

Response of Mrs. Susana Madrigal-Eduque

On behalf of the Consuelo "Chito" Madrigal Foundation, thank you very much for the Bulawang Bikolnon Service to Bikol Award. Receiving this award is truly an honor for all of us. This award would not have been possible without the vision and generosity of our founder, Consuelo "Chito" Madrigal and the hard work, dedication and perseverance of Fr. Joel Tabora, Fr. Jun Viray, Fr. Robert Rivera and most importantly, our beloved Fr. Wilmer Tria whose tireless efforts led to what CCMF Bikol is today. Fr. Wilmer from all of us our heartfelt gratitude. Dios mabalos.

It was God's grace that led Tita Chito to fulfil her dream of sharing her resources with the underserved.

One day as Tita Chito saw street children begging she said, "I have the resources to help the poor but doing it properly is difficult and I do not know how or where to begin. I told her that I would introduce her to Fr. Joel Tabora whose heart and mission has always been to alleviate poverty. Unbeknown to many, this auspicious meeting with Fr. Joel Tabora was the birth of CCMF Bikol. Tita Chito tasked Fr. Tabora to prepare a plan with the following guidelines.

First, Tita Chito wanted the foundation to start in Bikol because her father, Vicente Madrigal, was a Bikolano. When Fr. Tabora told her that the "poor are, poorer in Bikol" she knew that God was indeed drawing her attention to Bikol. Second, Tita Chito wanted Dominicans to be involved in the foundation since her father was a scholar at San Juan de Letran and later, at the University of Santo Tomas. When she learned that Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi, the Archbishop of Caceres at that time was a Dominican, there was no turning back as everything was falling into place. Truly, this was Divine Guidance.

To us, her family, Tita Chito's decision to extend help was nothing out of the ordinary. She might have been in the twilight of her years but she was still so engaged in business and philanthropy. And we also knew that Tita Chito would not begin an endeavor without a clear vision. Her marching order was to help the impoverished in a way that would uplift their dignity.

CCMF-Bikol is a testament not only of Tita Chito's love for the impoverished, but of her profound understanding that poverty alleviation requires enabling the underserved to become self-reliant. She knew that to help the disadvantaged, one must journey with them not as a benevolent king but as a caring shepherd. And she wanted to make sure that those who received help from the Foundation would, one day, be able to help others as well.

Our grandfather, Vicente, who hailed from Ligao, Albay came from very humble beginnings. It was the scholarship in San Juan de Letran and UST that gave him the opportunity to have a better future. Citibank was his "microfinance" as it trusted his capability to do business and pay for his first loan. Tita Chito wanted to give the same opportunities to the underserved. It is by these principles that CCMF-Bikol came to be.

I will end by quoting my Tita Chito who said: "I consider myself blessed in these children of God. They have been orphaned by poverty, injustice, ill fortune and I have been privileged to embrace them, to share with them my good fortune. Like all others, they are also my children, in the best and highest sense of the word."

Salamat sa indo gabos. Marhay na hapon sa inyong lahat.