Gifts of ages

My name is Aristanto MSF.
I am a religious priest, member of the Missionaries oif the Holy Family (MSF).
And I am serving as executive secretary of the Commision for the family of the Episcopal Conference of Indonesia; and the same time, coordinator of the pastoral of elderly in Indonesia.

Slide 1
- In this short intervention, I will share what is happening and alive in most parishes in the cathiolic Church of Indonesia.
- I titled this intervention with "gift of ages"; throught this title, i want to say that seniors have an extraordinary role in the life of faith and church, specially in the parishes.
- They want that we call them "adiyuswo" (javenese) – "seniors" (persons worthy of respect, experience and wisdom).

Slide 2
- In Indonesian law, people who are categorized as elderly are those who are 60 years old and above.
- The number of elderly people in Indonesia in 2023 reached 11.7% of the total population (280.73 million people). And in the coming years, by 2050, the number of elderly people in Indonesia will reach 25% of the population.
- This large number of elderly people is faced with economic and health care difficulties. This is because their retirement fee are not enough to live on, despite government social assistance programs, so they have to live with their children and grandchildren. Living in the big family (3 gerenations) is normal and common in Indonesian culture.
- This elderly situation is also experienced by Catholic elderly. To note that: Catholics make up 3% of Indonesia's population. They are spread across 37 dioceses in the vast territory of Indonesia, the 7th largest country in the world.

Slide 3
- Catholic seniors are very active in the life of parishes. Most of the roles in the parish pastoral council are held by active seniors, while still taking into account the important presence of mediors and young people for the sake of discipleship. They are active as assistant priests for communion distribution, leaders of the basic christian community, catechists, team of family ministry, etc.
- Faith formation for these seniors is the responsibility of the section of ongoing formation, which coordinates the pastoral care of the seniors in the parish.
- However, there are also elderly communities formed among the parishioners both at the parish level and at the diocesan level which have various names: Simeon Hana Community, St monica Community (widows), St Josep Community, or just seniors community. They are incorporated in the section of association in the parish council.

Slide 4
- The senior communities that have developed in this parish vary in form and activities. Sometimes they form these communities spontaneously. The most important thing is that they have a room to meet.
- There are several activities that these communities usually organize:
    o Monthly senior mass, celebrating their birthdays.
    o One day recollections on the theme of the elderly. The themes of the recollection can be taken from modules created by the Family Commission or the Pope's catechesis on the elderly.
    o Formation of faith: Word meeting and sharing in the context of advent faith deepening and preapostolic faith deepening (development fasting action)
    o Pilgrimage to holy places dedicated to Mother Mary especially in May and October.
    o Social assistance in the form of visits to the sick elderly. and basic food and health assistance.
    o Seminars on the theme of the elderly and health care.
    o Heath Gymnastics every Saturday morning, after the morning mass, followed by morning coffee-tea.
    o Serving the choir for Sunday Mass.
- The gatherings and activities are very encouraging for the seniors, so they don't feel alone and have the opportunity to share their love with many people, including their sick friends and people in need.

Slide 5
- Then, what can parishes do for the elderly who are sick and unable to participate in the community and activities in the Church?
- There are several ministries that are usually provided by the parish priest together with the elderly team and community of elderly:
    o They assist the priest for communion serving the Holy Community every Sunday to them according to his christian basic community.
    o The parish priest organizes a family visit together with the coordinator of the Local Christian Basic Community. Parish priest listens, prays and blesses the sick elderly.
    o Ministry of the sacrament of reconciliation and the sacrament of holy oil to the elderly during advent, and especially during the postvent period.
    o Health services at the parish clinic for parishener, including for the elderly.
    o Basic need charity for the elderly including simple health facilities.
    o World Day of the Sick Mass every February.

Slide 6
- One of the good Indonesia traditions is the gathering of extended families. (Trah - bloodline- Meeting). The term often used is "kumpul balung pisah". (Reunite the scrattered bones)
- The meeting is inspired by the figure of their deceased ancestor, who in the past was an inspirational person and can be proud of.

- The purpose of these gatherings is to get to know each other and build brotherhood across generations, religions and ethnic;
- This meeting is held once a year, for a few days, on holiday.
- The activities they often engage in are:
  - Recreation and parties
  - Simple cross-generational games
  - Sharing experiences and praying together
  - Building solidarity with underprivileged families and taking part in families who will be organizing important family days next year: weddings, weeding anniversary, mass for commemoration of the deceased family member… etc.

Slide 7
- From this presentation, I want to say that seniors are God's loving gift to families.
- When they were healthy and strong, they taught their children how to love in their limitations and frailty - and when they are sick and weak, they give their children the opportunity to love them unconditionally as God loves us.

Thank you.
May this presentation inspire us to love, honor and provide opportunities for our seniors to share their rich life experiences and wisdoms.
God bless