

Mission to the Emotionally and Spiritually Wounded

Jimmy Leornas

Gathered in a circle in a dimly lit mini-hall, silent whimpers and crying of anguish can be heard. Emotions are high. Fourteen-year-old Anna was beginning to share her story. Looking at me and her classmates, tears were starting to roll from her big round eyes. She said how confused she was since both her mother and father had their respective families already. And, she was living with her grandparents on her mother's side. She related how it pained her much that her Lolo died a year before. Her voice cracking, she expressed her fear of also losing her Lola, since she was not accepted by the respective families of her mother and father. Looking straight into my eyes, she asked me, "Sir, *inianak lang po ba ako?*" ["Sir, was I just sired?"]. Tears began to swell in my eyes as I bit my lip to control my emotions. I mustered just enough words to reply, "No matter what, Jesus still loves you."

That was a long time ago, but it galvanized me to become full-time in this field of apostolate or shall we say a missionary work for family, life and faith. We are on the road practically daily all these years giving seminars, retreats and recollections to Catholic, private and public schools, parishes, organizations, communities, and even to some companies. From far-flung places in Mindanao to the poverty stricken areas of the Visayas; from the heavy trafficked areas of Metro Manila and to the mountainous areas of the North; from the beautiful auditorium of well-known private schools to the decrepit small rooms of poor schools; from a large parish hall to the *barangay* chapel, we can say: "we've been there." We have heard their struggles to keep family and life together as we heard of people already giving up on each other. What is worse is when they start to give up their faith.

This is a time of rapid and intense changes that can be distinctly noticed nowadays, especially in the behavior and values of people. It is a time when truth is relative, values are undermined, families are becoming dysfunctional and even disintegrating, and the Church is in confusion as authentic faith is abandoned. Despite the technological advancement in communication, there is a backward trend in human personal communication. There is a lack of love and a lack of the sense of sin. Life has become cheaper. Suicidal tendencies are on the rise, especially among the young. People are becoming more materialistic. And, as a way to escape, people are resorting to and becoming more hooked to online gaming, technology, social media and other addictions.

As a response, we developed a wide range of topics that address the needs of the family, individuals, and the young people of this time; examples are: valuing family and life, the effects of media and technology, addiction to social media, servant leadership training, parenting topics, retreats and recollections, spiritual warfare, the sanctity of marriage, and many more.

This is the time that the "other poor" in our society have to be cared for: *the emotionally wounded and confused people*, especially the young. Indeed, mission today includes an urgent call to share the gift of faith, proclaim the gospel of life, and uphold and defend the value of the family.

Jimmy Leornas is a husband and a father; he is the head of Family Life International-Philippines. He may be contacted at: famlifephils@gmail.com