



## OIKOS PTOCHOS THEOU MISSION (The Poor Household of God)

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### OIKOS IN 2015: A YEAR OF 'REBUILDING'



PROVIDENCE HOME, Oikos' main home.

The Year 2015 was a year of rebuilding, not only of houses, livelihood which Typhoon Ruby (Typhoon Hagupit) washed out on December 7 last year, but people's lives as well. The trauma, the pain, and the scary nature of the experience was hard to forget. A slightly heavy rain that would last for half an hour was enough for the residents in the rural areas living along the three (3) rivers traversing the town of Borongan to scamper and seek refuge on higher grounds. Many made makeshift shelters on the mountains. Notwithstanding its own trauma, Oikos set aside its own need for rehabilitation and focus its eyes on helping barrio folks rise up once again and make a start anew.

## Education

Firm in its belief that education is the best hope for young people to a better future, OIKOS continue to send poor students to school through the generosity and support of the Poor Household of God, USA. The program has been steadily growing over the years, a good sign of people's generosity. Some of the children have even sponsors. After four years of implementation, the Educational Assistance Program (EAP) already produced 17 college graduates, 11 are already employed, four are volunteering in OIKOS and two decided to have families.

This School Year 2015-16, the program is supporting 61 college students, two of whom are in the major seminary, 2 in St. Mary's College, 1 in Leyte Normal University in Tacloban, 1 in the Eastern Visayas State University in Tacloban, and the rest in the three (3) different campuses of the Eastern Samar State University. Of these 61 students, 24 are in-house, meaning they are living in Oikos Homes with the Oikos Sisters.



OIKOS COLLEGE SCHOLARS with Bishop Crispin B. Varquez, D.D. at the Joint Christmas Party of college scholars under the banner of the Diocese of Borongan Educational Program.

In the Typhoon Haiyan devastated areas, OIKOS has extended support to 11 college students, two of whom have graduated last year, 10 high school and two elementary pupils. This year, OIKOS registered a record-high of 92 high school-assisted students from all over Borongan. Educational supplies were also distributed to 600 elementary and high school students in Barangays Sohutan, Calicoan, Hindang, Bayobay, and other barangays in the town proper of Borongan. Supplies were also given to poor students from other areas who find their way to any of the four Oikos homes.

Part of the EAP is the monthly formation of all Oikos students, both college and high school. Formation for college is done in Nazareth Home, Oikos formation house. Venue for the high school formation is Providence Home, Oikos main home. College formation focuses on youth servant leadership, while the high school centers on the formation of conscience.

Oikos also manages the scholarship program of the Diocese of Borongan and Caritas Manila which totals 245 students spread all over the Diocese. Formation meetings are also held every month.



## Health & Nutrition

Under the Health & Nutrition Program is the Multiplication of the Loaves Ministry. This is offering to the Lord whatever 'loaves and fish' Oikos has and sharing it with the poor be it in Oikos homes or in the barrios where Oikos serves. In the past year, this ministry has been active serving the likes of Barangay Bayobay, San Jose, Siha, Calicoan and Cagbonga in Borongan and Brgy. 06 in San Julian. Oikos' McGuire home, aptly named, Welcome House for the Poor, is a clear mirror of this Oikos spirituality. Each day Oikos-McGuire is filled with people asking for help, for a shoulder to cry on, an ear to listen, a place to stay for the night, or for temporal needs, for rice, for food, for medicines, anything that they need.

On January 4, 2015, the feast of the Epiphany, the Oikos Family celebrated the day with the inmates of the Eastern Samar Provincial Jail. They were so happy of the food brought in – cheeseburgers and soda, for to most of them it was their first taste after so many years. Medicines were also given to those who had prescriptions and have maintenance meds.



AT THE Provincial Jail  
celebrating the Feast of the  
Epiphany.



The Pharmacy clinic is as busy as ever. It averages 20 clients every day, mostly outpatients from all over the province. Oikos' Charity Pharmacy remains the only charity pharmacy in the Diocese of Borongan giving medicines for free to patients who are very poor and can hardly afford the cost of their medications. It also assists and aids emergency cases especially those who needs blood and immediate intervention. For the year 2015, the Charity Pharmacy registered 1,060 availments, mostly outpatients.

Oikos continue to help sustain the medicines of three children who have heart diseases and takes care of the monthly injections of three mentally-challenged patients as well.

## Housing Assistance



THE DESTRUCTION caused by Typhoon Ruby.

After Typhoon Ruby, evident was the need of many people for shelter. With coconuts, the main source of income of our people, still reeling from the fury of Typhoon Yolanda, and the unimaginable flood caused by Typhoon Ruby, building a new home or even just making major repairs, for that matter, seems an impossibility for many poor people. Since the surging muddy waters of Typhoon Ruby happened on December, it wiped out most of the crops barrio folks planted in preparation for the Christmas sale. Gone was the livelihood of the poor barrio folks especially those living along the banks of the three rivers passing through Borongan. Life has become harder. Food resources became scarcer. The more it became almost next to impossible to be able to rebuild their homes.

Through the generosity of the Simbang Gabi group in the Diocese of Joliet and some individual benefactors, assistance for housing became possible. In Barangay Sohutan alone, almost all

houses were assisted with various construction materials, from GI sheets, corrugated flat iron



THE EDM housing at left, and the distribution of construction materials from the Simbang Gabi group of the Diocese of Joliet.

sheets, plywood, nails, screws, etc. Materials were also given to 10 beneficiaries from Barangay Bayobay, 2 in Barangay Campesao and several beneficiaries from the town proper especially those living near the sea. To date 78 families were benefitted with the housing assistance.

In cooperation with the *Enfant Du Mekong* (EDM), a French organization active in rebuilding and rehabilitation efforts for victims of Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan), 70 temporary homes with comfort rooms, were built in Calicoan, Sohutan, and Bayobay. EDM provided the materials and labor, but Oikos through its Ruby housing assistance funds provided the food for the volunteers who offered sweat labor. This is still a continuing activity since some comfort rooms are still undergoing construction.

## Solidarity Missions

After super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan), the world's strongest recorded typhoon, devastated the southern part of Eastern Samar on November 8 2013, Oikos started doing Solidarity Missions to affected areas in the diocese through relief work and the Barrio Immersion Program. Dubbed "Hand-in-hand to A New Tomorrow" (*Sama-sama sa Bagong Umaga*), the program is meant to accompany our brothers and sisters in their sufferings as they rise up to rebuild their lives through psycho-social and spiritual interventions, relief work, educational and livelihood assistance, and other capability-strengthening activities.

During the barrio immersion, the Oikos team stays in the barrio for three days sleeping inside tents when no housing accommodation is available. It gives catechism to children, recollection



BARRIO IMMERSION at Barrio Carapdapan, Salcedo, E. Samar.

to the adults, movie viewing of lives of saints in the evening, and free lunch to all who participate in the activities. On the final day of the barrio immersion is the medical and dental mission. And to cap it all is the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

Barely a year after Typhoon Yolanda's (Haiyan), an equally terrifying calamity came, Typhoon Ruby, on the wee hours of December 7, 2014. The typhoon's strong winds were not as fierce as typhoon Yolanda, but the surging current of muddy flood waters coming from the mountains was terrifying. In two hours, muddy flood waters engulfed the barrios alongside rivers in Borongan, including some parts of the Poblacion.

Immediately after Typhoon Ruby, Oikos gathered whatever resources it could come out and distributed rice and food packs, school supplies, plastic boxes, mosquito nets, blankets, clothes, stuffed toys, and health packs to all families living in Barangay Sohutan, Bayobay and Calicoan. It offered also a 2-week feeding activity in Sohutan with materials coming from Feeding the Children. It held a full 3-day barrio immersion activity in Barangay Carapdapan, Salcedo, and a whole-day activity in Barangay 06, San Julian.





## Character & Community Development

This program is complementary to the Educational Assistance Program for it aims to build the capabilities of the poor to become sharers in the progress and development of their communities. The youths, principally the Oikos Youth Missionaries (OYM) with a diocesan-wide membership, are given the focus inasmuch as they are the 'hope of the fatherland'. They are formed to become new breed of dedicated youth servant leaders committed to community empowerment and transformation. Thanks to the college scholarships that Oikos manages, OYM's membership numbers over 200 and has become diocese-wide. Formation for OYM is through quarterly gatherings and recollections, summer camp and a bi-weekly formation meeting for its core leaders and facilitators.

OYM is also an active participant especially in diocesan activities. Twice it has been assigned to be the choir of big diocesan gatherings. September last year, 30 of its members were selected facilitators during the Vocation Jamboree. Last December 19, the OYM spearheaded in the planning and facilitated the Christmas gathering of all college scholars under the banner of the Diocese of Borongan.



OIKOS YOUTH MISSIONARIES (OYM) at the vocation jamboree last September (at left) and during the Catechists' Formation WITH Sr. Bing Espinosa, LGC last June (at right).



SUMMER CAMP last April.

Summer of 2015, OYM together with the Oikos Sisters held the 3-day summer youth camp in Salcedo, E. Samar. It was attended by 202 youths. Priests and lay leaders were invited as resource speakers. At the last day, Bishop Crispin Varquez , Bishop of the Diocese of Borongan celebrated the Mass for the youth campers.

For children under 15 years of age, the Oikos Little Missionaries (OLM) is the group. Though in 2015, OLM did not have their usual quarterly gatherings, yet they had their weekly Sunday schools in four barrios – Sohutan, Calicoan, Bayobay, and Hindang -- involving 130 children from Grades 1-6. But during the month of May, in celebration of the 'Flores de Mayo', the older Oikos children did daily catechism in Barangays Siha, Calicoan, Sohutan, and Bayobay. That involved over 300 children.



OIKOS LITTLE MISSIONARIES in one of their quarterly gatherings.

For the adults, Oikos kept active the Bible Sharing sessions in Sohutan, Calicoan, and Bayobay. They met weekly and the participants are steadily growing.



BIBLE SHARING MOTHERS' outing and Christmas Party. At right is the Sunday school in Sohutan.



## FAITH (Food Always in the Home) Program



This special program launched middle of the year of 2012 aims to establish a “food garden” for every family which will produce a continuous and sufficient supply of vegetables on their tables to ensure that children living in marginalized communities have access to nutritious, organic food from their own vegetable garden. FAITH aims to establish a “food garden” for every family which will produce a continuous and sufficient supply of vegetables on their tables and to ensure that children living in marginalized communities have access to nutritious food from their own vegetable garden.

FAITH was first launched in Barangays Sohutan and Calicoan and became a showcase of a unique vegetable gardening type where plants are planted on recyclable plastic materials, tin cans, tires, etc. and are lined up on risers. One hundred families joined FAITH in the first launching and was greatly affected by Typhoon Yolanda. But they replanted immediately after and continue to do FAITH until now.

In August 2015, FAITH was launched in Barangays Tacla-on and Sta. Cruz in Salcedo, Eastern Samar with assistance coming from the Diocesana Caritas di Brescia, of Brescia, Italy. Taclaon and Sta. Cruz are adjacent mountain top barrios that were completely destroyed by Typhoon Yolanda. Inhabited by naturally hardworking farmers, they welcomed the concept of FAITH and embraced it with diligence. One hundred families joined FAITH and they are now reaping the fruits of their labor. In Barangay Sta. Cruz, they are experimenting on planting lettuce, cabbage

and carrots on recyclable plastic materials and they had found out that they can actually produce. But that is only during the colder months – October to February.

## Piglet Recycling Program



DURING THE distribution of piglets in Taclo-on, Salcedo.

Acknowledging the hard work, faithfulness and industry of outstanding FAITH (Food Always in the Home) farmers from Barangay Sta. Cruz and Barangay Taclo-on of the municipality of Salcedo, Eastern Samar, they were made the first beneficiaries of the Piglet Recycling Program, a livelihood program of OIKOS PTOCHOS THEOU MISSION (The Poor Household of God) in partnership with CARITAS DIOCESANA DI BRESCIA of Brescia, Italy. The Piglet Recycling Program was launched in the two barrios on September 16, 2015. Forty-seven (47) beneficiaries of female piglets had been registered – 28 in Taclo-on and 19 in Sta. Cruz. In addition, three beneficiaries were given male piglets to assure that there would be boars to service the program. Each beneficiary was given a one-time subsidy of Php 2,500 for pigpen construction and feeds worth Php 1,500.

The Piglet Recycling Program capitalizes on the simple skills already familiar to most of the barrio residents – backyard swine raising. It targeted poor families affected by Typhoon Haiyan who desire to rise up from the rubble wrought by the typhoon, recoup lost earnings, expand their livelihood skills, take advantage of the productive nature of the pig and make it a sustainable endeavor towards improving the quality of their lives.

Earlier, before Typhoon Yolanda came, Oikos launched the Piglet Recycling Program in Sohutan and Calicoan from the proceeds of the Special Appeal of St. Raphael's Catholic Church in the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois. Oikos proposal for the Piglet Recycling Program was chosen from among other contenders. There were 54 who joined but almost half of it were affected by Typhoon Yolanda. But those who survived made good and through their paybacks, those who lost their piglets were given another chance again to raise pigs. Sohutan and Calicoan are now known to be pig raisers.

## Short- to medium-range plans

### **Education**

To remodel the ground floor of Nazareth Home, make it as the formation center as well as a Student Center.

### **Health & Nutrition**

To establish a health clinic for the poor, in a year or two, that can serve their needs at certain days of the week. Health services to be offered will include medical and dental as well as therapeutic massage and acupuncture.

### **Community & Character Development**

OYM hopes to start campus ministry in the Eastern Samar State University, Borongan campus as well the holding of a weekly prayer meeting in Borongan and open Sunday School in barrio Balacdas.

### **Solidarity Missions**

To visit Northern Samar and look at the possibility of holding Barrio Immersion in the area.

To hold at least two (2) Barrio Immersions this year.

### **FAITH (Food Always in the Home Program)**

To initiate a savings scheme for FAITH and Pig farmers in Tacla-on and Sta. Cruz. Get technical assistance from Fruitful Harvest Association, a small yet successful savings group.

To launch FAITH in Barangays Sabang and Suroc this March, on April in Barangay Carapdapan, Salcedo and Barangay Bucao, Guiuan.

### **Pig Recycling Program**

To launch the program in Barangay Suroc this year.

*“Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think...” —Ephesians 3:20*

For Oikos:

Sr. Minerva C. Bagas, OPT  
Elder Servant



