

8 March
2022



Society of the Divine Word
Philippine Central Province
Office of the JPIC (Justice-Peace
and Integrity of Creation)

PAGES

Vol 1
Issue 1

Kalinga



Bi-monthly Newsletter of the
Arnold Janssen Kalinga
Foundation Inc.

Inside the Issue



WHAT IT WAS LIKE JOINING A DRUG WAR VICTIM'S EXHUMATION

"He was still trying to say something... We still rushed him to the hospital... We couldn't understand what he was saying anymore, but I think he was entrusting his children to us..."

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OUR KALINGA CENTER MILESTONES

Like the rest of the world, we pivoted during the COVID-19 community restrictions.

Here's how the mission expanded even more in the last year.

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ADRIAN LEARNS TO READ

"Nine-tenths of education is encouragement."

- Anatole France

Unstoppable, relentless optimism.

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NOTE FROM THE FOUNDER

by Rev. Fr. Flavie Villanueva, SVD

I buried my mother 18 days ago. After days of feeling hallow and not knowing how to go back to my usual life, I started going through her stuff. She left detailed instructions on how to share her personal things to particular special people.

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WHAT IT WAS LIKE JOINING A DRUG WAR VICTIM'S EXHUMATION

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*William was a 38-year old binatog (white corn kernel) vendor, who left behind three boys when he was shot and murdered at a neighbor's wake while playing cards on March 29, 2017.

According to his sister **Philomena who was present when William's remains were exhumed yesterday, Feb. 28, 2022, the gunman calmly and slowly walked up to him and shot him point blank, leaving him in a pool of hot blood.

'Like a sick dog'

For the first time in five years, his loved ones have William's mortal remains once again, thanks to Project Arise under Program Paghilom which helps drug war victims have their loved ones' bones exhumed and saved from getting discarded into a mass grave together with other unclaimed remains.

Even in death, indignity seemed to follow William like a sick dog. And William is just one of the thousands who have suffered such a fate.

Because his apartment-type tomb was piled high on top of two other tombs, the sepulturero (grave digger) recklessly yanked his partially rotten clothes and bones onto the ground like a mound of unwanted garbage.

A sorry heap of femurs and shattered rib bones, decomposed rags, and cement debris came crashing down.

It was definitely a rude awakening.

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Mommy Celia (2nd from left) was also a regular reassuring presence at the Center.

NOTE FROM THE FOUNDER

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My 83-year old mom took time to write the name and a note for each one amid the pain she was experiencing. I realized this is what it means to offer "love without boundaries." She passed away last month leaving me and us this life-giving legacy.

This is precisely the kind of "kalinga" we strive to offer in the Arnold Janssen Kalinga Foundation Inc. (AJFKI). It's the kind of **compassion that knows no time nor boundaries**. Something so radical is simply impossible to sustain; on mere personal effort, it will get crushed by the sheer weight of persistent and intense human suffering. But then it dawned on me that "kalinga" is an expression of one's faith. In AJFKI, we reach out and love the ones who need it the most. They are the MOST - the marginalized, the outcast, the sick, and the tormented.

The call to re-create and empower has to begin with our faith, the same faith that Jesus possessed when He called the first disciples. He didn't look at their appearance but more at their need and craving for meaning. Jesus saved, redeemed, and re-created them with His love—and these 11 fishermen went on to build the Church that would reach the ends of the earth. Like us, when we have been re-created, it's inevitable that we also re-create others, unconsciously empowering them in the process.

May this maiden issue of Arnold Janssen Kalinga Pages, whose vision is to lovingly recreate and empower our dear homeless and victims, be a regular venue where we share our stories. Our Lady of Banneux, pray for us!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Flavie Villanueva'.

Rev. Fr. Flavie Villanueva, SVD

ADRIAN LEARNS TO READ *by Nirva Delacruz*

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This is another way to describe the work in AJKFI, and it's especially true in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program, a program in partnership with the Arnold Janssen Mission Foundation (AJMF) whose vision and mission is to create and sustain Alternative Learning System (ALS) centers nationwide. With the program, even street dwellers can go back to school!

For the homeless, the idea of learning is a strange luxury. Even more so for someone like Adrian Abraham Apare, a 32-year old house boy who joined AJKFI's ALS Program, unable to read nor write. When ALS teacher Stella Talco first introduced herself to Adrian via Facebook messenger, she was surprised to receive a voice message in return. It was then that she discovered that her new student couldn't read a single letter.

'A happy shock'

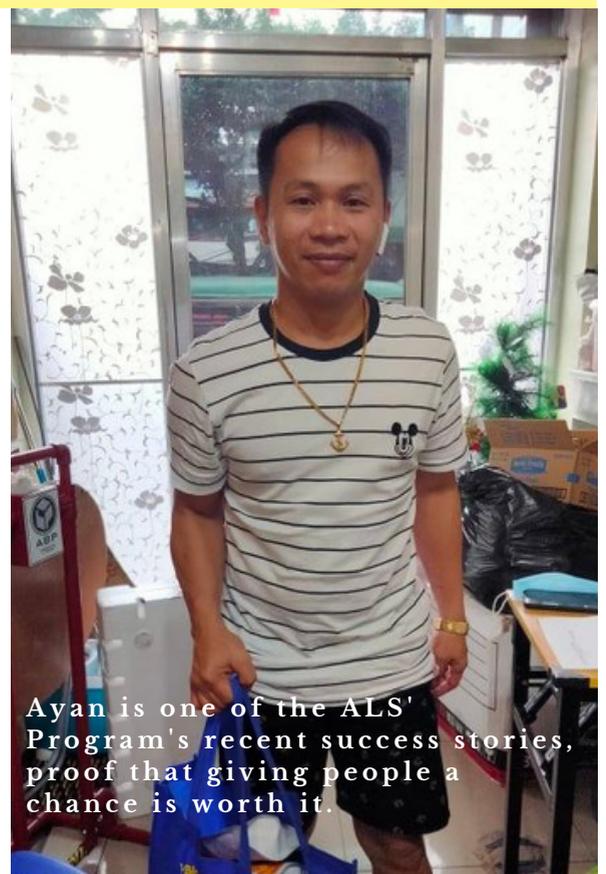
Joining his first virtual ALS class in October 2021, Adrian or Ayan, as he is fondly called, first learned the alphabet. According to Stella, to reinforce the learning, she sent him videos he could re-watch to practice his reading. "Kahit sobrang nakakaumay na 'yan, ulit ulitin mo (Even if you're sick and tired of it, just keep on replaying it," she recalls telling him.

There is truth in Colleen Wilcox's words "Teaching is the greatest act of optimism" because by December of the same year, Ayan was reading and writing. He sent his first Facebook message to his teacher—a happy shock. "Nagulat ako. One time, nag-update s'ya sakin nag-chat s'ya, 'yung mismong message talaga. Tinawagan ko, 'Marunong ka na mabasa?' (I was shocked. One time, he updated me, sending an actual message. I called him, 'You can read already?')," shares Stella in a recent interview.

Motivated even more

Months after, Stella is still blown away by the transformation. "Sobrang wow...blessed. 'Di ko talaga ma-explain, kasi sobrang down na down ka dahil ang dami mong iniisip, tapos narinig mo na marunong na s'yang magbasa. Parang nawala lahat ng mga problema mo kasi may achievement ka. (A big wow... blessed. I really can't explain it, because I was so down with a lot on my mind then I suddenly heard that he could finally read. It's as if all my problems vanished because I've achieved something.)

Today, Ayan continues to make progress, and Stella is even more motivated to introduce struggling students into the brave, new world of learning. "Target ko talaga is maparami talaga ang mga estudyante and 'yung mga estudyanteng 'yung heart nila na pumasa, na tulungan 'yung sarili din nila (My target is really to have more students, and the kind who really have a heart to persevere and to help themselves)," she explains. Truly, in Kalinga, we eat optimism for breakfast.



Ayan is one of the ALS' Program's recent success stories, proof that giving people a chance is worth it.

OUR HUMBLE BEGINNINGS



There's been rough times and the best of times...Here are a few snaps years back in 2015. Five years ago today, March 8, 2017, we registered AJFKI with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

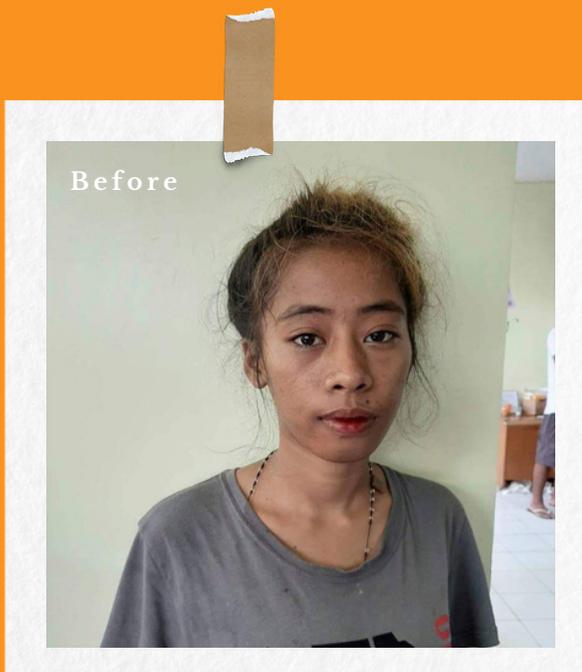




The Arnold Janssen Kalinga Center (AJKC) was founded on July 16, 2015, with a vision of re-creating and empowering the lives of the homeless, working towards a society where nobody is left behind, and the dignity of all people is upheld, respected, secured, and celebrated, primarily by helping address the problem of urban homelessness.

From the one-man band with Fr. Flavie Villanueva, SVD, the Center grew into a family of dynamic parish volunteers, active lay faithful, and people from all walks of life who simply wish to offer care in a dignified way. We eventually registered the center on March 8, 2017 as a non-profit organization under the name Arnold Janssen Kalinga Foundation Inc.

A Board of Trustees, who share the vision and mission started by the AJKC, guides the foundation.



WHAT IT WAS LIKE JOINING A DRUG WAR VICTIM'S EXHUMATION

by Nirva Delacruz

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Project Arise's mission

"Kuya, pwede po bang ayusin naman natin?" Fr. Flavie Villanueva, SVD, the founder of the Arnold Janssen Kalinga Foundation which runs Project Arise, was caught unprepared by the unceremonious presentation of William's bones.

Minutes before, Fr. Villanueva had just blessed the tomb and said a short prayer, with William's sister, niece, son, and curious onlookers present.

Strangely, lying in the dirt and decay were playing cards, the last items William touched the night he was murdered.

The cards had been sealed with him in his simple wooden casket.

The layers of thin cardboard have proven more sturdy against the passing of time and the force of the elements.



A decent resting place

Like the cards, William's memory seems immortal—at least for his eldest son, now 15.

A lanky boy with sad eyes, ***Pio was 10 when he first heard the news of his father's death.

He remembers little, except that his first reaction was to start crying.

Pio vows to take up criminology in college to solve the puzzle of his father's death.

Who bothers with the Williams and Pios of this world?

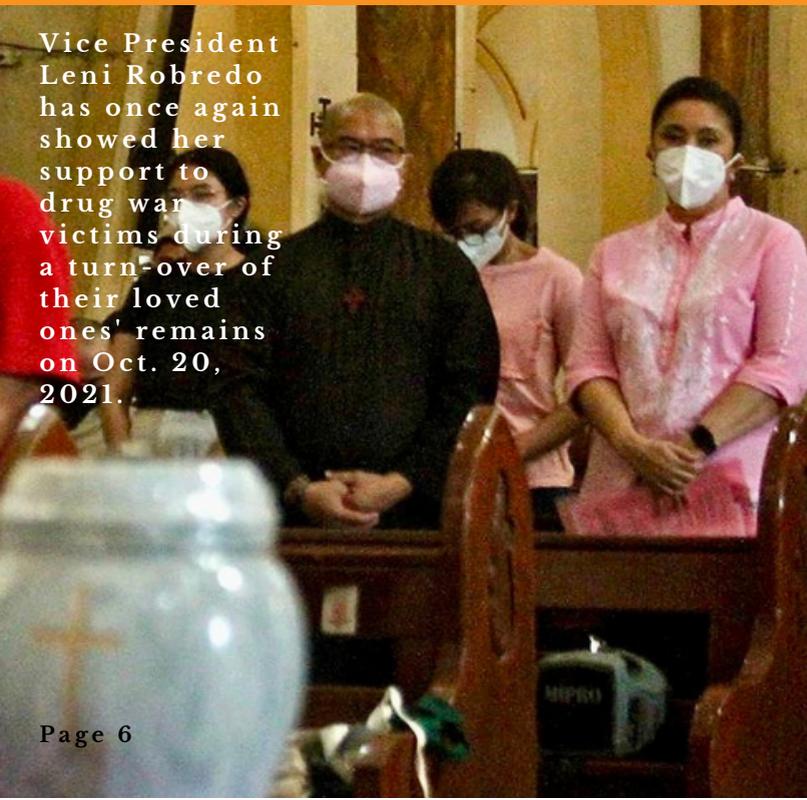
A precious few.

Strangely, lying in the dirt and decay were playing cards...

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***Names were changed to protect the identity of the individuals.*

Vice President Leni Robredo has once again showed her support to drug war victims during a turn-over of their loved ones' remains on Oct. 20, 2021.



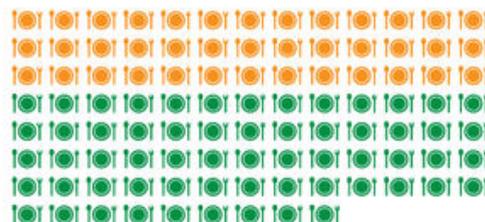
For many victims of the drug war, death is merely the beginning of injustice. | Photo: Raffy Lerma

OUR MILESTONES FOR THE KALINGA CENTER

From Apr 25, 2020 to Dec 31, 2021

342,465 MEALS SERVED

We served hundreds of thousands of daily home-cooked meals to the homeless.



FEEDING DAYS 465



Even as the number of homeless rose month after month, we stretched every centavo to feed them every afternoon.

₱ 11.8M COST INCURRED

With the help of generous donors like you, we were able to pull it off.



NUMBER OF STREET DWELLERS 250-1K



In April, we were serving 250 homeless. This rose to 600 in June; 850 in Oct; 1,100 in Dec 2020; 700 from Jan to Apr 2021; & 1,000 to 1,100 from May to present.

'COME & SEE': HOW WE'RE GETTING MORE HOMELESS TO COMMIT TO A NEW LIFE

by Noel Feliciano

For the past two years, we have welcomed 165 homeless people from the streets of Kalaw, Lowton, Perez, Canonigo to come live with us and help us help them write a new chapter in their lives.

The sad reality is that about 40% of the total number of homeless people whom we've admitted at the AJ Bahay Kalinga (BK) in Bagong Silang, Caloocan still preferred to return to life in the streets. The desire for so-called unstructured 'personal freedom' remains strong for some. There they continue to struggle with all sorts of vices, including drugs, smoking, and drinking, sometimes even negatively influencing their peers to resist change for the good.

Thus, a recent update includes the approach of the "Come and See" Program, a pre-admission program where street dwellers can live in BK for 3-5 days to experience actual life with us. We ask them questions and discover their insights to determine if they are committed to personal change. Since kicking off the program in December 2021, three batches with 34 participants have spent time with us. Ten of them are now Batch 5 residents of BK. We're hopeful that more people will decide to stay and say yes to a new life in BK.

Another recent update is that we've clarified the program direction for every resident. The staff has designed a program flow that provides concrete steps in dealing with individual residents. Today, we have measures and criteria to decide whether to accept new individuals and move them up for graduation and send-off. All these requirements are based on the Kalinga values and culture. The work is big, but our hearts are bigger! Everything is a work in humble progress.



Life in Bahay Kalinga includes Alternative Learning System classes as well as livelihood skills training like baking.

“ We ask them questions and discover their insights to determine if they are committed to personal change.