



Chronicles from Manila n°13
Special Farewell to President Cory Aquino



**The Assumptionist Delegation of the Philippines
in communion with the Filipino people
mourning its former President**



For weeks, the Filipino people of all religions have prayed for the health of its former President, diagnosed with a colon cancer. These were weeks of expectations and hopes: a manifestation of faith and prayer in a troubled political situation (see our latest Chronicles)

The three Assumptionist communities of the Philippines were very present to these events, praying for the health of the former President. She had herself written this beautiful prayer for her own peaceful death:

*Almighty God, most merciful Father
You alone know the time
You alone know the hour
You alone know the moment
When I shall breathe my last.*

*So, remind me each day,
Most loving Father,
To be the best I can be.
To be humble, to be kind,
To be patient, to be true,
To embrace what is good,
To reject what is evil,
To adore only You.*

*When the final moment does come
Let not my loved ones grieve for long.
Let them comfort each other
And let them know
How much happiness
They brought into my life.
Let them pray for me,
As I will continue to pray for them,
Hoping that they will always pray
For each other.*

*Let them know
That they made possible
Whatever good
I offered to our world.
And let them realize
That our separation
Is just for a short while
As we prepare
for our reunion in eternity.*

*Our Father in heaven
You alone are my hope,
You alone are my salvation.
Thank You for Your unconditional love.*

Amen

All the Assumptionists, Filipinos as well as foreigners, took part in this event in one way or the other, in deep communion with the pain but also the pride of a people willing to defend the frail gains in democracy and good government.



Eulogy at the Cathedral

On the eve of the burial, on August 4, the novices went to the Cathedral to pay their respect in front of the coffin of the former President. But after waiting for five hours due to the crowd gathered for the viewing of the deceased President, they had no choice but to go back home.

Rowel Casino, one of them, has this story:

« What I saw and experienced at this time was unity among Filipinos in showing our last respect to the former President; the people of old who lived the Martial Rule years were there, my generation who was still newly born at the time or babies was there, and the younger generation who just lived to the legacy what had been given to us to them by her effort was there. This is a mix of people and social classes, the rich and the poor lined up, except those who call themselves as VIP's.

I came to think that most of the time we would really feel the value of a person or a thing when we learn that it will be lost from our grasp forever. This was what I could see in the events that took place this week and in the past months. When we learned that she was sick, people did healing prayer services for her, not just in the capital but all around the country. Then, we finally heard that she was near her final moments in the past months; everyone in the country offered prayers for her healing. This woman, simple as she was; was able to unite our country again in prayers.

I remember watching some videos and pictures from the first revolution, and it was through prayers also that the revolution succeeded and that came back again in the past week when Mrs. Aquino was in the hospital and when she died.

For me as a Catholic, and aspiring religious, her example of complete trust in the Lord is what I desire most to share with this courageous woman of God. Now I came to realize and understand more that when one is to attain holiness one is not freed from suffering, but on the contrary one is tested more and more. I would like to see that I and my brothers in the Congregation would be able to share in the holiness that she possessed, and to take the difficulties as part of our growing in holiness.

Let me close with my deepest sympathy and condolences to the family, and unite with the whole Filipino people in believing that she is indeed in heaven with our Creator. "



The Assumptionists at the funeral Mass and procession

Brothers Alex Castro and Ricky Montanes were lucky enough to get entrance tickets to the Manila Cathedral from the Religious of the Assumption for the funeral Mass along with the cream of the Filipino people. **Ed Molina** could also find his way in and accompanied the funeral procession through the boulevards of the capital. This is what he reports:

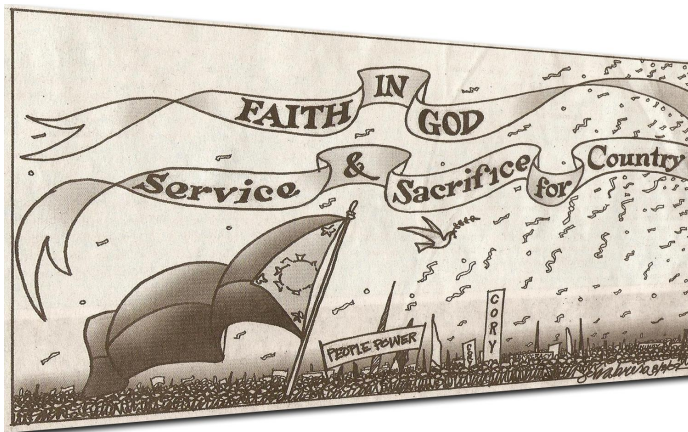
The Requiem mass"

« People were abuzz around the Manila Cathedral area as early as 5 in the morning and we arrived. The police, media and coordinators were busy setting things up. We stood there looking around, resigned to stay out in the rain for lack of tickets to go inside the Cathedral. But a few minutes before the mass, a friend gave us extra ticket and we were able to get in.

The atmosphere inside the Cathedral was equally busy, if not more. But once the celebration started, a subdued even solemn feeling pervaded the whole place. The liturgy was beautiful and respectful, with appropriate silent moments to convey dignity and solemnity. The music and songs were fitting and the eulogies were moving but not overly done.

There were many highlights of the celebration but I think one stands out - the homily of Fr. Catalino Arevalo SJ, professor emeritus of Loyola School of Theology and spiritual director to Cory Aquino. I believe he summed up Cory's legacy quite well - strong and lively faith in God, selfless love for the Filipino people, and unyielding courage in the face of adversities.

As the casket of the former president was being taken out of the Cathedral, the faithful was silent and as it passed by the pews lined with religious sisters of different Congregations, the crowd applauded in respect and gratitude to this great woman - an icon of democracy, a mother to the Filipino people.



The Funeral procession

While the funeral Mass was underway inside the Cathedral, the crowd was swelling in the plaza outside. The crowd unflinchingly stayed despite the pouring rain. There were groups of children from urban poor communities, there were families carrying their children to witness the historical event, there were people from all walks of life wanting to say goodbye and pay their last respect to Cory.

As soon as the funeral cortege left the Cathedral, people followed behind the bier flanked by four honor guards. People who came by busloads from different provinces and suburbs of Manila lined the whole 22-kilometer route to the cemetery. Many were wearing yellow and flashing the "L" sign for "Laban" (fight), the signature color and sign of Cory's campaign against the Marcos dictatorship.

It was People Power over again. People have not seen this since the 1983 funeral of Ninoy Aquino, Ninoy was the opposition leader and husband of Cory Aquino who was gunned down at the airport as he returned to the Philippines to run against the dictator Ferdinand Marcos who had imposed military rule for more than 20 years.

The memory of oppression and hard-earned freedom and democracy were awakened in the hearts of the Filipinos. The younger generations shared and witness the atmosphere of solidarity and the love for the freedom that they often take for granted. One sentiment arose from within the hearts of those who took part in the funeral and those who watched it attentively from their homes - Hindi kami papayag malupig muli! Hindi na! (We will not allow ourselves to be oppressed again! Never again!) »



Fr. **Bernard Holzer** was standing outside the Cathedral, in the rain, with the thousands of people from the slums of Manila:

"Hundreds of families from the depressed areas were standing there in the rain to say a last farewell to their beloved President. It was like a yellow tide (the signature colour of the companions of Cory Aquino); there were also t-shirts, umbrellas, banners, balloons and headscarfs featuring Cory. They were applauding to the entry of the Opposition MPs and booing to that of the actual President leading party. They were strong and loud. Others were silent while holding a lit candle.

At the beginning of the Mass, I moved in front of one of these giant screens to follow the celebration. People were silent and moved. Some were weeping when hearing the deeds of the "hero" or the "saint" ("Joan of Arc and Mother Teresa combined") they had lost, cramped one against the other under a sea of umbrellas while the neighbouring streets were flooded with 15 centimetres of water."

One could feel the emotions of the people: they were remembering their unity behind the overthrow of the former dictator and their hope for a better future... How will this event influence the results of the next presidential elections next May? I personally had a thought for the partners of CCFD (French Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development) who had fought the dictatorship and were put to prison and tortured. My tribute and my prayer were also in their honour."

Meanwhile, in front of the TV set...

Frs Gilles Blouin and Jean-Marie Chuvi Adubangho followed the celebration in front of the TV, as well as the retreatants in Baguio preparing for their first profession or their entrance into novitiate. **Jean-Marie Chuvi** gives his impressions:

« *You reap what you sow* as they say. The funeral of the late President Corazon Aquino was for me an opportunity to know more about herself. Indeed she appears as a great leader, a woman of strong character, strong will, courageous, and a woman of faith. *Faith in God and in the country* was her political motto.

The memorable funeral service she was offered first at the De la Salle University and later at the Manila Cathedral was a great honor to her from the church. After that, the long funeral procession (9 hours) from the Manila Cathedral to the Manila Memorial Park showed the respect she earned from the majority of government leaders, the military, diplomat officials and the ordinary people, many of whom accompanied her remains walking up to the burial sight, shouting "Cory, Cory, Cory". One could see how she was really loved by the people. It was really impressive.

I think the late President left a deep impression on the Filipino people as a democracy fighter and as a social justice advocate. Her good example is also a model for me, and it is just right that she received such a great honor during her funeral for indeed she deserved it as the sign of people's gratitude to her. *May she rest in eternal peace.* »



Other Assumptionists present at the Manila Memorial Park

At the cemetery, the postulants were honoured in being chosen as marshals. They arrived at the Manila Memorial Park at Sucat, Parañaque in Metro Manila at 11:30 am together with other seminarians and nuns. At 2:30 pm, braving intermittent rains, they marched to the burial site to secure the place from the crowd of mourners and to give the Aquino family, close relatives and friends private and solemn moments with the icon of democracy.

At 7:30 pm, the funeral cortege reached the Park. Military honors began thereafter including a 21-gun salute for their former Commander-in-Chief. The people in the Park, including the postulants, numbering to almost 20,000, fell silent, watched in awe and shed tears as President Cory's brown casket was slowly placed in the tomb.

They left the Park at around 9 pm, physically exhausted but proud to have served their country's first woman-president and a grieving but grateful Filipino nation. So long, Tita Cory! Goodbye and thank you very much!

« **Eugene Jangao:** "Marshalling for Pres. Aquino's burial is the greatest achievement I have ever done as a Filipino. I was moved by the way she draws Filipinos to be united and proud again as citizens of their country even at her very last moment. I can say that her life is an expression of selfless service to people and total surrender to God!"

« **Jay Hector Lituañas:** "Serving as one of the marshals in Tita Cory's burial is such a great honor and an once-in-a-lifetime achievement! When she was entombed, as the military band played the stirring melody of the patriotic song, "Bayan Ko", and as the cannons fired the first salvos, I found myself flashing the "Laban" sign and tears started to roll down from my cheeks. That is a great moment in my life - to be again a witness to the unfolding of history! »

Cristopher Quiñal: "It is a great privilege for me to be part of the official marshal during Pres. Cory's burial. This simple task brings me joy and pride to have participated in one of the great events of my country. This is something I can tell my nephews and nieces that I was therein that historic moment."



After Evening Prayer, the whole Adveniat community got together in front of the TV in order to watch the arrival of the funeral procession at the Manila Memorial Park and so to participate in the burial ceremony. It was truly a memorable day for the Filipino nation.

Thank You, thank You Lord!

A prayer by Cory Aquino

*In pain and sorrow
I have never been alone
Many thanks, dear Lord!*

*A heart full of love
In times of deep affliction
This I pray for, Lord.*

*In much hurt and pain
Yet my heart is not bleeding
Thank You, thank You Lord!*

*She has been among others the assassination of
her husband "Ninoy" and seven aborted coups
during her presidency...*



August 12th, 2009

@: aa.manila@yahoo.com
www.assumptionists.ph

