



Razor's Edge

By
Joe Mari Mercader
Executive Editor
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"If I Win I Will Give You Justice!"

NEW YORK, NY Aug 05 (PinoyGlobal) - After the late Pres. Corazon "Cory" Aquino delivered a speech in Manila Hotel at the height of the heated campaign to pull down dictator Marcos, one of my avid listeners Leny Lantin, daughter of the late Judge Gregorio Lantin of Manila, called out to Cory: "Cory, Cory! Joe Mercader is here! Cory turned around and the crowd of thousands in the lobby parted to let me approach her. She then took my hands, and looking at everybody, raised them half way and said, "I know what they did to you. If I win I will give you justice!"

Cory was referring to my commentaries at DZEC radio station of Iglesia Ni Cristo, in Quezon City, that was abruptly stopped on the instigation of the Palace through then Press Secretary Cendana. I clearly remember her first call telling me to see her after my program. Her house was at Time Street just a block away.

She told me people have been calling her that I could be salvaged for critically castigating the Marcos regime on the air. Impliedly, they meant I was virtually playing the "Russian Roulette" with my bold commentaries. Maybe so, but I assured her I was not foolhardy.

"I was just testing his claim that he dismantled martial law and supplanted it with amendment 5 that supposedly gave us back our freedoms," I told Cory. What dictator Marcos did not say was that the substitute government that was ran by presidential decrees was even harsher because for criticizing public officials alone the penalty was death sentenced. It was a fraud!

Cory asked me "Joe Mari, are you not afraid? Why are you doing this?" I answered her that "If your husband who was somebody was not afraid to die, why should I worry? Marcos will not commit the same mistake of making a martyr out of a mere radio commentator like me, mom."

True to her words, I was appointed head of Tourism for the East Coast based in New York in May 1986 making me the first official appointed by Cory at the Philippine Consulate on 5th Avenue. In a brief dialogue before my appointment, she told me "I was looking for you four days ago because I wanted you to be undersecretary of Tourism, but you were nowhere to be found. My Secretary already appointed somebody I don't even know him," she said.

I missed that opportunity to be undersecretary. From there, I could have jumped to Congress. Inwardly, I really wanted to run in the next elections and who knows reach the apex of my political career. With her unqualified support my chances of winning was as great as Cory's popularity was phenomenal.

A few days after her election, Nene Pimentel (now senator) whom she appointed to the department of Local Governments as Secretary, said that Cory was looking for me to appoint me in her government. Cory's daughter Balsy, also contacted me. The rest is public knowledge. I assumed my position in New York upon arriving here in May 1986 a month after she became president.

For this I am extremely grateful to Cory. I was able to transplant my family to America. My daughter with her

Belgian husband gave me two gorgeous grandchildren who now fill up the void of emptiness left by the death of my beloved wife Liuva, two years ago. They live in their penthouse condominium on 5th Avenue. My son is doing quite well too and lives in his own house in Queens.

May God in His infinite kindness take Corazon Aquino in the bosom of His heart as he does with good souls!

Cory was such a wonderful person symbolizing national unity. Even her sworn political enemies like the Marcos family crossed the big divide of their differences to bid her goodbye when she died. Not surprisingly, the Aquinos accepted their sincere condolences offered by the former first lady Imelda Marcos in behalf of herself and her family.

In accepting their condolences, Sen. Noynoy Aquino said that even when his mother was still alive, they already talked of reconciling with the Marcos children. He said that Cory discussed the subject with him and his siblings before. Really, it's about time they end that burning hate for the late dictator's family, which only rupture painful memories not conducive to unity.

Christian forgiveness is now in order. Not that the Marcos family asked for it because they have taken their adversity stoically and with dignity, but this well of kindness should spring from the bottom of the Aquinos' heart.

Noynoy recalled that Imie Marcos was his colleague in Congress for three terms. On some issues they were together, at other times they were on opposite sides, as dedicated legislators should be when the interest of the nation is at stake.

Condoling the Aquino family for its matriarch's passing is acknowledgement that she turned up our fallen democracy into a vibrant government. Ironically, this marvelous legacy she left for successors to follow has been hideously soiled by their unbridled arrogance, abuse of power and full-scale corruption while the nation reels in poverty.

Misgovernance led to broken families with the wife or husband philandering abroad or divorcing his/her partner in the Philippines to marry a foreigner or a documented Filipino to acquire citizenship in the host country.

Whatever their reason/s, nevertheless, they were forced to leave the country because jobs were and still are next to impossible to get in the Philippines. Corollary to that are the broken homes that come as a consequence of spouses separating. Because of dire poverty children turn to a life of crime and shame (drugs and prostitution) to earn money for the family.

And while the poor grovel in abject poverty (gumagapang sa hirap) the super rich cronies on the other hand, add insult to injury by flaunting their ill-gotten wealth with the president denying it with tongue in cheeks. Is this the prospect of Filipinos under the Arroyo government?

Hopefully, by accepting the magnificent example initiated by the Aquinos and Marcos's, a new path is paved for political demagogues to follow. Politics does not have to be a fight to the death for contentious foes. It should be a chance to worship sportsmanship. Graciously accepting defeat should be the primordial principle in any contest.

As we have seen in the death of a legend, Cory Aquino, or anybody else, life is short and meaningless. No matter how rich or famous you are death is a persistent companion. Lamentably, people's memory is so warped they easily forget what you did for them. Whatever platitudes they say on your grave or death anniversary they say it matter-of-factly for public consumption.

But behind this morbid reality, there is the silver lining of a respite. There are moments when the soul glows radiantly, displaying intrinsic love and understanding for others. This is evident when political adversaries commiserate with the family of those who suffered a great loss. Our differences should be regarded as those of siblings that never lose track of their true feelings for brothers, sisters and vice versa.

Politicians have really the same goals: to serve the nation. What deteriorates this ideal is the craving for power and wealth not to mention inflate one's ego. By washing away bitter animosities and passions for mundane desires, they can achieve wonders for the people.

Cory's memory should blaze the trail to be focused on goodness. Let them start now and not procrastinate for this chance comes but once in a lifetime!