



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES
H.E. MRS CORAZÓN C. AQUINO***

Saturday 18 June, 1988

Madame President,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican. Your presence here bears witness, in fact, to the close and friendly ties that exist between the Filipino people, whom you represent, and the Bishop of Rome, charged with a universal ministry of service to the Church in every land. In the course of my Pontificate I have had many opportunities to experience the strength of that relationship, especially on the occasion of my visit to your country in 1981, and in my frequent meetings with the numerous pilgrims from the Philippines who visit the City of the Apostles Peter and Paul. I thank you for the kind words of goodwill which you have expressed on their behalf.

The recent history of your country is filled with important events which continue to have a profound effect on the collective life of the nation. The new way of governing the country is positively encouraged by those who look to this process as a better way of meeting some of the most pressing problems affecting the well-being of the Filipino people. Many of your fellow-citizens are convinced that the good of the country can best be served along the path of a greater participation by all in national life and by a negotiated settlement of the major issues touching upon the unity and structure of the nation, including the important question of relations between the central Government and groups or movements claiming autonomy. The agrarian reform which is a no less important part of your Government's program can help to meet at the deepest levels the challenge of building a more just society. The efforts made so far, in order to ensure improvements in many sectors of public and private life, offer encouragement to all to continue with ever greater determination in the service of the common good.

In fact these improvements invite the Government and the Filipino people not to diminish their efforts to uphold and strengthen the values for which your country is rightly esteemed throughout the world. With particular emphasis I mention the values of human dignity and family life, on which the whole good of the nation depends directly and immediately. The Philippines cannot survive as a peace loving, just and humane society unless Filipino families preserve their unity and resist the breakdown of the moral and ethical values which are society's support. This is a time to call upon the traditional Filipino commitment to the family and to the community, and the ethos of solidarity which so deeply mark the Filipino character. In your tradition there exists a spontaneous sense of certain aspects which I underlined in my recent Encyclical on the Church's Social Doctrine: the centrality of the human person in every process of development, and the need for a constant overcoming of the moral obstacles to development, obstacles such as an unbridled desire for profit or power, which is diametrically opposed to the Gospel invitation "to 'lose oneself' for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to 'serve him' instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage" (IOANNIS PAULI PP. II *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38). The Filipino people, Madame President, possess those traditional qualities called *pakakaisa* and *bayanihan* which can contribute to promoting social justice and to ensuring that each person's dignity and rights are respected and defended.

The Church has no specific political or economic programs to offer, but by pursuing her own mission, in a context of religious freedom, she makes present in every area of life the religious truths and values which strengthen the resolve to serve the common good with wholehearted dedication and unflinching honesty. She teaches a special love for the neediest and most deprived members of society, and she thereby fosters effective works of charity and justice which greatly "humanize" society. Her teachings on faith and morality are not remote from daily life, but rather call for unflinching coherence between belief and behavior. The Church's social doctrine is a permanent appeal to conscience both for the followers of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and for men and women of good will everywhere who recognize the welfare of the human person as the appropriate criterion of all progress. Filipino Catholics, as well as their Muslim brothers and sisters, can find in their respective religious traditions the motivation and moral energy needed for a concerted effort to lead their country forward, out to present tensions, to a period of harmony, characterized by hard work in the cause of development and a high morality in all spheres of private and public life.

The tasks that history has set Your Excellency in the service of your country are by no means light. I would assure you that I remember you and your fellow-citizens in my prayers. In this Marian Year I entrust you and your family and the entire Filipino people to the loving protection of the Mother of God, Mary Most Holy. Filipinos are proud to call themselves a "*pueblo amante de María*". May her spiritual presence continue to comfort and sustain Filipino families in responding to the demands of the present challenging hour of your history!

God bless the Philippines.

*AAS 81 (1989), p. 16-18.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XI, 2 pp. 2046-2048.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1988 pp.529-530.

L'Osservatore Romano 19.6.1988 pp.1, 6.

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