



Razor's Edge

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Chief Justice Puno Could Be Better Prez

NEWYORK, N.Y., January 22 (PinoyGlobal) - Trivia: If stoning to death adulterers is applied in the Philippines as they do in Iran, our Congress will be a cemetery and selling stones will be a more lucrative business than real estate. For one thing, the entire government will be a very lonely place!

Years ago, before I interviewed the late Sen. Mike Tamano in my television show, he jokingly said, "Christians are hypocrites. In public they appear devoted husbands as if they do not cheat on their wives, but behind the scenes they have many *queridas*. We Muslims have many wives because we marry all our *queridas*!" On this, Aristotle had the last say, "It is harder to fight pleasure than to fight emotion."

Truly, assumptions are the termites of relationships. For instance our politicians go to church and receive the Holy Communion yet they are rotten as public officials - peddling influence, stealing government funds and even ordering the killing of adversaries without remorse.

So much for preliminaries. True to the belief that in the Philippines politics is the main industry, as early as now the political shift is already grinding full speed-over a year ahead of time. A totally apolitical person could suddenly find himself the center of malicious charges merely because he is suspected as having intentions to run for president. The onslaught of Palace sycophants could be inordinately horrible. A man may not even indicate desire to run for president, but because he happens to be famous he is character assassinated mercilessly to stymie his ambition. It is simply obscene!!!

A case in point is Supreme Court Chief Justice Reynato Puno who gained tremendous approval from the people for his unbending stand on fundamental issues that offends Malacanang. The lapdogs of GMA literally went ballistic trying to soil his unblemished persona. He has suddenly become the lightning rod of criticisms and personal attacks as they have been doing on Sen. Manny Villar. Congressmen, in particular, have been disparaging him as a probable presidential candidate when he has not declared any intention nor is he aligned with any political party of consequence. They claim that he has no business joining politics because of the separation of powers. Of course, that is basic that he cannot mingle in politics for as long as he is a member of the bench.

Others say that if he nurtures the ambition to challenge Gloria in the polls, his independence as a member of the judiciary will be compromised. Former Congressman Jacinto Paras emphatically alleged "that unseating Pres. Arroyo before her term expires in 2010 may be the ultimate objective of forces working to depict Puno as the target of a non-existent impeachment move against him." Most probably, he had in mind Edsa II that snatched the presidency from ex-president Joseph "Erap" Estrada and forked it over to then Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo who was just too eager to step into her boss's shoes. What Paras et al assume only gives substance to a hallucination that is completely detached from any form of reality. As we Filipinos say that is all "guni guni!"

The core of their unfounded apprehension is that Puno could handily preempt Gloria's chances with his impeccable credentials and wisdom. Or if Malacanang

succeeds in amending the fundamental election law Puno's putative candidacy could ruin her plans to perpetuate in office. That to me is the long and short of their whining.

Firstly, the Chief Justice has not indicated any such interest. In fact he vehemently denies any intention to join politics. Because his detractors are rabid politicians notorious for double talk does not mean the Supreme Court chief is like them that his denial should not be taken at face value.

Second, even assuming that he aspires to run for president and fights any contender including Madam Arroyo (which by the way, would be an unconstitutional attempt on her part to defy the term limit after 2010), he (Puno) is not in estoppels by any prohibition or restriction. By then he shall have been a civilian after his retirement in May. As a private citizen he has as much right to run for any elective office just like Gloria, Noli De Castro, Erap Estrada or the standard bearer of any political party. And speaking of qualification, he is more prepared and competent than anybody to be president. His experience as Chief Justice in which prudence, wisdom, decorum and untainted integrity are indispensable hallmarks of the prestigious position makes him highly qualified to aspire for president. In contrast notorious politicians, or in the language of Cory Aquino, "trapos" (old rags), in the arena, will only tarnish the highest office of the land.

As there are Palace puppets in Congress downgrading Puno, there are also staunch believers that he is highly qualified to be president after Madam Arroyo. These are stalwarts in the House of Representatives like Mito Magsaysay, Juan Edgardo Angara and Matias Defensor to mention a few. Specifically, they vouch support for him saying that he (Puno) is "best qualified with his proven integrity, wisdom and hard work" among many accolades they heaped on him.

In referring to the Chief Justice, Congressman Elpidio Barzaga, a fanatic of Gloria, lamely argued that "as a member of the judiciary he should not get into politics." He stressed the "possibility that a member of the judiciary might sacrifice his impartiality, probity and integrity in his work if he plans to enter politics."

Barzaga is mouthing nonsense – merely because one is on the bench it does not follow that he will prostitute his integrity and untainted reputation in anticipation of joining the ranks of politicians. One can be a politician and still be honest if he wants to. Chief Justice Puno is such a man for he is the embodiment of those qualities rarely found in trapos today. If we want to save the country, men like Chief Justice Puno or Sen. Manny Villar Jr. are pillars who could formulate the panacea for all the ills caused by mal-administration that are plaguing the nation.

Let freedom ring. Let Madam Arroyo exit as mandated by the Constitution after her term limit expires in 2010. Enough of this administration that bred nothing but poverty, calamities and institutionalized corruption as it was never done before! An administration that cuddled cabinet members like Joc Joc Bolante and the incompetent Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo, who allowed Consul Gen. Cecile Rebong to pay \$10,000 a month at Trump Towers for her luxurious living style until Filipino Times exposed her and she had to leave.

Razor's Edge adheres to the adage that when decency protests, silence is sin. Hence its reaction to issues affecting the nation.

Gloria! Tama Na! Sobra Na!

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