M E S S A G E

Kaisa ng sangkakristiyanuhan ang Pilipinas sa paggunita sa pinaka-dakilang dula sa balat ng lupa -- ang sukdulan ng pagpapakasakit ng ating panginoong Hesukristo.

It is the greatest story ever told -- the gospel of human suffering and eventual redemption that is possible only through Christ, so that we may fulfill our destiny according to the word made flesh.

So now, in this holiest of weeks, let us reflect on its true meaning and then relate it -- in all humility and with profound awareness, but in deep penitential terms -- to the thorns of life and the heavy cross that man bears daily on his sinful shoulders.

May our commemoration of Holy Week, from the triumphal entry of Jesus on Palm Sunday to Jerusalem where he was received as the Messiah, to his agony in the garden of Gethsemane; from his betrayal by his own disciple to his crucifixion in the stony mountain of Calvary; from his seven last words to his death, enable us to relearn his holy teachings and his truths, his mysteries and his beatitudes. From all these, let us rediscover the love and the goodness, the faith and the charity that will strengthen us, individually and collectively, in meeting the challenges of everyday life and the rigors of building a national community of free and God-fearing citizens.

As a people and as a nation, we have carried our own heavy cross. We have experienced travails and pitfalls. But with trust and faith in God almighty, we have since recovered our national cohesion, improved our economy, enhanced the social well-being of our people, attained political stability, and strengthened our democracy.

It is our fervent prayer that in the annual commemoration of Holy Week, the love of Christ and the love for our fellowman shall reign supreme in our hearts, and in the hearts of all mankind.

Sana'y sumainyo ang tunay na kahulugan ng mahal na araw at maghari nawa sa ating mga puso ang kapatiran at pagmamahalang siyang diwa ng pagkamatay sa krus ng bugtong na anak ng Diyos.

Salamat po sa inyong lahat.

26 March 1997
M a n i l a