

OPINION & FEATURES

Making the transformation

YES, it is possible—transformation, that is.

The Moral Force Movement initiated by Supreme Court Chief Justice Reynato Puno was welcomed by many including lawmakers and aspiring presidential candidates, in the hope to help voters choose wisely for the 2010 national elections.

“Transformational leaders,” is what the country needs, Puno said, and many agreed that choosing the right leaders is crucial. In a country that is mostly divided by politicking, poverty and corruption, the Philippines needs individuals whose integrity and patriotism remain true in spite of the various temptations

their positions may face.

But before we all go cheering what the movement stands for, we must all remember that all goals and intentions, no matter how true or sincere, needs more than just words. First of all, we should

realize that the big majority of the electorate are the D and E social classes, that are most vulnerable to being exploited by scheming politicians.

The movement should also take the lead in informing and educating the people, on how to set aside personalities who give empty promises during their campaign. This will help the Filipinos understand that choosing the wrong individual to lead the country will result to another six years of transactional politics that only breed corruption.

Will transformation really be possible?

There is no denying that many have tried similar movements in the past, will little, if any success. Of course, there are those who

see this as a passing advocacy, especially when some think that the Chief Justice must clean his own backyard—to ensure speedy and inexpensive delivery of justice.

Still, we should this movement as a glimmer of hope that yes, someday and possibly in the 2010 election, our country will be run by leaders who will only have one vision in mind—transformation. (AJP/Press)



EDITORIAL

The 5-finger prayer

SOME of you may have received this beautiful prayer from emailing friends. I got this from Aisha Tadiar, a lovely musical artist, with the note, “This is so neat. I have never heard this before. This is beautiful—and it is surely worth making the 5-finger prayer a part of our lives.” Let me do my good turn this Lenten season by reproducing the prayer, for you to savor and bear in mind and heart as you kneel down in prayer, as you drive to work and to the supermarket, and while playing solitaire in your computer. May you have a Happy Easter!

FROM THE STANDS

Domini M. Torrevillas

The 5-finger prayer

1. Your thumb is nearest you. So begin your prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest to remember. To pray for our loved one is, as C.S. Lewis once said, a ‘sweet duty.’

2. The next finger is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and ministers. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right direction. Keep them in your prayers.

3. The next finger is the tallest finger. (My note here: yes, the dirty sign finger). It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion. They need God’s guidance.

4. The fourth finger is our ring finger. Surpris-

ing to many is the fact that this is our weakest finger, as any piano teacher will testify. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble or in pain. They need your prayers day and night. You cannot pray too much for them.

5. And lastly comes our little finger—the smallest finger of all which is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. As the Bible says, “The least shall be the greatest among you.” Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself. By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs will be put into proper perspective and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively.

If you decide to send this to a friend, you might brighten someone’s day! Pass this on to someone special. I did—to you who has just read this.

Samira Gutoc, an inspiring young Muslim woman of Marawi City who spearheaded the organization of the Young Moro Professionals, sent us this appeal for the Abu Sayyaf to release the remaining International Red Cross workers in Sulu. She writes, “In this season of Lent, we Muslims appeal to the Abu Sayyaf to uphold true faith by releasing the ICRC remaining kidnapped victims. The Young Moro Professionals state: 1. We condemn those who victimize people who only wish to help the victims of the conflict in the Bangsamoro; 2. We equally condemn atroci-

ties regardless of who the victims are and who the perpetrators are; 3. We especially condemn the victimization of humanitarian aid workers; 4. The kidnapping of aid workers will only hurt our people who desperately need the help of the outside community; 5. Any act of banditry against aid workers can only serve the interests of the enemies of the Bangsamoro.”

A good number of tennis players are feeling like they’re scoring love sets in the courts. That’s because the tennis courts they’ve been playing at for many years, are being torn down to give way to other projects. One big loss to the sport has been the conversion of the Rizal Racket Club in Pasig to a cockpit, can you believe that? Cock-fighting is pure and simple gambling—but since it rakes in more revenue for the provincial government, and tennis does not, the governor and provincial council turned the sport complex to a gambling den. And to think that many of our national and promising tennis players used to play in the courts there.

The UP Diliman Tennis Club members are also feeling the doldrums, as they have been given notice to vacate the courts. The courts have been there for more than 50 years, and been used by the UP varsity players for practice, as well as by academicians, businessmen, government officials, geologists and mathematicians. The question is, where will they play if engineering buildings are constructed in the lots?

In Pasig City, the city courts are reported to be turned into a mini-mini golf course. The members of the Eusebio Tennis Club are petitioning Mayor Bobby Eusebio to please, not go ahead

with the plan. Their question, like the UP Diliman tennis players is, where will they play? Many of the players are retirees, and you can appreciate their enthusiasm and energy as they spent their mornings hitting and running after the ball as though they were only 40 years old. They host dual tournaments with the clubs of Bulacan, Alabang, Philippine Columbian Club, Baguio City, Manila and Mandaluyong.

Tony Hernandez is president, and Dennis Pekila, vice-president, of the club that’s nearly 50 years old, and many of whose members are retired accountants, architects, electrical engineers, bankers, lawyers, businessmen and former OFWs. Probably the oldest and a favorite is Jaime Salvador, who is in his 80s. Then there are the younger ones—Cesar Hilario, Emile Guevara, Ernie Cruz, Jovel Francisco, Jun Almenares, Romy Baysa, Cris Norona, Mao Murillo, Ed Martin. A neurosurgeon plays there—Dr. Norman Bitanga. A doctor Balikbayan from Baltimore, Jaime Punzalan, spends his vacation at the courts.

Couples have fun playing against one another—Roger and Suzie Gador, Rene and Fannie de Guzman, Bing and Lorena Reambonanza, Mel and Evelyn Mejia, Tony and Rosie Hernandez, and Virgilio and Susan Berame.

And the ladies? Why, if the Eusebio tennis courts are gone, where will they play? They don’t want to play mahjong or grow old doing nothing. They include Anie Hernandez (who plays at Forest Hills in New York), Ella Boneta, Lin Ramos, Lota Santos, Eva Abella, Apol Macarono and Trinity Gatus.

Calling Mayor Bobby. (Philstar.com)

Believing in forever

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

A BLESSED Lenten observance to all. As we take time out from our daily cares and focus on the spiritual side of things, I’d like to dwell on the homily delivered last February by Fr. Emmanuel “Nono” Alfonso, S.J., at the wedding Mass for my son Conrad and his bride Myra Mansala, a lovely bank executive from Hagonoy.

Fr. Nono heads the Jesuit Communications Ministry and occasionally pinch-hits as host of the popular *Doctor Love* late-night counseling over dzMM.

As MM. Conrad and Myra were about to exchange vows and profess eternal love in sickness and in health, in poverty and riches, the priest congratulated them. For as he put it, “in this day and age, when we hear many married couples separating, families crumbling... what you are about to do is an act of courage because you are going

against an ongoing trend in the world.”

He called their decision “an act of faith, rising above your fears and your doubts, as well as an act of hope, a promise towards the future, uncertain though it may be.”

Fr. Nono added: “In this single heroic act, you celebrate what is most divine in the human: our capacity to commit our freedom, our very selves towards the future.” He said that the marrying couple reminds all of us of “what is most sacred, most special to our humanity,” and they deserve our thanks for “edifying” all of us.

Going to the core of his work as representative of the Church—which is to offer advice to the newlyweds—Fr. Nono noted that the *Doctor Love* callers included spouses of overseas workers having problems with their loved ones abroad, and local folks who have fallen out of love with their second or third live-in partners and currently enamored with a new one.

He said similar calls would

come night after night, “painting a dark picture of how people look at commitment in this day and age.”

Whatever happened to the vows couples make to one another, “for richer, for poorer... till death do us part?” he asked and paraphrased the title of John C. Haughey’s famous book, “Does anyone still believe in forever?”

Ultimately, he mused, the question is: “What kind of a society is formed when promises, as they say, are made to be broken?”

The priest noted that according to the papal encyclical *Familiaris Consortio*, the first task of the family is to form a community of persons, which begins with the couple who, in marriage, become one flesh.

Only after the couple becomes a communion of persons do they open to the broader community of the family. But he also noted the encyclical’s emphasis: marriage requires two necessary qualities—unity and indissolubility. In marriage, he said, two individuals were

united not only physically but emotionally and spiritually—so that, people often note, as the years go by, a couple begin to look like each other, and can also guess what’s in the mind of the other.

This unity in marriage, he said, was needed if two people are to achieve any growth and depth in their marriage. If one partner’s time is partial, if his energies are divided, if his spirit is distracted, “no love can blossom.”

On the other hand, indissolubility is another word for fidelity and it flows from the gospel command that whomsoever God has put together, no man can put asunder, Fr. Nono said.

But he noted that today’s youth often frown upon this notion of being stuck with another person for the rest of their lives as limiting their freedom. And yet, there is no other way in which a relationship can grow and deepen except in an atmosphere of stability and constancy.

“No one can commit one’s life and love to anyone who will not be around tomorrow,” he stressed, adding that love takes time to mature. “Therefore, love can only grow with the promise

of the future: that a person will love his or her spouse through thick and thin, in sickness and in health, come what may.”

Thus, these two qualities of marriage, said Fr. Nono, “were not mere commandments imposed from above or utopian ideals exacted by the Church.” Rather, they are “practical and necessary,” as “real love cannot happen, grow or deepen any other way.” But when love is achieved this way, in unity and fidelity, “then truly, the love between husband and wife becomes the manifest sign of God’s steadfast love for his chosen people, and Christ’s love for the Church.”

The priest admitted he was wrong to say that the grim picture painted by *Doctor Love* callers was the dominant situation of married life in the country, for there were couples who have remained true to their marriage vows despite the vicissitudes of life.

“Perhaps not as outspoken as the radio callers, but they’re around,” he said, and this may be the reason the Pope, in his encyclical, calls on these couples to testify to the world that such marital love is not only possible but real.

He then cited the moving story of Wawel Mercado (son of my good friends, the late PR/advertising giant Tony Mercado and writer Monina Allarey-Mercado) and his wife Mila.

After the birth of their first child, Mila went into coma. When she recovered, she was paralyzed and couldn’t even talk. And yet, for more than 10 years now, Wawel has stayed on, taking care of her and their lone child.

Fr. Nono said this entailed so much sacrifice from Wawel, but his love for his wife has become “a testament to the world that love is stronger and more powerful than his wife’s illness or his loneliness, or the little family’s struggle for a normal life.”

Indeed, this couple’s love for each other, no matter what, is “a real sign of God’s love, of which, as St. Paul put it, no one can separate us, ‘neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers.’”

Fr. Nono’s final admonition to Conrad and Myra: “Unity and Fidelity. Let us pray that as the years go by, you may become more united and faithful to one another and with God. Amen.” (Inquirer.net)

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