

Meal program at the Stella Maris Retreat Center



With the relentless heat, humidity, rains, and storms, children around the formation house in the Bataan area were unable to go to school or even play outdoors, often confined to their small rooms.

This gave rise to the idea of organizing a “movie theater” program for them. On the day chosen, all the religious people in the diocese gathered in our Stella Maris Retreat Center for the annual general meeting. So every member of the formation house was busy preparing for it. However, as soon as the meeting ended, we quickly transformed the hall, turned on the air conditioning, and screened a Tagalog movie for the children in the cool auditorium.

Snacks and drinks prepared the day before were distributed. At first, we feared the large crowd of children might disrupt the quiet movie setting. To our amazement, however, they sat in perfect silence for two hours—utterly captivated.

After the movie, we called families by name and distributed food supplies first to the children and their parents. Providentially, just when we were planning this program, a generous donation from Korea arrived, allowing us to prepare food bags like government or NGO relief packages after natural disasters.

But this event turned out to be our most attended since starting the ‘Pandesal program’ (Novitiate’s Apostolic program, which provides food to children living around landfills). At the entrance, we realized the food prepared was not nearly enough. While the children were engrossed in the movie, we quickly combined the 60 family food bags with supplies from our community warehouse to stretch them to 80. Even so, when distribution began, we found it was still insufficient. In haste, we brought down food set aside for our own dinner and even leftovers from the previous day. By the time we handed out the very last portion, it felt as though we had witnessed the miracle of the five loaves and two fish unfolding before our eyes.

No one went without. Everyone left rejoicing, and we too felt overwhelming joy despite having spent the entire day on our feet, with hardly a moment to rest.

Once again, we experienced that fullness and satisfaction do not come from material abundance or comfort but from the joy of sharing with the poor and the love of God that sustains us. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the sisters and supporters whose prayers and generosity continue to strengthen our solidarity with the poor.