



### **Impelled by the Love of Christ**

**QUEZON CITY, Philippines** - In the afternoon of Thursday, 6 May 2020, while Metro Manila is in total lockdown, the Montfortian novices, scholastics, auxiliary staff and some priests, including Fr. Norwyn Baydo, SMM, the Philippine Delegation Superior, prepared 300 food packs, drinks and desserts to be distributed, within the Quezon City area, to the poor and destitute. There were four separate groups who were assigned to different areas for better organisation and more coverage.

Living out the call from the Gospel of Matthew 25:35, *"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink"*, is a manifestation of our own corporal work of mercy. As Montfortians, we continue to resonate the same work as that of our beloved founder and as followers of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd.

In days past, the Community has done the same outreach initiative as the Enhanced Community Quarantine was extended. The Novitiate had two episodes while the Scholastics community had four. Bro. Hilton from Papua New Guinea who is currently doing his Novitiate, highlighted his

experience stating that *"food distribution is a charitable gesture and a priceless moment of close personal encounter with Jesus through the poor and the needy"*. In the same theme, Bro. Francois Ancheta, a fourth year Scholastic, said, *"We are called to be Christ to other people especially during this pandemic, so that they may feel God's love and compassion. This is a concrete and simple gesture, that we show our solidarity to those in need and be able to share the blessings we received from God's Providence"*.

It is indeed a powerful realization that we have simply become God's channel of grace to our suffering brethren. Fr. Paul Arnel, SMM, our Novice Master, succinctly shared his personal experience on how he felt "true again" to his identity as a channel of God's blessings, compassion and care in a tangible way. This insight was also equally shared by Bro. Harold Montoya, a second year Theology student, who emphatically shared that *"being generous to those in need is like answering their very own prayer, by being used by God as his channel of grace"*. In addition, Bro. Arnel Collantes, a third year Theology student, said, *"Although we pray for the suffering and the hungry, it is important however to let them feel that someone cares for them by our simple, yet full of love, food sharing"*.

I have seen for myself the gratefulness of the recipients, our dear brethren, upon receipt of our simple gifts with their endless "Thank you" and "God bless you", wearing their genuine, beautiful smiles. A heartwarming scene for me was when the children exclaimed at the top of their voices, *"May biyaya, may biyaya!"* ("There's a blessing, there's a blessing!"). It actually felt like I was the one blessed by this profound experience. Simply being God's channel of grace to the abandoned and the needy in our society has been made possible through His Divine Providence. We extend our special thanks to the generous benefactors and also to Fr. Roy Millano, SMM, our very own Filipino missionary to Papua New Guinea. The inability to return to his mission area due to the lockdown did not deter him from remaining true to the mission. We are grateful beyond words for his contribution in the food-giving outreach of the International Novitiate Community! All Glory to God alone!

*Bro. Oliver Abasolo, SMM  
Novice*