

## Constitutional Convention

### Sermons\*

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## OUR CONSTITUTION

There was a prominent layman, a lawyer who felt very deeply about the *constitutional convention*. He felt very deeply about the new *constitution*. He spoke about this very often, at all occasions in the community: to the rotarians, to the K of C, to the Jaycees, to other parish organizations. He spoke about it passionately wherever he was a guest speaker.

He was earnest, sincere, eloquent, and he made a deep impression everywhere... until he got to his housemaid. The housemaid was serving him at table. "Inday" he said, "you must be *interested* in this new *constitution!* You must be *involved*. You must work so that we will have an honest election for the constitutional Convention."

Inday said: "Why?"

The lawyer choked. "Why?" he said. "Why? Because we *need a new constitution!*"

Inday was quiet. She thought about it. Then she mustered her courage, and said to the lawyer: "But Sir, in my humble opinion we already *have* a constitution!"

The lawyer grew red in the face. "Of course, we already have a constitution!" he roared. "But we have to *change* it!"

Inday said: "Why? ... Why change? The constitution we have already — very good! Given to us by the Americans! Stateside! Blue seal!"

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\* (These 10-minute talks are prepared for delivery in all churches and chapels on the Sundays indicated. They can be given before, during or after the Mass by a priest or a layman. They are composed on request of the Hierarchy by representatives of the Major Superiors of the Philippines and the Philippine Priests, Inc., under the auspices of the Episcopal Committee on the Constitutional Convention.)

The lawyer stood up and advanced on the housemaid. "A constitution can not be given to us by somebody else!" he roared. It has to be *ours!* We must make it ourselves!"

The housemaid was backing up against the wall, frightened, but she said: "Why must we make it ourselves? Shoes — best when they are Stateside. Cigarettes best when they are blue seal. Our constitution — blue seal, already."

The lawyer was so angry that he could not talk anymore, and he stormed out of the room. The mistress took the trembling housemaid into the kitchen. "Inday!" she said, "Do not argue! Just look up at the moon, and say yes!"

This is our real task over the next few months: to convince our people — our simple, honest, lovable people — down to the last housemaid — that we need a constitution which is all our own.

The Constitution which we have now is excellent, brilliantly and beautifully composed by good men — but it was written at a time when our new nation was striving with all its power to be like the United States. Our constitution was modeled on the constitution of the United States.

It was a splendid model. Perhaps the finest model in the world.

But it was not our own.

We are a poor people — not only in the wealth of the earth, but even in the wealth of the spirit. We have no Shakespeare, as England has. We have no Goethe, like the Germans. We have no Michaelangelo, like the Italians. No one has ever expressed in the written word, or even in marble or on canvass, what is most ourselves, most our own.

Even our language is borrowed, very often, from somebody else.

But *we do have a personality!* We are *unique* among the nations of the world! We *are* the only Christian country in the Orient! We *are* the outpost of democracy in the Far East! We do have *ideas* and *ideals*. We do have our own way of doing things. We have our own way of *feeling*, our own way of *expressing* what we feel. We do love

our own land, and our people, and our children, in a way that is all our own.

The Constitution should reflect this. The basic law of the land, upon which all our institutions will be built, should be *Filipino!* It should be *Christian, and democratic, and Filipino!*

The Constitution should be... *our own!*

Take one instance of what I mean: our educational system. Our present constitution, with sweeping phrases, included in its composition a system of the American colonial government of the Philippines. The system might have been valid for American school children, in the United States, but it was *not valid here!*

We copied it.

We included it because it was Stateside, blue seal.

But it does not fit *us!* It does not fit our children!

We are a Christian country. We love our children, and we want our children to love God. We want them to *know God*. We cannot be content with a textbook on manners, which was written in Brooklyn. We really want much more for our children.

The Constitution should reflect us, as we are, and our children, as they are. We say the Angelus in the morning; we say grace before meals; we believe in God — and this belief should be part of the classroom, because it is part of our life!

And so it is with many other things. The time has come for us, the quiet people, to speak!

The time has come for us, the gentle people, to be strong.

The time has come for us to write our own laws — and this is what we will do in the constitutional convention.

What the lawyer said to Inday was true! We must be *interested!* We *must* be *involved!* Precisely because we want to express the heart of the Filipino in the fundamental law of the land.

This new constitution must be *ours!*