

My '5 Loaves & 2 Fish' for the Care of Our Common Home

A personal monologue on ecological conversion & action

Revised edition (Jan 2022)

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What can my 5 loaves & 2 fish do to feed the 5,000?

I have always known how insignificant can my personal efforts be in tackling our global ecological, biodiversity and climate crises. I have always felt helpless about how futile they can be whatever I would do and whatever personal sacrifices I would like offer to help.

No, I'm not trying to be a 'messiah' for the world. In the first place, it's really about my very own closest dear ones in my birth-country, the Philippines. They have been victims of climate disasters too; though not as bad as many more of our most unfortunate fellow Filipinos who lost their homes and livelihoods entirely. Nonetheless, they are all at the frontline of our mother nature's unforgiving fury and retaliation for humanity's unjust exploitation of her resources and neglect & indifference to her failing health. It always pains me to see their unmerited sufferings caused by the unsustainable, extravagant & damaging consumption lifestyles of the few have-lot's of the world. And when these 'fortunate-ones' come as 'heroes' by flooding these have-not's with relief aids & donations, make no mistake that I feel very grateful for their kindness; but at the same time, I can also feel insulted for their hypocrisy when they just continue with their ecologically damaging lifestyles. It is like a wife-battering-husband who says he 'loves' her and tends her wounds but does not cease in repeatedly hitting her. No, he only selfishly 'loves' himself and only cares for what he can get from her.

Furthermore, it can also double my disappointments when my very own friends and compatriots can seem to be uncaring; or perhaps, I'm just really wrong and simply blind to their own efforts not known to me. Nonetheless, it is mostly praiseworthy to see our many migrant communities spread throughout the world mobilising to fundraise every time the Philippines needs our relief aid (albeit also viewed by some if not many with much suspicions because it is also a fact that some do maliciously exploit these tragedies to fill their pockets). But how I would like these efforts to go further than just short-term one-time donations. How I wish us to move from being just reactive to the after-effects to be more proactive to tackle their root causes; and so, be more preventive. To keep a hungry man alive not with a fish just for the day but to help him sustainably feed himself by helping him learn to fish & survive for life.

But I also know that I cannot impose on others my personally learned and embraced should-be lifestyles changes and should-be climate actions (especially in advocacy & political campaigning). If my very own family members can also be lagging behind in our ecological journey of lifestyle changes, would I deprive them of what makes them happy and then imbitter our relationships? I know that suggested changes imposed from outside can sometimes (if not often) be met with much oppositions and can unjustly deprive others' individual freedom of conscience (even if it may be sometimes erroneous or needs to mature more). If some people have been offended by our Covid restrictions and have flout the government rules that are really for the common good (may not be perfect, as always, but we should continue to do our best), then I can already foresee that some (if not many) sound

climate policy changes will surely be not well received; such as, in travel and transport policy changes; and how much more in the areas of agriculture [especially livestock farming], forestry & other land use (AFOLU) and fishery. And so, even if the most effective changes – drastic and immediate – can only be achieved from the top, ultimately the most meaningful changes actually start from the bottom: self. Peace begins within oneself [and then builds fraternal & social friendships], charity begins at home [but then reaches out to others] ... our healthy planet must also begin with personal ecological conversions. And so, renew the face of the earth...for the better!

Perhaps, I should be content by being another nameless boy with 5 loaves & 2 fish. But hoping and praying that our Lord Jesus Christ, Lord & King of creation, may bless them to feed the 5,000.

What are the 5 loaves & 2 fish can you personally offer for the care of our common home?