

## THE POWER OF ONE

(Homily of Abp. Rex Andrew C. Alarcon for the Closing Mass  
of the General Assembly of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting [PPCRV],  
November 28, 2024 at the John XXIII Hall of Pius XII Center)

### **Introduction** *(I omitted the first part of the homily during the delivery.)*

Good morning everyone! Thank you very much for being here; for taking the time to travel to Manila in order to participate in this PPCRV General Assembly. I arrived this morning by bus, that is a 10 hour travel, in order to celebrate Holy Mass with you. I shall return to Naga by bus tonight. I say this not for you to thank me, but rather to show that I care for our country and for PPCRV.

### **My PPCRV Experience.**

My engagement with PPCRV dates back when I was yet a seminarian here in Manila at UST. After PCP II, PPCRV was organized, as the laity's response to the call for social transformation ben ensuring Clean Honest Accurate Meaningful and Peaceful Elections. I was not yet a priest, I was a lay person then. I felt empowered participating in the work of PPCRV.

Back in the 1990's. I was assigned in one of our municipalities in Camarines Sur. If my recollection is correct, I was a 3<sup>rd</sup> year theology seminarian. I was given the charge of PPCRV operations. At the beginning I was excited, but then as the elections drew near, I was losing my excitement. The number of volunteers was small. And some others withdrew as the elections come closer.

We still ended up with volunteers in the different election areas. But there was only myself who would do the monitoring. We had no service car. I was young and idealistic, and so I took on the task. What I would do, when there is a jeepney passing by, I would ride the jeepney. When there is a motorcycle that would pass by, I would request for a ride. I was ready to walk from one precinct to the next.

I believe many of you may have had this experience. But you did not give up. And until today you have not given up. There is hope, as long as there is one who shall uphold the true, the good and the beautiful.

Thus, thank you for your presence, for taking time out, for your dedication. You have not given up. You have not given up for our country.

## When We Are Overwhelmed

After Typhoon Kristine, which brought great floods, of which magnitude we experienced for the very first time. We were overwhelmed. A day or even days after the typhoon there was mud and garbage everywhere; places stink. There were news of missing persons and bodies. Some places remained isolated for days because the floods did not subside immediately. Main thoroughfares were blocked. There was difficulty or bringing relief goods. Looking around the disorder, one feels confused as to where to begin or how to start again. There was sadness and despair in people.

Perhaps this is the same feeling we experience. When we look around, the situation of our country leads to a loss of hope. The political drama, the deceptions happening around us. "It's a mess!", we may say. There are those of us who are already dismayed with the elections. Where do we begin? How do we start again? Can we still bounce back or recover? These are questions that come to mind. *Parang ito yung scenario sa Gospel today. Marami nang kaguluhan. Malapit na ang katapusan ng mundo.* (Cf. Luke 21:20-28)

However, we feel deep in our heart that YOU and I, cannot be indifferent in the face of all these. That's why we are here. We care for our country. We care for our people.

And so what may we do in the face of such overwhelming situations? *Madaming kalat at basura; napakaraming kailangang linisin at di mo alam kun saan at paano magsisimula.* It's like a thousand people to feed. And you only have a few bread and fish. Even the disciples did not know what to do.

## The Power of One

I remember two young/ children heroes.

1. *Malala Yousafzai*, a young Pakistani girl who said: "I don't want to be thought of as the 'girl who was shot by the Taliban' but the 'girl who fought for education'," she said. "This is the cause to which I want to devote my life." In 2014, at age 17, she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace.

2. *Cris "Kesz" Valdez*, Born to a poor family, abused by his father, who made him beg in order to buy his alcohol. From 3 years old he would scavenge scraps of food. He was rescued from a fall. On his 7<sup>th</sup> birthday, instead of asking for gifts, he chose to give other children 'gifts of hope', containing toys and goodies. He went around Manila giving these gifts. He formed a group of Caring Children. At age 14, he won the International Children's Peace Prize.

These are examples of the Power of One.

## Hope that comes from One

Friends, we face many difficulties. Yet we do not lose hope. PPCRV has been the only strong Church movement, laity led, that is directly involved in the electoral process.

We do not lose hope, as we need to persevere, because nation building does not happen in one single election. Nation building, building a people is a lifetime endeavor. It is a long term goal –very long term goal. Nevertheless, here we can make our contribution to the society.

We do not lose hope. We engage. We get involved. One of the problems in our country, or in communities –there are many cynics and critics who do nothing. We may criticize or be critical, but we do not simply sit by and watch. We are doing something concrete. We make our contribution. It may be small, nevertheless an contribution.

I love to say: *“One concrete good act is of much more value than a thousand promises.”* And I am always inspired by what Mother Theresa said: *“You may not be able to feed a hundred, but you can feed one.”* Again, this is the Power of One.

By entrance of the Bishop’s Residence in Daet, we put up a big tarpaulin with the piece, the Power of One by Ashish Ram. It goes:

### THE POWER OF ONE

One song can spark a moment,  
One whisper can wake the dream.  
One tree can start a forest,  
One bird can herald spring.

One smile begins a friendship,  
One moment can make one fall in love.  
One star can guide a ship at sea,  
One word can frame the goal

One vote can change a nation,  
One sunbeam lights a room  
One candle wipes out darkness,  
One laugh will conquer gloom.

One step must start each journey.  
One word must start each prayer.  
One hope will raise our spirits,  
One touch can show you care.

One voice can speak with wisdom,  
One heart can know what's true,  
One life can make a difference,  
You see, it's up to you!

## **Conclusion**

Today, dear Brothers and Sisters, as we gather in this Eucharistic Celebration, we behold the One who left the ninety sheep, in order to seek out the one that was lost. In Jesus, we behold the power of ONE – the only begotten Son whom the Father sent to save us. This is the love of the Father. He gave his only Son to redeem the world. (cf. John 3:16) With Jesus death on the Cross, One Life became the seed of new life for all humanity.

In closing, may we not get tired of repeating to ourselves these sayings:

*“It is better to light just one little candle than to curse the darkness.”*

*“The journey/pilgrimage of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”*

And again: *“One concrete good act is of much more value than a thousand promises.”*

And remember: *“The easiest way to fail is not to try.”*

Thank you for being here, for your sacrifice and dedication. May God bless you! May God bless PPCRV!

\*\*\*\*\*