

A Library of Hope:

Where Precious Blood Spirituality Comes Alive

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I was born and spent the first eleven years of my life in the Philippines, which many consider a “third-world” country. When I became a teacher, I taught for ten years in Catholic schools, including Donnelly College in Kansas City, Kansas. Most of the students there were first-generation college students and students of color. Staff didn’t need to harp on the value of education; students knew it was the way out of poverty.

Later, when I became a teacher of students who speak other languages, I also taught in urban settings in Kansas City, Missouri. Most of my students in 2004 were immigrants.

At St. Francis Xavier Church in St. Joseph, Missouri, I met Fr. Bill Walter. In one of his homilies, he challenged parishioners to live simply. He said to clean out our clothes and donate unwanted clothing. It inspired me to ask the bulletin editor to include a message asking parishioners to donate clothing, which I sent to Pililla, my hometown in the Philippines. It was a blessing, especially in 2009 when our town was devastated by a typhoon.

I have always valued libraries where people could come, borrow books, and participate in activities. There was no library in my hometown, and I wondered why the government hadn’t opened one. After several years, it occurred to me that my dream of having a library depended on my establishing one. The first step was to ask two aunts who had been teachers and principals whether people would use the library. I didn’t want to have a building that no one used. The aunts both said yes. In 2014, I took a sabbatical from teaching. I returned home to the Philippines, and in 2015, Pililla Educational Center was established.



Later, when I found out about the Precious Blood Human Development grant. I asked if I might apply to receive funds for the library. I was told I couldn't apply since there are no Precious Blood priests in my town. Who would oversee and ensure that funds were used properly? Fr. Al Ebach instead suggested I talk with Fr. Ron Will, then pastor at St. Francis, to see if he could designate some money for the library. Gratefully, we received about \$ 1,500, which we used to provide healthier snacks to marginalized and poor children who came to the library.

Today, Pililla Educational Center is eleven years old. It continues to provide a gathering space for children. Volunteers help improve children's reading skills through Angat Pililla, another organization in my town that I partnered with. Even though there are as yet no Precious Blood priests, brothers, or religious in Pililla, Precious Blood Spirituality is alive within Pililla's boundaries. We continue to extend God's mercy to the marginalized and poor, hoping with them for a better life now and in the future.



Questions for Reflection:

- How has your own experience of Precious Blood spirituality inspired you to respond to the needs of the poor, the marginalized, or those whose voices are often unheard?
- The Pililla Educational Center began with a simple dream of providing children with access to books, education, and a welcoming space. What dream or need have you encountered that might be calling you to take action?
- Cayetana reminds us that Precious Blood spirituality can flourish even where no Precious Blood priests, brothers, or religious are present. Where do you see the values of mercy, dignity, reconciliation, and hope taking root in your own community?