News

Children wait in line for free food from a relief program in a poor section of Manila, Philippines

Children wait in line for free food from a relief program in a poor section of Manila, Philippines, Jan. 21. (CNS/Reuters/Eloisa Lopez)



by Catholic News Service

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The head of the Philippine bishops' conference has appealed to Catholics to give food to the poor so that they do not go hungry during a near-total lockdown Aug. 6-20.

Bishop Pablo Virgilio David of Kalookan said giving food now would cushion the lockdown's effect, as many people would suffer due to unemployment, reported ucanews.com.

"Lockdowns for the poor mean hunger, especially for those who are daily wage earners, those who live a hand-to-mouth existence," David said.

"I also foresee a lot of people being arrested for violating quarantine regulations," he said.

Ucanews.com reported that Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte ordered that an enhanced community quarantine — the term given to the strictest lockdown measures to curb the fast-spreading delta variant of COVID-19 — be imposed.

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"Only hospitals, supermarkets and banks can remain open. The rest must either close or maintain a skeleton workforce," presidential spokesman Harry Roque said July 31.

Some Manila churchgoers said they feared fewer people would donate food because the economic situation had worsened from last year. Others said they would donate, but not as much as last year when strict social restrictions were also in place.

"More people are now getting hungrier, and life has become more difficult. Even those who can give now feel the effects of the pandemic," Manila businessman Gerald Toribio told ucanews.com.

Toribio said his motorbike business was suffering because very few people are traveling during the pandemic.

"I am a Catholic and I really want to support the appeals made by Bishop David. But even my business is going down, and I have two college kids to support. These lockdowns are not giving us anything but pain and suffering," he said.