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Social Service in the Parish

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Social Service in the Parish

The corporal works of mercy which were counseled by Christ have been carried out in varied fashion through the centuries of Christianity. In our own times we note an increased emphasis on the teaching of methods or techniques to be employed in the performance of works of mercy (in modern literature referred to as social service) geared to help people who are in want or distress from which they are unable to extricate themselves unaided. These methods are taught in schools of social service, of which there are several in the Philippines, and are expected to be put in practice by those who are seriously striving to help people to help themselves.

The effectiveness of the Catholic Church in propagating and practicing these works of mercy depends on the zealous activity of parish priests and the devoted service of their parishioners. Through well instructed and spirited groups of the laity the ministry of the priest reaches to even remote corners of his parish and brings the mercy of Christ to souls in need of spiritual or temporal aid. Pope Pius XII has stressed this idea frequently in his addresses to Catholic Action groups. For example to the Italian Catholic Actionists in 1940 he said: "Many of the fields of social life remain almost inaccessible to priests, whereas they are open to the laity."

With this same thought in mind the Archbishop of Manila, the Most Reverend Rufino Santos D. D., established Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Manila as a family welfare organization which would help to coordinate and intensify the works of mercy or social services being performed by parishioners and parish groups under the direction of parish priests throughout the Archdiocese. In its latest report it is stated that forty-five parishes of the Archdiocese are being served by Catholic Charities. Reports of representative parish groups help us to appreciate the work being done. We take the following excerpts from these reports:

San Miguel—Under the able supervision of Mrs. Lulu Raimundo, the work of distributing monthly rations to 105 needy clients of San Miguel has been going on very well. With the guidance and stimulation of the Parish Welfare Service of Catholic Charities, the work of the Conferencia de San Cayetano and the Damas de Caridad units of the Parish have been coordinated. Now efforts have been made to visit the homes of those in the ration list. Many clients have been found

deserving of continued service. Others after brief aid and found able to manage without the ration were removed from the list. New applicants were therefore included in the list.

Paco—The Parish Welfare Committee, mostly members of the CWL still coordinates its efforts with the Samaritan Anonymous and the parish priest to maintain the Paco Medical Charity Clinic. The clinic now has over 3,000 registered clients. It serves an average of 100 to 150 patients a day for four days a week. The committee continues to recruit volunteer doctors, pays the full-time nurse and obtains most of the medicines used in the clinic.

Also doing regular welfare work in their parishes distributing material aid, medicine, and clothing, are the Parish Welfare Committees of Pandacan, Binondo, San Jose de Trozo, Santisimo Rosario, Singalong, Malate, Ermita, San Vicente de Paul, San Roque, Peñafrancia, Espiritu Santo, and Assumption Parishes. They average servicing 25 families and about 100 patients a week each.

These are only some of the recorded works being done by humble self-sacrificing parishioners. Instances could be multiplied many times over. For instance, in the five year old parish of San Isidro in Pasay City, parishioners are grouped together in the Barangay Ng Virgen to assist each other in their religious practices and to help each other when in need of medical care, hospitalization, food or burial.

The Immaculate Conception Parish of Cubao likewise engages in the same work and coordinates it through its Parish Council. We learn something of the workings of this Parish Council from the Report of its Liaison Officer Mr. Antonio Enriquez. There are six religious organizations which compose the Parish Council: the Knights of Columbus, the Catholic Women's League, the Legion of Mary, the Apostleship of Prayer, the Tertiaries and the Sodality of Our Lady. Each organization is represented by two or more members in the Council who act as counselors to the parish priest.

Through the Parish Council the unnecessary duplication of work is avoided. Each organization is assigned a certain sector and is given a specific work thereby avoiding confusion and competition.

For example, the Knights of Columbus of Quezon City have given great help to the parish by the construction of a recreational hall where young and old may relax after office hours. In the same

building are housed the Medical and Dental Clinics for the poor. In this hall tournaments among Catholic groups are held and Catholic ideas are exchanged between groups. In their Christmas drives and other benefits for the poor, the K of C works in harmony with the Legion of Mary through the Parish Council. The Legionaries furnish the names of the needy families and the appropriate committee of the K of C screens them to be sure that material assistance goes to those who are most in need.

Another organization which offers considerable material and apostolic support in the parish is the Catholic Women's League Unit of Cubao. The members of CWL through the request of Legionaries give and serve breakfast to the prisoners of Quezon City Jail and to groups of first communicants during the year. Through the census of the Legionaries, the CWL knows who are the indigent families of the parish who should be recipients of food packages at Christmas.

For apostolic work in the parish, the Legion of Mary is very striking in its activities. Through the block rosary centers, parish news is easily disseminated. The block rosary centers are the chains that bind all the sectors of the parish and they are managed by the Legionaries. Hence, there is no problem of communication because the Legionaries are most of the time in personal contact through the block rosary centers, census taking, home visitations, and poster posting with the parishioners. The Legionaries devote a good portion of their time to adult and child education in religion and to the circulation of Catholic books and pamphlets.

The tertiaries, Apostleship of Prayer, and the Sodality of our Lady which are the newly established organizations in the parish have already achieved much in their contemplative work and auxiliary aids to the other societies in the parish.

We mention Cubao merely as an instance. The same work of organized social service is doubtless being done elsewhere. There is reason to hope that the movement will spread to other parishes of the Archdiocese and will be intensified where it already exists.

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