

**Speech of H. E. President Fidel V. Ramos  
Festival Thanksgiving, PICC Plenary Hall  
September 13, 1992**

**INTRODUCTION**

LET ME GREET, FIRST OF ALL, BISHOP JORGE CASTRO FOR PUTTING ALL OF US TOGETHER HERE THIS AFTERNOON AS WELL AS BISHOP ALMARIO AND ALL THE OTHER LEADERS OF THE CHURCH OF ALL FAITHS. AND I ALSO WOULD LIKE TO GREET OUR DEAR COUNTRYMEN, ATING MINAMAHAL NA KABABAYAN AT LAHAT NG MGA IBA PANG KASAMA AT MGA KAIBIGAN NA NANDIDITO NGAYON. I ALSO WOULD LIKE TO GREET OUR MUSLIM BROTHERS, I SEE ONE OF THEM HERE,(MUSLIM) PEACE BE WITH YOU.

THIS IS INDEED AN UNUSUAL GATHERING OF FILIPINOS AND ONE THAT TO ME IS MOST RELEVANT AND RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE TIMES.

YOU KNOW, WHEN I WAS A CANDIDATE RUNNING FOR THE HIGHEST OFFICE IN THE LAND, I REALIZED THAT ELECTIONS WERE INDEED VERY DIVISIVE AS HAS BEEN THE TRADITION IN THE PHILIPPINES. BUT I FOUND OUT AFTER HAVING BEEN PROCLAIMED AS THE WINNER, THAT ELECTION COULD BE VERY UNIFYING. BECAUSE AFTER PEOPLE FOUND OUT THAT I HAD WON EVERYBODY TOLD ME THAT THEY HAVE VOTED FOR EDDIE RAMOS.

AND SO MY DEAR FRIENDS, MY DEAR COUNTRYMEN, I AM TRULY AND DEEPLY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR PRAYERS ON MY BEHALF, AND ON BEHALF OF THE REST OF THE NATION WHO ARE NOT HERE, IN MAKING ME THE BENEFICIARY OF

THIS CHRISTIAN FESTIVAL OF THANKSGIVING. YOU DO ME HONOR AND YOU DO HONOR TO OUR PEOPLE AND THIS IS SOMETHING THAT I CAN NEVER REPAY.

AND I KNOW YOUR SONGS OF PRAISE AND JOY WILL REACH HEAVEN, FOR AS THE PROVERB CHAPTER XV VERSE 8 ASSURES US "THE PRAYER OF THE UPRIGHT PLEASES THE LORD."

IN OUR TIME OF TROUBLES, I WOULD NEVER HAVE DARED TO TAKE UP THE BURDEN OF NATIONAL LEADERSHIP HAD I NOT BEEN CONFIDENT OF GOD'S SPECIAL FEELING FOR US FILIPINOS. WHO HAVE ALWAYS REGARDED OURSELVES AS "THE PEOPLE OF HIS PASTURE, AND THE FLOCK UNDER HIS CARE."

GUIDE ME, THEN, WITH YOUR PRAYERS -- THAT I MAY WALK IN A STRAIGHT PATH, IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD, TO RIGHTEOUSNESS. AND IN SO DOING WE BRING THE WHOLE NATION FORWARD TO THAT VISION OF A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL FILIPINOS.

OVER THE PAST 75 DAYS THAT I HAVE BEEN YOUR PRESIDENT, I HAVE STRIVED -- FOLLOWING ST. PAUL'S ADMONITION -- TO BE GOD'S FELLOW WORKER TO LAY THE FOUNDATIONS OF A TRULY HUMANE PHILIPPINE SOCIETY.

AND IN THIS WORK, I HAVE BEGUN AT THE BEGINNING --WITH OBLIGATORY TASKS LIKE THE RESTORATION OF POLITICAL STABILITY AND PEACE AND ORDER -- WHICH ARE THE REQUISITE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING.

MY PROGRAM OF GOVERNMENT IS FOUNDED, AS ALREADY ARTICULATED TO US BY BROTHER MANNY PELAEZ, NOT JUST ON PRACTICAL BITS AND PIECES OF REFORM BUT ON CHRISTIAN IDEALS AND BELIEFS THAT YOU AND I SHARE ABOUT THE PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS OF HUMAN SOCIETY.

WHAT ARE THESE BASIC POLITICAL IDEALS AND BELIEFS?

ABOVE ALL ELSE, WE SEE THE WORLD AS CENTERED ON GOD. WE SHARE THE VIEW THAT THE WORLD AND ALL IN IT ARE THE CREATIONS OF A SUPREME BEING.

AND WE REGARD THE STATE AS HAVING UNETHICAL PURPOSE WHICH IS THE WELFARE OF THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

WE BELIEVE IN THE IMPORTANCE OF ORDINARY PEOPLE; AND OF THE FAMILY AS A REPRESENTATION IN MINIATURE OF NATURAL SOCIETY -- HAVING ITS OWN SELF-CONTAINED GOALS AND PURPOSES.

AND WE REGARD THE HUMAN BEING NOT AS INDIVIDUALISTIC BUT AS COMMUNITARIAN. AND WE SEE HIM NOT A SINGLE- MINDEDLY BENT ON THE PURSUIT OF HIS SELF-INTEREST BUT AS ESSENTIALLY INEFFECTIVE AND INCOMPLETE UNLESS HE IS A PART OF THE SOCIAL INSTITUTION GREATER THAN HIMSELF.

IN THE SAME MANNER ,WE IN OUR SOCIETY REGARD THE RIGHT TO PROPERTY NOT AS ABSOLUTE -- WITH THE OWNER BEING FREE TO USE OR DISPOSE OF HIS PROPERTY AS HE PLEASES -- BUT A SOCIAL STEWARDSHIP HAVING AN INHERENT DIMENSION OF DUTY AND RESPONSIBILITY.

WE BELIEVE THAT ALTHOUGH WEALTH SHOULD BE PRIVATELY OWNED, ITS OWNER SHOULD MAKE PUBLIC USE OF IT TO BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY.

WE ALSO INSIST THAT THE OWNER OF PROPERTY ABIDE BY HIS DUTY OF CHARITY -- A DUTY IMPOSED ON HIM BY HIS POSSESSIONS -- OF HELPING, WITHOUT CONDESCENSION THE LESS FORTUNATE MEMBERS OF HIS

COMMUNITY.

WE ACCEPT THAT PEOPLE WITH MORE ARE OBLIGED TO HELP PEOPLE WITH LESS IN THE NAME OF COMPASSION AND IN RECOGNITION OF A SHARED HUMANITY. OR AS WE SAY "ANG PAKIKIPAGKAPWATAO."

WE REJECT THE MARXIST DOGMA OF AN IMPLACABLE SOCIAL CONFLICT BETWEEN THE SO-CALLED "CAPITALISTS" AND THE SO-CALLED "PROLETARIATS" AS BEING UNAVOIDABLE IN THE HUMAN COMMUNITY.

WE INSIST NOT ON AN ARTIFICIAL KIND OF SOCIAL EQUALITY IMPOSED BY THE STATE, BUT ON EQUITY OR FAIRNESS AMONG COMPETITIVE INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS. AND WE BELIEVE NOT IN CLASS STRUGGLE BUT IN SOCIAL COLLABORATION AND MUTUAL RESPECT.

WE ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT PEOPLE WHO BELONG TO DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHICAL OR RELIGIOUS CREEDS AND LINEAGES CAN COOPERATE IN THE COMMON TASK OF SECURING THE WELFARE OF OUR EARTHLY COMMUNITY.

THIS IS THE PRINCIPLE THAT UNDERLIES OUR POLITICAL COMMON CAUSE IN OUR LAKAS-NUCD OR NATIONAL UNION OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WITH ITS BROTHER PARTY THE UNITED MUSLIM DEMOCRATS, THE VERY FIRST POLITICAL COALITION IN THIS COUNTRY AND REJOINED AS POLITICAL IDEOLOGUES, MOTIVATORS AND ACTIVISTS, OUR CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM BROTHERS TOGETHER.

OUR ADVOCACY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND OUR INSISTENCE ON THE AUTONOMY OF SOCIAL GROUPINGS IN THE LARGER COMMUNITY ARE PART OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MY ADMINISTRATION.

AND WE REGARD THE PRESENCE OF THE INTERMEDIATE CENTERS OF POWER, OF CHURCHES, OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, OF PEOPLES' ORGANIZATIONS AND ALL OTHER ORGANIC SOCIAL GROUPINGS, AS THE STATE'S FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST ANY ENCROACHMENT UPON ITS LIBERTY.

IN OUR COUNTRY, THE PRESIDENT HAS UNIQUE POWERS TO MOVE THE NATION FORWARD, DEPENDING ON HIS VIGOR AND HIS VISION.

THESE PRESIDENTIAL POWERS TO EXHORT, TO MOTIVATE, TO INSPIRE, AND TO LEAD, I AM DETERMINED TO DEPLOY TO THE LIMIT -- TO CARRY OUR COUNTRY ACROSS THIS THRESHOLD OF CRISIS TOWARD THE GOOD SOCIETY WE ALL LONG FOR.

BUT I NEED YOUR HELP -- AND THE HELP OF EVERY CITIZEN WHO FEELS -- AS I DO -- THAT IT IS TIME THAT WE GET THIS COUNTRY MOVING.

THE PHILIPPINE STATE HAS HISTORICALLY REQUIRED EXTRAORDINARILY LITTLE OF ITS CITIZENS. AND, AS INDIVIDUALS, WE FILIPINOS ACKNOWLEDGE FEW OBLIGATIONS TO THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY.

THIS MUTUAL INDIFFERENCE BETWEEN STATE AND CITIZEN CANNOT GO ON.

WE MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THERE IS A PUBLIC SPHERE TO HUMAN LIFE.

WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT AS CITIZENS WE HAVE ONLY ONE FATE TO SHARE.

ALL OF US WHO ARE DETERMINED TO LIVE OUT OURSLIVES IN THIS COUNTRY MUST NOW DO ALL WE CAN TO MAKE LIFE IN IT A LITTLE MORE

HOPEFUL -- FOR OURSELVES AND FOR OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.

THE ALTERNATIVE IS FOR US TO CONDEMN OUR YOUNG PEOPLE TO MIGRATION; AND OURSELVES TO CULTURAL DESPAIR. WE NEED TO FOMENT FROM AMONG US A CIVIC REVOLUTION, AN EXPLOSION OF SOCIAL ENERGY THAT WILL ENABLE US TO CATCH UP WITH OUR VIGOROUS NEIGHBORS AND BECOME A NEWLY INDUSTRIALIZING ECONOMY NOT LATER THAN THE YEAR 2000.

SUCH A REVOLUTION MUST BEGIN IN OUR HEARTS AND MINDS AS A PEOPLE. IT MUST BEGIN AS A REVOLUTION IN SOCIAL ATTITUDES, IN SOCIAL COMMITMENT. WE MUST -- EACH OF US -- RESPOND TO HIS CIVIC CONSCIENCE. WE MUST DO ALL WE CAN TO ENSURE THAT THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY IS OPEN TO THE LEAST OF OUR PEOPLE.

WE MUST SEE TO IT THAT WE DO NOT HARDEN OUR HEARTS NOR SHUT OUR HANDS, FOR AS LONG AS THERE ARE AMONG US SOME PEOPLE IN NEED. WE HAVE NO TIME TO SPARE. AND WE AS A PEOPLE CANNOT CONTINUE TO PLAY AT INTRIGUE, EACH ONE PURSUING HIS OR HER SELF-INTEREST, ALTHOUGH DOING SO MAY BE SELF-DEFEATING.

THIS IS ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR -- SO LIKE THE QUARRELING OF CRABS CAUGHT IN A BAMBOO TRAP -- CANNOT GO ON. WE MUST ACCEPT THAT NATIONAL SOCIETY IS MUCH MORE, MUCH, MUCH MORE THAN JUST AN AGGREGATION OF INDIVIDUALS OR FAMILIES OR CLANS.

AND WE MUST REALIZE THAT EVERY HUMAN SOCIETY IS A SEAMLESS COMMUNITY -- A PARTNERSHIP OF THE CONNECTED GENERATIONS OF CHANGING PERSONS THAT INCLUDE NOT ONLY THOSE WHO ARE LIVING BUT THOSE WHO ARE DEAD AND THOSE YET TO BE BORN.

AND WE CANNOT CONTINUE -- AS PEOPLE HAVE DONE IN THE PAST, TO PASS THE BUCK TO SOME FUTURE GENERATION. THERE IS NO ONE HERE BUT US AT THIS TIME.

AND SO WITH MANY THINGS TO DO, AND WITH SO LITTLE TIME TO DO IT, WHO, IF NOT US, SHALL SET THINGS RIGHT.

AS THE MILITANT STUDENTS ASKED IN THE TIME OF THE DICTATOR DURING WHAT THEY CALL THE FIRST QUARTER STORM:

KUNG HINDI TAYO, SINO PA?

AS CHRISTIANS, WE CAN HAVE ONLY ONE ANSWER. WE CAN ANSWER ONLY IN THE WAY ST. PAUL TEACHES IN HIS LETTER TO THE GALATIANS AND HE SAID; CHRIST HAS SET US FREE, NOT TO BITE AND DEVOUR EACH OTHER, NOT TO INDULGE OUR SINFUL NATURES, BUT TO CARRY EACH OTHER'S BURDENS AND TO SERVE ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE.

YOU KNOW ONLY YESTERDAY WE WERE IN ZAMBOANGA CITY TO CONDUCT OUR PERIODIC VISITS TO THE REGIONAL CAPITALS OF THE PHILIPPINES. ZAMBOANGA BEING THE CAPITAL OF REGION IX IN THE SOUTHWESTERN PART OF MINDANAO AND THIS IS THE MOST BACKWARD REGION IN THE PHILIPPINES IN TERMS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AS WELL AS IN TERMS OF THE PEACE AND ORDER PROBLEMS THAT THE PEOPLE IN THAT REGION MUST CONFRONT. AND ONE OF THE PESTERING CONFLICTS THAT WAS THREATENING TO FLAIR UP ONCE MORE WAS THE RIVALRY BETWEEN FUNDAMENTALIST MUSLIM GROUPS ALTHOUGH THERE WERE VERY FEW OF THEM AND SOME OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WHO WERE DETERMINED TO RESIST. AND SO I FELT IT NECESSARY ON MY PART TO PUT THE LEADERS OF THE MUSLIM AND THE CHRISTIAN

COMMUNITY TOGETHER IN THAT VERY IMPORTANT PART OF THE PHILIPPINES. AND TO THEIR CREDIT THEY VERY WILLINGLY GOT TOGETHER AND BEFORE THE DAY WAS OVER THEY FORGED A COVENANT OF UNITY AND SOLIDARITY FOR THE GOOD OF OUR PEOPLE IN THAT REGION.

THIS WAS DONE BY A HANDFUL, NOT MORE THAN 12 OF US AND THE COVENANT WAS HAMMERED OUT IN THE SMALL OFFICE OF A MILITARY COMMANDER WHICH WAS OUR LAST STOP BEFORE I BOARDED MY PLANE. BUT THAT EVENT IN THAT FAR-FLUNG COMMUNITY OF THE PHILIPPINES HAD VERY FAR-REACHING AND IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS.

AND I WOULD LIKE TO SAY AT THIS GATHERING THIS AFTERNOON IS A REINFORCEMENT OF THAT FEELING OF UNITY AND SOLIDARITY THAT MUST BEFALL AMONG ALL FILIPINOS. AND IT IS IN THIS SPIRIT THAT I THANK ALL OF YOU ESPECIALLY THOSE THAT CONVENE THIS ASSEMBLY TODAY, FOR SURROUNDING ME FOR YOUR PRAYERS AND FOR PRAYING FOR THE FILIPINO NATION BECAUSE AS THE YOUNG ACTIVISTS OF 1970 SAID; "KUNG HINDI TAYO, SINO PA?"

MARAMING SALAMAT PO SA INYONG LAHAT.

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