

Count Your Blessings

By Alelie Coronel-Camitan
(Based on a true story)

This story happened in the Philippines.

Mano po! Hello!" Arkin said to Grandma when he got home. He greeted her by bowing and pressing the back of her hand to his forehead.

Grandma smiled. "Your dad is waiting for you with the fish. Hurry and go help him!"

Arkin's dad was a construction worker. He worked very hard to earn money for their family. But they didn't have much. And sometimes Dad

couldn't find work. When that happened, Arkin helped him sell homemade *tinapa* (smoked fish).

Arkin and Dad put the packs of tinapa in a basket and carried it outside.

"Thank you for helping me," said Dad. "I hope we sell enough to pay for a ride to church this week."

Arkin's family lived in a small village near rice fields and a fishpond. It was just him, Dad, Grandma, and

his older sister. They were far away from the chapel. To get to church, they had to pay to ride a tricycle (a motorcycle with a sidecar). If they didn't have the money, they had to walk for two hours.

"I have faith that Heavenly Father will help us," Arkin said. "Let's go!"

First they went to their neighbor Aling Nena's house. She always bought tinapa from them.

"Good afternoon!" Arkin said.

Aling Nena opened the gate for them. "Oh, my two favorite people are here!" she said with a smile. She gave Dad some money, and he gave her two packs of tinapa.

"Thank you for buying from us!" Arkin said. "It really means a lot."

Arkin and Dad walked back out to the street.

"Tinapa! Tinapa! Delicious tinapa!" Arkin called. More people bought fish from them.

It was hot outside, but Arkin didn't mind. He and Dad sang "Count Your Blessings"* as they walked. Every day was a blessing for them!

They kept singing and selling. Arkin almost didn't notice that their basket was empty.

"Look, Dad! We sold all the fish!" Arkin said.

Dad smiled. "Yes, it's a blessing."

Arkin was glad they had sold so much tinapa. It would help pay some of their bills, and there was enough money for a ride to church on Sunday!

But tomorrow was Saturday, and that was when they helped clean the church. So early the next morning, Arkin and Dad woke up to start the long walk to the church building. They always walked to save money for Sunday.

"Aren't you tired of cleaning your church every Saturday?" asked Grandma before they left.

Dad put his hand on Grandma's shoulder.

"Cleaning the church is one way we serve the Lord."

Arkin nodded. "We get blessings for cleaning the church. Heavenly Father helps our tinapa sell out so we can buy food!"

While they walked, Arkin and Dad sang more hymns. Then they worked hard to clean the church. Arkin wiped the dust from all the windows and chairs. Dad swept and mopped the floor.

When they were done, the bishop shared *pandesal* (sweet rolls) with everyone who helped. Arkin ate his snack with a big smile. It would be a long walk home, but his heart felt joyful and thankful. When they came back to church tomorrow, the building would be clean for everyone to enjoy and remember Jesus Christ. He was happy he could help. ●

*Hymns, no. 241

"I hope we sell enough to pay for a ride to church this week," Dad said.