

Priest appeals for more shelters for volcano evacuees in Philippines

A Catholic priest has appealed for more and better shelters for victims of a volcanic eruption in the Philippines after criticizing a local government response.

Ucanews.org reported that authorities in Tagaytay, located near the erupting Taal volcano, announced they had set up private spaces for couples to be intimate.

Inside the rooms, where couples can spend hours together after securing permission from authorities, are a mattress and bottled water.

But Father Jerome Secillano of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Manila said better and additional evacuation centers would serve a greater purpose than “love nest” rooms.

“We need more places to accommodate the thousands still holed up in cramped evacuation centers,” said the priest, adding that the “last thing you would think about during a calamity is intimacy.”

As of Jan. 22, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council reported that nearly 72,000 families or more than 280,000 individuals were affected by the volcano. Of that number, about 39,000 families, or 149,000 individuals, were in 493 evacuation centres.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology has maintained an Alert Level 4 over the volcano, meaning a “hazardous explosive eruption” is possible in hours or days.

Meanwhile, Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales, retired archbishop of Manila, expressed his gratitude to people who sent help to communities affected by the disaster, ucanews.org reported.

“We want to thank everyone for helping the evacuees,” said the cardinal, noting that the spirit of “Bayanihan,” or helping each other, is still very much alive among Filipinos. “It is really nice that many are visiting and helping,” he said.

Archbishop Gilbert Garcera of Lipa also noted how people are still smiling despite their situation. “This is the Christian life,” he said. “We will rise again.”