

The Human Face of Service and Giving

By: *Jeff Pioquinto SJ* - reflecting of his experiences in three different communities in Railaco and in Alieu, in East Timor while learning the language, culture and the different apostolates of the Society of Jesus.

Living with the local people for a whole week, and having to survive on their simple diet of rice, boiled with cassava leaves and salt, and no nutrients, was a true eye-opener, and a great introduction to 'life on the front lines' for him.



“I pray that you may involve in your efforts those whom you seek to help; give them a voice, listen to their stories, learn from their experiences and understand their needs,”

Pope Francis was addressing the participants of the Fortune+Time Global Forum which took place in Rome in 2016.

These lines, reverberated into my reflection of my experiences in three different communities in Railaco and in Alieu, learning the language, culture and the different apostolates of the Society of Jesus. I challenged myself of these words Pope Francis said, *“See in them a brother and a sister, a son and a daughter, a mother and a father. Amid the challenges of our day, see the human face of those you earnestly seek to help.”*

Often than not, I tend to forget that the people whom I serve, have human face, experience to share and hearts full of gratitude. I tend to be preoccupied with so many ways on how to help and on how to give more, but inclined to forget the real essence of giving and sharing.

I remember my experience going with Fr. Bong in one of his mobile clinic trips to the different villages in Railaco. I was tasked to talk to the patients, get the details of their medical conditions, write it down and give it to doctor – to Fr. Bong. My Tetun was not yet that good so I was so anxious of trying to understand on what they were saying, making sure that I was giving the correct information about the patients to the doctor.

Since I was too anxious, I was too preoccupied and I forgot to smile and became too focused on my work and nothing more. Then suddenly, one mother carrying her sick son said to me in Tetun, *“We understand that your Tetun is not that good...the most important thing is we can still understand one another despite all these limitations. We know pretty well that you came to help, and that is enough for us.”*

From that moment on, it dawned on me that the people whom I really desire to serve have a face. They have stories to tell. I started to relax myself a bit and engage the patients with conversations. Those conversations built relationship. Relationship built deeper connection.

This experience exemplifies why there is a need for pastoral care on the humanitarian things that we are doing in our apostolate. It leads us to see the face of the people whom we serve. It leads us to understand more deeply their needs and on how we better can serve them by giving them a voice. Learn from their experiences.

In the end, I learned a lot from the people of Railaco. I thought I gave much to the people but it was the other way around, the people gave much to me. Surely, they don't have of the material things to give but their magnanimous and grateful heart, surely changed my life and the way I do things as a Jesuit.

The experiences and the stories we shared during my immersion in Railaco Mission areas, helped me to be a better Jesuit.

