

In times of peril...

A Vision of Service

WB Solomon E. Quila (17)

(An Inaugural address during the Public Service of Installation as Worshipful Master of Kalilayan Lodge No. 37 in Lucena City of Wor. Bro. Dr. Solomon E. Quila on Jan. 7, 1967 at the Filemon Perez Temple.)

Very Worshipful Master of Ceremonies, Bishop Evangelista, Very Worshipful Installing Officer, distinguished guests, brethren of the Lodge, ladies and gentlemen:

The sense of undeservingness in me is matched, if it could be matched, by my heartfelt gratitude. By your gracious action, I have been accorded the singular honor of being elected to the highest position within the gift of this venerable Lodge of Master Masons. I do thank you for this honor, or I would, if I find words large enough in gratitude. Well, the penalty for your goodness to me is that you must listen to me today. The penalty for me is that I must pretend to a learning and experience in Masonry that I do not claim. My consolation at the moment is that if I provide you with little sequences of notes, which is all that I can give, you are Mozarts who can promptly compose the true and proper music. So let me give you simple notes on "A Vision for Masonic Service."

Let me begin by sounding a rather unpleasant yet realistic note, namely; that there is a manifest and deliberate secularization in orientation in almost all arenas of human endeavor in the world today. This means that the outlook is predominantly "this wordly", materialistic and alarmingly atheistic. A few minutes given to the watching of television, hearing radio announcements and reading of the dailies will

likely mortify one's mind and soul of the tragedy of our time and age. Without posing them as rationales, let me suggest two things that contributed primarily to the present state of human affairs. First, the World War II which constituted a watershed of moral and spiritual scruples. The morality which is predicated on the philosophy, "to each his own," has crept into the public and private life of the Filipino people, thus resurrecting the cave man's law, "to the mighty goes the spoil," in adherence to the political dictum, "what are we in power for?" Second, is the fact that there is a dearth of leadership in our country. There is a curse of special privileges in public service, a curse which is essentially a denial of Christian ethics, a perversion of democracy and a blight to human goodwill. Somebody has aptly observed that there is a need to give a shot of decency and integrity in the arm of Philippine leadership in order to free itself from the mania of colonial mentality which is a sure road to national shame and dishonor.

Brethren and friends, a time and age such as ours is one of peril as well as opportunity. It is perilous for individuals and institutions which seek to conform to existing norms and mores; those who would blindly follow the old adage, "when in Rome do as the Romans do", instead is modifying it to, "when in Rome do as the Romans ought to

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do".

Conformity has no place in our contemporary social and political setting. Voltaire once said, "Conformity is treason," and to my mind, this is applicable to our day and age.

On the other hand, our age is also one that presents a golden opportunity to carve a name in the granite wall of Philippine history. It took the American Revolution to produce Nathan Hale, the Philippine Revolution to produce Rizal, Bonifacio, Mabini, Burgos, Zamora and Gomez and the Second World War to produce Jose Abad Santos, Vinzons and others. Yes, it takes the Scythian darkness to fully appreciate the radiance of the stars in the firmament. To put it in the words of Thomas Paine, "the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

Let us thank God that we have been called unto Masonic service in these times of peril and opportunity. It is highly significant that it is barely a week ago that we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the death of our foremost Filipino hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, for it seems to me that if we are to cast our hopeful eyes unto the future of human society in general and of Masonry in particular, it must be geared to the vision of one of the greatest Filipino Masons, Dr. Rizal, whose life and works had been manifestly undergirded by Masonic tenets and principles. No amount of gorgery will and can ever drown out the fact that our greatest hero lived and died as a Mason and has beckoned us to a life of unsullied justice, honorable meekness and victorious nationhood. Side by side with the Christian Church, our venerable Lodge like all her sister Lodges are committed not to be mere observers but parti-

cipants in the great drama of life that is being played within the four corners of the globe. Let us keep ourselves always reminded that a chain is as strong only as its weakest link. Each one of us therefore is called upon to strengthen the link that we each represent.

That Masonry is one of the vital arms of human society in pursuing general human welfare needs no argumentation. It is best expressed empirically rather than conceptually. I am proud to be a member of a fraternity which is committed to create an atmosphere of justice, an aura of peace and a bond of fellowship and love among all men. The Christian Mason always bears in mind that this hope of being of service to God, country and people is a product of faith. The central fact of life, faith in God, carries him through the vicissitudes of life. He is never possessed by a sense of complacency. Neither does he succumb to skepticism and despair. Through faith in God, the Mason stands in the stream of time, buffeted by the ill-winds of circumstances but his witness and life is effective and faithful, and he keeps a steady gaze upon the citadel of hope, erected through Masonic tools and implements of labor, and this prompts him all the more to act in the living present, for it is here and now that he is called upon to serve.

Let us go forward then, towards the building of loftier and nobler vision, towards more aggressive mission to break the soil of ignorance among our people, towards a closer partnership with other institutions of society, vanquishing the old Adam of pride, disinterestedness and selfishness, towards being 'sunshined' by God into greater courage and effectiveness all over the world's Masonic Front. △