

## Correspondence

# *Alay Kapwa* and community pantries during COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines

### ABSTRACT

In the crisis we are facing, the importance of solidarity, as a vital component of *Alay Kapwa Spirituality*, in evangelizing the people to practice their faith through care and concern for others is manifested. This is the true Christian way of life. We are Christians not just because we are praying together but because we are helping one another. When the pandemic ends, we can be assured that *Alay Kapwa Spirituality* is already animated in the lives of the people and when we face situations where solidarity seems to be needed, we will no longer wait for the extreme hardships of the poor to be manifested before we help them.

**Keywords** Spirituality, Solidarity, Community, Covid-19

To the Editor

In the recent correspondences published in this journal, the authors looked at the emergence of community pantries in different places in the Philippines as a way to fill the gaps left behind by the government in aiding the needs of the poor.<sup>1</sup> In another correspondence, they focused on the importance of the virtue of solidarity as a way to get through this pandemic, because everyone is in this crisis together despite of the status we have in life.<sup>2</sup> The way how many concerned citizens initiated community pantries shows a total expression of the virtue of solidarity. People saw this opportunity not to show off but to assist those who cannot afford the basic needs of many due to the impact of the pandemic. Solidarity leads people to be in communion with their *kapwa* (neighbors). Albeit there is kindness shown, some believed that community pantries make the poor dependent and lazy. This cannot be true in times like this, because the way the poor line up to community pantries is already an exertion of effort just to have something to feed their family since there is not much opportunity for work or livelihood for the poor.<sup>3</sup> The virtue, or spirit, of solidarity in community pantries makes present the vision of the Philippine Catholic Church's national Lenten evangelization and action program *Alay Kapwa*.

Becoming 'brother's keeper' is our role as Christians no matter what situation we are experiencing. This role that we have is an expression of the *Alay Kapwa Spirituality* where

we are offering to others, especially to the poor, our time, talent, and treasure. This pandemic brought us to a situation where one cares for the *kapwa* (neighbors), where we view others not just as someone outside of our existence but as 'another self'.<sup>4</sup> The community pantries, in the context of *Alay Kapwa*, is, indeed, an action-oriented expression of our faith as Christians in helping the poor. In many dioceses, parishes already initiated their own version of community pantries through the social action commissions. This may look like 'dole-outs' which makes the poor dependent on the help of others but it can also be viewed as a practical way of making people aware of the needs of others. Even the poor people are becoming sensitive to the needs of others because they are getting what they only need, enough for a day, that others may still have something to get.

In the crisis we are facing, I see the importance of solidarity, as a vital component of *Alay Kapwa Spirituality*, in evangelizing the people to practice their faith through care and concern for others. This is the true Christian way of life. We are Christians not just because we are praying together but because we are helping one another. When the pandemic ends, we can be assured that *Alay Kapwa Spirituality* is already animated in the lives of the people and when we face situations where solidarity seems to be needed, we will no longer wait for the extreme hardships of the poor to be manifested before we help them.

## Conflict of interest

No funding was received for this paper. The author declares that he has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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