

SHINE THE MOST IN THE DARKEST
(A personal experience)
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Life was never easy when she was young. Color Cancer took her father's life early, leaving her mother with four children to raise on her own, with just her meager salary as a teacher to depend on. Most of the time, they did not have enough food on the table. They learned to be contented with whatever was available. They did not experience having new bags, shoes, uniform or other school things. They never complained. Despite all these, her mother was not hindered from answering the call of her profession. She would gather her financially struggling students every lunch and divide among all of them whatever was available on the table.

College life was even harder for her. Most of the time, She had to survive on whatever her mother could provide. One time, out of nowhere, a professor might have noticed her struggle and asked her, "How was your finances?" Being surprised with her response, the professor further asked "Is it ok if I extend monthly financial help?". That is the part where she started to see light coming at the end of the tunnel. One thing she realized, God uses different people in different circumstances of life. Do not get tired therefore of praying because this is where God starts working.

In 2008, she was hired in Muñoz National High School Annex. From there, she was able to see a bigger picture of the condition of the students in public schools, far different from the situations of her former students from the private school. So many times, her heart was broken upon receiving excuse letters from students being absent from class with the reason of financial struggle. One time, an excellent student was absent from class for two weeks straight. The reason broke her heart. She knew how it feels to have nothing. She had been there. She was able to reap the good seed sown by her mother years ago. She knew it was a time for her to give back the kindness that she was able to receive. She did not have much, but whatever She has, she could give. It was a commitment she made starting that day. Every student matters. Teaching is not just about how good you are in delivering the lesson, or what scores the students get in the quizzes, or how good their performance is in the given tasks.. It is about touching a student's life and doing something to uplift their present situation. It is about how much they remember your compassion and genuine concern towards them. It is about seeing love by deeds. Financial reason should not be reason for someone to stop achieving his or her dreams. A teacher can do something.

It is an overwhelming joy to see that those former students are now the generous donors of the school. The former recipients now become the donors. They give because they know how it feels to have nothing, and what it was like to receive from someone who cares and perfectly understands. Kindness when passed on multiplies. And it somehow eases the burden that this pandemic brings whenever her present students receive simple things from these unknown donors. Nothing equates to the feeling that you are loved and cared for... and so the cycle continues.. They say life is a karma, whatever you do, whether good or bad, it will someday come back to you, and sometimes it comes back in the most unexpected ways. So always choose to do good.

They say teachers do not get rich. Cliché as it may sound, but really not everything can be bought by money. Seeing a non-reader gradually progresses and starts enjoying reading a book, a passive and loner student starting to bloom and discover his or her hidden talents, or a former struggling student

becoming successful in life, these are things that teachers consider as treasures. Happiness brought by these things last a lifetime.

Even this pandemic has brought the best version of ourselves. We can still shine. We can help. We can inspire. We can always become better. See how we became actors and actresses in our own video lessons. We became computer and technology experts, and other thing we thought we could not do. When we find things overwhelming, we just take everything one day at a time. It is never too late to learn. All we need is an open mind and a willing heart.

We are teachers. We take our profession seriously and personally. We are Teachers. We can make an impact in the lives of our students weather we encounter them physically or just virtually. We are teachers. We do not give up to the challenge of times. We are TEACHERS. We can shine even in the darkest of times.