

- A layman's critical observation of the pompous display of churchmen's wealth.

## THOSE PAPAL KNIGHTS

A very amusing sight to remember is to witness those so-called Knights of St. Dolphy or Ladies of Sta. Chichay, during one of those religious processions or ceremonies, or the Christ the King October all-male procession, when these papal knights are in full regalia.

There you see them, these pillars of society, these professional Catholics (to distinguish from us inconspicuous ones), saintly Catholics (who probably pay ₱20 to their maids or cheat their employes of their wages, or the government in their income tax, while going to daily mass and communion), with their holier-than-thou airs, strutting, like peacocks, with their funny hats, black napoleonic uniforms, red sash across their chest, black capes, and swords on their shoulders.

It's a never-to-be-forgotten sight: looking very much as if they were candidates for canonization; with their shiny swords on their rigid shoulders and gloved hands, they remind me of Tony Ferrer ready to tangle with Joseph Estrada or Fernando Poe in some super colossal Filipino Western (!) production.

Is it a mere coincidence that the Popes have almost always conferred these privileges on the rich? The only knight I remember who was not rich was the late Jesse Paredes. The papal decorations are given for services rendered to the church. What services, for instance? Giving a few hundred pesos to some orphanage, perhaps, or a thousand to the construction of a church, while miserable squatters beside the church starve. But these

papal awardees don't care. "The poor," they moan piously, striking their breasts like the Pharisees, "ay, the poor, I pity them naman — they smell but never mind, they'll get a great reward in heaven because they suffer and suffering is good for the soul." Giving a few hundred pesos to the poor (accompanied by the ubiquitous photographers naturally) while they hypocritically spend hundreds at the most fashionable hotels for a single dinner or their wives and daughters splashing thousands for evening dresses. Whited-sepulchres indeed!

Why can't these papal knights just wear a medal or something similar instead of wearing that ridiculous outfit? And why do Popes almost always, if not invariably always, give these decorations to the wealthy? Or is it that the Church — including our cardinals and bishops — is always on the side of the rich and the powerful?

I haven't heard of Manda Elizalde and his wife getting a papal decoration and yet

I think Manda and his wife are the only real Christians (as defined by St. Paul) in the entire Philippines. Without exceptions of course.

Also, why is it that I've never seen the cardinal or our bishops ride in a bus or a jeepney? Are they afraid to lose their diamond-studded pectorals and rings? Why not sell those stones and give the money to the orphans? Christ never wore onyx rings.

The papal knights give generously to the church as insurance for heaven, but they are the type who will not give a square meter of land to their tenants, who will charge usurious interests for lending money, or will not pay decent wages and retirement pay to their employes or teachers. And yet they are rewarded by the Pope. And they display their hilarious Marinduque's Moriones costumes at these useless processions. How silly can you get?

Who gives their names to the Pope? Probably, the Apostolic Delegate whose

pictures, with the usual cocktail in hand, appear, with the rich and the malakas and the nouveau rich, in the society pages.

One question to the Church and the Pope: Why

can't you go back to the poverty of St. Francis of Assisi or the humility and simplicity of St. Pope John XXIII? — *WILFRIDO MA. GUERRERO, University of the Philippines, Manila Chronicle.*

## ON REVISING THE CONSTITUTION

While it is the exclusive prerogative of Congress to propose actual constitutional amendments for ratification by the people in a plebiscite, as we did in 1967, it is the right and perhaps the duty of all competent citizens to make studies of amendments which may be proposed to the 1971 Constitutional Convention. — *Senator Arturo M. Tolentino*