

# PRAYER CHANGES THINGS

## Pray with the Philippines Sunday, June 28, 2020

BY ELEAZAR FERNANDEZ ON JUNE 22, 2020

**Lectionary Selection:** Matthew 10:40-42

### **Prayers for the Philippines:**

Wellspring of Life and Love, we come to you with hearts grieving, tears flowing, voices trembling, and hands shaking. We are overwhelmed by torrents of life's challenges: natural (and not so natural) disasters compounded by human actions that destroy our life support system as a whole and by those who feed on the flesh of the most vulnerable members of our society.

Of the many challenges that we as a people in the Philippines are facing and in solidarity with others around the world, we are raising our laments and questions. Help us, dear Spirit of Wisdom, to find some answers to our anguished questions:

*What is staying home and staying safe?*

For those who don't have homes or those who are living on streets, beside railroad tracks, under dark bridges (so-called "bat people" of Manila), cemeteries, a mountain of garbage, and mosquito-infested swamps.

*What is "sheltering-in-place?"*

For those who are living in hastily constructed shelters made of rusty corrugated metals, sheets of plastic, and cardboard boxes in crowded slums.

*What is working from home?*

For the front-liners who have no choice but to go to work, the street-vendors and laborers who produce essential goods, and those who do not have regular fulltime work, which means no-work-no-pay.

*What is lockdown?*

For those who have been locked up in prison cells and victims of human trafficking who are hidden behind locked doors in brothels and factories.

*What is social distancing?*

For the victims of cultures of exploitation and discrimination, such as classism, racism, and xenophobia.

*What is this idea of "flattening the curve?"*

For the victims of systems and practices that "widen the gap" between the rich and the poor.

Wellspring of Wisdom, Courage, and Hope, guide us so we may know you deeper and open our ears so we may hear you through the cries of the suffering people and the groaning of creation. We pray that you empower us, your people, so we may be able to embody the most loving and welcoming act wherever we are in these trying times.

Amen.

### **Mission Stewardship Moment from the Philippines:**

As the Philippines was recovering from destructive effects of the Taal volcano eruption, especially those in the neighboring towns south of Manila, the coronavirus pandemic unleashed its deadly might. The country was put on lockdown in the second week of March 2020 and that was extended when the statistics on the virus infection continued to rise. Now approaching three months, the pandemic continues to pose a threat to life and uncertainty remains as to when people can gather again in normal face-to-face situations. The threat, of course, is not limited to the virus because the people cannot endure the prolonged lockdown without facing other equally serious threats, such as loss of employment and income, which may lead to more civil unrest. As if the coronavirus pandemic were not enough, the typhoon season has started and a strong one, named Ambo, unleashed its fierce might last May 14 and left destruction along its path. Compounding existing vulnerabilities due to social inequities, the pandemic, and the typhoon, the current administration of the Republic of the Philippines is taking every opportunity when communities are in lockdown to push draconian measures to quell dissent and resistance, such as the Anti-Terror Bill.

Seeking to be faithful and responsive in this challenging situation, churches and educational institutions of the church, particularly that of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, have launched programs to respond creatively to the needs of the people. Union Theological Seminary, in particular, organized six Zoom conferences under its Innovative Theological Education Program (ITEP) to help people in this time of pandemic. Topics include Psychological Responses in a Time of Pandemic, The Covid-19 Crisis and the Global Economy: Roots and Impacts, Spiritual Practice for Spiritual Caregivers in Time of Pandemic, Healthy Self: Radical Self Care in the Time of Corona, and From Fear to Hope: Contradictions in the Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic.



*Prayer and Mission Moment by Eleazar Fernandez*