



### **Christmas Spirit lives after Typhoon Odette**

**CEBU, Philippines** – The best and most loved season in this country, as most of its population are Catholics, is Christmas. Awaited with excitement and joy as early as September, this season added a higher level of gladness because of the improved condition on the restrictions due to the pandemic. It is for the first time that Covid-19 cases have tallied low. People are allowed to go out as a significant percentage of the population is vaccinated. Gatherings are permitted, and it is almost a pre-pandemic time.

The traditional Misas de Aguinaldo and Simbang Gabi, a 9-day (Dec. 16 - Dec. 24) novena Masses in preparation for Christmas, was much anticipated. It was already allowed in all the chapels of different parishes in almost all parts of the country. Yet on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December, a super typhoon Odette devastated the southern part of the country - Palawan, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Typhoon Odette wreaked havoc in the Southern part of the Philippines. Many houses and infrastructures were damaged, electric and communication lines were down, and water supplies were cut off in these areas. Around 500 people were killed, and almost millions were left homeless. The families of our conferrers were also affected. Bohol (Fr. Benjie, SMM), Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu (Fr. Sherwin, SMM), Argao, Cebu (Fr. Paul ARNEL, SMM) as well as in the place of scholastics and postulants were affected.

Most of the greatly affected places are in central Cebu and the southern part of the province, where our present Mission House and our previous mission areas are located. Before the wrath of the typhoon, some 20 neighboring families living nearby the mission house got accommodated until the following day. When the weather condition improved the following day, the damage left by the typhoon was indeed heartbreaking. Trees got uprooted, roofs of houses were blown off, electricity and water were unavailable.

The SMM Cebu Mission Community composed of Fr. Paul ARNEL, SMM, Rev. Lester, SMM, and Bro. Armel, SMM, with the help of the people in the area, began to clean the surroundings and made the power generator of the community available for them to charge their phones and update their loved ones from other places about their conditions. Transcending hope and compassion to the affected families and individuals this yuletide season, the Montfort Missionaries - Philippine Delegation has launched a fund drive to finance the relief operations in the badly affected areas.

Our missionaries in Cebu were able to bring relief goods for 165 families in Upper Colon, Kapayawan, Kahambay, and the other regions. Generous friends brought 20 thousand liters of drinking water to our Mission House to aid hundreds of families. Also, G.I. sheets have been distributed to families whose houses were either destroyed or whose roofs were utterly blown away in the areas of Minglanilla. Aside from that, feeding efforts of more than 250 indigent children and the distributing of relief goods to the poorest families around the neighborhood were organized by the Daughters of Wisdom (D.W.), held in our mission compound. Relief efforts and rehabilitation works are ongoing with the help of generous people. Indeed, Christmas 2021 is yet another challenging year for many people, especially those greatly affected by super typhoon Odette, yet the birth of Jesus gave new hope to everyone.

*Rev. Fr. Federick YUMANG, SMM*