

Philippine bishop: Hoarding medicine during pandemic hurts the poor

MANILA, Philippines (CNS) – A Catholic bishop in the Philippines has warned people against bulk buying and hoarding medicines like acetaminophen and cough syrup to alleviate COVID-19 symptoms.

Ucanews.com reported that Bishop Oscar Florencio, who heads the bishops' health care commission, said on Jan. 10 that hoarding ultimately victimizes the poor, as the practice results in shortages and price hikes.

He was responding to recent reports about a shortage of anti-flu drugs due to panic buying.

"Drug shortages can have a significant impact on patient care, and hoarding may worsen the problem," Bishop Florencio told Church-run Radio Veritas. "Hoarding means there are fewer medicines available, and the poor cannot buy them anymore because they're not available."

"Greed is the culprit. It is greedy to buy a large amount," the prelate said.

"It is not just you who wants to live," he added. "We have thousands of fellow Filipinos testing positive for COVID each day. Give them a chance to get well by making the medicines they need available when they need them."

Several drug companies in Manila reported they were struggling to meet the demand for acetaminophen and other medicines amid a surge of infections with the omicron variant.

Ramon Lopez, secretary of trade and industry, told reporters on Jan. 10 that popular brands may be scarce but generic

medicines were readily available.

Bishop Florencio also encouraged fully vaccinated people to convince the unvaccinated to get inoculated to avoid severe COVID-19 complications.

“Give assurances to those unvaccinated that it is safe. ... Vaccines save lives. So, even before hoarding medicines, let us first convince others to get jabbed,” he said.

As of Jan. 9, at least 52.3 million of the Philippines' roughly 111 million population had been fully vaccinated, according to the latest government figures.