, we settled upon the hardhit barangay of Balulang, in which we have 2 families rendered homeless and in which fewer Governmental agencies were operating, and their operations were around or at a small distance from the immediate area of our faithful. The area is middle class, whatever hut type homes were there were washed away or destroyed, but most homes are of masonry and were filled with mud. Meanwhile, Sheryl went about looking for a Doctor, and late in the afternoon found one to work for us. Dr. Woo also called from Balay Balay and said he would visit. He did, and later he and Yolly talked with the result that he said would come back on Thursday afternoon.

Our crew worked Tuesday late afternoon with the local basketballers to shovel the inches of mud off the basketball court to create the space we would need for the Mission. Wednesday morning the Military truck came in and we hung tarps and utilized the gazebos & shed conveniently located on the side of the Court to create the registration, assessment, pharmacy

and consultation areas necessary to the Mission. We also established the opposite side of the truck for the Relief items such as food and clothes.

The Doctora arrived around 10:30 AM and went to work, seeing about 160 plus patients. Fr. Hora manned the Catechism table assisted by LOMers enrolling in the Brown scapular and blessing Rosaries. Dr. Woo came in the afternoon and saw more than 30 patients. He has promised to come back today for follow-up purposes on patients.

December 29, 2011

Since there was a great demand from the local crowd, the team decided to continue the mission on the second day in Phase 2 Villa Nena 2, Barangay Balolang, Cagayan de Oro City

Our medical doctor for this day is Dr. Woo (the speaker from the regional bioethics conference of Rosa Mystica Health Mission 2007 in Lagao Gym, General Santos City), committed to spare half of the day to serve for the mission. He is living in Bukidnon, which is about 2 hours drive from Cagayan de Oro. The team agreed to start the relief operations and medical mission by 1300 (1pm).

The team was divided into two, the boys went to St.James Chapel in Barangay Ipanan, Cagayan de Oro, which was also affected by the Typhoon Sendong, to clean the quarters where we will store the relief goods and medicines for the succeeding relief operations.

The rest of the team set up the mission area for the second day of medical mission and relief good distribution of both perishable and non perishable goods. An additional items like detergent powder was also given so they can use for cleaning.

The sick patients went to the medical mission where they can avail free medical consultation and medications. Common ailments identified are skin diseases and water borne diseases, because most of the houses are still soaked in mud. Many patients went to wound dressing because most of them have step on glass/metal debris of the typhoon aftermath.

Spiritual supports are consistently provided by the priest and Legion of Mary, such as scapular impositions, rosary distribution, catechism, confessions and spiritual advices.

Before the day finally ended, Rev.Fr. Pfeiffer and Dr.Woo visited a bed ridden patient in her home within the area. She had a stroke and couldn't stand up to go to the mission for medical consultation. She was examined by Dr.Woo and promised to deliver her medications on the following day.

Despite the short notice preparation, the ACIM Asia team managed to collect relief goods and items (both perishable and non perishable) that will be delivered to the victims and affected families of the recent tragic calamity that hit Cagayan de Oro City. Through the efforts of the

ACIM France, and its good hearted benefactors, an official typhoon relief operation for the victims of Sendong was materialized.

Cagayan de Oro City which is about 11 hours drive from General Santos City, though they experienced stormy weather before, but they never expected such results for the typhoon Sendong. The ACIM Asia team decided to leave General Santos City (where the head of ACIM Asia team is situated) at around 10 in the evening on December 26, 2011. The ACIM Asia coordinated with the 33rd IB Philippine Army (despite the holiday break of the troops and short notice – they approved the request) for its 6 by 6 army truck to load all the relief goods, medicines and volunteers to Cagayan de Oro City.

A group of volunteers (with a Swiss volunteer) coming from Davao who also brought various relief goods and items headed by Fr. Tim Pfeiffer left Davao City at around 12midnight.

December 28, 2011

The team left the headquarters (John Silongan – a local faithful who housed the volunteers) at around 6AM and start setting up the mission area in Phase 2, Villa Nena 2, Barangay Balulang, Cagayan de Oro City. The team was divided into two – Medical and Relief Distribution which will be conducted simultaneously. Fr. Tim Pfeiffer directed the whole team, while he, himself provided spiritual relief to those are who are in need

As usual, the process starts with registering the recipients and asks what services will they avail – some prefer medical, some prefer the relief distribution, while some prefer both. They are also assessed by taking their baselines data and vital signs before they go to the medical consultation area.

The local head of the German Doctors Association, Dr. Pinky “Fe” Nocete, whom I met in Manila last April 2011, was on her vacation leave in her hometown in Bukidnon – 2 hours drive from Cagayan de Oro. Supposedly, Dra. Lagare should be our resident mission doctor, but she got sick and couldn’t make it. Hence, we plead to Dra. Nocete if she can serve the mission, and by God’s grace, she agreed since she is on her vacation leave.

Simultaneously, relief goods such as rice, potable water, noodles, biscuits, coffee pack, dried fish, blankets, clothes, food utensils are being distributed to the victims. About 100 people were able to receive perishable and non perishable items, while 143 patients received free medical consultation and medications on this day. The medical mission ended at 2PM since Dra. Nocete had to leave while the relief distribution is still ongoing.

The highlight of the typhoon relief operation is the spiritual aid given by Fr. Tim Pfeiffer such as scapular imposition, rosary distribution, confessions, catechisms and teaching the recipients on how to pray the rosary provided by the local legion of Mary.

Indeed the locals have lost everything they have, and our little efforts may not be able to restore all of it, but a steady and strong spiritual support being provided during the times that they need it the most will make a positive difference on their dispositions.

December 27, 2011

The military driver, the military troops were not able to sleep because they had to be awake for security purposes. They are awake the entire night of travelling, while volunteers are half awake during the night.

The team bought 20 sacks of rice that will be distributed as relief goods to the victims in Malaybalay, a province along the road to Cagayan City. It was around 10AM when the team reached the city proper of the Cagayan de Oro City. The team headed off to the house of a local faithful who have received the volunteers of ACIM Asia and a group of volunteers and a Swiss volunteer from Davao.

Fr. Tim Pfeiffer and the ACIM Asia team had a short meeting about how to plan the operations the moment they meet in John's house. They discussed that they should divide the team in a manner that some will assess the area where to conduct the mission and the needed materials to use to clean the area (one of the identified areas is the Barangay Balulang, where 2 faithful families have lost their houses), one will scout for the possible areas where to hold the next missions and find a medical doctor, while the others will do the marketing to purchase the needed materials.

A local doctor (Dra. Pinky Fe Nocete) in Bukidnon, who is from the German Doctors association responded to the plea if she can render her service to the Sendong victims and she head off directly to Cagayan de Oro city (2 hours from her place) to discuss about the mission plan with the team. Around 2PM when the team meet up again together with Dra. Nocete about the plan for the preceding days and flow of activity. After thorough deliberation, they have settled to conduct the medical mission and relief distribution on the next day December 28, 2011 because the area needed to be cleaned first by shoving the thick mud on it.

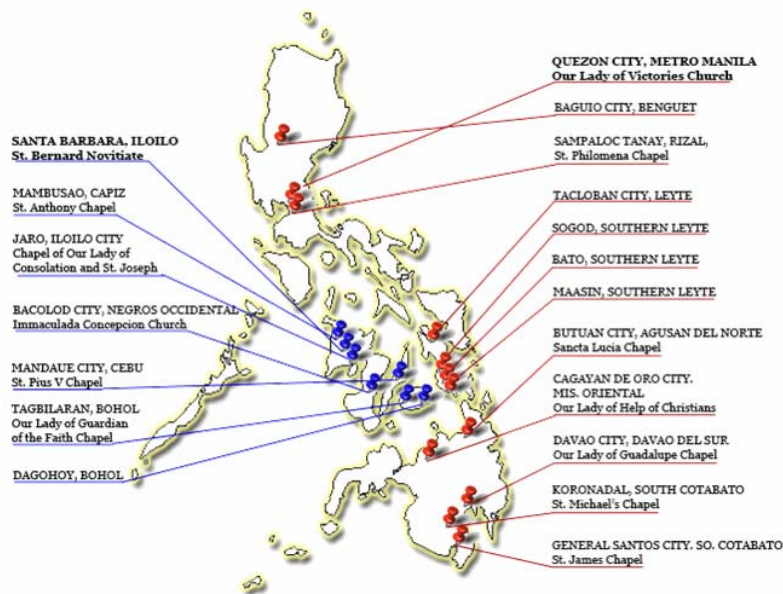
At around 4PM, the boys went to the area with their shovels to shave off the thick mud in the basketball court that will be used as the mission area to conduct relief distribution and medical mission. Local people have helped the team in cleaning, which hastens the entire cleaning process. The rest of the team prepared the mission and purchase the needed materials. A mass was also offered at 6PM for those who have died within the area.

Each survivor has his own story to tell, most of them are amazed how they managed to survive the devil like water, which seems so thirsty to swallow people and destroy everything it passes on. There is also a story about a family who has their father on a wheelchair, and the children were trying to carry him to an elevated area so they can survive. The father told his children that his situation is impossible to be saved and he will just be a nuisance to their survival plan. He

insisted to his children that they should leave now and save themselves and leave him alone – if they really love him, they should obey this “last” request. The children though flabbergasted by such request followed and headed to the elevated area with tears on their eyes and pain in their hearts of leaving their father. As they climb to the elevated area, they saw the gushing water swallowed their house, and they knew that their father was also gone.

Up to date, about 1,300 casualties were accounted while there is an unknown number of missing bodies. Infrastructures were all ruined, leaving nothing but pack of thick mud and psychological trauma for the survivors. We can only do so much, but the team will do what it can do to aid and extend help and deliver services to the victims.

Mindanao Mission Relief



The recent disaster that hit the Philippines last December 16th-17th struck two cities in which live fervent but poor Traditional Catholics. Fortunately, Priests of the Society of St. Pius X are now much closer to the stricken areas than they were a year ago since the Society opened a house in the city of Davao in Southern Mindanao in August of 2011. While Davao is 7 – 8 hour bus ride South of Cagayan, Fr. Alexander Hora is in the area to assess the situation while Fr. Joseph Pfeiffer is in and around the region since his Mass circuit runs between Cebu, two Islands North of Cagayan and Bohol, the Island immediately North.



This hard hit region of Northern Mindanao is still reeling from unusual torrential rains caused by the Tropical Storm which struck Cagayan de Oro Friday night around 11 PM and which raged until they quickly subsided around 3 AM Saturday morning. In some areas the water didn't subside until 5 PM. The raging torrents coursing along drainage canals pierced buildings, even breaking through some concrete walls, overturned vehicles and dumped plenty of garbage everywhere. The worst tragedy was the deaths resulting from being caught unawares in sleep, and to the elderly who could not move quickly enough or agilely enough on their own and who were not able to be reached to be evacuated. Sadly and tragically, the father of one of our Legionaries in Cebu died during the flooding. May he rest in peace. Fr. Joseph Pfeiffer is currently in between the Island of Cebu and Bohol where he is busy with many souls in various difficulties.

Less serious damage was caused to the houses by the water which quickly rose to ceiling height forcing quick evacuation with no time to grab valuables and even less opportunity to move any heavier items out of reach of the damaging water. Water to clean up the mess and drinking water is difficult to come by, and this water shortage is one of the more serious concerns. Among our faithful, 3 families have lost their homes. Besides the many funerals, which place a heavy weight upon whole neighbourhoods, the disruption of life due to the housing problem and to the restoration of less damaged homes makes gainful work a great difficulty.

The Society's work in Cagayan de Oro consists in Mass said on the roof-top of an apartment building which has been fitted with a partial roof and Sanctuary Sacristy arrangement with a "nave", (that is, the rest of the roof part of which is exposed to the sky above) into which about 130 people can be crammed. Mass Sundays witness the assistance of over 100 people, of whom around 30 were severely afflicted by the recent flood. Another hard hit city was Iligan, where we have a number of Faithful, none of whom have reported serious damage.



Our objective with this letter is to create a fund from which we can allocate resources to our families the hardest hit in order to enable them to get in the position from which they can rebuild. In one case, Raul, the President of one very active Legion of Mary Praesidium, had to evacuate his house towards the Mountains that make the Southern border of Cagayan. His household consists of an extended family of 10, comprised of several in laws and their families.

At the same time, we hope to be able to help their neighbours, some of whom like our dear Legionary Jing from Cebu, have suffered deaths in their families. In this respect, Raul who needs help himself, is in turn one of our greatest on site assistants since, as an experienced apostle of the Legion of Mary, he will be invaluable in helping us to assess which people in his area really need help and who are not getting the help they need through any other means and for whom our help can represent a real spiritual benefit. Likewise, Joann, who is President of our Junior Legion of Mary, and who also lost her house, will be of inestimable assistance in helping us help others. Let us realize that in helping these generous souls we will best be able to apply realistic and efficacious aid to those who are in real need. Too often, international assistance gets inefficiently used due to the lack of sufficient real contact by trustworthy people on site.

Meanwhile, we know that the Christmas season puts a heavy strain upon all, but whatever you can do will go a very long way. The US dollar is worth 42 Philippine Pesos, which will purchase one very simple meal.



How you can help in the USA (for outside, please contact Fr Couture: district@sspasia.com)

Mail a check to **District Accountant, SSPX DISTRICT OFFICE, 11485 N. Farley Rd., Platte City, MO 64079 USA.** Payable to: **SSPX Foreign Mission Trust – Asia** . Please write nothing in the MEMO LINE, but on a separate sheet, a note that it is for **“MINDANAO RELIEF FUND”**.

Bank to bank transfer: please ask for details.

Those of you who have family in the Philippines, may find it more convenient to transfer funds to family members there and to request them to send a check to us in Davao, where we will deposit the check in our Philippine bank account for cash. If they use BPI Bank, they may also simply deposit the check into our account: BPI Account # 1330-0030-29.

Our mailing address is: Society of St. Pius X, #9 Buhangin-Cabantian Rd, Davao City, 8000.

Thank you so much for thinking of us and for helping our fellow Filipino Catholics

May God bless you and your families during this Holy Christmas season. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all!

In Our Lord,

Fr. J. Timothy Pfeiffer.

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