

A Way of Life

By BENJAMIN SALVOSA

NATIONS ARE ONLY AS strong as the moral strength of their peoples. History is quite plain on this point. The leader who is to make his country rise above its vicissitudes must grasp this basic fact.

The new Civic Code now awaiting approval at Malacañan, is therefore of far-reaching importance. An embodiment of the best Filipino thought and philosophy, it is a document that should mould the character of the nation according to the ideals and traditions of the race.

The Code is probably the most enduring gift that the Republic can bestow upon the people this Christmas.

China achieved greatness and power when it founded a way of life based upon love, loyalty, marital fidelity, obedience and sincerity. These precepts, modified by Kung Fu-tze's definition of the superior man, probably reflect the highest fulfillment of the Chinese soul.

The greatness of Japan was hewn out of Bushido, the Way of the Warrior. Kudo, the Way of the Emperor, drives the Japanese to deeds of heroism and loyalty. With Buddhism and Shintoism, which temper these two, they explain why the Japanese are determined in battle and at the same time are inordinately fond of such gossamer things as painting and the tea ceremony.

Courage, loyalty, obedience and truthfulness—the Code of the Spartan—made possible the glory that was Greece, a glory that was torn by its roots when desire for comfort made

weaklings out of the Greeks and hastened their moral decay. The old virtues—piety, modesty, courage, fortitude, prudence, honesty and trustworthiness—were at the base of the grandeur that was Rome. The Roman of Caesar's time was a strong Roman; but the Roman that followed him was more concerned with material ease than with things of the spirit, and as a result he found his empire falling about his ears.

A nation's greatness results from the desire of its people to achieve greatness—results, in short, from a man's quest for perfection. Generations bequeath to those that succeed them the virtues that embody their highest moral development. If the heir proves worthy, it contributes to this moral growth and makes itself greater than its predecessor; if weak, it drives itself on the lonely road to oblivion.

Keeping morally strong is difficult. The validity of moral principles is to a great extent affected by economic and social conditions. Morality is in fact related to environment. A nation should therefore see that its moral strength is not reduced no matter what the circumstances, and that it is not undermined by newfangled philosophies and ideas.

Our public schools are committed to the task of bringing our youth to their fullest moral growth. That is only proper; the youth not only succeed to the moral principle of their elders but also to the work of shap-

ing the character of their sons. But classroom instruction on the virtues is not enough. There should be a Code—a Way of Life, if you please—dedicated to the task of giving a people their own peculiar identity. That code should represent the distilled thought of a nation and should reflect its traditions. It should be a Way of Life that those of the present would live and those of the future carry on.

II

The new Civic Code was formulated by a Committee* created for that purpose by Administrative Order No. 15 promulgated on February 12, 1944. It consists of four parts: the Precepts, the Quotations, the Anecdotal and Explanatory Materials, and the Appendix. The first consists of the precepts for each of the 29 virtues chosen; the second of selected extracts from the writing of 17 great Filipinos; the third of anecdotes that illustrate certain aspects of the character of these great men; and the fourth of Rizal's Don'ts from the constitution of the La Liga Filipina, the Duties of the Sons of the People by Bonifacio, the True Decalogue of Mabini, the aims of *Ang Bagong Katipunan*, and the Code of Ethics of the defunct Commonwealth.

The Committee explains in its letter of transmittal to the President that:

In doing its work the Committee was guided by certain definite principles, the better to comply with Your Excellency's instructions. These principles are:

1. That not only those who are popularly esteemed as national heroes, but those distinguished and illustrious Filipinos as well whose achievements and wisdom have made them worthy teachers of our people be included as sources of materials. This explains the inclusion of men like Francisco Baltazar, Modesto de Castro, T. H. Pardo de Tavera, Cayetano Arellano, Rafael

Palma, Teodoro M. Kalaw and others, in the list of those whose works the committee read and studied.

2. That although Administrative Order No. 15 sets forth the virtues on which quotations were to be sought, the Committee would not limit itself to these, but would add others whenever warranted by the quotations unearthed.

3. That, whenever possible, the quotations be in the language in which they were originally written, the better to permit faithful translations to be made subsequently into English and Tagalog. On the other hand, English would be used for the precepts, and English or Spanish for the anecdotal and explanatory materials.

4. That the Code emphasise the virtues which make for collective rather than individual perfection, on the principle that our people, strongly inclined as they already are to individualistic ways, should be inured more and more to the discipline necessary for collective or communal living.

5. That the Code, while strongly nationalistic in content, should also be sufficiently imbued with ideals and aspirations of an international order so as to fit our people to live in the world and with the world.

6. That the Code, while recognising and giving due consideration to the present situation and predicament of the nation, should at the same time adhere to norms of thought and conduct that have timeless and universal validity.

The precepts avoid the use of the biblical "thou" and are grouped under four heads; General, Social, Individual, and Women.

Those in the first group are:

1. Have faith in Divine Providence that guides the destinies of men and nations.

2. Love your country faithfully, for it is the home of your people, the inheritance from your ancestors, and

*Jaime C. de Vera, (Chairman), Salvador P. Lopez (Secretary), Mariano V. de los Santos, Encarnacion Alzona, Juan Coliza, Jose D. Ingles, Jose A. Lunsang.

the legacy to your descendants. Serve it loyally in any capacity however humble, and consider its defense as your primary duty. Gladly sacrifice everything for it, even life itself, if necessary.

3. Love your fellowman as a brother and companion in life's journey. Brotherly love begets unity, strength, and happiness. Through loving-kindness life's hardships are easier borne, and its bounties more keenly enjoyed.

4. Honour your parents and serve them gratefully and dutifully. Respect your elders and hearken to their counsel.

5. Venerate the memory of the nation's heroes by making their ideals your own and your children's. Their lives exemplify the best qualities of the race and their deeds have made the proud events of Philippine history. Their achievements summarise the nation's highest efforts and constitute its everlasting inspiration.

The precepts in the second group (Social):

1. Be industrious and do your work well. Work is not a curse but a blessing; be not ashamed to engage in productive toil however lowly. It is your duty to improve your heritage from your predecessors and to transmit it to posterity in a better and more useful form.

2. Develop your faculties through study without departing from the path of virtue. Seek knowledge throughout the world that you may improve yourself and be better able to contribute to the progress of your country and of humanity.

3. Respect the law and the duly constituted authorities. The stability of the state rests on the respect of its citizens for law and authority. Without stability there can be no peace, morality or progress in any community.

4. Contribute to the common good as a matter of civic duty. You do

not live for yourself or your family alone; you have definite responsibilities to the society of which you are a part. Social discipline requires that you subordinate personal interest to the general welfare.

5. Strive always to be fair and just in your dealings with everybody. In the ideals of justice and righteousness lies the strength of nations, and a people that firmly believes in justice cannot be deceived easily or oppressed for long.

6. Be tolerant of the ways, beliefs and opinions of others. Try to understand the points of view of those who differ with you. Welcome criticism because it helps you to see yourself as others see you, and thus, improve yourself.

7. Be ever vigilant against oppression or injustice in any form. It is your duty to denounce the existence of evil and the commission of crime, particularly the corruption of public officials, and to see to it that all wrong-doers are brought to justice. To condone evil instead of combating it is to fail in your first duty as a citizen.

8. Imitate good customs and practices. Reject bad examples. Always endeavour to equal, if not to excel, the best models in any field of activity, irrespective of nationality, race or creed.

9. Observe the rules of sportsmanship. In any contest be considerate of the feelings of your opponents. In victory be modest; in defeat good-natured.

10. Treat everybody, high or low, with courtesy. Good breeding is manifested through clean speech, proper dress, dignified bearing, and an amiable behaviour which consists in readiness to help and unwillingness to offend others. Good manners may not make the man but they reveal him.

Those in the third group (Individual):

1. Value your honour as you value your life. Poverty with honour is preferable to wealth with dishonour.

2. Be truthful and sincere in word and action. Be tireless, open-minded and thorough in the pursuit of truth; and in the fight for truth be constant, uncompromising, and brave.

3. Bear suffering with fortitude. More than anything else adversity reveals the true worth of a man. A life of ease often weakens the will and undermines the character; hardship brings out the latent powers of body and soul.

4. Have confidence in yourself. Depend on your own efforts, never relying on the favour of friends or relatives, the charity of neighbours, and the paternalism of the government. Develop initiative and originality; do not be afraid to venture into new fields of enterprise.

5. Be humble. Acknowledge your own shortcomings; no human being is perfect. Self-improvement is impossible without humility. Learn from your past errors and avoid committing the same mistake twice.

6. Temper your will and curb your passions. A long, happy, and useful life is the reward of moderation and self-control. Only he who can master himself is worthy to lead others.

7. Live within your means and save for a rainy day. Avoid all forms of extravagance, pretense, and dissipation. Refrain from getting into debt, except it be for a wise or useful purpose. Thrift leads to economic independence.

8. Ever keep in mind an honourable purpose as the goal of your strivings, and then seek to realise it through positive action. Words, knowledge, and ideals are not enough to build a great nation; every man must endeavour through action to make himself a part of the edifice, instead of being like a useless stone in the field.

9. Persevere in every useful undertaking. Do not be disheartened by difficulties nor dashed by failure. Success goes to the strong and resolute in spirit.

10. Do your work on time. Leave nothing undone that you can do today. Be punctual in your engagements. Failure to be punctual is a breach of courtesy and a waste of time.

11. Keep your body clean, your clothes neat, and your home and surroundings orderly. Cleanliness is essential to individual health and community welfare.

12. Learn to appreciate beauty in nature, art, and literature. Love of the beautiful has an elevating influence and ennobles the human spirit.

The last group (Women):

1. Respect woman regardless of social rank. Regard her as a companion and partaker of your joys and sorrows, and as a partner in your aspirations and efforts to promote the public welfare. Respect for woman is a noble tradition of civilised peoples.

2. Filipino women: Bear in mind your grave responsibilities to the nation. Upon you depend in a large measure the wellbeing and happiness of your country. Cultivate your faculties so that you may become prudent, intelligent, and courageous mothers who can instill into the minds of your children the traditional virtues that enable a nation to survive and become great.

These precepts embody virtues that are typically Filipino. As a matter of fact, they mirror Filipino tradition. The lives of great Filipinos prove that they are closely woven in the fabric of our national life.

III

Faith in Divine Providence is an innate Filipino trait. Before the landing of the Spaniards, the Tagalogs had a God whom they called

Bathala. The Visayans called Him *Laon*, the Zambals *Akasi*. Historians declare that the Filipinos owe his faith in Divine Power to his forebears in India and Sumatra.

"Above the popular will and the egoism of nations," said Cayetano Arellano, "the predominance of race, and the lust of conquest, there is in the mighty current of human affairs a superior force which impels toward progress, and produces from time to time great men who execute the Divine Will which regulates the universal harmony."

These words find recognition in the Constitution which requires key officials, from the President down, to take an oath of office wherein they invoke the aid of God. Churches, buildings and improvements used exclusively for religious purposes are, by mandate of the Constitution, exempt from taxation. The state encourages religion as a means to mould a citizenry that will lead the good and abundant life.

Love of country stands out in almost every page of our history. The roll of those who raised the banner of freedom begins with Lapu-Lapu who bested the conquistadors under Magellan in Mactan on April 27, 1521. The rest consists of glorious names. Rajah Soliman, Magat Salamat, Diego Silang, Gregorio del Pilar, Lopez-Jaena, Rizal—the list is long.

Rizal's return to the Philippines in 1892, fraught with danger, was impelled by a desire to "show those that deny us patriotism that we know how to die for duty and principle... Always I have loved our unhappy land, and... I am ready to sacrifice for it... I shall die blessing it and longing for the dawn of its redemption."

The declaration of independence in Kawit on June 12, 1898, voiced the resolve to "support... this declaration (with) our lives, our fortunes, and our most sacred possession, which is our honour."

Love of fellowmen, as broad as it

is human, is an old Filipino trait; in fact it has been expressed by even the most nationalistic Filipinos. Emilio Jacinto, the Brain of the Revolution, put it thus:

"Out of love and helpfulness for our fellows originate sincerity and charity—beautiful flowers that bloom in the pure heart and balm for the unfortunate."

Bonifacio, fiery as he was, recognised its importance. "Share with the poor and unfortunate whatever is in your power to give."

The typical Filipino viewpoint is that if one desires to command the respect of his fellows, one must not be overbearing, because it is not that, but righteousness and kindness that develop the love and respect of men.

Respect for parents is summarised by old saying: "Three friends has man. God, his Father, and his Mother. He who honours his parents honours God." Yet, to the Filipino, that is not enough; he further modified it. He who loves his elders loves his neighbour, and he who loves his neighbour obeys God.

The Filipino virtue of filial love is rooted in ancestor worship, practiced widely in the Philippines at the coming of the Spaniards. Feodor Jagor observes that "the authority of the parents and of the eldest brother is supreme, and the younger sisters never venturing to oppose it, women and children are kindly treated."

Ramon Reyes Lala notes that there was "extreme family affection. They are very fond of their children, who, as a rule, are respectful and well-behaved. The noisy hoodlums of European and American cities are utterly unknown."

So strong are ties in the Filipino family that the freedom at present enjoyed by women has not in any way reduced them. Filipinos are natural home lovers; and the teachings of the Catholic Church, which put emphasis on filial love and obedience, have buttressed family solidarity.

The sons and daughters who are unmarried still live with the parents and give them their earnings. The mother remains the family treasurer; aged and needy relatives are well taken care of.

Reverence for heroes constitute a part of a nation's traditions. For a nation to be able to meet the challenge of the future, it must draw inspiration from its past.

Our great heroes—Rizal, Bonifacio, Del Pilar, Lopez-Jaena—gave us our national identity through sacrifice and blood. Balintawak, Tirad Pass, Zapote Bridge, Kawit—these are not merely events in our history; they are monuments to the intrinsic worth of our people.

Reverence for our heroes not only implies our appreciation for the part they played during the events of their time but also our willingness to meet the problems of our own generation with the same zeal and honour with which they did theirs.

Industry was the firm base upon which Jose Acosta built his fortune. "Work unceasingly," he told his children, "for if a man does not work, the soil will only produce weeds and thorns."

The counsel is not new; it is almost classical. But men are so often and so easily tempted to the ways of laziness that industry should be unceasingly stressed.

Interest in education makes for intellectual enlightenment and personal and national progress. Jose Burgos expresses the need for education pungently:

"Get educated. Use the schools of our country for as much as they can give. Learn from our elder men what they know... Be a Filipino always, but an educated Filipino."

Education is intimately connected with the development of a nation in all its phases. An enlightened people means an enlightened nation. An enlightened nation is nearly always a great nation.

According to Tavera, "Rizal desired to go to Europe in order to educate himself, to become useful to his people. He was not moved by the wish to have a good time and enjoy life."

Respect for law and authority—what does it amount to? Bonifacio's answer is: "He who obeys the power conferred by the people obeys the people and identifies himself with the will of all the citizens that compose the people, which identification of accord is necessary for the very life of the people."

Bonifacio saw that principle as primordial. It had a relation with the "life of the people," and the Great Plebian insisted that the "welfare of the people is the sole purpose of all the governments on earth. The people is all: blood and life, wealth and strength, all is the people."

Respect for law is vital to a nation because it makes for peace; and there can be no progress except when there is peace.

Sense of duty and responsibility is paramount in the lives of men and nations. "Go out into the world," said Villamor, "always faithful in the performance of your duties. There are a hundred men who prefer to be told their duties for every man who prefers to pose his duties upon himself. Yet the world is moved by those who impose their duties upon themselves."

Justice and righteousness, practiced widely by Filipinos everywhere, enable men to see other men according to their just lights. They are a characteristic of the heroes who made the proud events in Philippine history.

Tolerance is summed up by Tavera in this manner: "Criticism is the best teacher in the life of a man. It stimulates one to greater study and investigation."

Of tolerance, Rizal says: "We need criticism to keep us awake; it makes us see our mistakes so we can correct them." It was Rizal's opinion that "we should rely upon ourselves alone;

but should ask, listen to others, and then do what we think is proper."

Civic courage, according to Rizal, makes a nation acquire respect, "not by abetting and concealing abuses, but by rebuking and punishing them."

The great propagandist Marcelo H. del Pilar held to the belief that all of one's children, be they barrio- or city-bred, educated or unschooled, should honour righteousness.

Judicious imitation is vital to a nation like ours, which has to draw heavily from the cultures of other peoples. According to Villamor, "Good or bad examples influence a man's life in a great degree, as much for the better as for the worse... Use all your efforts for your betterment and perfection; reject bad examples; you should imitate, even excel, good models, but in doing this, you should not lose sight of the good customs and good examples that you have inherited from your forefathers."

Rafael Palma believed that our instinct for imitation should distinguish between good and bad. The good and the false should not be emulated; neither the vices. One should look for and assimilate the best practices and customs of other peoples.

Sportsmanship is more than a mark of the educated man; it completely reveals him. One who is sportsman-like is a modest victor and a good loser.

Of sportsmanship, Modesto de Castro says: "If one should win, he should not show inordinate joy, but if a display of joy be inevitable it should be done in a manner that will not hurt the loser... If one should lose, one should be careful to conceal every hint of sadness or anger."

Good breeding is reflected in the courteous man. Courtesy, says Villamor, "gains all and costs nothing. This is a truth especially applicable to our country where everything can

be obtained through politeness; that is, where the manner counts far more than strength. Oftentimes good words spoken with kindness convince better than good arguments uttered with arrogant petulance."

A Tagalog proverb affirms this view: "It is easy to be a man; difficult to be a gentleman."

Honour is mentioned in the sixth precept of the Katipunan Primer: "To a man of honour, his word is his oath." This enlarges upon the words of the poet: "A good name is rather to be desired than great riches, and loving favour than silver and gold."

Of this virtue, Emilio Jacinto writes: "The real man is he who, of tried and trusty valour, does good, keeps his word, and is worthy and self-respecting."

Plaridel put it another way: "The value of one's life can be measured only in terms of human service... Defend the right, happen what may, never fearing whether you win or lose, and your integrity will be upheld or maintained..."

Devotion to truth was a gleaming facet of Rizal's many-sided character. Tavera declares:

"If he has not been a fervent disciple of truth, he would never have had... beautiful moral qualities... Self-control, constancy, firmness of opinion, for example, cannot exist unless one has first worshipped at the shrine of truth."

Once destroyed, a reputation for truth cannot be reestablished. An Ilocano proverb says: "The word of a liar, though true, is never trusted." One should worship—not fear—the truth.

Fortitude, like a chemical, reveals the moral composition of a man.

"In persons of good disposition," said Villamor, "sufferings temper their character and give rise to profound and elevated thoughts... Some Filipinos, apparently useless and without resolution, when placed in some difficult and responsible posi-

should be a rule everywhere. "(It is one of the first obligations of man," says Tavera, "not only when it is desired to observe the rules of politeness, but as one of the essential disciplines of civilised life."

"Better than the industrious," notes a Tagalog proverb, "is he who is early."

"Cleanliness," according to the biblical statement, "is next to godliness." This is explained by the fact that man's body is a temple of God, and it is man's duty to keep the temple clean.

The maxim, however, is more practical than one might suppose. Cleanliness—both moral and physical—prevents disease and conserves life.

Rizal recognised this truth. Sickly when a boy, he developed, in later life, a strong and supple build.

Appreciation of the beautiful—or, rather, the ability to enjoy the beautiful, distinguishes man from the lower creations. As Fernando Ma. Guerrero observes, "Life consists not only of ideas and knowledge. Life is also sensation, emotion, the vibration of the soul, the eternal thirst for beauty. Not only with bread is man nourished. More often, what matter-of-fact persons qualify with disparagement as visionary, romantic or utopian is the most feasible and effective means that stimulates transcendental achievements in history."

Respect for women has always been a mark of superior civilisations. Na-

tions that fail to give recognition to the importance to women in the scheme of living are generally stagnant and unprogressive.

"Do not look upon women," said Emilio Jacinto, "as a plaything, but as a friend and companion in life's hardship. Accord full respect to their weakness; remember your mother from whose womb you came and who nursed you as a babe."

Feminine virtues should be kept alive by a nation's womanhood. As Modesto de Castro says, "A young woman should remember that though she may be beautiful and rich and can properly groom herself, if she does not know how to keep house, she is valueless in the eyes of the wise; because woman is the keeper of the honour of the house, an honour that is destroyed by the untidy woman."

He continues: "A young woman should contemplate on the fact that her honour is like riches... that once destroyed can not be mended again, that once dropped can not again be picked up. Like shining and clear crystal that, once broken, cannot be made whole again."

The precepts—and the quotations behind them—of the new Civic Code embody the best Filipino thought, distilled and made pure. The virtues emphasised in the Code are characteristically native. They should help make the Filipinos a great people and be as a rock upon which to build their spiritual edifice.



No Pushover—

LT GEN. WALTER KRUEGER, Commander of the U. S. 6th Army in the Leyte Operations: The folks back home are wrong if they think the Japanese fighting the battle on Leyte island are a pushover.