

The bell tolls for thee...Mr. President (Duterte)

Written by Manuel Caballero
Saturday, 03 December 2016 21:18



CONSUL GENERAL THERESA DIZON-DE VEGA



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A research source says “for whom the bell tolls” is an expression from a sermon by John Donne.

Donne says that because we are all part of mankind, any person’s death is a loss to all of us: “Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

In light of the above, and the over 4,000 suspected drug traffickers and addicts who had been killed in extrajudicial manner, the bell tolls also for thee, Mr. President (Duterte).

‘Dark times’

I’m sorry to start with a gloomy observation that there seems something very wrong in the state of leadership in the native country, which prompted the Ombudsman, Conchita Carpio-Morales, to say in a recent scathing speech, before the UP Law Alumni, that the bothersome problem of the Philippines today is that its leaders do not know how to detect what is right and what is wrong.

The justice criticized President Duterte for extrajudicial killings.

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In answer to a question, she said she could not categorically say whether Mr. Duterte will be spared or indicted due to EJK.

She announced, though, that investigation of the President was ongoing for possible misconduct for allegedly hiring ghost employees when he was mayor of Davao City.

She said the country was going through “dark times” and needs to go back to basics and look to two of the Ten Commandments, including Thou Shall Not Kill and Thou Shall Not Steal.

Former President Fidel Ramos resigned as special envoy to China.

He warned President Duterte to watch his words and to manage the executive department in an orderly manner.

Thousands of Filipinos staged another rally against President Ferdinand Marcos’ burial and against President Duterte for allowing the burial to happen by aiding the Marcos family.

The Catholic Churches in the Diocese of Legazpi (Albay) and Dagupan (Pangasinan) read powerful letters in all the parishes during mass last Sunday condemning the killings under the Duterte Administration.

In Legazpi, the bells will ring at 9 p.m. in all the diocese churches each night for President Duterte to stop the killings and, instead, give those people a chance to rehabilitate.

The same is true in Dagupan, but bells are to ring at 6 p.m.

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It is expected that more parishes around the country will ring their church bells for the President to stop EJK.

Powerful and well-thought-of letter

We share with readers excerpts from the pastoral letter read around Legazpi City.

“...Because of these killings, we are sadly witnessing a growing callousness among our people, accepting these as a fact of life; for they say, these persons were after all drug addicts, and therefore they deserved to die! What is happening to us? Have we become so heartless that we cannot anymore feel for them, their families and those loved ones they have left behind?

“To you, Mr. President (Duterte) and to our people, we say this:

“We, the Bishop, Clergy, Religious and Lay Leaders of the Diocese of Legazpi are doing our best to help address the drug problem through peaceful and more compassionate ways other than killing. We have started HARONG PAGLAOM (House of Hope), which is a community-based rehabilitation program aimed at providing recovery coaching, spiritual guidance and life skills training to substance users, in collaboration with local government units, particularly the barangays. Through this modest but sincere effort, we not only want to help these returnees, but also assure them that in life there are second chances and the opportunity to do and be better.”

Part of the prayer:

***“...help those who hold power over people
to uphold the rule of law and defend the sanctity of life;
those entrusted with arms to protect and serve,
to act responsibly and respect the rights of all, even criminals.”***

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CONSUL GENERAL DE VEGA: WELCOME BACK TO N.Y.

All of us in the Filipino Reporter, and on my own, welcome our new Consul General in New York and other Northeast States and New England States, Theresa Dizon-de Vega.

ConGen de Vega is a product of UP (bachelor of arts in English) and Ateneo (Law School).

She also studied a graduate degree (master's in literature) in a Canadian university.

She revealed in an interview with Cristina DC Pastor while she was deputy consul general in New York in 2013, she never dreamed of being a diplomat.

She told Cristina she was "pushed" to taking the Foreign Service Career Exams by a retired Filipina diplomat who was a friend of her mother.

Bright that she is, she passed the exams.

We are now stuck with her for the next six years.

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Lol.

I'm sure Fil-Ams here would love her in the same way they loved the previous ConGens.

I have heard and read good and nice things about her.

In the same 2013 interview with Ms. Pastor, then Deputy ConGen de Vega gave some profound observations of the local community.

Q: What's the first thing that surprised you about the (Fil-Am) organizations in New York?

A: The sheer number of activities.

You have a very engaged community here.

Whatever their advocacies, there is engagement.

It may not be engagement along the same line but it's engagement which is important.

It's a community that feels the need to get involved.

You have that here, it's just a matter of maximizing it for a lot of issues and creating venues and platforms for them to explore how far you can go.

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Q: What do you see is the challenge to Filipino-Americans?

A: It's an exciting era for the Filipino-American community.

We're one of the fastest growing ethnic minority groups.

The challenge is how to reflect that in the mainstream, in politics, in policy making, in other fields.

ConGen de Vega will find out that since 2013, there had been some marked changes in our community.

We have a group of young and bright people in the Fil-Am media.

We have involvement in mainstream politics.

We had two Fil-Am candidates in New Jersey, Councilman Jonathan Wong is a Filipino-American and Buddy Deauna for Council of Bergenfield.

(The former lost, but remains a council member. The latter won.)

Council President of Jersey City, Rolando Lavarro Jr., is a Filipino-American.

Two more Filipinos in New Jersey, Atty. Councilman Arvin Amatorio of Bergenfield and Peter Mendonez Jr. of West Windsor, are both Council members in their localities.

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Amatorio runs again next year, while Mendonez will seek the presidency of his Council in January 2017.

(Editor's note: We regret we were all out of town and could not attend last weekend's welcome gathering for the new ConGen. Linda Pelayo and L.P. Pelayo were in Dubai. I was in California.)

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