

## **Thank you, President Cory**

By now, most, if not all of us are aware that our beloved former President Cory Aquino passed away on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 after several months of battling colon cancer. In death, even more than when she was alive, President Aquino has been hailed as a hero, a saint, a symbol of democracy, and a mother of the Filipino nation.

President Cory no doubt deserves these accolades and more.

So much has been written about how she brought back democracy to the Philippines after several years of Marcos dictatorship through the internationally-celebrated bloodless people power revolution. So much has been written not only about how she survived seven coup attempts during her administration, but also how she missed huge opportunities for implementing genuine and long-lasting societal reforms.

She was not perfect, but no human being is.

I had a brief personal encounter with President Cory during the 1985 snap election campaign when she came to our school and I was able to shake her hand. Wearing her trademark bright yellow dress and a disarming smile, I found her to be remarkably simple. However, President Cory was a simple woman who lived an extraordinary life. Although born with the proverbial silver spoon being the scion of a wealthy clan, she faced and survived a series of trials, each of which could have caused a major physical, emotional and spiritual breakdown for anyone. However, during and after each trial, she plodded on, her faith and dignity remaining very much intact throughout.

Her life was filled with paradoxes.

She was belittled by a dictator and his ilk, but emerged to help make great things possible. She wielded power with great humility. She exercised wisdom in admitting to her inexperience. She exhibited strength by recognizing her weaknesses.

In death, she inspired an entire nation to rethink its values.

President Cory was a shining example of the Benedictine motto, *Ora et Labora*, or “Prayer and Work”. No doubt the Benedictine sisters of her grade school alma mater, St. Scholastica’s College, are very proud of the fact that President Cory reflected the very same values that they wished to inculcate in all their students and beyond. President Cory’s piety is not only legendary, it was truly lived and practiced. This was clearly her greatest source of strength.

Cliché as it may sound, President Cory's legacy will, and should live on.

The outpouring of love and expressions of sympathy over her death were truly impressive and astounding. One can only hope and pray that this overwhelming show of collective mourning will eventually translate into a full manifestation of national unity and pride, much like the historic people power revolution of 1986.

Meanwhile, we can continue to honor President Cory's memory by emulating her life of prayer and work, humility and courage. Let her shining example serve as a reminder that each of us is capable of greatness, as long as we recognize that greatness comes from something that is bigger than ourselves. I have always believed that the Philippines is very much blessed due to, and by the strong faith of its people. In life, as well as in death, President Cory exemplified this fact to the entire world.

Thank you, President Cory, for making us proud to be Filipinos. May you rest in peace with our Creator.

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