

Cardinal Rosales directs vehicles during typhoon-caused traffic

With no help in sight, Cardinal Rosales directs vehicles during typhoon-caused traffic snafu



When retired Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales of Manila found himself stuck in a traffic jam in the middle of a typhoon on the outskirts of Manila Aug. 23, he decided to take matters into his own hands.

With no traffic cop around to help him, the 83-year-old prelate zipped up his coat and began directing traffic himself.

"Our vehicle was stuck in traffic," the cardinal told reporters in Manila. "When I alighted the vehicle to see why we were not moving, I saw five cars blocking our way," he said.

The retired prelate walked nearly a kilometer to find out the cause of the jam. Finding no traffic enforcers in the area, Rosales directed the flow of vehicles.

"I approached the driver of one of the vehicles and told him that there are some 200 vehicles stuck in traffic because they were [driving] the wrong way," the cardinal said.

The cardinal not only directed wayward drivers, but tried to calm others exhibiting mild cases of road rage.

"It's really lamentable how some people tend to behave," said Rosales, adding that he had to do something or wait for three hours or more to reach his destination.

The prelate was on his way to a retirement home for priests in Lipa, where he lives, after saying Mass in a nearby town.

Cardinal Rosales said no one recognized him as he tried to talk to drivers while directing traffic flow. One driver, however, saw the pectoral cross the prelate was wearing under his rain jacket.

"I think he saw the cross when the zipper of the jacket slightly opened," said Rosales, chuckling while recalling his experience.

"They were very apologetic," the prelate later told AFP.

About 80 percent of the Philippines' 100 million strong population are Catholics, who are considered among the world's most devout.

Rosales said he endured his share of hours-long traffic jams during his eight-year term as archbishop of Manila that began in 2003. But for as long as gridlock remains a distinct possibility in the capital, Rosales said he would serve as a make-do traffic cop when given the chance.

"Next time, I'll be sure to bring a whistle," he quipped.

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