

The week Martial Law bade us goodbye

On the day Martial Law bid goodbye to 47,000,000 Filipinos, most of the people were too busy with their livelihoods and lovehoods to wave a hand to it in fond adieu. For it happened to be near noontime on a Saturday, and only the lazy folk who could afford to loll on their sofas, a beer bottle in hand, eyes wavering between the television and the mouth of the bottle, thus received the later morning news of the departure of Martial Law. Judging from their eyes, the television viewers were no reliable indicia of whether or not the people were relieved over the departure of Martial Law or the departure of the liquid in the beer bottles. So we made an away-from-the-spot assessment that week following the announcement that Martial Law, the people's bad friend or the people's good enemy,

the world, therefore the world hates you." So Catholics should not be disturbed if they think they see the early enthusiasm for the Pope fading in the "world." And the media especially will echo the voice of the world, namely that view of life which gives priority to power, pleasure and wealth which feel uncomfortable under the law, prefers the transitory things of this existence and ignores or opposes the things of the next. It is not to be expected that such a weltanschauung would find palatable the hard sayings of Christ's vicar.

We have above described John Paul II as "his own man." He makes his own decisions, not of course without advice and help — he has in fact gone further than any Pope in his insistence on collegiality or sharing his government with the bishops. But his final action is his, as he sees the truth, not overawed by influences within or with-



depending more on the status of one's digestion, was leaving the country. There were no indications as to whether Martial Law would in the

out the Church, not by theologians, liturgists, canonists, the media, "liberals." He is his own man, that is Christ's man.

The present posture of the secular press has been well described in a cartoon which portrays Jeremias, the prophet declaiming to a large crowd. A man viewing the scene says: "I like Jeremias. It is his Jeremiahs that I do not like." Similarly the secular press and the wider "liberal" world, in an out of the Church, are saying "we like Joh Paul II; it is his papal teaching we don't like."

The Catholic people as a whole do not share these misgivings. They are happy to have a strong, clear guide and are confident that his is the way of Christ. They will continue to give him their love, loyalty and respect, as in Poland, Ireland, the USA. The same is certain to take place in the Philippines. ●

—REV. LEO A. CULLUM, S.J.

future come again as Balikbakitaran. The reactions of various strata of society are recounted hereunder.

Two men were enjoying their delayed noontime meal when they learned that Martial Law was a thing of the past. Carried away by the far-reaching news, their appetites were whetted, and they ordered enough food for four people and gobbled every morsel up. The men elevated their thoughts. A teen-age boy approached them and begged for alms, but they were too engrossed in their meal to dig into their pockets for a coin. They just told the boy to leave them, in a gruff voice that made the beggar quail.

Feeling expansive after their repast, one of the two men then reached into his pocket: but lo and behold nothing! For the man's pocketbook was gone. He dug into all his pockets, he looked under and beside and behind the chair he sat on, but nowhere could be seen any billfold.

"Pare, I've been robbed! I've lost my money! Someone must have

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picked my pocket! Now I can't pay for our meals!" And the man was close to tears, aggravated by the amount of liquid that the beer had added in his system.

"Pare, maybe that beggar was the pickpocket!" the other said.

"If this is what I get without martial law, it's better if there's martial law!" the victim said, close to wailing his woe.

"Mare, one housewife said to another dolorously, "I would be ashamed to trouble you. But there is no other remedy for me to take, so I have come to see you because I know that you are very kind."

"You do not need to speak in a riddle, mare," the other woman said, as she continued to iron a denim trouser. "If it is money you wish to borrow, tell me how much. I have saved a little amount because Merto is working overtime and gets paid each night. He says the company's business has been picking up since martial law was lifted... Do not be ashamed, mare."

"If you can lend me fifty pesos, mare, I shall be grateful. You see, Islaw did not bring home his pay yesterday because he says he was held up in the jeepney that he rode in," the housewife sobbed. "We have rice up to tomorrow only, and no viand."

"Held up, mare? the other woman asked quizzically. "Are you sure your husband is not fooling you? Even if martial law has been lifted, I do not think the holduppers have become bolder... I can lend you half of what you ask. But investigate your husband too. I am suspicious."

That evening when the housewife's husband arrived, she immediately confronted him: "Oy, oy, Islaw! Were you really held up?"

"Why, yes, my wife," Islaw answered wearily.

"I verified from from the police, and there was no such holdup," the housewife lied, her voice grim. She glared at her husband to disguise her

falsehood. "There was no holdup. Was there?"

"Well - well, you see, wife..." the man scratched his head.

"Aba, you liar! Maybe you spent it on jai alai and on drinks! Am I right? Am I right?" and she started pummeling her husband with her fists. Islaw shielded himself from her blows.

"All right, I promise not to do it again..." the man grinned.

"Get out! And borrow money for your food!" the housewife spat.

"Wife, now that martial law has been terminated, I can say what I want. That is freedom of expression," the man said.

"So what do you think of saying - and to whom? Certainly not me," the

With the lifting of martial law, freedom has been translated to the letter good naturedly by people with a sense of humor.

wife retorted, as she continued pressing her husband's pair of trousers on the ironing board.

"Well, there are many significant things I can say," the husband boasted, lighting his cigar.

"The only significant thing I want to hear you say," the wife replied, "is something like this: 'My salary has been raised!'"

The farmer paused from sharpening his bolo and gazed afar at the golden rice grains on his field. Soon it would be harvest time. He was certain, with God's kindness, to reap a huge profit from his produce, decidedly more than the Municipal Mayor could receive in a year. And the harvest was three times a year!

The farmer saw a man from his barangay approach - it was Selmo, who was a genuine lazybones, he managed to live on people's benevolence or charity.

"Ka Inso!" the lazybones greeted the farmer. "Let us celebrate the termination of martial law! Bring out your best basi so we can toast to its passing!"

"Huh? Why should I?" the farmer countered. "It was martial law that gave me that piece of land. Without martial law I would still be a tenant, a slave. Why should I be happy that something that helped me has gone away? Go drink water."

In the bus, the young man kept pressing the arm of the girl beside him; apparently they were lovers. Still the other passengers had their eyes on the two.

"Do not press my arm. Stop that," the girl whispered.

"But there is no martial law anymore," the young man said.

"So what if there is no martial law? Do not press my arm!"

"Now... that there is no martial law, there is freedom of the press," the young man winked.

Two men, sophisticates from their looks, were dunking cups of coffee into their potbellies. They talked with a degree of worldliness about the affairs of the nation. Then their conversation naturally veered to martial law.

"I'm glad martial law is gone," one of them nodded.

"You mean, only one half is gone," the other riposted.

"The entire martial law is what I mean," the first frowned.

"Pal, martial is gone - but not law," the other said. "That's one thing we can't afford to lose or allow to leave us." ●

- BENJAMIN M. PASCUAL