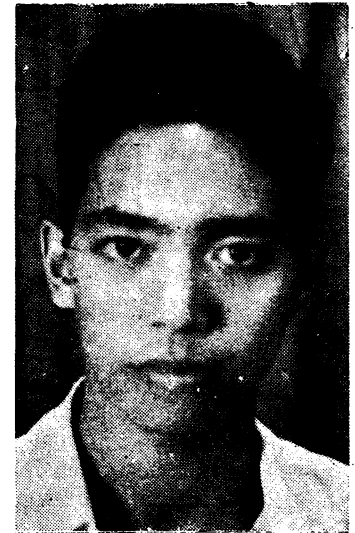


A Negrense's Prayer

By OSCAR D. GRANADA
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OSCAR D. GRANADA

O Just and Merciful God, I humbly commune with Thee at this very moment of our provincial complications. Being deeply and sincerely concerned about the welfare of my co-provincianos, I ask for Thy help and guidance to save us, unfortunate Negrenses, from a future political and moral disaster which will surely bring woe and discontentment to our province. In the past, other people called our sugar land a paradise; now, it is a land that they belittle and despise. We are now condemned as a people, and we are looked upon with indignation and distrust. But you understand, Dear God, that the present impression of other people on us is not due to the misdeeds committed by all. Are we then to be punished as a whole just because of our patience and our great love for peace which prevent us from resorting to unlawful means to check up the evil-mindedness of a few? Is our tolerance the very reason for such a tragic fate to befall on us? Have mercy on us, Dear God. Help us to stand on our feet once more, to face other people and show to them that evils are practiced only by a few, and that we, Negrenses as a whole, cannot be blamed and condemned because of their misdeeds.

From Thy seat above, You clearly see how democracy is working in our province. You see how our individual rights are being cleverly curbed and trampled to dust by a few 'responsibles' who are blinded by their authority and power. And yet You perhaps wonder why we remain at peace!

During those times when

we ought to be given that sacred chance to choose men whom we love to carry on the affairs of our government, You see the occurrence of threats and intimidation exercised by those who are supposed to safeguard the well-being and security of a people. In some of our towns, You see people being deprived of their right of assembly, of their right to express their grievances in front of the many who are eager to hear them. In most of our sugar centrals and sugar plantations, You see men and women curbed by the will of their employers in matters affecting constitutional rights, because they will surely suffer the consequences of unemployment if they don't adhere to their employers' demand. You see our provincial and municipal officials, including the supposed-to-be educators of our province, being directly or indirectly utilized as means to work for the election of some favored candidates when, by law, these same officials can not and must not interfere in that particular phase of national event, except to vote according to their hearty wishes. Above all, You even see that matters in our province are being manipulated

in such manners as to enable men to occupy elective posts even if they are obnoxious on the part of our real, living electorate. And yet You perhaps wonder why we remain at peace!

O God, why do You allow such things to happen to us, peace-loving and democratic people? What have we done to deserve all these undue punishments and misfortunes? Why do other people hate us and look down upon us as low, and call us moral cowards? Are we to continue suffering, living under such a sordid condition just because we do not know how to resort to other means than peaceful ones in our struggle to live in a well-planned, decent and democratic world?

Maybe, Dear God, You have every reason to inflict all these troubles upon us. Perhaps, it is because of our patience and tolerance. But whatever be Your justifiable reasons, God, please extend Thy loving kindness to us all Negrenses. Help us in our peaceful endeavor to live a decent political life; a kind of existence that will be admired by the people around us; a life untainted by dirty or immoral practices; and a life by which those who possess

the authority will no longer use their authority and power for the annihilation of one's individual liberties as provided in our Fundamental Law, a Law in conformity to Thy own. We do not know how to behave radically, like other people in other provinces, in our approach to our serious political problems. We always love peace and we desire to settle our problems in the most justifiable and peaceful manner.

Dear God, as I am to close my prayer, I beg You to be merciful to us, peaceful people of Negros Occidental. Please enable us to live decently and properly once again, as we had been living of yore. Grant strength and wisdom to our beloved Provincial Governor, to our provincial and municipal officials, and to all of us, Negrenses, in our continuous endeavors to act justifiably and morally before Thy sight and before the sight of all people. Grant that all of us will live a clean, upright and honest life so that other people around us will exist in the midst of political liberty and moral prosperity which are the greatest and true marks of a real democratic plan of existence.

All these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, AMEN.

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