PEACE TO ALL! MAGNIFICAT!

My dear friends in the Diocese of Chicago, it would be my pleasure to meet you personally, but because of the pandemic it is impossible. That is why I am sending this simple and heart felt greeting from the Philippines.

 **I am Sr. Rubi Arellano**, local superior of the Sisters Servants of the Visitation community in Borongan City, Philippines. We operate a mission home and residential facility for children from the different municipalities of Eastern Samar who come to us in a vulnerable condition: neglected, health problems, malnourishment, disabilities, abandoned, or orphaned. We also assist the extremely poor children and adolescents from our local community of Bato who hope for a better future. In other words, our children are considered as the unfortunate and forgotten in our society. In them we are trying our best to make alive the word of Jesus. Our congregation lives and works with the poorest and forgotten of our world on five continents with the objective to “**RENEW THE VISIT OF THE LORD TO THE HUMANITY, Today” - the CHARISM of our congregation.** We are always incarnating in our heart the message of our mother foundress, Ma. Vincenza Minet, “TO BRING THE SMILE OF GOD TO THE WORLD”, in our daily life, as we do our mission- taking care of these little ones entrusted to our care. Like Our Blessed Mother Mary, we serve with JOY, LOVE, and SIMPLICITY.

 The mission is challenging, but I believe that nothing is impossible to the God whom I entrust my everything. Our residential facility in Borongan, AIN KARIM, is home to children ages 4month old to 14years old, two with profound disability. With my co-sisters we are trying to let them feel the atmosphere of being a family where there is love, care, and protection. At the same time, we work to promote both the spiritual and emotional development of each child. We believe that each child deserves to be cared for, to be loved, and to have a happy life environment. In them ***we welcome Jesus, who comes to stay with us and wants to be loved as a weak and needy child***.

It is also our desire is to be the *hope of salvation*, living amidst the people of Eastern Samar. We reach out into the community to uplift the poor families of Borongan by offering educational assistance such as tuition, back packs, school supplies, transportation, allowance for snack and lunch. In this simple act we believe we are helping them build their dream for the future. We also offer their families livelihood training to help boost their family incomes. We also sponsor programs of religious education for youth and teens and home visits to the sick and upstream poor who are so often the victims of natural calamities such as typhoons. We also offer assistance to the poor who come to our door, visit the sick at the provincial hospital, bringing the Holy Eucharist to all and words of comfort, food, and medicines to the very poor who can’t afford proper care.

The Sisters Servants of the Visitation live in the heart of people’s joys and sufferings. We accompany our brothers and sisters in simple ways, so they feel the presence of God, who loves them. Like Mama Mary, we hurry to the assistance of those in need with an open heart and hands to serve.

I hope you will join this beautiful mission inspired by the Holy Spirit in the person of our dear mother foundress to continue renewing the visit of the Lord in the humanity in our day, today. This charism that pushes us to serve God without discrimination of race, color, or belief recalls the Gospel passage: ***Whatever you to do the least of my brothers, you do unto me (mt.25;40).*** Again, it is with humility and hope of heart that I am pleading to all of you to help us continue our mission, we need your prayers. With your spiritual and financial aid, we will, despite so many difficulties we encounter, be able to continue sow the seeds of hope and love to our children.

For the last, let me share with you the gospel of Mt. 14; 13-21. The multiplication of bread. Jesus putting in action the corporal works of mercy, feeding the hungry, but before it was done, Jesus first fed their souls with his inspiring words that comforts and gives life to the soul. In our time, we may ask ourselves who are those persons that need our attention, our care, love, and protection? If we will glance to other side of the road, we can notice that there are so many unfortunate creatures of God that in so many ways need our special care. Not going far from what is happening in our human family now a days, we are amidst the greatest suffering because of Covid 19, this pandemic crisis that has cost so many lives of our brothers and sisters, causing famine to those who are dependent on their daily wage to feed their family and other experiences that some of our brethren are facing because of the virus and lock down. We cannot be indifferent in this battle. As a church let us be united in one voice, asking God for the protection for all. May the spirit of joy and peace be always our strength to continue serving God. May the Blessed Mother of the Visitation continue to inspire us and you to hurry with great haste and serve the most needy and vulnerable among us, both here in the Philippines and there in the Unites States.

I hope to meet you in the future once this crisis has passed so as to further share my joy of serving God in our missionary congregation, Sister Servants of the Visitation.

(Please learn about our mission home in Borongan @ guardiansofthevisitation.org)

May Our Lady of the Visitation Protect you and May God Bless you and your families!

 ~ Sr. Rubi Arellano, SSV