

FINAL

CHOOSE THIS DAY WHOM YOU WILL SERVE

**Message of H.E. President Fidel V. Ramos
63rd Anniversary of the Cosmopolitan Church
Taft Avenue, Manila, Philippines
1000H, March 24, 1996**

INTRODUCTION

"CHOOSE THIS DAY WHOM YOU WILL SERVE, ...BUT AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD." (JOSHUA 24:15)

WITH THIS AFFIRMATION OF FAITH, I JOIN THE COSMOPOLITAN CHURCH, MY HOME CHURCH, IN ITS ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION TODAY. AND AS I DELIVER THIS MESSAGE, FOND MEMORIES OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS, YOUTH ACTIVITIES, WORSHIP SERVICES, FESTIVALS AND FELLOWSHIPS COME TO ME LIKE "SPRINGS OF LIVING WATER" THAT GIVE ME RENEWED STRENGTH!

LIKE JOSHUA, THE SOLDIER WHO BECAME THE LEADER OF THE HEBREW NATION IN THEIR JOURNEY TO THE PROMISED LAND, I RENEW WITH ALL OF YOU HERE TODAY, MY FAITH IN GOD WHO IS OUR CONSTANT COMPANION AND LOVING SAVIOR.

WE WILL SERVE THE LORD

CHURCH ANNIVERSARIES HIGHLIGHT THE BASIC CHARACTER OF THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS. WHILE THEY ARE COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS THE CHOSEN PEOPLE OF GOD, IT WOULD BE MORE APT, IF SEEN IN RELATION TO JOSHUA'S AFFIRMATION OF FAITH, TO SAY THAT FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ARE A CHOOSING PEOPLE. AND THEIR CHOICES DETERMINE WHAT THEY CAN BECOME AND WHERE THEY COULD GO.

REMEMBER THAT ADAM MADE A WRONG CHOICE AND WE ALL BEAR THE MARKS OF HIS ERROR. ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND HIS CHOICE WAS SEEN AS THE HEART OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. JOSHUA, TOO, MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE AND HIS CHOICE IS SUMMED UP BY THE AFFIRMATION, *"AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD."*

JESUS MADE THE CHOICE THAT BROUGHT US BACK INTO THE RIGHT PATH TO GOD AND GRANTED US ETERNAL LIFE!

TODAY, AS WE CELEBRATE THE ANNIVERSARY OF OUR CHURCH, MAY I SUBMIT TO YOU THREE CHOICES. CHOICES THAT OUR CHURCH COULD TAKE AS IT CONTINUES TO PROCLAIM AND BRING OUT THE GOOD NEWS OF THE LOVE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST IN RESPONSE TO THE REALITIES AND DEMANDS OF OUR TIMES.

BEARERS OF HOPE

FIRST, LET US BE BEARERS OF HOPE.

I REMEMBER HEARING IN SUNDAY SCHOOL THAT HOPE IS THAT STEADFAST FAITH IN GOD'S POWER TO SAVE. IT OFFERS NEW STRENGTH IN A SEA OF HELPLESSNESS. IT CREATES AND NURTURES A STRONG RESOLVE TO OVERCOME DEADENING POVERTY.

HOPE, THEREFORE, IS THE POWER THAT COULD ENABLE PEOPLE TO OVERCOME ADVERSITY AND A SENSE OF HELPLESSNESS. IT UNITES THEM AND NURTURES THEIR COMMITMENT TO DISCOVER THE EXCITEMENT OF LIFE AS THE GIFT OF GOD.

ALTHOUGH I DO NOT CLAIM TO KNOW PERSONALLY THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PAINFUL TRAVAILS SUFFERED BY THE THREE COSMOPOLITAN HEROES WHOM WE HONOR TODAY -- CAPTAIN VICENTE GEYTE, MR. TITO DANS AND MR. SERAFIN AQUINO, SR. -- I DO REMEMBER THEIR LIVE, STRONG PRESENCE AMONG US IN COSMO DURING THE OCCUPATION. I CAN ALSO SURMISE THAT IT WAS HOPE -- HOPE FOR A BRIGHTER DAY -- THAT KEPT THE PEOPLE OF COSMO TOGETHER DURING THAT SAD PERIOD IN OUR LIVES.

THIS IS WHY THE RAMOS ADMINISTRATION HAS ALWAYS CALLED ON OUR PEOPLE TO UNITE AND CLOSE RANKS TO FACE TOGETHER THE DIFFICULT CHALLENGES THAT STILL DAUNT US. TO GENERATE HOPE FOR TODAY, WE HAVE ALWAYS PLACED PEOPLE EMPOWERMENT AT THE CENTER OF OUR DRIVE FOR A FULLER LIFE FOR EVERY FILIPINO.

WE NEED HOPE SO WE COULD HELP ONE ANOTHER IN DEFENDING THE DIGNITY AND INTEGRITY OF OUR LIVES TOGETHER. IF WE PUT TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON OUR MISERIES, HOWEVER, WE WILL NOT KNOW THE PROMISE THAT COMES FROM THE HEART OF THE GOOD NEWS.

THEREFORE, I BELIEVE THAT GOD'S CALL TO THE CHURCHES AS BEARERS OF HOPE IS TO PUT TO THE FORE OUR MODEST SUCCESSES IN ALL ASPECTS OF OUR LIFE AS A NATION IN THANKSGIVING AND JOY. HOW HEARTENING IT IS TO SEE OUR CHURCHES LEAD THE PEOPLE IN REJOICING OVER THE GAINS WE HAVE ACHIEVED IN THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS REALMS SINCE OUR PEOPLE POWER REVOLUTION AT EDSA TEN YEARS AGO.

SOMEONE HAS SAID, "*SINCE MEN CAME TO BE, THEY HAVE REJOICED TOO LITTLE. THAT, MY BROTHERS, IS OUR ORIGINAL SIN!*" OUR CHURCHES SHOULD CALL PEOPLE TO REJOICE EVEN FOR OUR LITTLE VICTORIES. FOR OUR REJOICING COULD LEAD US TO MARCH WITH FIRMER STRIDES INTO THE WORLD OF WONDER AND BRIGHTNESS, ENLIGHTENMENT AND FREEDOM!

PERSONS FOR OTHERS

THEN WE DISCOVER THE JOY OF SERVING. **LET US CHOOSE TO BE PERSONS FOR OTHERS.**

THIS IS THE SEASON OF LENT. I RECALL THAT IN OUR LENTEN CELEBRATIONS HERE AT COSMO, AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT MANDATES OF JESUS AS HE HAD HIS LAST SUPPER WITH HIS DISCIPLES, WAS: "*THE GREATEST LOVE A PERSON CAN HAVE FOR OTHERS IS TO GIVE HIS LIFE FOR THEM.*" (JOHN 15:13)

I ALSO RECALL THAT ONE EMPHATIC MESSAGE DURING POST-RESURRECTION SERVICES HERE WAS THE SAYING OF THE LORD TO ALL HIS FOLLOWERS AT JUDGMENT DAY: *"I TELL YOU WHATEVER YOU DID TO THE LEAST OF MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, YOU DID IT FOR ME."* (MATTHEW 25:10)

I THANK THIS CHURCH FOR THE BASIC CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS THAT HELPED NURTURE MY LIFE. THE BIBLICAL TEXTS THAT I JUST MENTIONED ARE SPECIAL TO ME BECAUSE THEY HAVE ALWAYS CONVEYED THE MESSAGE OF BEING A PERSON FOR OTHERS.

LET US CHOOSE TO BE PERSONS FOR OTHERS. FOR THE COMMITMENT TO SERVE THAT JESUS HAS SHOWN US IS THE WAY TO ENABLE THE POOR, THE NEEDY AND THOSE LIVING AMONG THE MARGINALIZED FRINGES OF OUR SOCIETY, REDISCOVER AND CELEBRATE LIFE AND HOPE AS GIFTS OF GOD FOR EVERYONE!

TO BE AUTHENTIC BEARERS OF HOPE, WE NEED TO BE PERSONS FOR OTHERS.

LEADING A LIFE OF PRAYER

LET US THEREFORE CHOOSE A LIFE OF PRAYER!

OUR AWARENESS GROWS WHEN WE SEE THE SIGNS OF GOD'S PRESENCE IN OUR MIDST. A CHURCH THAT CHOOSES A LIFE OF PRAYER IS ALWAYS AT THE CENTER OF ACTIVITIES, NEVER ISOLATED FROM WHERE THE ACTION IS IN ORDER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLE'S LIVES. BUT LET US REMEMBER TO PERFORM AS WE PRAY, AND TO PRAY AS WE PERFORM.

PRAYER BRINGS US INTO THE REALM OF THE POWER OF GOD.

LET ME SHARE WITH YOU ONE LAST REFLECTION WHICH STRENGTHENED MY BELIEF THAT PRAYER IS OUR STRENGTH AND GOD'S WEAKNESS. EDSA 1986 TAUGHT ME THIS: WHEN WE PRAY TO GOD, WE ARE MADE STRONG -- IN FACT WE FEEL WE ARE AT THE HEIGHT OF OUR STRENGTH. WHEN WE PRAY TO GOD, WE TOUCH HIS WEAKNESS, THAT IS, HIS READINESS TO SURROUND US WITH HIS UNFAILING AND ABUNDANT MERCIES!

ON THE EARLY MORNING OF FEBRUARY 24, 1986, AS WE PREPARED OURSELVES AT CAMP CRAME TO RECEIVE THE FINAL ASSAULTS FROM THREE DIRECTIONS AND BY AERIAL BOMBARDMENT FROM THE FORCES OF THE DICTATOR, SOME OF US SOUGHT REFUGE IN PSALM 91, KNOWN TO SOLDIERS OF WORLD WAR I AS THE PROTECTION PSALM:

HE WHO DWELLS IN THE SHELTER OF THE MOST HIGH WILL REST IN THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY. I WILL SAY OF THE LORD, "HE IS MY REFUGE AND MY FORTRESS, MY GOD, IN WHOM I TRUST." "BECAUSE HE LOVES ME, SAYS THE LORD, I WILL RESCUE HIM; I WILL PROTECT HIM, FOR HE ACKNOWLEDGES MY NAME."

THE VICTORIOUS OUTCOME IS NOW HISTORY, AND DEMOCRACY WAS REGAINED.

AS THANKSGIVING TO GOD'S FAITHFUL COMPANIONSHIP, LET US CHOOSE, ON THIS DAY OF OUR CHURCH ANNIVERSARY, TO BE BEARERS OF HOPE, TO BE PERSONS FOR OTHERS, AND TO LEAD A LIFE OF HUMILITY AND PRAYER.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH AND GOD BLESS US ALL!!! AMEN.