

Compassion: The Heart of Mission

The Gospel today narrates how Jesus manifested his compassion for a crippled woman, healing her on a Sabbath day. Reading this passage reminded me of a personal experience I had some years ago as I walked by on my way to the metro station. The highway underpass was crowded, with hundreds of people passing by. The air was thick with dust and pollution from the scores of buses, cars, jeepneys, and trucks clogging the road. It was summertime, and the heat in tropical Manila was intense.

There I saw a young mother; her face beamed as she held her month-old baby in her arms. It was clear that this was the joy of her life. I wondered: "Why were this twenty-something mother and her beautiful baby sitting in such an awful place?" And yet, there they were. The industrious young mother had a small makeshift table where she displayed cigarettes, candy, chewing gum, and a few bananas. Her meager daily income would hardly be sufficient for the two of them. Life had not given her many choices, so she sold her simple wares in the thick of the crowds, pollution, and heat.

"What will become of this little child?" I thought as I stared at the scene before me. My journey on the metro to downtown Manila was uncomfortable, even though I sat in an air-conditioned train. And, I couldn't hold back my tears. What price the world's little people pay each day! Indeed, when we meet such experiences in life, we are being challenged to reach out to the needy with Jesus' own compassion. We all have been recipients of Jesus' compassionate love and mercy. Thus, one could formulate a simple description of mission and its practice: *compassion received overflows in compassion shared.* Jesus, help me put your compassion into action in my daily life!