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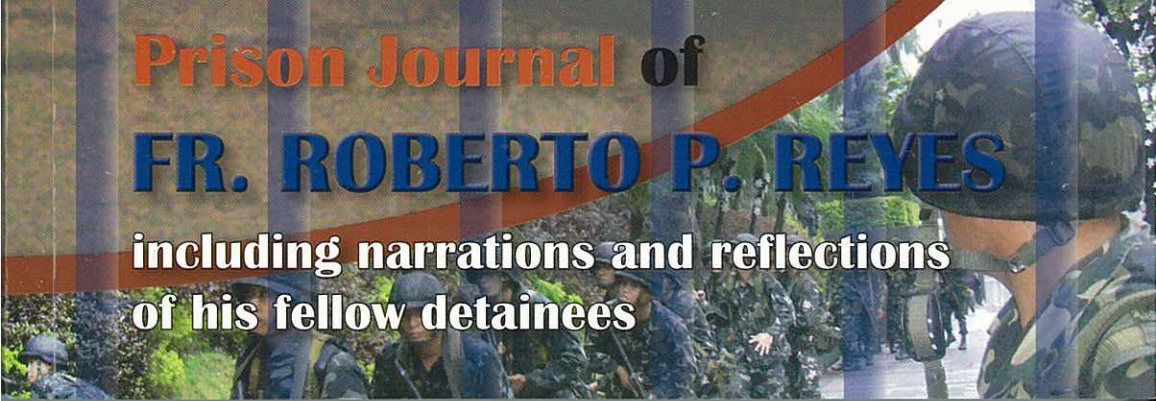
# PRISONS...

## Manila Pen and beyond



**Prison Journal** of  
**FR. ROBERTO P. REYES**

including narrations and reflections  
of his fellow detainees





# **PRISONS...**

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**Prison Journal of**

**FR. ROBERTO P. REYES**

**including reflections of his fellow detainees**



**ASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**



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# Contents

<b>Foreword • Basil Fernando</b> .....	v
<b>Introduction • Prof. Raul C. Pangalangan</b> .....	1
<b>Reflections</b>	
<i>Brigadier General Danilo Lim</i> .....	5
<i>Senator Antonio “Sonny” Trillanes IV</i> .....	11
<i>Lieutenant (s.g.) Eugene Gonzalez</i> .....	15
<i>Lieutenant Jonnel Sangalang</i> .....	19
<i>Francisco Nemenzo</i> .....	23
<i>Atty. Argee Guevarra</i> .....	27
<i>Herman Tiu Laurel</i> .....	31
<i>Capt. Nicanor Faeldon</i> .....	40
<b>From R. Robert’s PRISON Journal</b> .....	43
<i>Day 1</i> .....	43
<i>Day 2</i> .....	44
<i>Day 3</i> .....	48
<i>Day 4</i> .....	51
<i>Day 5</i> .....	55
<i>Day 6</i> .....	57
<i>Day 7</i> .....	65
<i>Day 8</i> .....	71
<i>Day 9</i> .....	77
<i>Day 10</i> .....	82
<i>Day 11</i> .....	86
<i>Day 12</i> .....	91
<i>Day 13</i> .....	97
<i>Day 14</i> .....	101
<i>Day 15</i> .....	104
<b>Manila Pen and Beyond</b> .....	107
<b>Appendix: List of Detainees</b> .....	126



# Foreword



**Basil Fernando**

Director, Asian Human Rights Commission

Fr. Roberto Reyes in jail — it is almost like Alice in Wonderland — the reality and unreality of things and our perceptions.

Prison is supposed to be the worst place in a country assigned to the worst people in the country — is that so? The worst people that I know, let us say for example, the worst types of murderers, those who kill dozens, hundreds or even thousands in the most cold-blooded fashion after securing their arrest by using the coercive machinery of the state, they are most certainly not in prison.

Let us take a case very dear to the heart of Fr. Roberto. The case incongruously but however popularly known as the case of the Abadilla Five. Abadilla was a murderer, licensed to scheme and eliminate ‘terrorists.’ The Abadilla Five are innocent persons. State authorised agents manipulated the charges, manipulated the evidence and then got a verdict ‘according to the law.’ That is like the law of the queen in Alice’s Wonderland. Get the verdict first and then arrange the evidence to cheat the system.

But that is not enough. The names of the accused themselves should be manipulated out of memory. No one hears about the names of these human beings: *Lenido Lumanog, Augusto Santos, Senior Police Officer 2 (SPO2) Cesar Fortuna, Rameses de Jesus and Joel de Jesus*. They are only known only as the Abadilla Five. Abadilla has again triumphed. He can still kill.

Abadilla the murderer is an embarrassment to the state. He may also be an embarrassment to a respectable family. Now he should be made a victim; a saint of some sort.

The arrangement of games of this sort is a highly professionalized function within the state. Everything that is, disappears. Everything that is not, appears. Learning to believe in falsehood is wisdom.

The game needs people such as the Abadilla Five. The game also

needs Fr. Roberto to be in prison, even for a short while. The game needs the freedom for judges to delay cases.

There was that something that people knew at one time called justice. Justice meant the capacity of a people to expose the game and to highlight the vulnerability of the human. The power vs. the human is what justice is about. The game vs. the truth is what justice is about.

It is a sad society that has only the game and no justice. So that is the Philippines now; very much too, like my own country, Sri Lanka.

‘I was in prison and you visited me’. Surely Lord, you can’t be the Abadilla Five. If we are to visit you in prison then there must be other prisons than what

we have now. If you are the Abadilla Five then what are our judges and our politicians? Or should we have another game? We should meet the Abadilla Five and thereby meet you and then shed some crocodile tears and say how sorry we are to send innocent people to prison. We have to explain to you and you simply have to accept that we can’t



help this. You will have to pretend that those who are pronounced guilty are guilty and those who are pronounced good are good.

So the Philippines can say we are a predominantly Christian country, but we will not visit the prisons because we are afraid to know the truth.

The mockery of the citizen becomes the primary task of the state. It is a good thing for people like Fr. Roberto to go there, even by accident sometimes. It is necessary for people who do not want to be engaged in that game to go and see the truth.

From all the evidence we have it is not an exaggeration to say that there is no such thing called justice in the Philippines. Sooner or later if some citizens begin to realize this then the eyes of others can be open to see things as they really are.

I suppose the purpose of this prison diary is to give some insight that is able to break the constructed falsehood and to help in building an understanding of the glaring human contradictions in the Philippines. That no doubt is the only sensible thing that any sensible person can do within a social milieu such as that of the Philippines.





**DISSENT  
WITHOUT ACTION IS  
CONSENT**

[citizenaction@yahoo.com](mailto:citizenaction@yahoo.com)

# Introduction

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**Prof. Raul C. Pangalangan**

University of the Philippines,  
College of Law

November 29, 2007 has yet to claim its rightful place in Philippine history. The naysayers deride it as having been doomed from the start, yet what would they look for as indicators of strength? The presence of prominent politicians? The “hakot” multitude and crowds-for-rent? A new Cardinal Sin who will shepherd the faithful? A shadowy central committee or law firm who will marshal the protests? Sadly, what others see as signs of triumph, I take as telltales of the inauthentic rebellion.

“Filipinos are all so prudent. That is why our country is as it is,” Jose Rizal wrote to Mariano Ponce. We mock the dreamers whose dreams we had the power to give — and then blame them that we didn’t. We have become a democracy of onlookers who sit on the sidelines waiting for the smoke to clear... and to cheer on the victor. Faced with a historical moment at the Peninsula, we hedged our bets, and chose to wager not on the basis of who’s right and who’s wrong, but rather on whose side had more guns. We stuck to the play-safe cost-benefit calculus of a people too often used in the past.

Fr. Roberto Reyes was present at the Peninsula and he was subsequently arrested and imprisoned. His book brings together in one volume several genres of writing. Here he publishes his prison diaries. There’s nothing like a daily journal to tell us — us who would



have reaped the bounties of social change, us who remained free after the rebellion failed – about the life of a political detainee, and to show us that history is made and felt, lived and endured, by human beings.

Also in this volume are writings by the other participants, some of them vignettes of isolated moments in that long day, and the others essays and analyses like that of former University of the Philippines' President Dodong Nemenzo, who was imprisoned with Fr. Reyes. The book also includes the statement that General Danilo Lim read to the nation from the Peninsula.

We have seen these moments before in recent Philippine history, when the nation felt a sense of malaise, knowing that there is something rotten yet unsure of how to excise it. The first was during the youth ferment that culminated with the First Quarter Storm of 1970 and the Diliman Commune of 1971. The second was in the early 1980s when the sheen had begun to fade off the Marcos regime. For the first, the agenda was pushed by a centrally organized Left, and the impassé was broken by Marcos when he declared martial law. For the second, the stalemate was broken by the murder of Ninoy Aquino at the airport tarmac, and we found catharsis at Edsa 1.

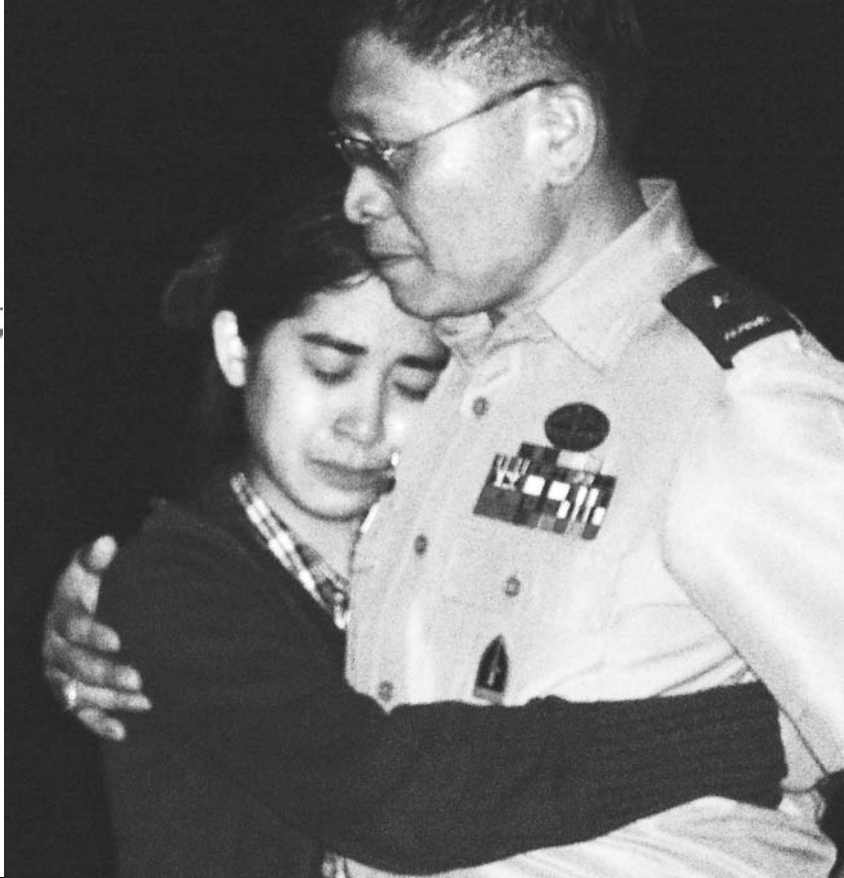
We see the same sense of malaise today, but without any centrally organized group to orchestrate it (as in the early 70s) nor any unifying figure and tragedy to rally us to the cause (as in the 1980s). At the Peninsula on November 29, 2007, we broke away from the obsession to replicate the Edsa template. The looming elections of 2010, instead of giving us hope, merely remind us that we are locked into an electoral cycle of elite politicians or their proxies playing a game of musical chairs.

The challenge is how to transform widespread unease into popular outrage, and how to channel that raw outrage into networks of organized action. November 29, 2007 should not be seen as an isolated episode in Philippine history that began when General Lim and Senator Antonio Trillanes IV walked out of the courtroom, and ended when the Philippine National Police stormed the Peninsula lobby. It should be seen as part of the larger experiment to reinvent Philippine democracy, and to seize the hour, seize the day.

*Ranaya*

Hong Kong, 14 November 2008





# Reflections



## Brigadier General Danilo Lim

Philippine Army

For my elementary and high school education, I attended St. Louis's School in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya. It was a private Catholic school run by CICM priests and Franciscan Sisters.

In simple activities held at the school grounds, my high school classmates (SLS Class '72) got together to observe our 35<sup>th</sup> Year Graduation Anniversary on February 24, 2007. I could not be physically present to join them as I was detained in Tanay, Rizal at that time.

As a gesture of solidarity, my classmates all sported white T-shirts bearing an image of me in uniform and the following printed words next to my profile:

FOR WHAT IS TRUE  
FOR WHAT IS HONEST  
FOR WHAT IS RIGHT

To be involved in the event, I sent them a message which was read out during their program. This is the letter I wrote to my dear classmates and friends.

February 24, 2007

My dear classmates and friends,

As a soldier, I was trained to obey without question. In the process of performing my sworn duties, I came to realize that our

kind of military organization is nothing but an instrument employed by the elite in power to perpetuate the unjust and corrupt practices and preserve the “status quo;” defective systems, structures, and all. Nothing but an attack dog on leash, it is tossed some bone fragments to be pacified every time it grumbles. Mostly, it is let loosed to go after “enemies of the state,” equated to those who express dissent or find fault with the ways of government; those who often times are themselves victims of the selective and perverse dispensation of justice by our morally degenerate leaders.

In the military, I have witnessed corruption at all levels, especially at the upper reaches of the ladder, and saw the deterioration of morals and values in the service. Prevalent practices sharply contrasted with the ideals that we were supposed to have internalized. I started asking questions. In the 80’s and 90’s, as a young scout ranger Captain and Chairman of the Y.O.U. (Young Officers’ Union), together with other young officers, I sought and fought for reforms. We all paid a very heavy price---almost 3 years in detention. The response came in the form of elaborate lip service, nothing fundamental. Under the present order, military reforms will always remain chimerical because it is in the best interest of those in power that the AFP remains Unprofessional and Corrupt. This way, the Sycophantic institution would behave obediently and like an automaton, follow all their biddings no matter how illicit. The disgraceful and Criminal Conduct of Esperon and other generals (they were all amply rewarded), for example in frustrating and thwarting our people’s mandate during the presidential electoral process in 2004, underscores such Unprofessionalism and Corruption. We have a military establishment Corrupted and Perverted by our shameless and



depraved civilian leaders. The military's prostitution and involvement in the election fraud was confirmed by no less than General Senga, former AFP Chief of Staff, who admitted to Col. Querubin and me that he himself is "not clean" and was "used" in the cheating. This explains why even the "watered down" version of the Mayuga report has yet to be made public up till now.

I am now all the more convinced that even genuine military reforms would mean nothing without accompanying essential alterations in the other sectors and in our society as a whole. As a microcosm, the military is the small picture that mirrors the whole bureaucracy and our society. When the whole universe is corrupt, it necessarily follows that the subset that reflects it is also rotten. There is an urgent need for a corresponding fundamental and radical restructuring in the bigger picture. Unfortunately, such cannot be achieved through a discredited electoral mode as our vehicle for change because the process rarely turns out leaders whose hearts are in the right places.

After my involvement in the events of December 1989 and subsequent detention, I worked doubly hard in order to get back into the military mainstream. I have performed creditably enough to earn my promotions and be considered for coveted positions. One can even say that prior to February 24, 2006, my future in the Uniformed service was a "cloudless sky." I could have pursued the safe and easy path if it was solely a matter of selfish personal considerations. With all the right connections, I had everything going for me. Among the youngest to attain a star rank, not a few in the know were declaring in advance that I would eventually make it as chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The truth is, I was one of the fair-haired boys of GMA. She personally picked me, ahead of many more senior contenders to command the elite First Scout Ranger Regiment. During my stint as regional Commander, she visited the unit three times. A fourth visit would have been on February 25, 2006. In conversations where leader personalities in the military are discussed, she would advertise my leadership qualities. Admiral De Leon, former Philippine Navy Chief, related to me that in one trip to Cebu, he was on the same

flight with GMA and in their talk, when the topic shifted to promising officers in the AFP, GMA readily volunteered my name. Admiral De Leon later commented, “Napakalakas mo Danny kay GMA.”

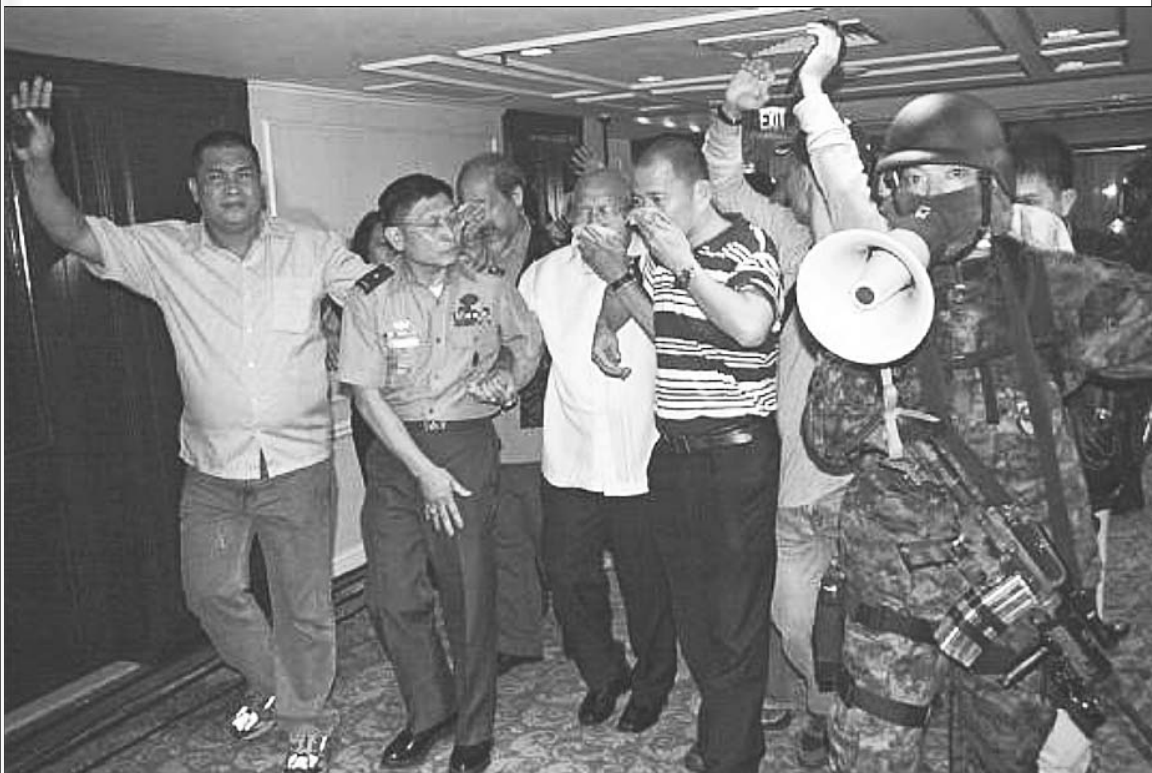
Every so often, I would receive a call from the President and sometimes get invitations to attend functions ( including some very private dinners) in Malacanang. A few minutes after the airing of her “I am sorry statement,” offshoot of the “Hello Garci” scandal, she called me for an assessment of the troop’s reactions to her televised statement. In my mind, Wow, I really count! The President’s youngest brother, Buboy Macapagal, is a friend and sometimes drinking buddy. I rubbed elbows on a regular basis with so many politicians, Congressmen, Senators and Cabinet members, including many of the most powerful and closest to the Malacanang kitchen. It was also during these meetings and interactions that I would hear from the “horses mouths” confirmations about the massive vote manipulations during the last Presidential election.

I could have kept quiet and behaved in a manner I was expected (according to my military training) to conduct myself. After all, as far as my career was concerned, everything was smelling roses. Who wouldn’t want additional stars on his shoulders (already promised to me) and maybe eventually even make it top the top rung of the AFP’s leadership ladder? But then, it was not solely my personal career. There is the more important collective career of the Nation. My subsequent actions were based on what I believe was best not necessarily for myself. I had to harness every bit of strength I could find in my character to say yes to something that truly matters. And I’ll never regret my decision of opting to follow the tough road.

As I write to you from my detention place, I feel relaxed, completely at peace, and grounded against even more of life’s strong gusts. The surrounding high walls and barbed wires are mere physical demarcations. The spirit and the righteous cause cannot be confined. I am alive, strong, confident and happy! Happiness, after all, is a matter of choice. I pray that God continue to give me strength and imbue my heart with courage and with his guidance, I choose to continue taking a stand; to do the right thing even when it is hard.

The attack hounds of this administration and those who simply do not have the deeper capacity to discern grander forms of motivations would simply dismiss me and my ilk as mere military adventurists. To cause even greater discredit, they ascribe mercenary motives to acts which are willing sacrifices. My lifelong philosophy has always been, "give voluntarily and never take anything for yourself." When your action is attended by what's in it for you or some good deals you expect to come your way, then the whole deed is tainted.

We all were born with a grain in our being desiring a better world and a better deal for everyone. There is that feeling that we need to make a difference not only in our lives but also in the lives of others. Just like all of you, I dream dreams for this country. I look forward to the time when the visions of our selfless martyrs and heroes would come to final fruition. I dream of a society and its people enjoying



the benefits of a powerful and vibrant economy that is able to provide livelihood and generate jobs for everyone; where the ravages of poverty are things of the past (worse, it is not only poverty but destitution for many Filipinos nowadays); where our women and children are no longer to leave the comforts of home and family and risk lives and limbs seeking employment in foreign and often hostile environments and where justice is done to the social justice component of the Constitution. I dream of a good government running this country which is a paragon of genuine service, fair play and accountability. I'm willing to pay the price to make these dreams come true.

I thank all of you very sincerely for your continuing support and for your gesture of solidarity. In life, we make a difference by our thoughts, our words and our actions. We know to well that it is too easy to mouth (like parrots) slogans, certain beliefs and certain dreams. Taking action, living and internalizing them are altogether a difficult and different story. Yet, if we want to see and experience life's defining changes, we need to take that brave initial step into the unknown. A great philosopher, Henry Thoreau said, "Dissent without action is consent." That you have closed ranks and are all together in this simple but very significant activity, sporting those white shirts emblazoned with the standards of truth, honesty and righteousness, is a symbolic and meaningful manifestation that you have collectively taken that bold first step. Welcome to the struggle!

Indeed, this is a Caress in my heart. I am all the more inspired and with God's grace, I'll have the same stoic and unwavering strength ( which He gave) to define my every decision and action as I brace to meet more of the worst that fate has to offer.

I'll keep the faith!

Para Sa Bansa!

*Danny Lim*

# Reflections

## *A Day in the Life of a Filipino*

**Antonio “Sonny” Trillanes IV**

Senator, Republic of the Philippines

It was still early in the morning when Mang Nestor got up from bed. He was quietly sipping a cup of salabat inside his kubo as he prepared to walk to the town. Mang Nestor is a rice farmer in a strife-torn town in Central Mindanao. Today, however, he would not farm. He had been told the day before that the area where the rice fields are have been declared “No Man’s Land” by the AFP as part of the on-going military operations against the MILF. Taking advantage of the break,

Mang Nestor decided to spend the day looking for a doctor. He had long wanted something to relieve himself of the sharp pain in his abdomen. He believed it was some sort of liver ailment as told by the albularyo he consulted with.

At the health center, Mang Nestor dutifully waited for his turn. After patiently waiting for a few hours, he was finally called but only to be dismissed quickly by the attending health worker since the doctor was not around. Besides,



he was also informed that there was no medicine available. Eventually, he was told to come back the following week as the doctor should be there by then. Realizing that he had no more business in the town, Mang Nestor then headed slowly back for home. As he strode by the dirt road, he began to shake his head in regret when he realized that his habitual drinking could likely be the cause of his predicament. He smirked as he recollected those whole-day drinking sprees he and his friends did back then to provide some form of cheap entertainment, as well as to drown his hunger and miseries.

His reflections were abruptly disrupted by a convoy of streaking vans escorted by several police and military vehicles that blew past him causing a cloud of dust and dirt. As he squinted his eyes, he managed to get a glimpse of the black van at the center of the convoy. He nodded as though it was very familiar to him. A few years back, Mang Nestor recalled that it was the same black van that brought the town mayor to the plaza to deliver a campaign speech. A bus had brought him there, along with other people, to be part of the hakot crowd in exchange for a fifty-peso fee. The mayor then was running for re-election and was sincerely promising the townsfolk that, if re-elected, he would install deep-well pumps for potable water in their barangays, as well as multi-purpose pavements to dry their palay. During the elections, he voted for the mayor, not because he was moved by the promises made, but because he had sold his vote to the tune of five hundred pesos. His neighbors said they received more but then again, he thought, five hundred pesos is still five hundred pesos. The elections are near again yet the promises remained unfulfilled, but the prospects of making a little money amused him. This time around he would sell his vote to the highest bidder. He was convinced they are all the same anyway.

— xxx —

Halfway to his home, Mang Nestor decided to take a break from walking under the scorching heat of the sun. He found a big tree and gently sat underneath



its shade. He appreciated the scenic view of the rolling mountains as he blew out a sigh of exhaustion. Near the base of the nearby mountain, however, there seemed to be clouds of smoke. Then he heard distant rumbling of what sounded like continuous cannon shelling. It is the war, he thought. How long would it take this time, he asked himself. It was a good thing he still had a half-sack of rice stored in his house. He had already conceded the possibility that his harvest would be completely destroyed. Besides, he had already loaned out almost all of it to the rice cartel operator in the area in exchange for the money he used during pre-production.

He now wondered how his life would have turned out had he joined the NPAs who were recruiting him decades ago? Would he be living a better life now? Most probably not, he thought. For he vividly remembered an incident a few years back when a band of NPA guerillas stormed their barrio and killed a man suspected of being an AFP informant. He could not understand why these people who fashioned themselves as the saviors of the masses would kill the very same people they claimed to be fighting for? Then again, he still would not have joined them because no one would take care of his family.

Mang Nestor's wife, like him, is illiterate and could not be employed. Actually, only one of his six daughters had gone past grade six. Aside from the fact that he could not afford their education, he remembered what was taught to him by his own parents: "Knowing how to read and write your name; and how to count money are the only things you need to know to survive." What frustrated him though, was the fact that he had no sons to help him in the farmlands.



His two elder daughters had gone to Manila to work as housemaids. The next two are still at home helping their mother. The fifth daughter left for Davao to look for work a year ago but he had not heard from her since. His neighbors heard this vicious rumor that she had ended



up working as a prostitute. His youngest child, the brightest and the one who had the most promising future, had eloped at a tender age of fourteen. In deep thought, he had not noticed the tears that rolled over his cheeks. He asked himself, "What have I done to deserve this?" "Maybe I was not praying enough", he answered himself back. But his family rarely missed going to mass. Nonetheless, he pledged to himself that this Sunday he would pray more fervently than the previous weeks.

In his reflections, Mang Nestor had lost track of time. He looked up and estimated the time to be way past noon,

which was why he had grown hungry. He contemplated on resuming his long walk home but then he realized there was nothing to eat there except the boiled malunggay leaves his family had been eating for the past several days. So instead, he decided to lie down on his back and sleep.

The plight of Mang Nestor is but one of the more than forty million Filipinos or more than half of our population living way below the poverty line. Each one goes through a similar ordeal every single day since the day they were born. Their lives are the representations of the true state of the nation with all the societal problems, government shortcomings and the damaged culture that had made them poor, weak, and helpless.

Last November 29, 2007, I made a stand for Mang Nestor. I failed then but I will still stand up for him someday...

# Reflections

## Lieutenant (s.g.) Eugene Gonzalez

Philippine Navy

The Manila Pen Incident was an expression of outrage in response to a series of events that the Arroyo Administration orchestrated to deliberately fool the Filipino people and eventually profit from their ignorance and gullibility.

The primary event that led to the decision to go to the Manila Pen in protest was the ZTE scandal. The scandal showed the extent and malignancy of the graft and corruption of the government of the Philippines. With 200 million pesos given at a golf whim to bribe technocrats for its eventual approval and 10 million dollars to buy out competitors, it is by far, at that time, the biggest sweetheart deal made by the country that I know of. No less a person than Mrs. Arroyo



went to China and guaranteed the deal to the Chinese Government on behalf of our country. The height of the arrogance showed when the scandal broke, the government machinery at their disposal closed ranks and tried to play the people for a fool by lying through their teeth and concocting a makeshift justification for their actions. They even used the privileges accorded by their offices for the benefit of the people for themselves, to protect them from eventual indictment.

And suddenly at the height of the investigation of the scandal, by sheer accidental coincidence, an explosion occurred at the Glorietta Mall. The first announcements made by law enforcement investigators gave a terrorist angle on the explosion. One of the officers even mentioned the presence of RDX residue on the site, reinforcing the terrorist theory. But when speculations arose that the explosion might just be a diversion to take the focus off the ZTE

scandal, the government figured that the terrorist angle might in a way lead back to them. So, just as sudden as the attack itself was the change in the law enforcement statements in which they said the explosion was found to be accidental. With all the government spin doctors and puppets singing the same tune, the media soon enough picked up the theory.

Together with the Philippine Marine debacle, where at least 15 officers and soldiers died, and the eventual assassination of the only government link to it, Cong. Wahab Akbar, the group decided that what was happening was too much for us to ignore. With scores of Filipino bodies lying around, sacrificed to the contempt and avarice of their administration, it was feared that the death of these citizens might be covered up; we believe that something has to be done. We as citizens of this great nation should not stand idly by, apathetic and just let these events happen. To those who benefit from little knowledge, comes the responsibility to ask questions and make demands for more





knowledge for the benefit of those who have no knowledge.

The Manila Pen incident was a call to the Filipino people for outrage for what was being done to all of us by this administration. It was a call for accountability on the part of our so called government officials for either their incompetence or contempt. The explanations that were given by the government for all the mentioned incidents were all one sided, untested and free from cross examination. It was all rammed down our throats for us to swallow. I personally am already choking on them. I can't take it anymore and need a breathing spell of the truth. And I firmly believe that my countrymen also deserve the same right. I will not stand by and watch. I will stand up and demand. We have a favorite quote from Edmund Burke, and it goes like this, "The only necessary thing for the triumph of evil, is for good men to do nothing." I do not presume to be good but I refuse to do nothing. That is why I tried at my very least to do something. That is why I went to Manila Pen.



# Reflections



## Lieutenant Jonnel Sangalang

Philippine Marines

“Have I done something wrong?” This is one of the questions that have been in my mind for quite some time now, especially when I am alone and in the mood for a reflection.

Am I a bad person? I know I am not that perfect. I have my flaws and shortcomings. But for God’s sake, I know I am good. There is goodness within me.

July 27, 2003. I was one of those military officers who set aside our personal welfare, took a stand, and exposed various anomalies within the AFP hierarchy and the current leadership of Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. The incident ended up when the government made us believe that they were sincere and would resolve the problems laid out before them. For me, it was a mistake for us to talk with, and allow the same people who were involved in such anomalies, do the investigations and suggest resolutions for the problems.

It was a clear deception; the government representatives went under the pretense of negotiating as gentlemen and sealed the agreement in good faith. Alas, all military officers and men who were implicated in the said incident were incarcerated and charged with various offenses under civil and military courts.

Years passed, some of our colleagues were released, while some have decided to trudge a different path from the one we were on. After more than four years, our situation did not get any better; we were still incarcerated, while criminal and administrative charges against

us were ongoing. What is more depressing was that things got worse; Mrs. Arroyo and her cohorts continuously ignored the condition of the Filipino people while they ravaged the country's financial and natural resources. Criticisms and protest from various sectors have been ongoing; additional military officers and men were detained for airing their grievances and standing up for the truth. It was a hopeless case. Thus, our group believed that once again, someone should stand and accordingly, something must be done.

During that time I was already engaged and all I was waiting for was my fiancée's overseas contract to finish. We were scheduled to marry after a few months. It was a decision point for me, that is, whether I should still let myself get involved or stand down and let others, or perhaps destiny itself find its way to solve whatever political adversities we had that time.

In the morning of November 29, 2007 the so called "core group" charged with the coup d'état were scheduled to have a hearing at Makati RTC. I was one of them. When we arrived there, things



happened spontaneously and within a few hours we were already at Manila Peninsula Hotel. From there various events took place. By night fall, the PNP and AFP personnel stormed the place and we were taken into custody together with people from various sectors which included prominent personalities who went there and believed in what we stood for; that change is needed in order for this country to move forward.

We were apprehended once again. This time it was not by the military but the police who took us into custody. We were processed, charged with rebellion and brought to Camp Crame, Quezon City where we were detained within the PNP Custodial Center.

It was a puzzling event for some why such a move was made. For our families, it was a shocking moment. They were expecting that things for us were already getting better. Sadly, they were wrong; as I have said, things were not going anywhere, things for us and our country were getting worse... going steadily down hill. We tried to explain and let them realize why we made such move.

Sometimes a deafening silence from them is something that is difficult to comprehend. Did they understand our reasons? Are they angry? What I know is that majority from them were glad that nothing tragic happened to us... after all the things they saw and heard from the TV and radio during that time. Up to this point such things are not being taken lightly by our families and the stress definitely took a toll on them. It is not easy for them, it never was. When I was still a bachelor I seldom felt the pressure of their sacrifices. However, after getting married last May, and the fact that we will soon have our first baby, all these just add up to the things I have to consider at this point.

Nevertheless, I am still thankful despite all this, for I know my sisters and other family members and friends; most especially my wife... all love and support me, no matter what. Somehow, it eases most of us in detention knowing they are always beside us, supporting our cause. It is a bonus on our part when they are with us.

There was once a priest who occasionally celebrated Holy Mass with us; in one of his homilies he said "Hardships and difficulties in life

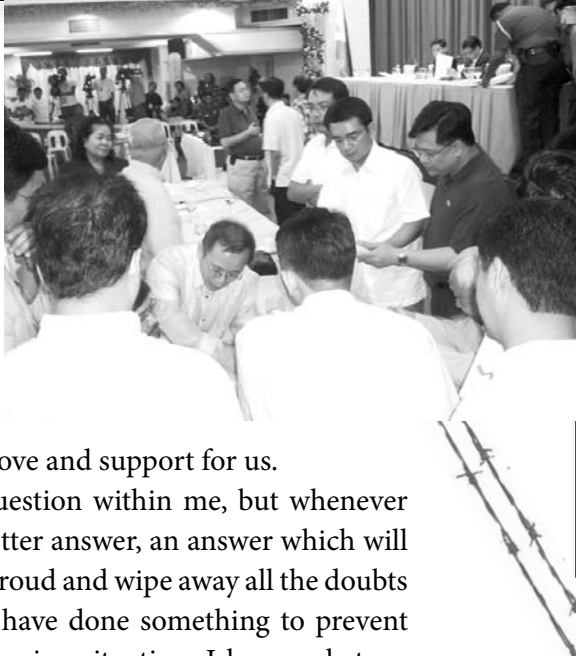
are nothing if you know you are doing them with a purpose, for someone... if you are sacrificing for their wellbeing.” Such teaching is adoptable into two ways, for us - with our intention for our country; the other is for our loved ones - for their undying love and support for us.

Now, I still have the same question within me, but whenever that bothers me, I know I have a better answer, an answer which will implicitly explain why I should be proud and wipe away all the doubts that I have. Knowing that I could have done something to prevent or somehow helped correct a worsening situation; I know what we did is morally right and there is nothing to be ashamed for. I don't want my children to grow up in a bedlam, a country where people cannot distinguish what is morally right from wrong; a perplexing righteousness within the society, where those who steal and those who lie are the ones who are always in power.

However, it is depressing that up to this point, such a perturbing situation still remains within our country. What infuriates me is that I know for a fact there are a lot of people who know what the situation is, yet most of these people decided to distance themselves. Apathy has eaten them, and all they want is for them to survive, to wait... but for what?

With all this, whenever I see those “free” people saving themselves, doing nothing, I reevaluate “freedom’s” effect on them. Compared to what has been happening in my life, I know I'm not at a loss; I know I have a purpose. I would say there is no emptiness within me. I believe I have more than what those people outside have, those who seemed free but in reality... they are the ones in captivity.

(Since criminal charges of Coup d'état and Rebellion are still pending in court, some details about events and names of people were intentionally omitted due to legal considerations”



# Reflections

## *Recalling Manila Pen*

**Francisco Nemenzo**

Former President and Professor Emeritus  
University of the Philippines

When I first heard of the 29 November 2007 walkout, I worried that it would be a repeat of the Oakwood fiasco. I thought it would be smarter for Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim and Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV to go underground after walking out of court and hold a press conference in their hideout instead of having it in a five-star hotel. The impact would have been greater and, at large, they could haunt Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Notwithstanding this reservation, I still joined to show my sympathy for what they are fighting for. Of course, I was mindful of the risks. There were factors beyond our knowledge and control which should come into play for the project to succeed. How will the key units of the armed forces respond? Will the mass demonstrations the following day — mobilized independently of this project — escalate into a popular uprising?



By 2 p.m. that day, Senator Trillanes advised me to leave before the PNP attacked. I passed on this advice to the members of Laban ng Masa, but I decided to stay regardless of the consequences. I could never live with my conscience had I survived while these brave young officers were slaughtered. Bishop Julio Labayen also thought along this line. He suggested that our presence might prevent a shoot out. At that point we saw on television the PNP Special Action Force preparing the assault, while the rebel soldiers were positioning themselves, aiming their guns at the entrance of Manila Pen.

Lim and Trillanes decided to avoid bloodshed instead of fighting a one-sided battle. The mezzanine floor was filled with tear gas. Resistance was impossible. As the SAF rounded up uniformed rebels,



we were told to sit on the stairs. The SAF men, waving their guns at us, called on the soldiers in civilian clothes to come forward. Then they searched for members of the Alex Boncayao Brigade.

Old age is an advantage in a situation like this. When the SAF commander recognized me, he ordered his men to give me a chair. He even expressed regret that we

should meet again under the circumstances. (He must have attended one of my public lectures, although I didn't remember him at all).

Bibeth Orteza and I were loaded in the last bus to leave for Bicutan, together with the Magdalo soldiers. Since we still had our cell phones, they requested us to assure their families that they were safe. They were writhing in pain because their hands were tightly tied behind. On the way to Bicutan, Bibeth and I discreetly loosened the plastic ropes; and once their hands were freed, they did the same to their comrades. By the time we reached Bicutan, they had tied their own hands in front.

The buses containing the media people left ahead of us. But Gen. Lim and Sen. Trillanes were on the first bus. The media people missed that dramatic moment when a hundred policemen cheered Lim and Trillanes as they disembarked. Many had their photos taken Trillanes taken. They also asked for his autograph. It took Gen. Barias a good deal of yelling before his men stopped treating the captives like heroes.

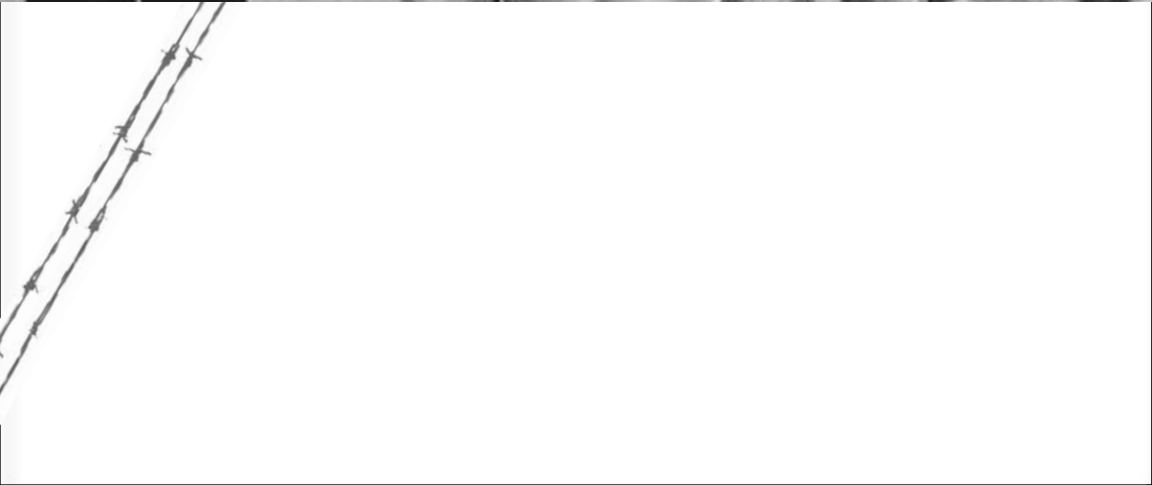
When we were transferred to the PNP Custodial Center in Camp Crame, I told Trillanes that it was a homecoming for me. He was only one year old the first time I was brought there!

The next evening all detainees were escorted to the Crame Social Hall for a show trial. Each was handcuffed to policeman and made to march single file. The whole affair was choreographed for television. We sat beside our escorts while the prosecutors fumbled, spewing out silly arguments. There was a battery of brilliant lawyers to defend us. I probably had the most lawyers because all alumni of the UP College of Law stood up and presented themselves as my legal counsel.

After I was granted temporary release on account of my age, I walked without handcuffs back to the Custodial Center to sign the release papers and collect my personal belongings. Along the way some young policemen joined me. One of them whispered: "Sayang, sir, hindi kayo nanalo. Handa na sana kaming sumama."

From one point of view, the Manila Pen demonstration was a disaster. But it also rekindled the morale of the restive soldiers who already thought the Magdalo was dead. Lieutenant Senior Grade Antonio Trillanes showed the nation that years of imprisonment and electoral victory have not diminished his fighting spirit.





# Reflections



## *Ang Pananahimik sa Iyong Pagkapiit (Sa loob ng Camp Crame)*

**Atty. Argee Guevarra**

N29M

Ganito ang hikbi ng pananahimik  
Kapag bihag ka ng gabi:

Mamimitig ang iyong bisig  
ngayong kulob  
sa loob ng semento  
at kinakarayom ang iyong dibdib  
ng dumadapong lamig  
na siyang magbabadya ng paglitis  
ng mga pagdaraanang pagtitiis

Nanlilisik sa kisame  
ang bumbilyang  
hindi kumurap-kurap,  
waring iniluluwa  
ang iskwadron ng lamok  
na buong bangis kung lumusob  
kasama ang pulutong ng ipis



na magpupulis  
sa iyong pamamaluktot  
sa loob ng maigsing kumot.

Nanliligalig sa iyong pandinig  
ang balagtasang  
ng hagok at hilik  
at pasyon ng pag-utot  
ng mga ka-kosang tuod  
na marahas na sususupil  
sa iyong pagnanasang makahimbing.

Kay panglaw ng bintanang  
dumudungaw sa nakapaskil  
na telon ng dilim  
upang makapamingwit  
maski tilamsik ng ilaw  
o buntot ng bulalakaw  
na maaaring makatuwang o makaulayaw

Sa pagdagta sa dingding  
ng naniig na hamog at hangin,  
gigisingin ang iyong damdamin  
ng tamis at sabik,  
hanghang at galit  
ng mga aninong iyong hindi makakapiling

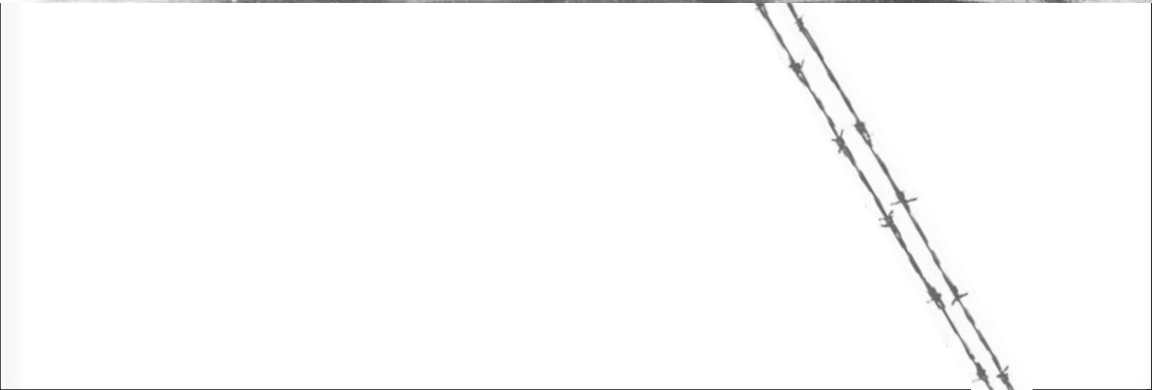
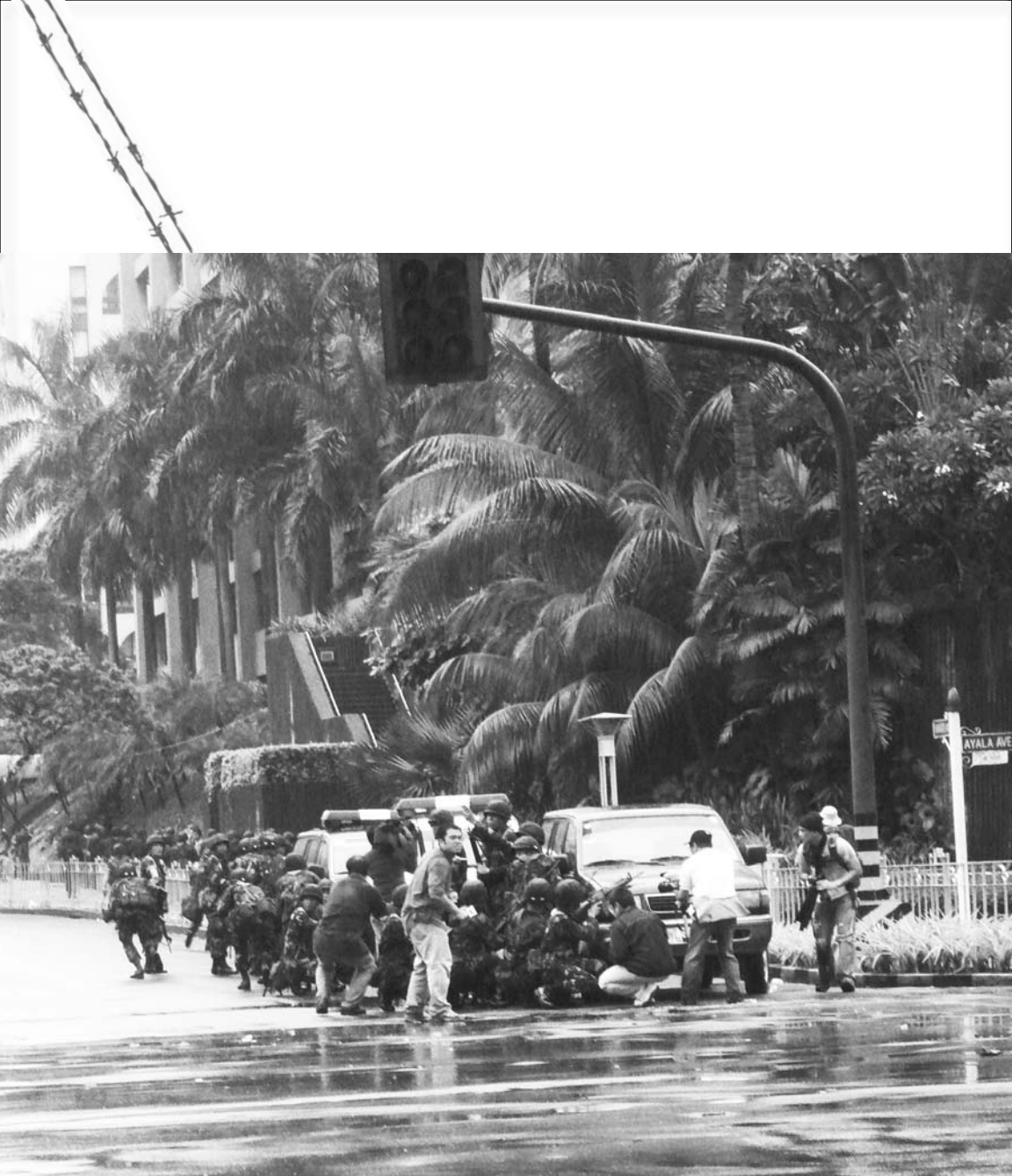
Mapapagulong ka sa sulok  
ng pagiisip  
at pipitik ang talukap ng iyong pamimikit,  
waring gagambang lulundag  
ang iyong mga mata  
sa pagkapit sa bawat hibla  
ng namumukadkad na umaga,  
at magsasapot ng malapot na luha

sa bawat siwang  
ng rehas na bakal  
upang makalambat  
ng anumang alabok ng alaala  
ng anak, magulang,  
kapatid, kaibigan,  
pamangkin, apo,  
kaibigan, kasama,  
asawa o nobya.

Matatag man ang higaan  
ng iyong kalooban,  
huhulihin ka ng hikab  
at tutugisin ka ng antok  
sa gabi-gabing pagdalaw  
ng ganitong mga pagsubok.

Pupuga ka para managinip sa iyong pagtulog.





# Reflections

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## *November 29, 2007 : A Day for Hope.*

**Herman Tiu Laurel**

### **At the Ninoy Statue.**

“When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle”, and some good Filipinos did come together on that fateful day of November 29, 2007 to denounce the sad state of the nation’s affairs under a band of elements which had Philippine society in the grip of its abuse and repression.

The morning of November 27, 2007 had begun early for me. The Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomista (Movement of Nationalist Economists) had asked me to join a prayer rally scheduled for eight o’clock at the Ninoy Aquino Statue on Ayala Avenue corner Paseo de Roxas. I took the Metro Rail Transit so I wouldn’t have the trouble of parking my vehicle, and given the traffic in the business center where the rally site it was the most practical thing to do. I arrived at the site very early, after waiting and nobody else arriving I decided to sit awhile at one of the fastfood burger store across the statue.

My hope for an early start of the mass at the site was buoyed when I saw Fr. Robert Reyes across the street. I came out to join him.

He was also just informed by phone the day before, when he had just arrived for a visit to Manila from his new assignment in Hong Kong. He was asked to help in the celebration of the mass at the site with others, such as the eminent Bishop Julio Labayen. Hours passed before we were informed that we had to pick up Bishop Labayen at the Manila Peninsula Hotel because he couldn't find the Ninoy Aquino Statue. At the same time, Fr. Reyes noted that we had not even a table to use as altar. I called up Lito Anzures of Makati City Hall, Public Information Office, to request help which they did send after an hour of waiting. By then it was so late Fr. Reyes and I decided to move on to look for Bishop Labayen.

Fr. Robert Reyes, I and a few of those that did arrive at the Ninoy Aquino Statue had a brief prayer before proceeding to pick up Bishop Labayen. As we started the walk I started getting text messages telling me that a group was marching from the Makati Regional Trial Court and apparently proceeding to the Manila Peninsula. This was being monitored on the radio networks. My cellphone buzzed, friends and relatives asking where I was and reporting that General Danilo Lim and Senator Antonio Trillanes IV were marching with a score of young officers towards the Manila Peninsula. As our walk neared the Ayala and Makati Avenue intersection we saw the media vans and police elements scattered all over.

We turned left passing the giant artificial waterfall of the hotel façade and inched towards Marines guarding this side of the Pen who stopped us for a while. A crowd had milled around the Manila Pen and from bits and pieces of their stories we pieced together the situation. Gen. Danilo Lim, Senator Trillanes and young officers of the Bagong Katipuneros movement (a.k.a. Magdalo) had taken a stand at the Manila Peninsula to stage a protest and denounce the Gloria Arroyo regime and its pernicious corruption of government and society. Fr. Reyes decided that he should go in to see if he can be of any help in sorting things out.

Fr. Robert Reyes persuaded the officer in charge of those guarding the Makati Ave. flank of the hotel to allow him and his companions to enter. As I stepped in with Fr. Robert and walked up the staircase

to where an ensemble normally played classical music to the hotel lobby guests I was approached by radio reporters. One of them asked me for a statement and I said: *“Nandidito ako para suportahan ang mga malilinis na opisyal ng ating AFP, mga nagmamalasakit, mga marangal.”* Meanwhile, I lost track of Fr. Robert Reyes. I stayed put at the level just above the orchestral area and hung around, texting friends to drop by and boost the morale of those trying to call all good Filipinos to unite and defy the bad men who have syndicated themselves to control, exploit and oppress this nation.

### At The Pen.

I just kept texting friends to join the protest action at the Manila Pen, not knowing a cordon had already been cast around the hotel perimeter to stop people from entering or leaving. A group of tsinoy teenagers visiting from Iloilo and billeted at the hotel engaged me in talk, and I explained what I perceived as the idealism of the action we were all witnessing from the young officers. All the while, young officers in with red armbands whizzed pass us, then one personality or another, and media reporters were all over the place. I kept on texting and calling on my cellphone to get more people to join in, as I always do for rallies and demonstrations.

Just a level above me a discussion was going on, later I was to learn that this was where some of the Bishops and political personalities were having a dialogue with the media. The only moment I was reminded of the time was when my stomach started growling and I was surprised it was way past lunch. I called up Linggoy Alcuaz to try to get some food bought outside for me and the people I could see were also feeling the pangs of hunger. They did manage to get some burgers up to the hotel doors, but they wouldn't be let in. So I spent the rest of the day with a growling stomach. Small price to pay for a ringside seat to a historic event, I was later to realize.



It was somewhere mid-afternoon when I started to venture farther out from that mezzanine area to the function rooms where the real excitement was going on. A table had been set up blocking the hallway to the function rooms where General Danilo Lim and Senator Antonio Trillanes IV had set up their center. A horde of media reporters were clumped just in front of the small table blocking the way and a number of young officers controlled the ingress and egress through that small path, opening and closing the small gap between the wall and the table edge. A telephone line had been strung out near the table and media reporters would use it alternately, and sometimes for interviews with protest and other types of personalities that would come and go.

The most prominent and dominant of the media personalities present at that choke point to go towards the function rooms was Ces Drilon, who stationed herself at the very front and could actually go in. A little further down the hallway was a TV monitor from which some of the young offices monitored the news coverage of what was becoming known as the “Manila Pen siege”. As I approached the media crowd milled around the very small access to the function rooms I saw Ellen Tordesillas of the *Malaya*, Dana Batnag who was later to be wrongly suspected of abetting the escape of Capt. Nick Faeldon, but there were so many familiar faces I cannot make them out from the haze of time past anymore.

I ventured to enter the hallway just to give my greetings to the leaders of the protest action. I was let in by some of the young officers and their civilian supporters because I had become familiar to many of them in the years since Oakwood, 2003, when I voiced my ardent support of their steadfast idealism through the years in my *Tribune* column and my DWAD radio programs. As I walked towards their room I was amused to see the soldier donning the afro wig, an image that would later become the subject of much speculation and humor. I was able to shake hands with General Lim and Senator Trillanes, and I expressed my support. They were very pre-occupied so I tried to make myself as unobtrusive as possible, walking back to the group of media people and listening to the crackle of radios.

There was no keeping track of time anymore as the excitement accelerated after every hour passed. Media was getting regular updates from the staff of General Lim and Senator Trillanes, but at one point interviews were minimized as the intensity of discussion among the protest leaders increased. That's when I remember asking sectoral representative J.B. Bautista to pitch in with the interviews to spare Sen. Trillanes the constant request from the media for Trillanes to come out of this command center. Atty. J.B. obliged and faced the media's many questions, including how he came to be at the Manila Pen on this historic occasion.

J.B. said that the first time he heard of the goings on at the Manila Pen that morning was the interview I had over radio. He recalled my call to the public to support the clean and idealistic Filipinos and officers who are trying to do something good for the country. Soon after these few words from J.B. events started to take a turn for the worse. All I remember was the commotion and media people talking of an imminent assault by the SWAT teams of the PNP. I walked back and forth between the end of the hallway and the command center hoping to find out more, but we could catch a whiff of tear gas already. The discussion in the command center was frenzy.

It was at this point that Senator Trillanes ordered that all civilians and media people be evacuated. I think many of us civilians



and media people knew what would be in store for the young officers and General Lim if they were left alone to the trigger happy commanders of the PNP too eager to follow the orders of their bloodthirsty commander-in-chief. Memories of retired Air Force Captain Paniflo Villaruel and Navy Lt. Ricardo Catchillar killed in cold blood on orders of Gloria Arroyo attack dog and DOTC Secretary, Leandro

Mendoza, on November 11, 2003 at the NAIAs old control tower was still fresh in our minds.

At that point I stepped up to face General Danilo Lim and Senator Antonio Trillanes IV that we, the civilians and media people, would not leave if they would not leave with us. General Lim turned to Senator Trillanes and said, "We cannot let any harm come to the civilians." After a moment of pause Senator Trillanes made the announcement to everyone that: "We will march out." I didn't know that there was already pandemonium outside the command center, but a door opened the cloud of tear gas was already thick in the hallway. At that point, we still weren't sure that everything would end up peacefully. I had eyed a huge earthenware planter to hide behind if shooting started. J.B. Bautista later told me he had considered jumping out one of the windows if bullets started to fly.

Between that decision and the final march of everyone, the soldiers, the media people and other civilians, down the semi-spiral staircase out into the police prisoner buses, a press conference was still held at a room adjacent to the command center. Vice President Tito Guingona, Bishop Labayan and almost everybody else was there around the long table that media swarmed around. I was just watching. Cellphones were scattered all around and on the table, probably left around in the confusion. I found myself at the edge of the table and some of the newsmen were asking me to push one or another phone closer to the speaker, Guingona, which I did so.

One cellphone had no claimant so I listened into it and just said "hello". Joe Taruc of DZRH was at the other line explaining to me that that cellphone was one he was talking to a young officer with. I told him I just chanced to pick up the phone and a press conference was going on. All this was at the top of my voice as the room was a bell jar of noise from the countless reporters asking questions, pushing,



shoving, and shouting, while Tito Guingona and others tried to be heard. Joe Taruc asked me to give the phone to Guingona which I managed to do after catching Tito's attention and Joe Taruc got a brief interview. Apparently, DZRH had the misfortune of not having a reporter there at that time. I joked Joe Taruc that I had now become a DZRH reporter.

The chain of events isn't so orderly from hindsight, but what I remember last was being the last to leave the command center. Waiters had come into the room to request stragglers to leave. As I walked out I realized that lights had been put out and I think I had taken off my shirt to filter the tear-gassed air as I joined that tail end of the line walking down. Reaching the stairs with the rest of the media crowd I saw beams of spotlights scanning the cavernous hall of the hotel while smoke clouded the view. We were being herded down the mezzanine unto the stairs, SWAT men in gas masks and full battle regalia barking instructions. We were finally told to stop at the stairs, all of us packed side-by-side like sardines. I finally got a view of the familiar Manila Pen glass front entrance, in the dim light I could make out an APC amidst shattered glass panels, and a machine atop it swinging left to right — I thought: "How stupid these cops are."

### **Handcuffed.**

There we were on the stairs, media people and other civilians. I couldn't see the young officers and General Lim, but I could see some figures down at the lobby being moved about. The PNP didn't seem to know what to do with the media. We were kept waiting for some time at the stairs. Then we saw and heard Ces Drilon protesting the treatment media was getting and in loud voices questioning the officers. They were trying to handcuff some media people at the bottom of the steps, but everything was taking so long I thought I'd go down and argue the case too; but one officer quickly grabbed my hands and put on those plastic cuffs. I was led out to the police bus and my instinct as a street parliamentarian prompted me to raise both hands to show the cuff and shout protests against this shackling of freedom of expression and of the press.

It was already night when we were being led out of the hotel lobby and through the broken glass doors and panels out to the buses on the driveway of The Pen. Camera flashes burst everywhere and TV lens pointed at us from every direction. I was thrust into one bus carrying media people. The other civilians were led away in other buses. General Lim and Senator Trillanes in another, we heard. I was thankful for the rest in the bus while waiting for it to be filled, and I fell silent from sheer exhaustion while the fellow media people in the bus we now all thrusting their handcuffed arms out the bus windows for the media still free to do their jobs to document. I lost track of the time as the long wait to fill the bus and count the numbers went on.



It must have been very late into the night when the buses started off towards Bicutan where we were to be “processed”, but that leg of the journey was also unbearably long. I can’t even retrace the exact route but can recall the long, arduous traffic somewhere on the expressway we were stuck in just before getting into Bicutan. While in the bus I got messages on my cellphone. One from a friend in Bataan said, “Gwapo

ka pala sa TV.” Ding Lichauco asked how I was, and I told him Lim and Trillanes made the sacrifice to stand down to keep the civilians safe. One text from a doctor friend asked me if I had hypertension medication ready, worried that all the excitement may cause it to shoot up. Actually, I wriggled myself out of my handcuff in the long trip and got my cellphone out to start communicating.

On the “processing” at one of the covered courts of the Bicutan facility the main task the PNP set out to do was to separate the media members from other civilians they suspected of active participation in the protest action of the young officers. I was initially separated from the active participants and placed with the media people. In fact, I had already been allowed to leave and get on a bus destined to

bring out the media group. I did get on a bus already, alone waiting for other media people to join me. From a distance I saw one young police official whisper something to General Geary Barias, and a few minutes later I heard my name over the sound system. I could have disappeared from there right at that moment (as a few others managed to do) but I decided to walk back to the covered court, happy at the thought that I won't be leaving the "family" of the Pen protesters.

General Barias himself pulled me out of the media line and transferred me to the group which included Sen. Trillanes. General Lim was seated at another adjacent group of seats and that was the first time I was able to approach him and say hello to him again after Manila Pen. After that long tedious process we were again put into buses, smaller ones this time, and brought to a detention facility that was very small, equipped only with the most inadequate sleeping cots and toilet conveniences. We were given a few basic toiletries, including soap, toothbrush and toothpaste. Vice president Tito Guingona was given the privilege on sleeping in an air conditioned office with a sofa, likewise Bishop Labayan. I stayed at a small receiving room on a cot just outside a toilet door, beside JB Bautista. It wasn't very comfortable. Others with us were JV Antietam and Agree Guevara who always had to take cigarette breaks; El Cid Fajardo and Ferdie Sandoval, among many others who eventually became part of the group transferred the same night or early morning and detained in Camp Crame.

We were transferred to Crame in the wee hours of the morning and there begins the story of another day which we will not deal with here. November 29, 2007 is what matters on this first anniversary of that day that good men got together under the leadership of genuine leaders and soldiers, and tried to start something good for the nation and the country. The gathering was abruptly disrupted before twenty-four hours could transpire, because if it had gone on for that long it was certain to have ignited the prairie fire of freedom all over the land. The good news is that from that one day, another year of fervent protest outside the walls of Camp Crame continued. The November 29 Movement was born, it had participated and led in many demonstrations and rallies that followed.

# Reflections



## Capt. Nicanor Faeldon

Philippine Marine Corps

*In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth  
becomes a revolutionary act.*

– George Orwell

The story of November 29, 2007 cannot be complete without mention of Capt. Nicanor Escalona Faeldon (PN) M, who managed to disappear despite the vigilance of 1,500 Marines and 500 police officers who surrounded the Manila Pen. Right after his disappearance, the Philippine National Police put up WANTED posters and offered ONE MILLION PESOS as reward for any information leading to his whereabouts.

The PNP has launched to major operations to trick both the public and Cpt. Faeldon into surrendering or surfacing. The first was the gossip pushed by no less than Chief PNP Avelino Razon that a reporter allegedly assisted Cpt. Faeldon's escape. The second was when an imposter posed as Cpt. Faeldon and give a phone interview to a reporter who showed the story on the prime time news. Both attempts have failed.

Military and police operatives continue to look for him supposedly because his continuing absence from detention sends a strong message that the military and police are not capable of holding

him and consequently cannot protect the government from one very determined junior officer .

Information reaches his counsel and his family regarding the operations to look for him. On at least one occasion a ranking government official warned his lawyer not to be seen with him, as he is under shoot-to-kill orders.

He remains missing to this day, but is believed to be alive and well and still fighting for the cause.

Atty. Trixie Cruz-Angeles

## From Capt. Nicanor Faeldon

My escape is part of the fight that was interrupted in 2005. I cannot continue to submit myself to an illegitimate government. By remaining in jail, I implicitly recognize the “President” and legitimize her exercise of power which she delegates to my custodians, captors and those who will be judging me. And the time had come for me to just stop.

There is much I would have wanted to do, much that I could do even in prison. But the idea of allowing myself to be part of a conspiracy to deny my countrymen of fair and honest government, compels me to leave. I knew that it wouldn't be easy, that I face deprivations even now. And yes, I know that everyday, I face the possibility of death. I know also that the possibility of failure and continuing prosecution could also await me.

Still, this is something I need to do. I am at peace with any possible outcome for years of incarceration have prepared me for it.

Still, though I'm focused on the purpose of my flight, I miss the company of my friends and family, miss the ordinariness of living in society and not looking over my shoulder. I miss meals and conversation. I miss being with people. But God has not left me. He is all I have now, but then, He is all I really need to this.

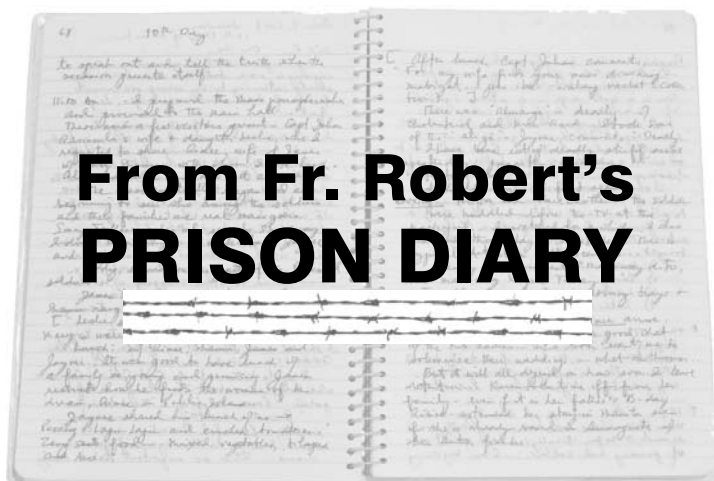
God bless my country.





Laguna shared his lunch of rice +  
beans, + eggs + corn and crushed tomatoes.  
Laguna also had some mixed vegetables, + eggs  
+ rice.

[illegible]



# From Fr. Robert's PRISON DIARY

# 1

— Day One —

**November 30, 2007, Friday**

From the events of the previous day, November 29, 2007 to the events of today, a whole river of events flow one after the other.

November 29 and 30, 2007 were two of the longest days of my life. From our arrest towards 5 p.m. at the Manila Pen to our processing at the covered courts of the Military camp in Bicutan, then the office of Captain Ampil where were told we were spending the night, followed by the inconvenient and inadequate facilities there — our constantly interrupted sleep, when finally at 3 am., we were told to get ready and go back to the same gym for another round of processing. It was cold and almost freezing. They took our vital signs. They took our pictures (I remember the time they took mug shots of me in Quezon City Jail on May 27, 2002) and



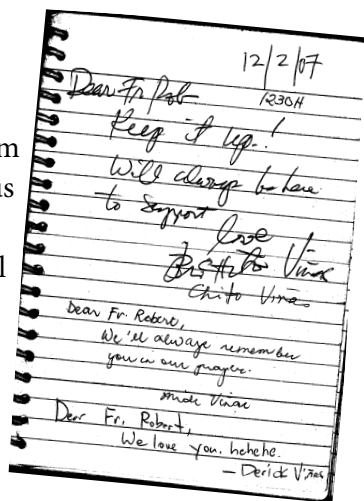
inventoried our personal effects. It was almost 5 am when we finally boarded a bus which was to take us to the Crame Custodial Unit.

At 6 am. we arrived at the Crame Custodial Unit.

The media had been waiting for us when we arrived. I recognized many of the old faces, Boy, my good cameraman friend of ABC Channel 5. The cameras were focused on all of us. Argee raised a fist in defiance. I did the same, clenching my fist which quickly melted into a peace sign. Then it was time to get off the bus. We filed out of the bus onto the street and proceeded to

the gates of the Custodial Center. Again, memories of May 27, 2002 came back. This was not simple déjà vu. I was not remembrance. This was real. I was entering another jail the second time around.

We were quite sleepy and exhausted but we had no time for anything else but to quickly adjust and settle into our new home.



# 2

## — Day Two —

**December 1, 2007, Saturday**

It was an idle morning, until visitors began to arrive: Chuck, Joyce, Isaiah and Jeremiah Crisanto and Yaya.

Fr. Eric Adoviso, his second visit — a real priest friend. Eric even gave me a book, 'Wild at Heart.' There were also Fr. Frank

Ungria, Msgr. Gerry Santos, Msgr. Tony Mortillero, and Msgr. Dan Sta. Maria.

I celebrated mass around 10:00 am. During the mass, around the first reading, Msgr. Morti and Msgr. Dan arrived. They stayed to the very end of the mass.

Our reflection focused on the question: Are we lucky, fortunate, blessed?

And here are some of the thoughts shared:

A Lawyer: You are lucky those of you who are inside. I envy you, I who am from the outside.

JV Bautista: I don't attend mass, but I have attended the masses of Fr. Robert. There is something else, something new in these masses.

Argee Guervarra: I no longer have any practice. I just lost my beautiful fiancée. Her parents rejected me. I am a poet and a revolutionary.

The afternoon was spent with visitors. Visits are truly important for those behind bars. Contact with the outside world is so important. One is not forgotten, one is connected, still part of living society.

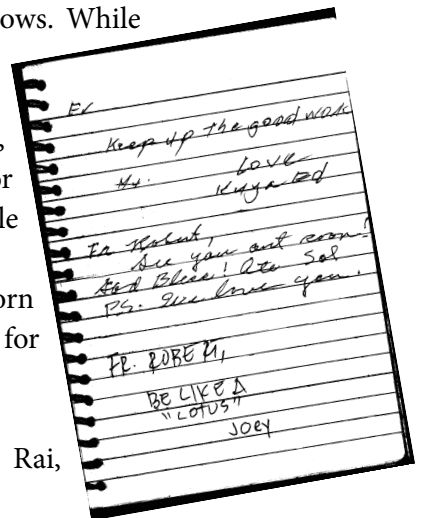
Isolation is trying and difficult. One can lose hope and fall into depression. What does one do to keep the fires of faith and love alive?

During the first two days our iron doors were always locked. I understood the routine. But this is a fact which the whole Nation knows. I am behind bars. The church knows. While the rest of my brother priests are enjoying freedom, I am detained. I hope this somehow impacts upon my brother priests, on the church. If not, I can only pray for strength and resolve to continue the struggle which I have embraced all these years.

As the day slowly fades from morn to dusk, I look back and thank the Lord for friends who love and care.

Ramir, Ningning and Rairai.

It is Raisa's birthday today. Imagine Rai,



a young girl, with her mother spending this day with her daughter. I remember Ningning and Ramir whose marriage I blessed and witnessed in the beautiful church of Baras, Rizal. It took them more than three years to conceive. I journeyed with them in prayer as they patiently waited for the day when the gift of parenthood would come. Rai finally came, but a few years later, another painful drama unfolds.

Chuck, Joyce, Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Chuck wore a Mao t-shirt. Jeremiah wore a Mao cap. Joyce came in the lovely fullness of motherhood. Her smile was as big and generous as her tummy which seemed ready to release its impatient boarder. A few weeks before my detention, I bumped into this wonderful family in Hong Kong. It was their last day in Hong Kong but the accidental encounter changed their plans. They stayed another three days. We had time to be together. That encounter, I thought was not an accident. It was fate, synergy, providence and grace.

The supportive visit of friends helped me to listen and understand the Spirit that spoke during my confinement. There is meaning in all these — each single detail — each single moment in detention.

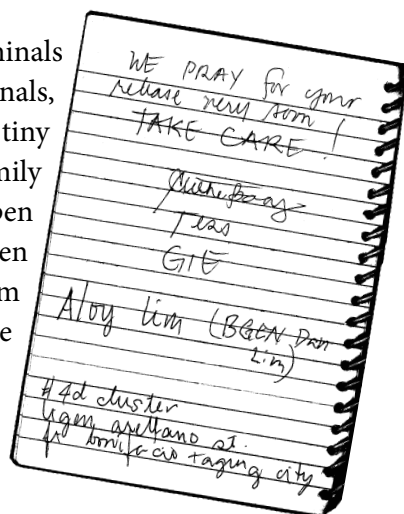
The steel bars, barb wire, jail guards, the guns, two way radios, record book.

The waiting, thinking, speculating, the countless 'what ifs?'

The uneven characters of our custodians... some kind and cordial, others rather arrogant and unfeeling.

The prison food — served in thin plastic bags — simple, meager and recurrent — *paulit-ulit*.

Fellow prisoners, from common criminals to political detainees, terrorists, drug criminals, kidnappers, carnappers and murderers. Our tiny cells, littered with foodstuff brought by family and friends, our personal belongings. The open toilet, which did not even have a curtain when we arrived. My thanks to Gen. Danny Lim who always received his rations in two — one always reserved for me.



The little stories of survival and striving, e.g. there was this detainee named Danny. He was from Tondo. He was the lead artisan in the thriving figurine business of the detainees. They fashioned figurines of reindeers out of mud, sticks and melted Jollibee plastic cups.

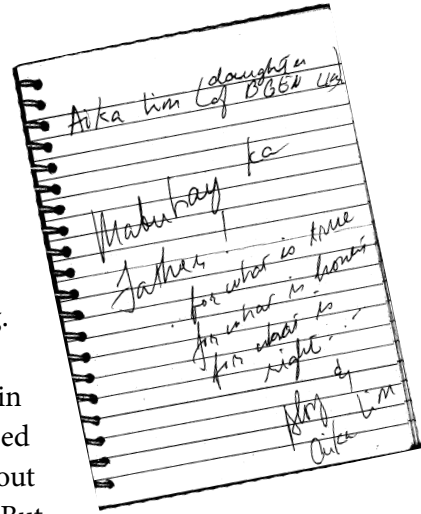
My day began with wishful thinking. We might be released today... if.

The DOJ people fail to file the case within the mandatory 36 hours. And if we are released this morning, I might, after all, be able to fly out of the country for Hong Kong as scheduled. But the day progressed slowly but surely. Soon it was noon. Then afternoon came almost unnoticed because of the endless stream of visitors. Evening fell in no time.

It was dark again. The whistle is sounded and our visitors are told to leave.

I am not flying back top Hong Kong today. I am staying in jail for now. Jail will be my home — my church — my life for now.

In such a short time, I have found new friends—Danny Lim, Sonny Trillanes and Mentong Laurel. Then there was my old friend, Ed Castro. I thanked God for the loyalty and friendship of the man.



# 3

## — Day Three —

**Dec. 2, 2007, Sunday**

6:15 p.m.. My Cell, Custodial Center, Camp Crame

Why are we blessed? This was the question I asked yesterday at mass. At today's mass, I asked, "What has already come and what is yet to come?"

The wives of the Magdalo soldier shared. Their sharing was heart-felt and even humorous. I saw the human and fragile side of otherwise brave and daring soldiers. I saw the suffering and the self-sacrifice of their wives.



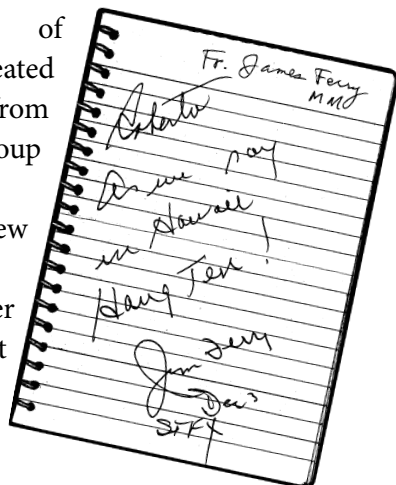
The sharing of Bel Formanes of UNORKA was touching. I did not know that Bel had lost three children. She expressed her solidarity with the wives of the soldiers — "Be brave, support your husbands."

Aloy, Gen. Danny Lim's wife also shared from the heart. She spoke of her repeated sufferings from the 1989 coup

to the 2006 stand off. What a valiant woman.

Then I shared about the coming of a new church...

Imagine a day when there are no longer priests, bishops, cardinals and popes. What





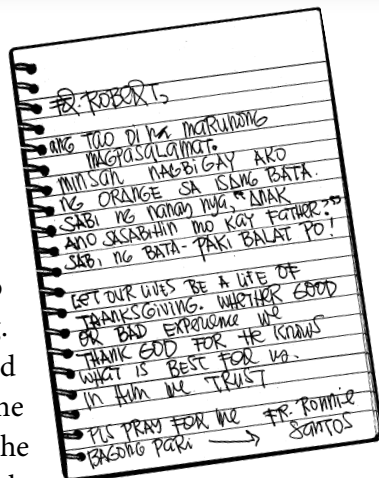
were driven by the middle forces. The poor and ordinary did participate but not in the planning and strategizing. But their numbers were necessary to swell the crowds necessary to push an unwanted president out of Malacanang. In the aftermath, many of those who planned and strategized entered Malacanang and became the new elite, obsessed with and driven by the same lust for power and privilege which led to the former's fall.

That mass and every single mass I celebrated always ended with a note of hope, for what is the mass without hope, what is a mass without a dream, Jesus' dream, His Father's dream, the dream of deep and lasting change.

After mass, when the visitors began leaving and we in detention were left behind, I began thinking about Hong Kong. When will I be able to return to Hong Kong to continue my work? What will happen to my work? How will the Bishop of Hong Kong respond to my predicament? Will he make an effort to understand or will he listen to more gossip and intrigue and do what is easy and convenient... judge.

I was anxious and rather worried. But I knew it was useless. The anxiety and worry about Hong Kong is a test of my faith. In fact, the present detention is again a test of my faith.

It seems that prison is not a new but an ever recurring element in both my human and spiritual development. The other elements are exile and desert...



# 4

## — Day four —

**December 3, 2007, Monday**

So far my longest detention. Hopefully, it will not be my longest trial. So far, I have had three cases filed against me:

2001 — Libel, filed by Jacky Enrile and his father, in connection with what I said about the Ernest Robert Lucas murder case of September 1975.

2005— Sedition, in relation to the events of October 14, 2005 when a group of activists walked from the San Sebastian Church to Mendiola (e.g. Oca Orbos, VP Teofisto Guingona, Jambie Madrigal, etc.) We were charged with violating the “No permit, no rally law.”

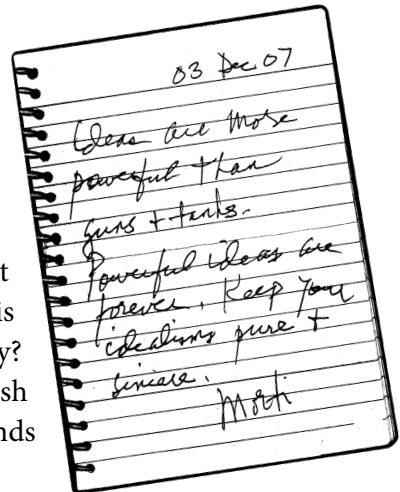
December 2007 — as of this writing, no case has been filed against us for our involvement in the so-called Manila Pen “Siege”

As I look back, I have been involved in pushing other high profile cases like:

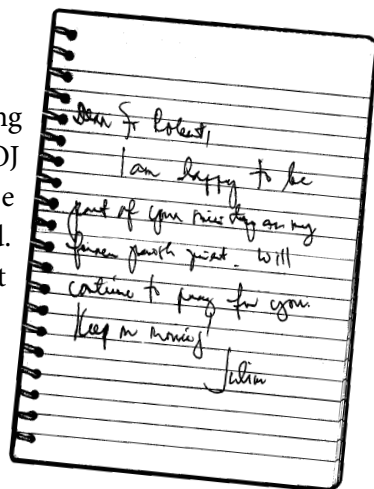
Abadilla 5  
Urban Bank  
Paco Larañaga  
Aquino Galman  
Kuratong Baleleng  
Vincent Reyes vs. Philipp Morris

I have not been eating regularly. I just ate once yesterday. I only ate a few grapes this morning. I will not eat lunch nor dinner. Why? I want to purify myself of negative and selfish thoughts. Second, to help me SEE God’s hands in all this.

11:00 am, I am alone, occupying the room of



Bong Linaac- the fellow detainee who was suffering from gastro-enteritis this morning. The DOJ representatives came to announce the names of those allowed to go home. Ed Castro's name was included. I was happy for him. I was rather disappointed that I was not called but I understood the situation. I was happy that it was Ed and not me who was to go home. At least Ed can go back to his wife and four kids. I need to endure more detention for my soul - for my purification. Have I not in a way prepared for this? In China? In Hong Kong?



I continue to experience a quiet joy when people showed their appreciation for me.

Ed embraces me and says goodbye. The women of Batangas, companions of fellow detainees Vangie and Jun, held my hand and wept. Jules embraces me and teary-eyed says goodbye. Mentong writes a touching message on my little green notebook. Sonny Trillanes tells me that he did not quite understand my former image. Now I am a different priest — a real priest.

I have now broken my former prison detention record of two nights and three days (May 27, to 29, 2002) at Quezon City Jail. So far I have done five nights and four days.

What was significant this morning was the visit of brother priests:

Fr. James Ferry Maryknoll Missionaries, Fr. Ronnie, Fr. Morti and Fr. Bong of the Diocese of Cubao and Fr. Archie Intengan, SJ.

The terrible weight of prolonged detention is beginning to weigh upon me. I have been thinking of my work, my things in Hong Kong. Just give me a week and I will get everything and wrap up my work.

The question "What if" keeps plaguing me. Of course it is natural to feel regret. I could have been out of all this if I did not contact certain persons and vice versa and attended certain activities.

It is no use indulging in wishful thinking now that I am here in detention again. I have to endure a pain that is meant to reveal more of the truth in me.

Regret? I could have been in Hong Kong now. Yet what is Hong Kong? What is the Diocesan Center but another prison. The Bishop and Sister are only waiting for me to leave on the day agreed between the Diocese of Hong Kong and Cubao.

## The Prison of Hong Kong

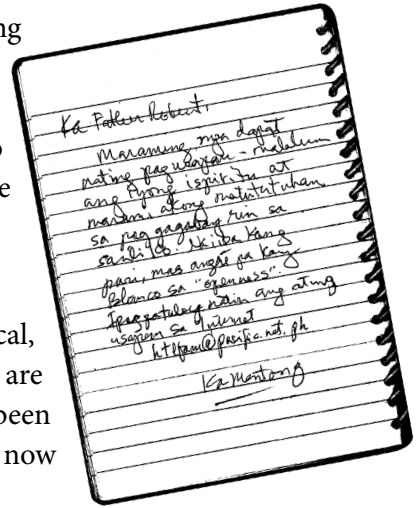
A different prison—an ecclesiastical, racial and political prison whose bars are prejudice, scheming and intrigue. I have been preparing myself to leave this prison and now with this case all is moot and academic.

Hong Kong is prison and freedom at the same time. Prison, because perceptions become walls and grills that prevent genuine encounter. I have ceased any meaningful encounters with the priests of the Diocesan Center ever since I felt the Bishop closing in on me. Sister is instrumental and other religious are not a help at all. Hong Kong is prison because of the culture of the “Talangka” and the First lady. Petty rivalries and the lust for position to prop oneself up imprisons both the person and those around as well.

Hong Kong is freedom because of encounters with those who are free, those who are not ordinary and fixated. Hong Kong is cosmopolitan; a world packed into a complex of buildings, malls, parks, transport systems of all kinds.

Movement... Freedom is movement. Hong Kong is movement... Hong Kong is free.

Even if prison is a constant threat in Hong Kong, I can move freely about. After China, Hong Kong was a whiff of fresh air. I can move freely until certain things began to happen.



## Daddy

Towards 8:00 p.m. when the first fifteen have almost finished being processed to leave, those of us staying behind watched the news. Suddenly, one of the soldiers changed the channel just when my father Carlos appeared and was about to speak. The voices of the other soldiers roared in unison, *"Ibalik niyo sa dating channel... panoorin natin ang tatay ni Fr. Robert"* (put it back to the previous channel.

Let us watch Fr. Robert's father). For some reason, we could not find the channel and when we did, my father's interview was over. The following day, a visitor of one of the soldiers reported what my father said. According to the visitor my father Carlos appealed for me. That is my father, Daddy, a man who in his twilight years is slowly beginning to understand and accept the "mystery of his son."

I came home to Manila in order to do two things, only two things:

First, to apply for a renewal of my US visa.

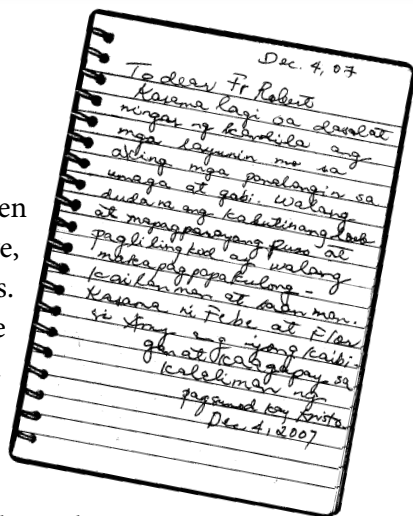
Second, to find a care-giver for my aging parents.

I wanted to return to Hong Kong immediately for my time in Hong Kong is coming to a close. But then there was the Nov. 29 invitation from Jimmy Regalario that lingered on.

This unquenchable fire within keeps burning. That wildness, untamed warrior within never tires of the good fight - the war against ignorance, poverty and oppression.

## Among Ed

Among Ed texted me on my mobile which I luckily left with a friend before I entered Manila Pen, "I am concerned and worried for you." I thought, that will be great if Among Ed could visit me. I feel happy about Among Ed. While he has chosen the road less chosen and endures the flack, he fights the good fight against corruption and jueteng in Pampanga.



## 5

## — Day Five —

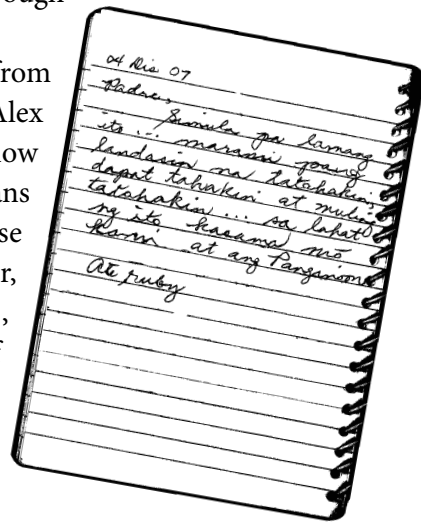
December 4, 2007, Tuesday

Silence is the predominant theme of this day. Amy Punzalan advises me to enter more profoundly into the silence. The media is making all kinds of noise about and against me. Silence, just go deep into the silence of truth.

Alex Magno in his column calls me “kulang sa pansin.” I am irritated and quite angry. He has been calling me names for the longest time. I refuse to descend into the depths of pettiness. It is just as well that I do no more than acknowledge my irritation and decide to be open to the grace of today. Grace did come through people who inspired and gave their support:

Amy Punzalan and Ruby Alcantara from Kubol Pag-asa, Fr. Levy Malagueno and Fr. Alex Pardo, former Gomburza members and now both military chaplains. San Jose Seminarists and Gomburza Obet, tukayo, San Jose procurator, Lawrence, Dunghur, Joy, Arthur, Kevin, Rev. Leo, Jonas, Fr. Vic de Jesus SJ., Fr. James Gascon SJ., Estring and Evelyn of the UP Parish Tuesday Circle. Atty. Glecya Mendoza, Bishop Ambo David and Fr. Querox Villanueva, Marifi, Sr. Arnold Paco and Glory Alcuaz.

9:45 p.m.. We had just left the big compound, the common area for both us and our visitors. We listened to Atty. Jun Francisco who explained the steps they are currently taking. Secretary Puno had just suggested that we should all be detained in Muntinlupa;



pure political Harassment.

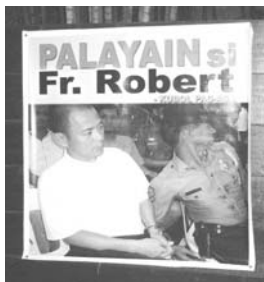
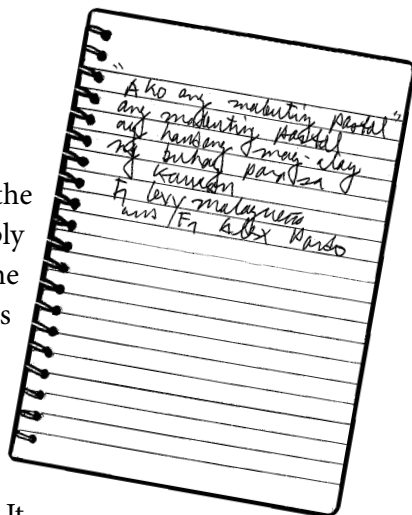
Now, in my cell, I go over the events of the day and gather my impressions. I am deeply touched by the visit of the seminarians and the two formators of San Jose, Vic and James. This gave me much joy and peace.

Gomburza stands a chance. Slowly, we can sit down and assess the possibilities.

Then, Bishop Ambo of Pampanga and his classmate Fr. Querox of Zambales came. It was a great expression of priestly support and solidarity. Querox has done something similar earlier in 2002 when he came every day to visit me while I was detained in Quezon City jail.

This detention has brought me closer to my brother priests. It is time to slowly come back to the clergy - if not to be back officially, at least to be more connected emotionally, socially. This might even be the way towards healing and reconciliation.

The great journey, pilgrimage and adventure that began on July 10, 2005 unfolds. This is exile once again. I am in my own land but behind bars. I have been deprived of my freedom, my rights were not respected. I am unable to speak out and move about freely. I am once more a prisoner in my own land, the land I love and have always fought for. But, I embrace this pain and offer it to God and for my people.



## 6

## — Day Six —

December. 5, 2007, Wednesday

6:30 am. I no longer struggle against confinement. I no longer think of leaving soon. It does not help and I only waste precious psychic and spiritual energy on unproductive thought.

I am happy my yoga mat was brought by Ed here.

I started with some asanas last night. This is the ideal place to plumb the depths of silence, to re-unite my soul... to encounter God once more.

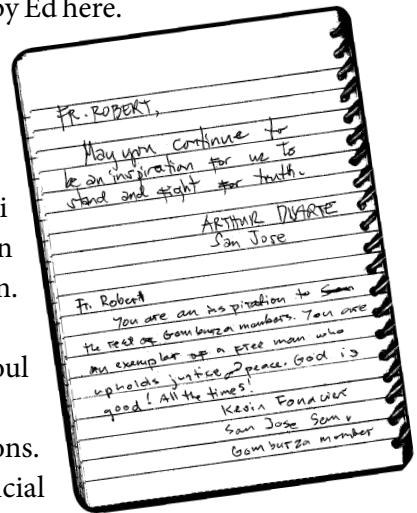
Silence — katahimikan lang, payo ni Amy (Silence only, advises Amy). Sa kalooban ng katahimikan naroroon ang katotohanan. (Within silence is truth).

In the womb of silence, I hear my soul speak:

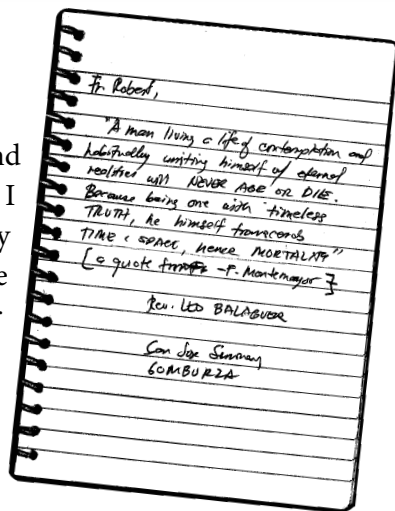
"It is good to dream, to have visions. You are not meant to be shallow, superficial and petty. There is a story a great story within waiting to be told. Now this story takes place in prison. There are in fact at least two stories: Story one, you in prison. Story two, the prison within you."

The prison within me is more important for now as I also try to understand the other story of Me in prison.

The Prison in Me... the iron bars of selfishness, ego and pride. The dark night - St. John of the Cross was put behind bars - he experienced darkness - his own - his sins, weaknesses, illusions; he had to go through darkness before he could see the light.



The prison in me is self-inflicted and socially-conditioned. Through the years, I chose the grills, the bars that blocked my spirit, dampened the passions, quench the fire. In prison now, I can work on the inner prison — rid myself of what Alex Magno calls “KSP” (Kulang sa Pansin, craving attention) — indeed, which normal individual does not crave attention; perhaps Alex does not need it, and so he can pretend that he writes for no one, not even for himself. He can pretend he is not paid for every defamatory, slanderous statement he makes. No, no one notices. He does not need it, if he is not “KSP”. Even GMA does not notice. It does not matter. Really?



They will humiliate me, use me... torture me and try to break my spirit.

Physical healing....

I prepared for asanas. It is my 6<sup>th</sup> day of detention. I have to gradually develop a routine that will strengthen body, mind and spirit. Yoga and meditation - entering the infinitely vast expanse of my inner world, especially because of the reality of detention. A small cell with a toilet, iron bars, an iron door locked and opened from time to time. I need to help myself: my mind, body and spirit.

10:15 am. Darry Uy, from Murcia, Negros Occidental approaches me and tells me his story. He will be two weeks in detention for the crime of using a “fictitious name.”

Darry is 37 years old, single and worked as a teacher in one of the Augustinian schools.

It is becoming clear to me that one of my missions now is to minister to the prisoners.

Darry shares how desperate he felt on the first day. “Umiiyak ako noong naglalakad akong papasok... gusto ko nang mamatay... Tinulungan ako ni Ka. Mando — na matanggap ang aking sitwasyon.” (I was crying when I entered. I wanted to die. Ka. Mando helped me accept my situation.)

10:30 am. Jonathan paid me and Danny Lim a visit and have just left. I was surprised that he was still here. Two evenings ago, he and his friend Kevin said goodbye to us. They thought they were already leaving. Gen. Lim and I approached the two young men and offered to pray for them.

A police officer came to inform us that Senator Nene Pimentel is coming to inspect the prison.

### Physical Healing...

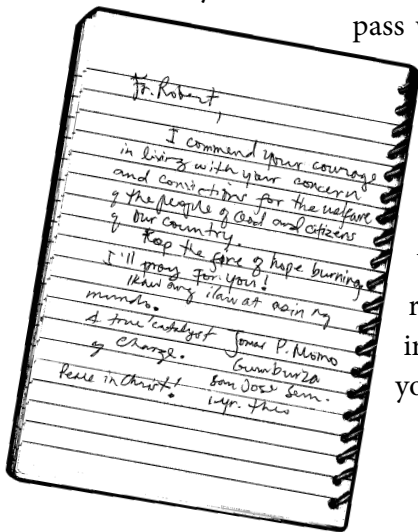
The morning was capped with yoga. I still felt some pain on my right knee. Dr. Miles de la Rosa of Orthopedic Hospital had diagnosed it as an injured ligament that only requires rest to heal. Gentle yoga movements have helped it heal gradually. There is still pain but it was no longer excruciating. I thank the Lord for yoga, a practice that I discovered and began when I entered the seminary in 1970.

### Spiritual Healing...

As I focus on slowly regaining strength and flexibility, I will also focus on my spiritual healing. This healing has taken the form of the "visit." How I have learned to treasure visits. People who visit the Crame Custodial Unit have to really go out of their way. There are several tiers of security before one finally enters our detention area. First, there is the first registration at the front gate. One has to fill out a slip with one's name; the person/s one intends to visit and why; the date and time of entering; and finally one's signature. Next, you have to write the same information on a log book. If you are allowed to enter, you have to leave a valid ID before they give you a numbered

pass which you have to clip on. As you enter

the gate, you have to fill in another log book before you are frisked. You walk for about fifty meters until you reach another table where you submit your registration slip and fill up another log book with the same information earlier required. Finally, you turn right toward an iron gate and are allowed to enter. Inside, you walk a few paces to another gate.





It is as though I were being asked to go back to the Philippines and start my ministry of hope, justice and peace. I was able to write a note to Fr. Brian Gore, requesting him to visit me and make arrangements so that Fr. Jim Mulroney can secure my things in Hong Kong. I will request Jim to just put my things in boxes and temporarily keep them in the Columban Office.

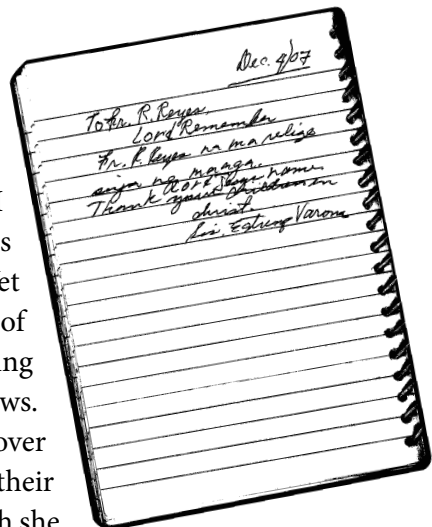
Msgr. Dan Sta. Maria and Julius Puruganan. They asked me if it is alright for Fr. Bernas SJ to come in to lawyer for me? I also gave them the telephone number of Atty. Jimbo who can prepare a jointly signed document of "shared custody" between Bishop John Tong of Hong Kong and Bishop Honesto Ontioco of Cubao.

More importantly, Msgr. Dan shared me his pain with another priest that we both know. Somehow, Dan and I have been sharing before. The opening is important in bringing us closer to each other — again, perhaps, a step closer to the Diocese of Cubao.

Pinky and Joey Alberto. My classy friends came, looking their usual stately and elegant selves. They sat and listened to Gen. Danny Lim and understood many things in a different way. More importantly, they got to know Danny in person. It is enough that ordinary people get a chance to speak to public figures, especially those painted as notorious by society. The visit of Pinky and Joey really perked me up. Thank you.

Before they left, Joey commented that I seemed heavier on TV but I looked thin now. They left us special noodles and pan de sal which I ate with Danny Lim.

Mommy, Nedie, Zeny and Rey — I noticed Mommy's colored hair, the lines on her face. I noticed how she has aged. Yet my mother is still there, still alive and full of love and devotion for me and her remaining children. She brought me some food and news. My sister Ridette and Sr. Becky spoke over the phone in the US. They both sent me their regards. Mommy has brought Ensure which she



could not bring in. Tin cans are not allowed into the Custodial Unit. Daddy stayed home, *taong bahay*. *Nagtrabaho si Manuel, nag-re-repair ng tulo sa Library mo.*

Mommy also told me about her long conversation with Fr. Archie Intengan. She told Archie how he at some point inspired me to pursue medicine. Mommy was willing to finance my medical studies then but she and daddy told me to finish my seminary studies first. She tells Fr. Archie, “Mahal ka ng anak ko, ikaw ang inspirasyon niya noon.” (My son loves you. You were his inspiration then). Then they spoke about Bishop Nes and why I left for China. Now I was a victim of some kind of inquisition.

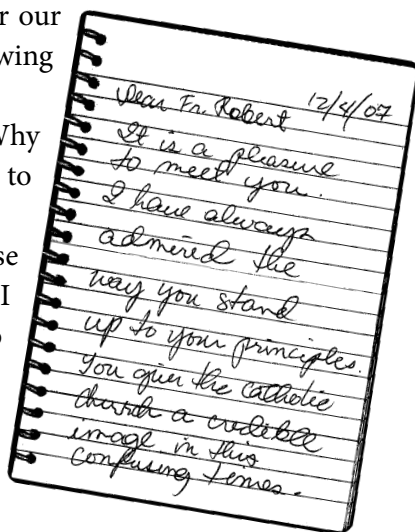
Mommy, Nedie and Zeny stayed until a little over 4:00 p.m.. Before leaving, mommy shared what she would say in case media interviews her:

Kasalanan ba magmahal sa Diyos at Bayan? (Is it a sin to love God and Country) — Kasalanan bang magmahal sa mahirap at naaapi? (Is it a sin to love the poor and oppressed) — Hindi kriminal ang anak ko. (My son is not a criminal) — Hindi siya dapat dalhin sa Muntinlupa. (nb. in the news, some Malacanang officials have recommended that we be transferred to the National Penitentiary in Muntinlupa.)

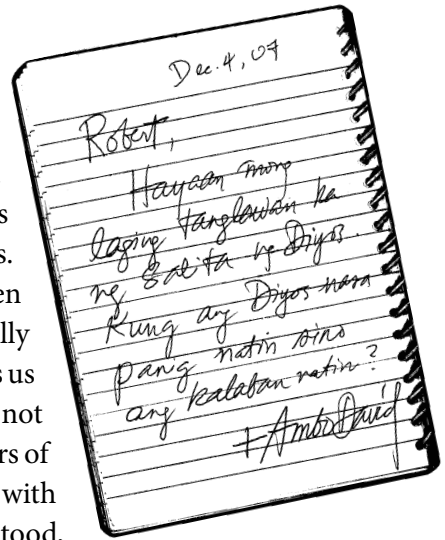
Then they left. The meaning of my short visit from Hong Kong is totally changed. I came home November 26, 2007, to meet up with Joy Rojas and others who will be part of Joy’s plan to do an ultra-run across the USA. We had to prepare for our interview with the US embassy the following day.

I have been praying and reflecting. Why is this happening? What is God’s message to me?

I have been speculating on how all these events impact on me. Should I or should I not think along these terms. Go deep into the Spirit and cease to dwell on the political meaning and implication of my detention.



It seemed, as many of my companions continually comment, that I have had the most visitors. Thank God. But, I was also visited by the sobering thought that as days passed, visitors will come less and less. Am I preparing myself for this? When we approach day's end, we all naturally withdraw into solitude. The silence helps us find a different comfort. Someone does not come and go, passing through thick layers of security. He is always present. He is also with us, detained, imprisoned, misunderstood, judged. This is truly assuring. Yes, I feel your presence. You are not a visitor but a constant companion. Thank you Lord.



5:45 p.m.. A police guard comes to give me a photocopy of my "Rebellion Case." Now I am officially a "Rebel." It took a while for me to earn this label. I welcome it, not because I want trouble or I enjoy pain and persecution, the way masochists do. No, now I can say I know how Jesus felt when he was accused of rebellion. In a few days, it will even be made public, when we face the scribes and Pharisees, the Sanhedrin.

This is it, the persecution begins. China and Hong Kong are just preparatory to this.

The journey, the pilgrimage, the walk to calvary begins and there is only one true requirement — silence, mindfulness of the redemptive presence of God.

Fr. Archie Intengan SJ tells Mommy to caution me not to say anything against President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. Strange! Why ask me to be careful now. I understand that what is important now is to get my freedom. I will have to be silent, avoid making unnecessary statements because the case is already "sub judice."

My sheer detention is statement enough. If a State can arrest and detain us without trial, and even suggest to transfer us to Muntinlupa,

that speaks much, says much about the kind of country we are in now.

Marcos did the same with warrantless arrests, summary executions, curfews, all necessary ingredients of the soup called Martial Law.

8:15 p.m.. Atty. Luke Espiritu just left. He confirmed the participation of Atty. Frank Chavez as lead counsel for my case. Atty. Luke is doing all this for me for free. He also informs me that “Kubol Pagasa” members are outside conducting a prayer vigil.

Atty. Frank Chavez’ entry on my behalf gives me a boost. In this political game, names are helpful. I have never really spoken to Frank Chavez. I know him from his various projects, the last being his Senatorial bid. Yet, deeper still is the invitation to see and find the “inner-lawyer”, the inner court which will guide me through this “dark night.”

9:45 p.m. A guard approaches my cell. “Sir, i-lock na po natin?” He says with a gentle voice. Every day, I am locked in three to four times. The reality of being locked up is painful. I am locked in and cut off from the rest of Philippine society. This painful and unjust treatment is made less oppressive by the little lights of visits which make the night less dark.



## 7

— Day 7 —

**December 6, 2007, Thursday**

8:25 a.m. It is already a week since Manila Pen. Just a while ago I was having coffee with Sonny Trillanes and Danny Lim. They were sharing with me the history of Coups in the Philippines. Why is there perennial unrest in the Philippines? Why has this unrest penetrated the military?

I also found out about the roles of Esperon and Razon in the private lives of Ver and Ramos. Esperon was the one assigned by Ver to Cacam (his mistress) while Razon was assigned by FVR to Baby Arenas.

Why did we get to this? Sonny Trillanes was reporting that the demolition job this time will focus on Sonny's private life — on his wife Arlene.

### A Different kind of poverty

"Poverty not merely deprives, it humiliates; and a good society will not allow humiliation." (cf. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, "To heal a fractured world" p. 37)

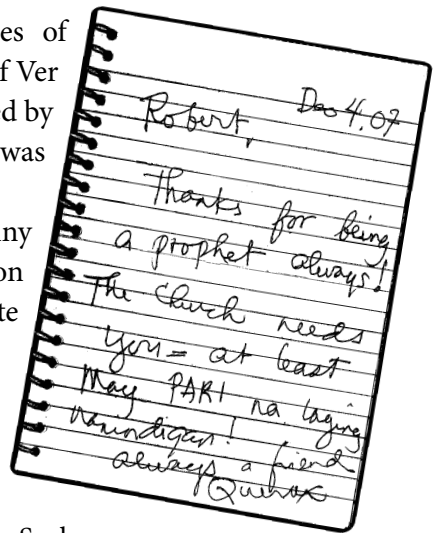
Am I poor now?

Is confinement poverty?

Is the lost of my basic freedoms poverty?

Unable to move at will, unable to speak, communicate at will, to spend money, go places, visit family and friends... Is this poverty?

In a way this is poverty for I am forced to depend on others, for



food, supplies and most of all information. My life has been reduced to moving within a limited area... Am I not then talking of freedom and not of poverty?

The poor are less free because they cannot do much and have to spend much of their time and energy surviving...

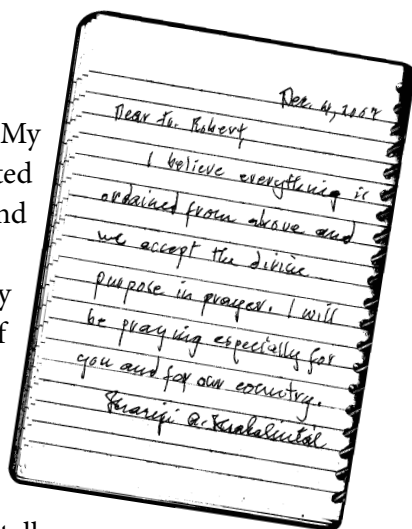
But I am not spending time and energy surviving. I am surviving effortlessly. Here, in prison, I am free to do many things like write, pray, read, go back to my yoga asanas, talk and listen to fellow detainees, say mass.

I am richer in a way because of the gift of time... I am rich because of the opportunity to relish my being. Unable to do things, to act in open society; detained, imprisoned---this is my only unfreedom now...that my body is fixed and limited to a particular space. But spirit, mind and soul, just by closing eyes, letting go of mind...I soar, fly, roam the infinite and boundless expanse of God-space.

Today is Thursday. I am expected to send my article for this weeks "paupo-upo" for the tabloid Bulgar. Last week, for the first time since I began writing for Bulgar in November 2002, I missed writing two articles, paupo-upo and patakbo-takbo. This week, I will write an article and pray that I will have a visitor who can send the article to Bulgar. This is the article.

## **Ibang Klaseng Upo**

*Madalas akong umupo sa MTR, habang hinihintay makarating ang tren sa aking trabaho sa Chinese University sa Shatin. Marami-rami na din akong paboritong upuan dito sa Hong Kong: Botanical Garden, Victoria Park, mga upuan sa labas ng sakayan sa Star Ferry para sa Tsim Sha Tsui, mga upuan sa Exchange Square at IFC, sa mga simbahan, sa refectory sa 13th Floor ng Diocesan Center ng Hong Kong, sa aking kuwarto sa 16th floor, at sa mga iba't-ibang tambayan ng mga kababayang OFW sa kalawakan ng mga bukas na lugar sa buong Hong Kong.*



Ngayon, madalas akong nakaupo sa loob ng maliit na selda. Mula sa as aking upuan, sa aking harap, naroroon ang mga rehas na bakal at pintong laging kinakandado sa gabi. Sa labas ng aking selda, merong dalawang bakod. Ang isa ay gawa sa cyclone wire na merong koronang barbed na pawang ahas na naka-ambang puluputan kami anumang oras. Sa kabila ng bakod na cyclone wire, naroroon ang bakod na baton a mga 15 piye ang taas. Meron itong lakaran na pabalik-balik makikitang naglalakad, rumurondang 24 oras ang mga armadong guardiya.

Ibang klaseng upuan nga sa loob ng aking selda sa Crame Custodial Center. Ibang klaseng paupo-upo. Madalas walang kausap, maliban lang kung may mapadaang guardiya o kapwa detenido na gustong makipag-usap.

Ibang klaseng paupo-upo — mas maraming panahong mag-tanong at humanap ng sagot; magdasal, manahimik at makinig sa tinig ng Diyos; mamili, magpasya, kung kakain o hindi...Bumabagal ang buhay...walang tumatakbo at nagmamadali sa loob tulad ng dagat ng mga nagmamadaling tao sa MTR, sa mga kalye, pasilyo, Malls, atbp sa Hong Kong.

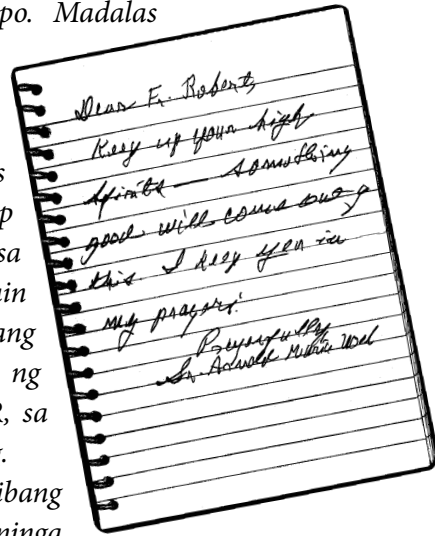
Dito sa aking upuan ng aking selda...ibang uringpaglalakad,---kasabayngmabagalnahininga, ng malumanay na indayog ng espiritu... lahat dito'y tila bumabagal... Kailangang matutong maghintay at magiyaga...

Ibang klaseng pag-upo... tila tumutungo sa mas malalim at mas tootoong pag-OPO.

### 5:00 p.m. My Cell....

Jaybee commented this morning, “nakakainggit si Fr. Robert, maraming bisitang madre....” (I envy Fr. Robert who has many nun-visitors.)

Sr. Lumen and Sr. Agnella OSB visited me and stayed for almost two hours. They are friends who understand my involvement beyond



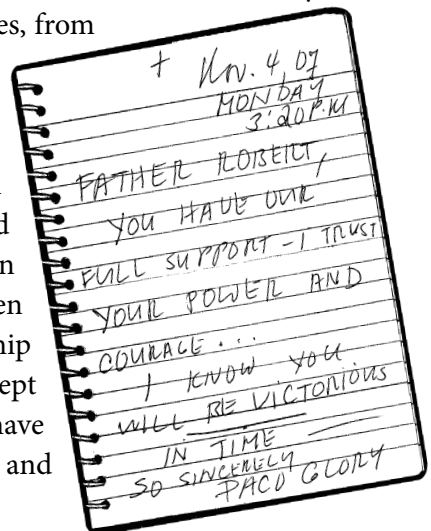


the political. Lumen and Agnella bought pandesal and coco jam. Atty. Verdadero, brought me a sandwich. He told me that he was once a boarder of Clem Ignacio's family.

My friendship with the Benedictine Sisters, because of Sr. Carmen Simpauco, Sr. Lumen Dungca and Sr. Kristia Bacani goes a long way. Thank you my OSB friends.

It is friendships like these that remind me of God's gentle presence in my life. Slowly, I begin to see and appreciate something on a deeply human plane...Persons, the gift of Persons in my life.

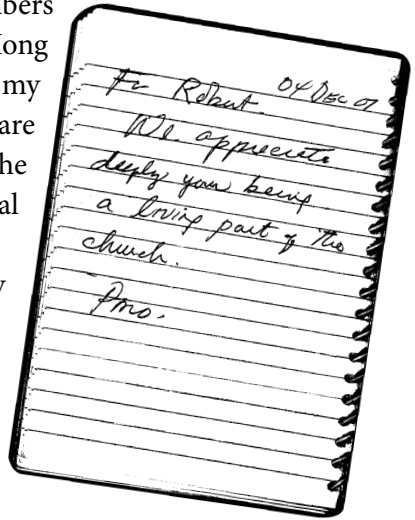
Teddy "Katots" Dono, Nap Franco and Fr. Edwin Mercado came...Earlier, a police man asked me if I would like to see my classmates. He did not say which classmates, from Malabon or the seminary. Then I see Nap, Katots and Edwin arrive. It was a happy epiphany...almost like the real one... the coming of the Three Kings... It is enough to see classmates... and feel their love and concern... These are gems you cherish in your heart. It was thirty one years ago when we graduated from college... The friendship has survived in spite of everything I have kept my militancy, my fighting stance— they have remained the way there were: Nap, Ted and



Edwin... According to them, Bishop Chito Tagle couldn't come now. But he will try to visit tomorrow.

Someone brings an *Inquirer* Article by Blanche Rivera about a vigil held by the OFWs led by members of Buhay Ka and Lakbay Lingap. Hong Kong is now reacting, responding to my disappearance. The OFWs miss me and are concerned about me. I wonder what the Hierarchy of Hong Kong under Cardinal Zen and Bishop Tong is thinking?

I know my friends. They are many and quite concerned. Thank God that they are there. And those who wish me ill can continue nurturing their evil designs. But the good is greater, stronger. Its light brighter. Thank you Lord for Hong Kong and this chapter in my life that is about to close.



Pilar Francisco tries visiting me a second time and is once more denied. Pilar is a friend and has show this when she visits me at the People Power Monument on November 17, 2007 when I celebrated mass to commemorate my 25th anniversary of Ordination. This time, Pilar visits me twice.

Bujon arrives and I give him two letters, one for Att. Frank Chavez, another for Kubol Pagasa. Ah yes, I remember. I received two rosaries. Sr. Lumen gave me a rosary from Rome. She had just returned from a meeting in Rome. Fr. Tony de Castro Sj also gave me a rosary too.

## Fire

Jayvee and Arjee, two nationalist lawyers. Trillanes, Lim et al... Nationalist, idealist, sacrificing soldiers....and the fire within me is kindled in a different way...a fire purified, by the white flames of faith.

**10:15 p.m.**

I just got back from the main hall. I watched the news and spent time with the other men. I spent a long time with Jayvee which I keenly enjoyed. Jaybee is a most engaging person. I am blessed to meet him and so many others in the group.

Senators Nene Pimentel and Ping Lacson visited this morning.

It's time to put together thoughts for patakbo-takbo. I missed writing and sending the article due every Friday last week. It was not possible to send paupo-upo and patakbo-takbo last Thursday and Friday.

### For "Patakbo-takbo"

*Hindi Ako Tatakbo (I will not Run...away)*

1. Takbo – malayuan... Ultra running-kailangan tibay, lakas, tiyaga, tapang at pananampalataya

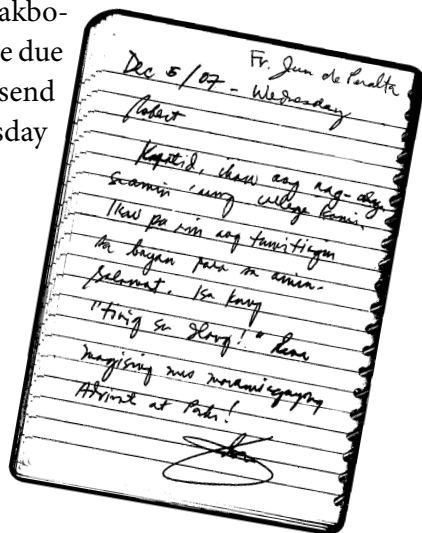
2. Hindi lang basta takbo—takbong namamahayag ng mabuting balita ng katotohanan, katarungan, kalayaan..

3. Takbong dumadalisay, umuugnay, bumubuo ng bagong pagkatao, bagong-kapaligiran, bagong-kamalayan

4. Takbong-piitan, Takbong-detention, Kasama ang maliliit na maliliit din ang kasalanan. At dahil kasabay ng kanilang pagkakamali ay ang kanilang kahirapan, walang pangpiyansa, kayat hindi makalaya.

Kasama ang sari-saring mga naturang "kaaway" ng estado. Ngunit may dahilan ang lahat. Ang mga tunay na dahilan, ang mga buong kuwento ay kadalasa'y hindi nailalabas, dahil sa mga bumabarang istruktura ng lipunan. Ang balita ay hawak ng mga korporasyon, ang mga korporasyon hawak ng mga pulitiko, ang mga pulitiko hawak ng...

Kaya't pansamantalang tumatakbo sa mundong walang rehas, walang nakabarang istruktura...ang takbong-loob, takbong-diwa... takbo ng Espiritu.



*Malaya ang aking katatawn tumakbo maski na saan. Ngayon ditto lang sa makipot na lugar, walang puno, kabilaang pader, rehas, barbwire, guardiyang armado... takbong limitado... takbong guardiyado... ngunit sapat nang pumikit at pumasok sa loob... may daang walang hangganan, mga punong matataas, luntiang paligid, walang nakatingin... Kaisa ang lahat, ang kalikasan at bawa't nilalang... malaya, malawak, walang hanggan, walang hangganang takbo ng Espiritu.*

# 8

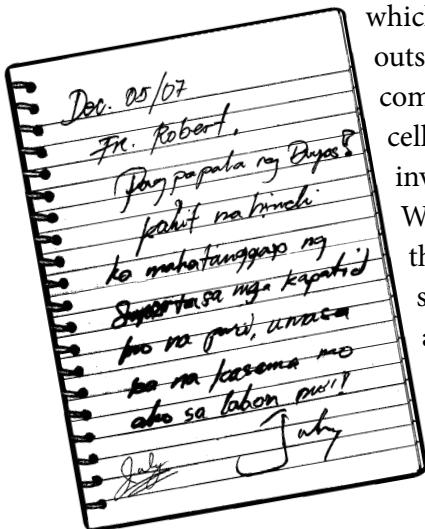
## — Day eight —

**December 7, 2007 Friday**

9:50 am My Cell, Block A, Custodial Unit, Crame

6:00 am. I was already awake but did not get up even if I felt I needed to void my bladder. In a while, I was up went to the bathroom. Just then Danny emerged and invited me to have our usual breakfast

which consists of coffee and fruit. We stood outside Danny's cell sipping our coffee. Sonny comes out to join us. Gen. Caloy Garcia whose cell is just on the other side joins us. Caloy invites us to walk around to the other blocks. We walked to the area behind our block where the Jemmah Islamiyah, the Abu Sayaff and so-called terrorists were housed. Sometime after breakfast, Danny and I made a pact to run everyday until our last day together. The daily run with Danny began this morning. During the run, Danny and



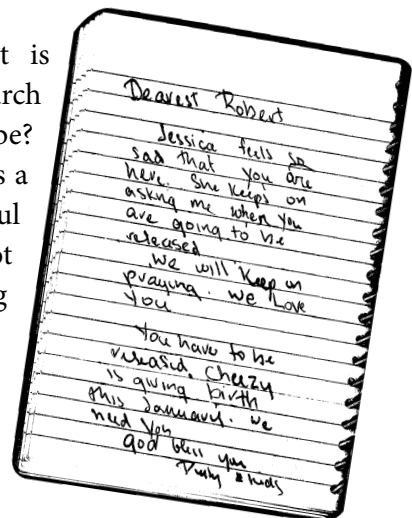
I discover how we share a lot of things: our idealism; our common sacrifice of “career” and future; our love of country; our love of the earth and our love of running. I paused and thanked God for Danny. Just a thought, didn’t I meet Danny on December 1, 2007, Vincent’s third Death Anniversary?

10:00 am. A policeman comes and informs me, “Father may bisita kayo...”

4:15 p.m.. I look back appreciatively to this morning’s first run with Danny. A deep bond, nourishing bond is forming between me and Danny. A run, a future run, but all the same a run which is now. Danny talks about how Baguio initiated him into the run. Even Gen. Zumel, PMA superintendent of Danny’s time, was converted to the run. Danny shares about the decency of this man, how he inspects everything and prevents corruption. Danny remembers Gen. Zumel inspecting even the short stretch of road leading to the firing range being asphalted. Danny perspired right away. He felt good. I felt great as well during the run. I wish I can actually go back to the run and yes, it is something worth looking forward to: a Run for Freedom - the Run of a Soldier and a Priest, bringing the good news of Peace, Justice, Truth and Freedom. For now, it is enough to run every day, and gradually build up endurance again. Ah, the tamaraw, the stallion is coming alive within; something that seemed to have slumbered is coming alive, coming alive in prison.

### **An Emasculating Church...**

“The Church would like to think it is initiating men, but it’s not. What does the church bring a man into? What does it call him out to be? Moral. That is pitifully insufficient. Morality is a good thing, but morality is never the point. Paul says, law is given as a tutor to the child, but not to the son. The son is invited up into something much more. He gets the keys to the car. He gets to go away with the father on some dangerous mission...” (Eldridge, pp. 101-102)



I had two visitors today. At around 11:00 am. Bishop Nes, my bishop finally visits me. There is so far no scolding, no recrimination and blaming—just support and concern and for this I am grateful. Bishop Nes informs me how they have written to the Chief State Prosecutor Manuel Velasco last Saturday evening. Good enough, but it was too late. When Bishop Nes arrived, he sat next to Fr.



Eric Adoviso (who has visited me three times) and Sr. Arlene (Sisters of the Parish of Visitation). Bishop Nes asked about what I needed. I told him there is so much food here, I am hardly in need. Fr. Eric comments on how Bishop Nes keeps healthy. Bishop Nes explains, “I am 59. I have a mechanical treadmill which I use every evening.” Just before my bishop leaves, I ask him to bless me. I felt something special, something rather subtle.

I may belong to the margins with the marginalized, but I also am connected with a bishop. This re-connection with my bishop is important. There has been a hiatus between us since July 10, 2005 when I began my 44-day Hunger Strike. The hiatus may be deep and real but I felt a reality, a truth... I have arrived and have come to my own... I am at peace.

My journey continues. God has been initiating me into something deep and mysterious. It is here in prison, in relative confinement, in isolation from the world, in the curtailment of my freedoms and comforts. Here God speaks to me.

2:00 p.m. At around this time Msgr. Dan Sta. Maria arrives to bring news of his conversation with Fr. Joaquin Bernas. Earlier, I had lunch with Aloy, Danny, Aris and the family of Capt. Julian Advincula.

I have been eating well, enjoying the generosity of Aloy and

Danny. Msgr. Dan informed me about Bernas decision to recommend his students to lawyer for me, i.e. Chiz Escudero and co.

JV explains to Msgr. Dan the complication. Atty. Frank Chavez has already declared his intent to defend me. I am properly and adequately protected. I am OK. The important and significant thing is Msgr. Dan's presence — this is enough.

5:00 p.m. I am going to the hall to see whether I can say Mass.

6:30 p.m. Darry accompanied me and was my sacristan. The mass was simple. We agreed that everyday, one of the group would share. This evening Kuya Julian Advincula shared. He shared about the "Miracle of November 29." It was the miracle of my being with the group when it happened. In a way it was a miracle to find myself there and now with these brave men, these inspiring and brave soldiers.

I underscored the tendency of institutions like the church to introvert and privatize the Gospel Message. The Gospel speaks of the "tyrant's fall." This may well refer to the tyrant within each of us. No problem, there may well be a tyrant within each of us but we should not forget the bigger tyrant out there...

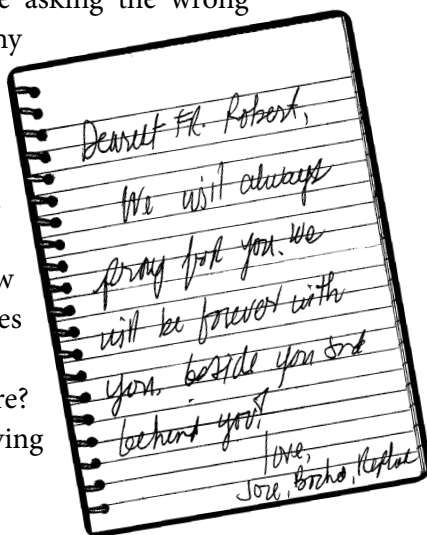
The Mass ended shortly before the News. The words of Kuya Julian Advincula continued ringing in our ears: "The Miracle of November 29."

I continued reading Eldridge, *Wild at Heart*. Today he talks about asking the right questions. "We're asking the wrong questions. Most of us are asking, "God, why did you let this happen to me? Or, "God, why won't you just... help me succeed, get my kids to straighten out, fix my marriage..." Or in my case, why don't You get me out of here?"

Eldridge continues and explains how the journey of initiation with God requires a new set of questions:

What are you trying to teach me here?

What issues in my heart are you trying to raise through this?



What is it you want me to see?

What are you asking me to let go of?

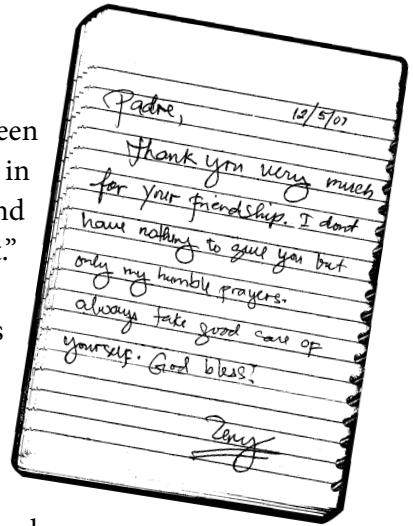
Eldridge explains, "In truth, God has been trying to initiate you for a long time. What is in the way is how you've mishandled your wound and the life you have constructed as a result." (cf. Eldridge, *Wild at Heart*, p. 105)

The Miracle of November 29 has both common and unique significance for each of us. For me, the Now of Detention flows from this miracle. I can continue looking back and fail to be present in the now. Because of my detention, other miracles are happening. My Bishop visited me. Priests, religious have and continue to visit me. The church for good or bad is taking notice. I am mindful of this now. I know it will be different, I hope I will be different when I leave. But that has not happened. What is important is Now. Being in detention has made me appreciate the Now. For me, the Now is the miracle of November 29.

China and Hong Kong in many ways were also times of detention. My flat in China, my room on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor of the Hong Kong Diocesan Center. Those solitary places were a preparation for this confinement. I am slowly throwing away my masks. I am slowly saying goodbye to the "impostor."

8:45 p.m. I left the common area. Sonny Trillanes calls Danny Lim and they form a circle with JV and Argee. I feel I belong but at the same time do not belong. There are many things that I do not know and understand. We are all here for different reasons. I am here for something entirely new and different. But what is it? Why am I here, in detention? What are you telling me Lord?

Rebellion? Planning an overthrow was not why I went to Manila Pen. Why? I was simply responding to Jimmy Regalario's invitation. The newspapers all talk about a plan. What plan? It is so noisy out there. The front pages are splattered with graphic images of tanks and soldiers, broken glass and furniture, a tank in the lobby



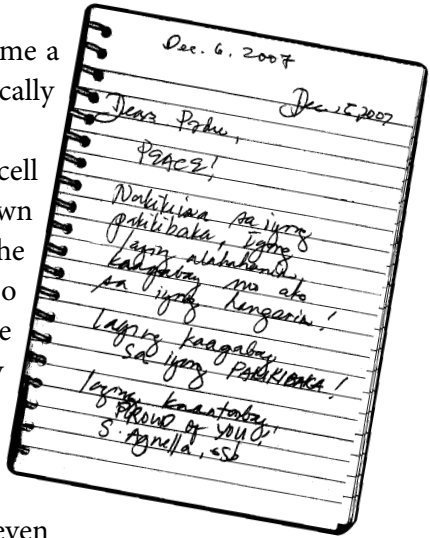
of a hotel. The commentaries are mixed. A lot of angry comments thrown at “military adventurers,” trouble makers. Amidst the noisy and confusing barrage of reactions and interpretations, I need to find quiet and peace. I will do deep breathing and yoga asanas. It is also time to thank God for the grace of both the negative and positive elements of the experience:

Positive	Negative
People visit me, especially bishops, priests, religious and lay	People who don't visit me
Support from groups and individuals, even those in Hong Kong	Groups that distance themselves, like Black and White
Some media look at the positive side. My parents visit me	Some media look at the negative side. My absence from my parents house in Malabon
I re-enter, though abruptly Philippine realities	I am cut off from my work in Hong Kong
I experience the intensity of social conflict	I am distracted from the contemplative path

In silence, I find time to look more closely at events and how these impact on my life. November 29 is just one of many that have significantly impacted on my life. Where I am now seems to be the result of a series of events and decisions since July 10, 2005, when I decided to fast with the group Kubol Pagasa. I have begun a complex journey with both external and internal aspects that are not that easy to discern. Detention for rebellion, which in other countries is punishable by death is what we are charged with. The case weighs so heavily on my present. I have to be ready to face how this will affect my future. I am with other detainees yet I feel so alone, so isolated. I don't feel I belong to a particular group. I have been out of the Diocese of Cubao since 2006. I have had little or no contact with any of my brother priests. I have formal meetings with my bishop. Now, I am with men who I did not know before. I feel a creeping sense of isolation in spite of the visits and my being with others. The detention

is telling me more. It is also offering me a more profound silence and dramatically imposed invisibility.

9:30 p.m. I had to go out of my cell and request the guards to tone down the radio and their conversation. The guards on the elevated walk were also making noise. The guards by the gate were pleasant and reasonable. They turned off the radio and said sorry. The guards on the elevated walk were the same. This is my poverty now. I have to request for my every need, even for peace and quiet so I could sleep. This is a bit irritating and even humiliating, a bitter pill for my soul.



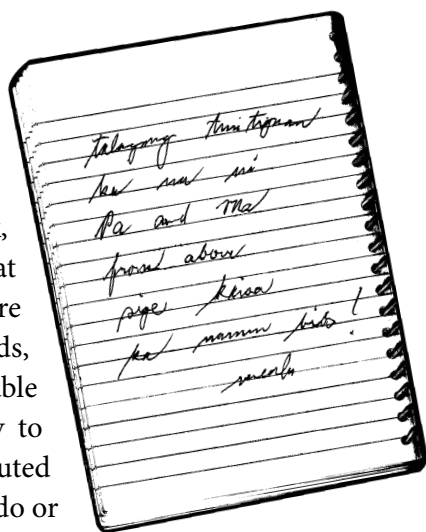
# 9

## — Day Nine —

**December 8, 2007 Saturday**

6:15 am. The AMRSP has not sent anyone to see me. Well, the CBCP as a body has not said anything either. Do I expect persons, groups to speak on my behalf? What is behind this longing? Am I looking for human support, affirmation? Listen, stop and be more mindful. Speak to your heart. Listen to your heart. Your heart speaks, Eldridge reminds us: Now more than ever, your heart longs for God... It aches, aches for many things... for freedom, for your temporary return to your former home, Hong Kong. It aches for more basic things,

for family, friends and community, for support, acceptance and understanding... It aches for the freedom to move, speak, communicate with others, and now that others are kept away by walls, cyclone wire fences, barbed wires, iron gates and guards, you learn to find the ever present and available Other. This is my privileged opportunity to encounter God in a deeper way, in an undiluted way. Here, there are certain things we can do or have but these have been reduced to the barest minimum. There is a deeper reason for this stripping... perhaps God wants you to further strip yourself of the non-essentials...



Nada... nothingness. Let nothingness be real. Let nothingness speak. Sometimes, I feel slighted, left out when the others talk among themselves. It was the same when I was still active in the diocese of Cubao. I somehow felt left out and out of place. When groups here have a huddle and I am not invited, these raw feelings are revived. But I go back to Eldridge who offers important questions that are gradually being answered by my situation. I go back to those questions:

What are you trying to teach me here?

What issues in my heart are you trying to raise through this? What is it you want me to see? What are you asking me to let go of?

The little inconveniences, the raw feelings that return, triggered by the isolation make me confront the reality of pain again. I can run away from the pain even in detention. I can find many and different ways of distracting myself. After all I am used to being "busy." Advocacies have served such a purpose before. They responded to problems but they also in some ways insulated and cushioned the pain.

Pain is not evil. It is an invitation to soul-work, to more silence and listening. In the light of the above questions, I can say that pain is a teacher meant to help me see what I may be avoiding and an energy that may help me to let go of something or someone that impedes my freedom and growth.

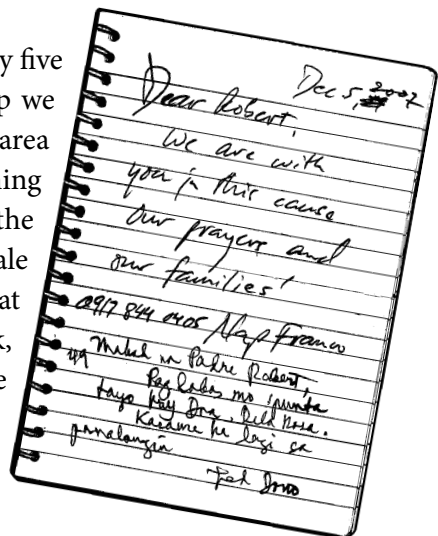
Public opinion, the opinion of others often brings pain. Journalist Juan Mercado's negative article the other day was unpleasant. I have suffered from criticism before; what is new? But if I am still so affected by public opinion, the soul work I am called to is to seek God's "opinion" and really get to know what God thinks of me.

Silence, less talk, will be essential to catching, getting a glimpse, a clue of God's opinion. God is here in detention, the God I have run away from, ignored, avoided, is here. I could still avoid God, spend my time and energy in all kinds of talk, from the serious to the ridiculous. I can indulge in romantic idealism. I can idealize November 29, calling it all kinds of things, indulging my ego through self-flattery and affirmation.

While there is need to maintain our personal integrity, our sense of self-worth, we cannot so exaggerate this. I cannot speak for others. I can begin with myself, walk, speak, be in other's company, withdraw, exercise, run, do yoga, rest now, with greater awareness and sensitivity to God.

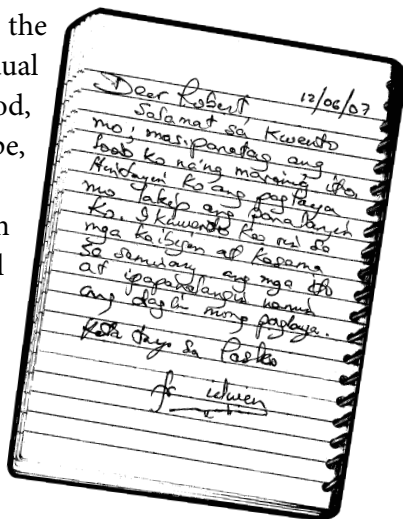
"My God," I often utter these words, that have become an empty utterance. Oh my God, may better and more honestly sound, "Oh my Robert..." In detention, I swing from utter egoism to short-lived emptiness. Yes, each passing day makes me see the need to meet God where it matters, not where I meet me but where the 'I' steps aside and allows God, Jesus to be God.

Danny and I ran for more than thirty five minutes. We did about ten laps on a loop we created. The loop begins from the open area fronting the Jemmah Islamiyah Cell, running through the police outpost just before the gate leading to the next block, the female block, proceeding to the end of the path at the back of the female block, then back, then right, running along the wall of the female block, towards the bigger block housing the Magdalo Soldiers, all the way to the front gate, then back again.



I enjoyed the run. First because of the conversation. Second, because of the gradual re-awakening of my runner's body. God, through detention continues to re-shape, transform me.

"Media" - some of the men and women in TV, Radio and print who make me feel bad about myself, make me defensive and angry, is another invitation to soul-work, which now more and more involves letting go of my public persona. In detention, something is dying. Something indeed, must die if something better, more real is to live.



Today, like all other days, God appeared through people:

Fr. Jude MSSC, sent by Fr. Brian Gore who could not come because he is still on the government's watch list. Fr. Brian who was once imprisoned as a member of Negros 9 is still on a watch list in spite of the dismissal of his case. Soon, I may also be on the watch list. I was able to write my letter to Fr. Jim Mulroney, instructing him to clear my room, put my things in boxes, label the boxes, etc. I am closing this chapter of my life - I am moving on. Fr. Jude also said Mass, where Myrna, "Tiya Dely" (Argee Guevarra's aunt) and Dencio (from St. Joseph, Kwun Tong Community of Hong Kong) shared. Conrado "Conring", Fr Brian Gore's assistant was finally allowed to enter through my intervention.

July Panday also arrived. Thanks to July, whom I requested to contact Fr. Brian Gore, Fr. Jude came. July stayed for a while and waited until I finished writing a message to the youth.

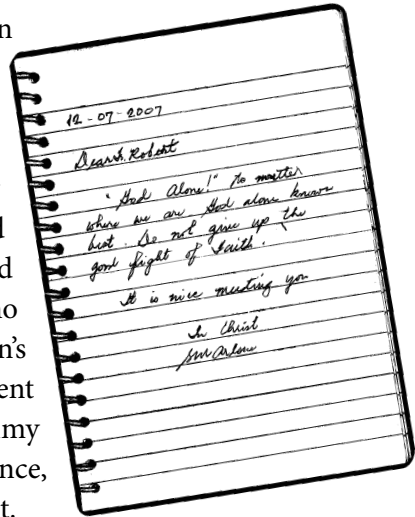
Gil de los Reyes also visited and following him, Mommy, Nedie and Zeny. It is more than evident that God is a friend. Gil explained why his two daughters were not with him, "I could not bring Teresa and Cristine here because I will have a terrible time explaining why Fr. Robert is being dragged by policemen..."

Stigma? Will I then have a stigma after this? Perhaps, but if this

will lead me to utter humility, just as well. Gil gives me a book by Doris Lessing, "The Golden Notebook." Gil tells me that Jayjay Soriano does not agree with what happened but wants to visit all the same. Then it was time to leave. "O sige Derps," Gil greets me.

"Derps," ah yes. There was a time when I was called that sometime in 1982 when I was an assistant pastor at the Parish of the Holy Sacrifice in U.P. Diliman. This year is soon coming to an end, with this November 29 experience still unfolding. I could only ask God where he wants me to go. I could no longer plan. I am in God's hands.

Mommy, Nedie and Zeny — Mommy looks well but is showing very clear signs of aging. My mother who has shown love and devotion to me, to her children all these years is now 79. She is still there doing everything for her children and I am grateful and privileged to be here, a beneficiary of her love and devotion, and indeed her understanding. Compared to a fellow detainee's mother who publicly complains about her son's behavior, regretting his involvement in these political upheavals, Mommy slowly is showing signs of acceptance, understanding and even proud insight.



### God's Name for me?

My names all come from Media: Running Priest; Militant Priest, Activist Priest; etc. God knows what Bishops, priests and religious call me. But what does God call me? What name does God give me?

I have grappled with certain names and have asked God whether any of these names were acceptable:

Wanderer, pilgrim, fellow-journeyer, truth-sayer, mouthpiece, prophet, God's running fool (once also used by NVM Gonzalez), incorrigible dissenter... etc.

# 10

## — Day Ten —

**December 9, 2007, Sunday**

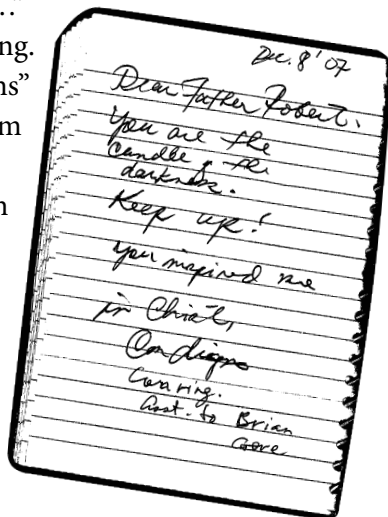
Our 3<sup>rd</sup> Run, One Hour...

My thighs and legs are aching. The injury on my right knee is sore but there is renewed vigor slowly returning to my weary instruments of locomotion, my things, knees, legs and feet, etc. Danny and I were quiet for the most part of the run. I became aware once more of my running body and now, my running spirit as well. Towards the last 15 minutes of the run, the arrogant Police woman “C.....” had the doors leading to the walking area on both sides of the block where Rizal Ali and the JI were locked. What compelling reason did she have to do this? Then I get to the gate where Julian Advincula’s niece is trying to enter. I tried intervening only to hear the Police woman C snap with a loud voice, “Napag-utusan lang kami. Wala po sa amin ang desisyon. Kami po ang napag-utusan...”

Power tripping, control, gate-keeping. I should re-read Michel Foucault’s “Prisons” and Antonio Gramsci’s “Letters from Prison.”

I spoke to the wife of Capt. Julian Advincula, who complains about the arrogance of the police. Power tripping is the term.

Dissent is healthy in a democratic society... Peaceful dissent... and so it seems. I will do this again if given a chance. It is so important to be ready



to speak out and tell the truth when the occasion presents itself.

11:00 am. I prepared the Mass paraphernalia and proceeded to the main hall. There were a few visitors present including Capt. Julian Advincula's wife and daughter Leslie, who I requested to share at Mass. I ate lunch with Aimee, wife of James with baby Shamu. Aloy and Aika were not yet there.

The Mass eventually began. I am beginning to see who among the soldiers and their families are real mass goers. Some seem to shy away. Andy shared on the part of the Oakwood soldiers. James Layug served at Mass. James taught his son, little Shamu, to ring the bell at various parts of the liturgy.

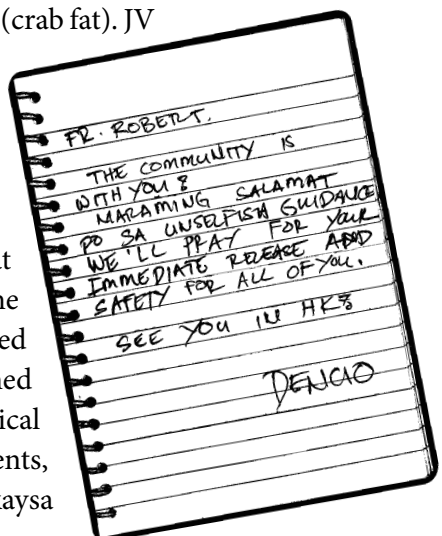
During lunch, Leslie extends Mary Racelis' greetings. Mary is worried for me. I ate lunch with Aimee, Shamu, James and JV. It was good to have lunch with a family so young and promising. James recount how he finds the woman of his dream Aimee in Pulilio Island. JV shared his lunch of Pesang Lapu-lapu and minced tomatoes with us. Zeny Delfin sent food: mixed vegetables, tilapia and rice.

After lunch, Capt. Julian comments, "Father, my wife finds your mass draining. Mabigat pero iba...walang racket... walang collection..."

There was, as always lots of food. There was alimango, looking "evil" with the cholesterol and uric acid hidden under the glistening reddish shell. I took some of the "alige" (crab fat). JV warns, "Deadly!" We have seen and eaten deadly stuff since yesterday: papaitan, chicharon bulaklak, tortang itlog.

I should begin to fast again...

There was a boxing match that afternoon: Hutton and Fairweather. The soldiers huddled before the TV. I watched with them for a while. I also watched those playing scrabble. This is our typical detention scenario. Danny Lim comments, "Maluwang dito, mas maluwang dito kaysa



Tanay.” (It is spacious here, more space here than Tanay.) I wanted to wash Zeny’s serving trays and plates but there was no water.

Bujon’s text messages reached Karen and Aimee. The two ladies arrive to discuss their wedding plans with me. I had a good chat with the two ladies who expressed concern about the possibility that I may still be detained when the time for their weddings come. It was the birthday of Karen’s father. She took time out of the celebration to talk to me in prison. Aimee extended her stay in Manila even if she is already based in Dumaguete with her Dutch fiance.

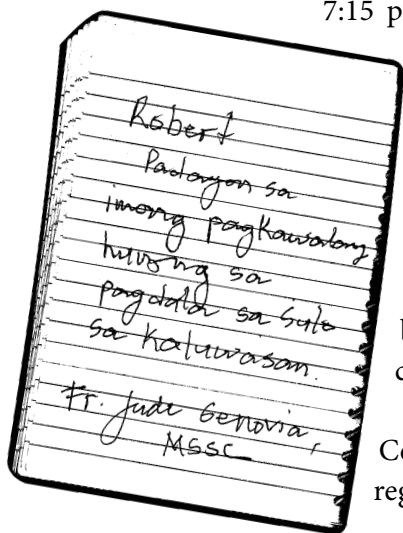
Bujon arrives bringing good news. Among Ed is going to court to show his support to me. If this is true, this is a positive sign, a strong symbol of two priests supporting each other. I can only pray and trust. I cannot even expect too much, just trust quietly and patiently. Bujon asked me to write a message for tomorrow’s initial hearing, on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of our detention.

I am not even worried. I don’t even think of tomorrow. I am simply present to where I am and what is currently going on. I promised Bujon to produce Bulgar articles that I will give him, starting tonight and letters to Daddy and Mommy and Kubol Pagasa.

6:40 p.m. Two policemen are arguing at the top of their voices. This is what irritates me, the lack of sensitivity towards others. This is one aspect of my present poverty, noise. I just have to live with it.

7:15 p.m. It is raining. I cannot go to the main hall. I have been here in my cell since 5:30 p.m. Finally, I have a little bit of privacy and solitude. I am beginning to sense a basic difference between my two neighbors, Danny Lim and Sonny Trillanes: Experience and Age. I feel drawn to Danny for the simple reason that we were both born in 1955. We share many things in common.

The rain is pouring hard on the Custodial Center. I am alone. I am not complaining nor regretting. I am not whining. I am learning to



befriend silence. In turn, silence is teaching me to wait and listen. I don't sabotage the process by running away and washing my hands. I am not a little boy. If I must go through detention so that more and more of the man in me emerges, so be it.

Listen, Look, Sense, Feel... Even from within, unable to move, I sense movement outside. People are moving not only for me but for something bigger. Atty. Luke Espiritu spoke to Atty. Francisco Chavez to defend me. Bujon spoke to Among Ed who offered to attend my hearing. Edd and Kubol Pagasa are always there to lend support.

Tomorrow will be a kind of epiphany - something will appear, make its presence seen and felt. I can only lift this up to God, surrender and trust. God will do what is best for me.

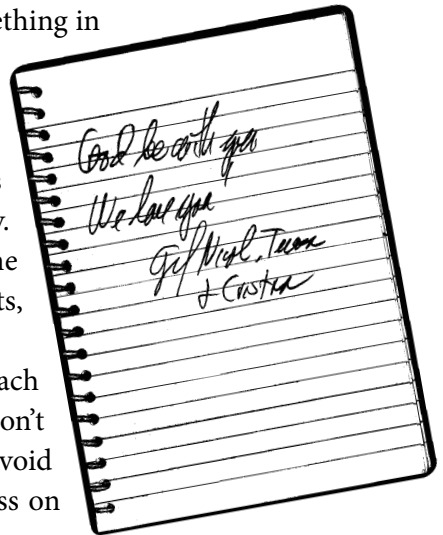
10:00 p.m. The night's two guards are loud and I tried to ignore their prattle. But it was getting loud. I decided to stand up and request them to tone it down. They toned it down for a while but soon forgot and started being noisy again. Yes, this is detention.

Earlier we were watching a movie. We were in the middle of it when a guard comes and tells us - time to lock up. We asked for consideration. The guard goes to the OIC, Police Officer "C....." and returns with bad news. The answer is "no." Yes, this is detention.

Evil? Something in the eyes. Something in the atmosphere. I need to pray harder, to listen more intently.

10:30 p.m. So close yet so far. I miss home. I think of my aging parents who are just less than 20 kilometers away. But I cannot see them unless they come here. God bless my wonderful parents, bless them Lord.

Amidst the strange atmosphere teach me to be sensitive and prudent. I don't feel good when some of the soldiers avoid my masses. But could I impose the mass on anyone? Besides, after and outside the mass, the soldiers relate with you.



# 11

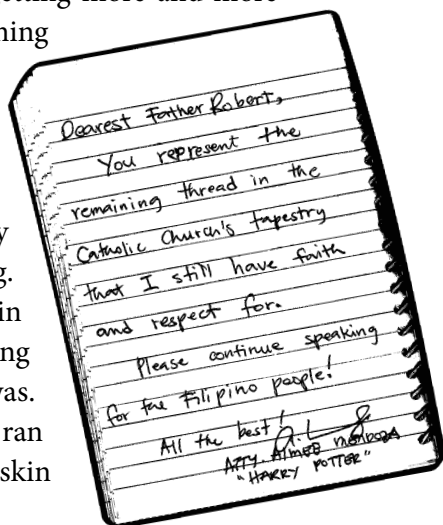
## — Day Eleven —

**December 10, 2007, Monday**

5:00 a.m. The radio is blaring again. It has intermittently awakened me. Frustrated and tired, I got up and was about to go out. I changed my mind and just decided to do some work. This is one constructive alternative to getting irritated... learn to do something else. I should avoid always complaining to the guards. They might just make life miserable for you. Ah... this is detention!

6:45 am. The noise has increased. I have simply accepted it. Nothing much I can really do about it. I accepted the noise without any resistance, made peace with the noise. If I do not react in anger to something, I maintain some peace within. This is the challenge then, to maintain that center of peace within.

Our 4<sup>th</sup> Running Day — 18 laps - without the long stretch on both sides of Block D. The notorious Police Woman C..... had both gates padlocked. The run was getting more and more comfortable. Ironically, my running has been revived in detention. My vision, deepening and becoming more mature is crystallizing while I run and share with Danny Lim. We started at exactly 8:00 am. After twenty minutes of running, it began raining. We continued running. I took in the rain as I ran - I was filled with an exhilarating feeling. I tried to identify what it was. Joy? Not quiet. Something more - I ran a bit more. Freedom: rain fell on my skin

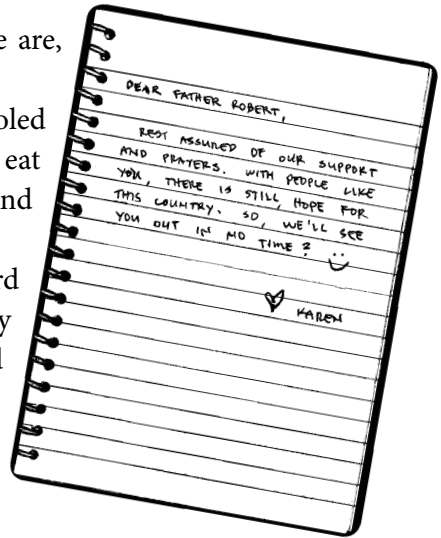


and into my soul blessing me with something both from above and within: FREEDOM.

The rain drenched us - runners we are, warriors and adventurers as well.

When we finished running, we cooled down and proceeded to the main hall to eat breakfast. There was rice and paksiw and some adobo sauce.

While eating breakfast, I overheard the report on my trial in Makati. My family and friends were present. Among Ed had just arrived as well. I felt good and inspired. I knew and felt that I have many friends out there but all the same whether there or here, I am free, the spirit is free, the spirit is within me.



4:30 p.m. In my cell, I recall the events of the day. Towards 10:00 am. Sonny Trillanes and Danny Lim walked past my cell. I came out and walked with them. Danny reported that the radio has been reporting the mobilization of supporters at the Makati Regional Trial Court. People wore stickers with the message, "Free Fr. Robert Now." The sticker was designed by Ed and Bujon.

At the main hall, the usual detainees were gathered, Tiny and Mayor were playing chess. Some soldiers were watching TV. Captain Julian was quietly seated in a corner. At around this time, Daddy and Mommy, accompanied by Atty. Rudy de los Santos arrived. My elderly parents, at their late age went to Makati to attend my hearing and from there proceeded to Crame to visit me. Daddy looked alright although his knees were bothering him. I led them to the table below the TV set. They sat. I gave Daddy a plastic chair with a back rest. Mommy begins recounting the events of the morning:

There was a big crowd outside, placards, stickers and posters all over. Media was there. They were outside and followed us to the court. The sala was packed.

Frank Chavez was good. He had a great sense of humor. He said “You see Fr. Robert’s daddy is ailing. Daddy has been coughing even while Atty. Chavez spoke). His mother is even crying. We will storm the heavens, even St. Peter will help us in this case.”

There were a lot of people there. Two Benedictine Sisters who said that they opened the court room (i.e. they came early). My mother recognized many of my friends: Ate Gie Ballarte, Tess Ngayan of UP; Sr. Cletha, Project 4 parishioners: Nedie Simpas; Sol and Ed de Pedro, Msgr. Dan Sta. Maria and one priest on the plump side.

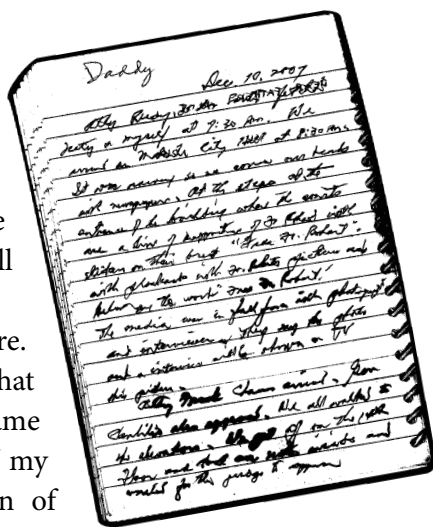
Among Ed Panlilio also arrives. He explained to media how his friendship with me dates back to their seminary days in the 80s.

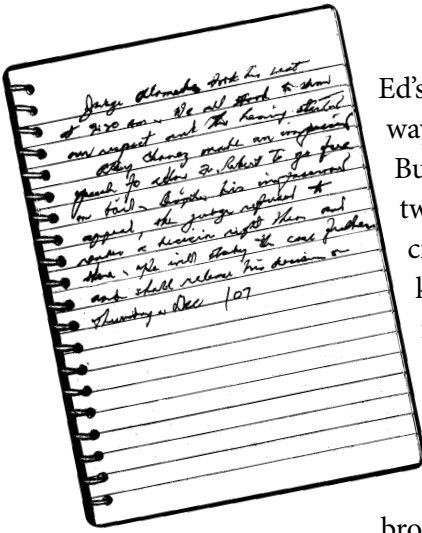
Then Mommy herself was interviewed by media who asked her how she felt: “I am angry, my son is not a criminal.”

Then Mommy and Daddy, with Atty. Frank Chavez and several of those present clenched their right hands and raised these in defiance. She also reported that a lot of OFWs have been calling from Hong Kong (especially Chary, Evelyn and Arlyn)

Then Mommy approached Atty. Frank Chavez and said, “Thank you for what you are doing for my son.

Then we shared the food that came from Zeny Delfin. My parents looked OK. God knows what is in their heart. But these events in my life are making us do things together as family. My two uncles, brothers of my father, Ogot and Miniong were also present. They were supportive too. Daddy wrote a reportage of the mornings proceedings in Makati in his journal. Mommy gives me some writing materials bought by Zeny. Mommy also relays Sr. Becky Jameiro’s message about her mother’s system considerably weakened by excessive calcium content. I felt happy with all the assurances of support from family and friends. I was indeed grateful to everyone.





I thought in particular about Among Ed's presence in court. He did go out of his way. It was a risk to be identified with me. But, here we were, two priests fighting on two different fronts. Among Ed's moral crusade reaches the Makati Courts. I know that more than returning the favor of my supporting him, he is showing how two priests can share the same values and principles and stand collectively for these. Indeed, I felt grateful, even awed by the risks my brother priest took. Where so many shied

away from me, he chose to go more than one mile. This time, it was not me but Among Ed running out there for someone whose feet have somehow been temporarily bound. Such priestly solidarity and fraternity is not done in triumphalism and pride. What may seem public and external is really flowing from something deep within our priestly hearts and souls. *Salamat* Among Ed.

Before Mommy leaves she talks about my nephew, Miguel, who developed allergy after a run. He drank something and his legs just got swollen. He must have inherited his father's allergy. Mommy orders another "deer" from Rey and gives it to Atty. Rudy de los Santos. Atty. de los Santos gets Rey's name and case number and promised to help him. I hope he really does for Rey's case is not serious and with a good lawyer he will be out of jail in no time. Around 2:00 p.m. I get a note from Glory Alcuaz complaining that she was not allowed to enter because she is not a relative. It started drizzling. Mommy, Daddy and Atty. De los Santos had to wait a while until the drizzle stopped.

3:00 p.m. Finally Glory Alcuaz is allowed to enter. Glory excitedly narrates the events of this important day. It was on human rights day, that my lawyer's pleadings were heard. Atty. Frank Chavez pleaded to take me on recognizance. According to Glory, the judge was rather "antipatico" at the beginning. Then Among Ed arrives. Suddenly the judge becomes "simpatico." Glory Alcuaz was simply

happy about what happened.

I decided to write another message to Kubol Pagasa, my community, my friends and fellow visionaries. Since I left the Diocese of Cubao, this little community of committed and patriotic Filipinos have continued to work together. It doesn't really matter if the church was not represented. I have friends, real friends, who were there. This is enough. Glory took my message and left. Chino and Karlo, Glory's sons will visit me soon.

Atty. Trixie was talking to Argee. JV was listening and forever teasing Argee as usual. JV was comparing our mothers: Mommy who is supportive but incurably anxious about me vis-à-vis Argee's mother who was anxious and critical.

I went to my cell and did some reading and writing. Towards 6:00 p.m., Smokey Archangel came to have a chat. He spoke about his difficult and scary life.

6:30 p.m. Proceeded to the main hall to watch the news. The news about the hearing in Makati was shown before 7 p.m. It was quite a coverage:

Interview with Among Ed.

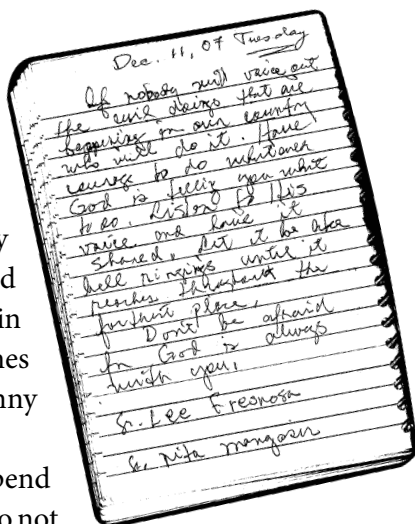
Interview with Mommy.

Atty. Chavez arguing my case in court.

Rally outside the court.

It was a rather extensive coverage. Even JV commented about how long the footage was. Then we had a "boodle fight" prepared by James Layug. I shared the space and the food with Danny and James. Finally the evening ended watching Tom Cruise and Dustin Hoffman in "Rain Man." Danny, James and Sonny watched the movie. Danny stayed until the end.

Time. Immersion. I should spend more time with everybody. I really do not



know how much longer I will still be detained. I may be walking out of this place either Thursday or Friday. The hearing meant much both to those who were there and especially to me whom they supported. It will definitely leave a deep impression in the hearts and minds of many.

# 12

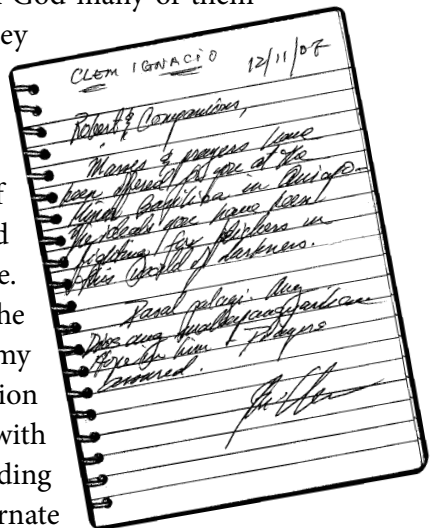
— Day Twelve —

**December 11, 2007, Tuesday**

8:45 a.m. Danny Lim just left with his police escort. He is going to Makati to witness on behalf of the Oakwood “Mutineers.”

The Police. They run our lives. From morning to night we are being watched and monitored. Thank God many of them were kind and even sympathetic, but they must carry out orders. They must watch the “dissenters,” “rebels, — the so-called “enemies of the state.”

This is my twelfth day of detention. I am adjusting physically and psychologically to the entire experience. This is nothing compared to what the rest are going through. For most of my co-detainees, they have been in detention for almost five years. This is detention with its agonizing uncertainty and never-ending waiting. Moments of encounter alternate with moments of introspection. We are



brought out and back for hearings. This government wants us charged and convicted. We stand proud of what we believe in and are fighting for. We do not complain and endure everything for our country and her people. We do not surrender our mind, soul and will. We know who we are and what we want. We know and are constantly aware of God's will, God's call. We listen with patience, faith and exuberance.

I return to my cell and prepare to write six Bulgar articles: Ibang Klaseng Upo; Hindi Ako Tatakbo; Salamat Hong Kong; Salamat Kubol Pagasa (using Ate Ruby Alcantara's statement); Salamat Among Ed; Ang Aking Bagong Tahanan.

11:05 a.m. Just got back from the main hall. It was unusually quiet but not deserted. Not all the soldiers were there, only some of those discharged, the aides of Senator Trillanes. Something is missing with the absence of the soldiers. There is this manly confidence and cheerfulness that I see in James, Danny, Gary, Andy etc. I had a little chat with Sonny Trillanes and got a glimpse of his person. I remember entertaining negative impressions of the man before. My impressions are falling apart as I get to know these men demonized by others.

4:15 p.m. I just sat patiently and waited as long as I can. It took almost a whole hour to send the first two articles to Bulgar. I hope they publish it. If they do, I will be reconnected with the outside world again. Earlier, Argee asked me for Atty. Frank Chavez's mobile number. His parents want Frank Chavez to defend him. They are even willing to pay for his services.

*Salamat Hong Kong (Bulgar Article)*

*Umalis ako na umaasang makababalik agad. Marami akong pangako:*

December 2 Christmas Party ng Buhay Ka

8 Masses for the UP Alumni

9 Recollections, St. Joseph's Central

*Buo ang aking loob at pananalig sa Diyos. Masaya akong umuwi dahil hangad kong makapiling ang mahal kong mga magulang, at madalaw ang mga pamangkin ko at ang biyuda ng aking yumaong kapatid na si Vincent na magdiriwang ng kanyang ikatlong anibersaryo ng kamatayan.*



also do as much asanas to help my right knee heal better. Yet breakfast and lunch are fun because of the people who share it with me. I have learned to fast before. For forty four days I went without solids. Can I go without human contact though for the same length of time? Breakfast was with Captain Julian. Lunch was with JV, Danny, Scarlet and Julian. Then more visitors began to arrive. Sr. Lee and Sr. Nita, Sister Servants of the Holy Eucharist came to visit. These nuns have been working with me in the Coalition Against Death Penalty. They have chosen this special ministry to prisoners. Now, I am not visiting prisoners with them. This time, they are visiting me, a prisoner. Zeny Delfin sends lunch again: mixed vegetables, daing na bangus and rice.

My friend Msgr. Clem Ignacio came as well. Clem has always been there through the years. He is a real friend. I am happy and truly encouraged by his presence. Clem even joked that he has spoken with the priests of Quiapo Church, where he is Rector and Parish Priest. He asked them whether I could be accommodated in Quiapo and do work among the vendors in Plaza Miranda. Clem writes an inspiring message on my tiny green detention log book:

“Robert, my encouragement and prayers, your life and principles continue to inspire us. Am always one with you in your fight for justice, truth and freedom. *Dapat sumulat ka sa amin ng Pastoral Letters ngayon tulad ni San Pablo. Ang tanglaw ng iyong mensahe ay dapat mapakinggan namin.* God Bless!”

(You should write Pastoral Letters as St. Paul did. We should listen to the light of your pastoral letters.)

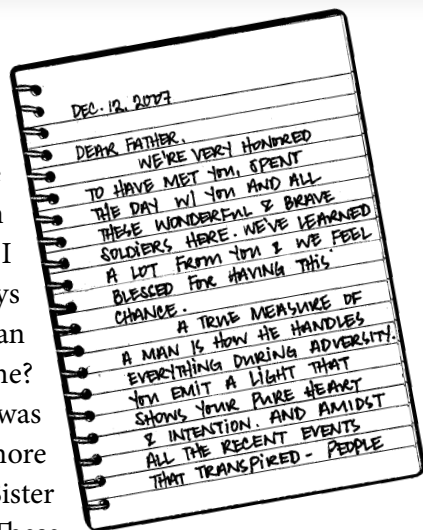
Clem’s visit made me consider the following points:

Not pride but humility. Not triumphalism but hiddenness.

From earthshaking noise to deafening silence... am I adapting to this?

From anger, hostility to enduring compassion and kindness?

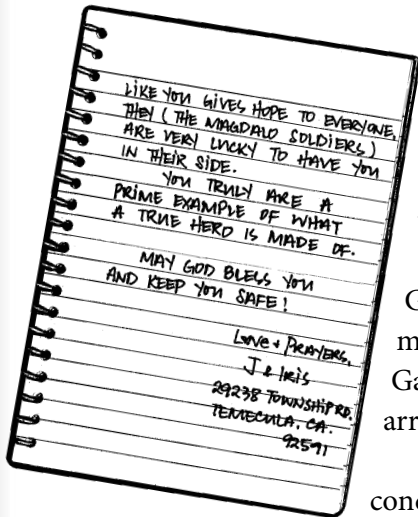
From the use of “words of mouth” which are often unreflected



and reckless to the wordless eloquence of the heart... A different way of speaking acting and being.

From constant distraction, shallowness and vanity to focus, and profound mindfulness... fiercely working towards "egolessness."

Scarlet Advincula, the 65 year old wife of Captain Julian speaks about her husband:



"Ganyan talaga ang asawa ko Father. Parating para sa kapwa...kaya kami mahirap... hindi namin hangad maging kumportable..." ( My husband is really like that Father. He is always for others... that's why we are poor. We do not wish to live in comfort.)

6:10 p.m. I went to pray the rosary with Gen. Carlos Garcia. He has been a great help to me. We prayed for those in detention and Gen Garcia's family whom he has not seen since his arrest.

I came back from the main hall. JV expressed concern for Argee: "Someone has to talk to his mother; someone has to calm her and her husband who worry far too much about Argee. They are making Argee feel that he is wrong."

This is one painful consequence of involvement, the stress, even the crisis it visits upon one's family. Argee seems to receive a lot of discouragement from his family. He does not have too many visitors. I can somehow feel his "wound". Then he reads in the Sunday Inquirer Magazine about what his former girlfriend who said, "I did not marry Argee because my family disapproved of him."

The many friends, relatives, fellow priests and religious friends etc. who went out of their way to visit me is really grace... a quiet epiphany. God, thanks to my detention, has been blessing me, assuring me that I am not alone, that I should be grateful. I just need to be patient and learn to trust without expectations. I should not misunderstand, misinterpret my situation. It is not simply to continue my former activism and militancy. It is meant to make me find peace

with God and myself, to learn trust, faith and not to fear today nor tomorrow. Images of People Power Monument pass before my mind's eye. One image is the streamer hanging outside my tent, "Let Go... Let God."

7:45 p.m. I am reading a book given me by a visitor, "Still Me" by "Superman" Christopher Reeve. It was about Reeve's survival after a near fatal neck injury due to a fall during a equestrian competition. The book helps me cope with the utter artificiality of detention. Twelve days in detention and still counting... I am stressed by many things. Detention is a block to my doing and finishing, accomplishing many things: My work in Hong Kong; plans for 2008, ministering to my aging parents; etc. Detention is also something positive. Because of detention there are things, truths that I can face and squarely face in a sustained fashion.

I know I am being called, invited towards depth and wholeness. The Manila Pen incident is no simple and ordinary incident. It is life-altering. I am being given ample time to reflect and see the new doors and windows that are opening... and inviting me to enter.

A number of my friends have not been communicating. They have chosen to be silent. I try to enter into their silence and commune with them in silence. I have had many such moments in detention, most of them at night when all the visitors have gone, when a guard comes to close and lock my cell. I have learned to accept and commune with silence. Silence is also one of the gifts of detention. I will most likely leave my cell into greater silence. I have been relatively silent since I left the Philippines in 2006. Manila Pen was a mysterious mix of deafening noise and profound silence. If and when I leave, I should be careful not to lose the grace of the past days... the gift of silence among the many gifts of Manila Pen.

8:10 p.m. To learn to be a man.. a warrior... not a wimp, a pushover... a victim of ego and my own delusions. To have the courage and honesty to recognize my pretense and fakeness and to work on it. To cease being the over-eager talker, the pathetic charlatan, feeding media with the shallow niceties of social criticism. Speak, if I should but in a different, newer and deeper way.

That day... November 29, I saw and encountered media again... It was not the same. They were not pleasantly surprised to see me. "What is he doing here again." Isn't he finally away, for his own good?"

And so this confinement puts me away again. I am far from the madding crowd. Here is my cell. I am learning to deal with my real hunger, my real passion. The shallowness of exposure leaves an ugly taste in my mouth, worst, in my soul. The real hunger, my real passion has something to do with both the fundamental needs and the truly transcendental values. Clem's request, "You should write us pastoral letters," translates thus to me. My life, the testimony of how I have lived and will continue to live will be my message.

# 13

## — Day Thirteen —

December 12, 2007, Wednesday

*Coming from my real center  
From the depths of my soul  
Force, light, heat, words*

*Flowing from my encounter with God*

8:50 am. Thanks to Fr. Eric Adoviso, I am able to pray each day, using his "Pandasal." I have thus far endured detention. It is a decent detention center. There are good days when the Officer of the Day was kind. There are the less than pleasant days when a "bulldog" was on duty.

The only inconvenience of detention aside from the obvious is the sporadic noise that invariably wake me up at night or in the early



mornings. I have learned to classify the noise into:

— the constant breaking of messages through hand held radios...*break break... roger ... roger*

— the noisy conversations of guards who keep forgetting my pleas for some silence at night

— the unwanted music from their transistor radios which play the whole night.

These are little inconveniences indeed compared to the dark detention centers where other less known political activists are tortured and even beaten up to death. This is really so small compared to the total brutality suffered by other political detainees. At least we have not become part of the “disappeared,” the “desaparecidos.” We have not become statistics in the list of “extra judicial murders.” This, however in small scale is about survival, if not physical, psychological, emotional, moral and spiritual. Aside from survival, it is also about healthy thriving, healthy struggling and fighting for meaning. Victor Frank spent a good part of his life in a concentration camp struggling with meaning. Christopher Reeves spent his last days either in bed or a mechanized wheel chair. Reading “Still Me” makes me ask how deep is my faith, how solid is my courage... and how far am I willing to trust that hand that continually leads me into the adventure of life.

6:30 p.m. We did not have our usual run this morning. Danny begged off because he had visitors coming. I planned to stay in my cell the whole day and have a quiet day. It is after all a Wednesday, the fasting day of Kubol Pagasa, our “Fast Wednesdays.” Before I began my quiet day, I went to the main hall for a cup of coffee. I had coffee with Captain Julian. My plans changed when Danny’s visitors from San Diego, California arrived. I met Iris and her husband Jay. They came with Aloy. They brought a lot of food, tempting food. I found myself nibbling on the sweets from Mexico and San Diego. Then there was the “manggang hilaw” and bagoong.

Food, food, food... I had to catch myself and pause... I need to be more aware and mindful when I see food. Then Aloy approaches me and tells me that she brought me some things in a blue SM plastic bag. Inside, I found:

2 Magdalo T-shirts; 1 BGen. Danny Lim T-shirt; Jockey Boxer Short and sando; socks; several cartons of low fat milk; assorted dried fruits with cereals and crackers.

I stayed for lunch and got to know more of Danny's family. Later, Ed Castro's note with newspaper clippings came in a plastic envelope. He was not allowed to enter again. I saw yesterday's *Inquirer* with the story about my hearing which was bannered on the upper left hand corner and continued on page 6 with a picture. On the picture were my parents, Atty. Frank Chavez and friends with their clenched right hands raised in the air in defiance.

What do all these mean? Politically, of course there is value and weight in the unfolding events. Spiritually, there is something else... and this I need to listen to more carefully and prayerfully.

I offered to say mass towards 2 p.m. My offer delighted Danny's relatives. At mass, one of the detained soldiers, Jonnel Sangalang shared. Iris and Jay also shared. Iris expressed her appreciation, "For the few brave men who continue to speak on the people's behalf. She also described her deep bond with her ninong, Gen. Danny Lim, a man I deeply respect. (She was almost in tears at this point.)" Before Iris and Jay left, she wrote something on my little green log book which made me ponder:

"A true measure of a man is how he handles everything during adversity. You emit a light that shows your pure heart and intention. And amid all the recent events that transpired—people like you give hope to everyone, they (the Magdalo soldiers) are very lucky to have you on their side. You truly are a prime example of what a true hero is made of."

I am touched and rather surprised that she noticed the "light that shows my pure heart." If so, it's because I have been working hard on my own heart. Then I asked Aloy where they were going tomorrow. She said, Tagaytay. I was glad and asked if they were passing Maryridge. They said yes. I sat and immediately wrote a letter to Sr. Becky. Aloy was also planning to bring the wives of the soldiers to Tagaytay. I suggested that Aloy bring the wives of the soldiers to pray and even stay overnight in Maryridge. Then they got up and prepared

to leave. Iris gives me a bear hug. What a bubbly, exuberant lady.

Meanwhile, Rasti Delizo, my former comrade in the Partido Demokratiko Sosyalista ng Pilipinas, the so-called PDSP arrives. Rasti has become an active member of Sanlakas. We have continued working together for socio-political change. We often go back to our PDSP days and lament the fact that some of our dear comrades have totally sold themselves to this administration. It is ironic how in a real sense they now stand on the opposite side of the fence.

11:00 p.m.. This is the second time that I went out and politely requested the guards on the elevated platform to tone down their conversation. One of the guards answered, "*Para lang hindi makatulog... magdamag kasi kami dito.*" (We are here all night. It is to keep us awake.) It was a rather uncouth answer, to which I had to respond, "*Oo, kayo kailangang gising, pero kailangan ko naman matulog.*" (Yes, you need to stay awake but I need my sleep.) Then I just went back to my cell... and the noisy conversation continues... I know it is difficult to stay awake, but their way of doing it is so unfair to those who need to sleep.

11:15 p.m. Suddenly, I hear that night's OIC's voice, "I know, *ilagay mo ang apelyido mo. Isulat mo.*" (You, you write your surname on the log book...) Her voice, irritatingly loud and overbearing breaks or rather adds to the almost nightly irritation of "detention noise."

Food, sometimes, surprisingly there is just too much food. Atty. Rey visits his clients. Later another lawyer comes in with a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken. I don't know why I could not resist it. Ironical that on a day when I wanted to fast from food and talk, I end up spending time eating and talking. Tomorrow perhaps... fasting is important, to prepare for anything, either release or indefinite detention.

Gary shares with me about the injury he incurred in Camp Abubakar. A shrapnel from an RTG hits him. He goes through the gory details of war. It is rare that I listen to a soldier recount the grim realities of war.

Today, I finished reading the book given by Fr. Eric Advoso. I have been reading many books at the same time. This has been the

grace of detention, time. Time to do many things that normal life does not encourage or offer. Outside, one has to make time for silence, rest, reading and writing. In a few hours, I would have been fourteen days in detention, much more than my first experience of three days and nights in Quezon City Jail from May 27 to 29, 2002.

# 14

## — Day Fourteen —

December 13 2007, Thursday

7:00 a.m. I complete two weeks today. Will I leave today or tomorrow? If not, what more does God want me to undergo both for my own transformation and the good of others? What more does God want me to do? A more constant, sustained sense of God's presence in my life has slowly evolved in the last two weeks. Upon leaving this place, I withdraw for a while. I withdraw even from media. Avoid exposure for a while. I cannot be sure who my friends are.

I had a dream last night. I dreamt of the animals at the Likas Buhay Ecological Center for Children at UP, Diliman. I remember some of the people responsible for my abrupt transfer from UP to Project 4. I remembered the hurt I bore because of how certain members of the hierarchy told me to get rid of the animals of Likas Buhay. How many animals perished in the process. Persons, groups, etc have and continue to be victims of ecclesiastical politics. So many of my animal friends died. They too were victims of ecclesiastical politics.

The day progressed rather slowly. It has been a special time. These two weeks were full. They were a course, a school, whose lessons

I still have to discover and learn in time. I know like the animals who were part of my life and the many children who befriended them in UP, the persons, place, events, situations, revolving around Manila Pen will be part of me. Dreams will come and speak to me. Dreams though never just stay in the ether of my mind. I once dreamt about running across the Philippines. That dream happened and now I dream not about the dream but about the actual experience of running thousands of kilometers, the roads, the landscape, the climate, the people... Sometimes dreams are happy, sometimes sad. Many of my dreams these past months have been mixed. Dreams make me both smile and cry, like my animals, the people in the different places I have worked, the Bishops and the various superiors who gave me work and supervised me, my brother priests, lay people, etc. Between the joy and sadness, something more constant invites me to be. Manila Pen may not have been in my plans, but it happened and I have become part of it and all those who were there, especially those of us who spent many days in detention together will always be a part of it. No excuses, no apologies.

### **5: 30 p.m. CASE DISMISSED!!!**

Judge Alameda has decided that there is no case against us. Case dismissed. Bujon arrives and congratulates me around 2 p.m. Earlier Atty. Luke Espiritu came and asked me to write a message. Zeny brings her usual gift of food: rice, fish and pepino and soft drinks.

We, excluding the soldiers have been cleared of rebellion charges. This is a vindication of our position, everybody's position.

11:05 p.m. The camp is quiet. Fourteen civilians and former soldiers have left the Custodial Center. Four of us have opted to stay on. Atty. Argee Guevarra, Atty. JV Bautista, Captain Julian Advincula and I. We wanted to spend the last night with the soldiers, these gentlemen in uniform, who chose truth and principle over office and privilege. These men have taught me a priceless lesson. In fact they remind me of something that was very clear to me as a young priest. It is as if



I am hearing the voice of Jesus one again, "Leave everything behind, pick up your cross and follow me."

### **12:00 Midnight. December 14 2007, Friday**

I am still awake. I suddenly do not feel the urge to leave. The future for me is still unclear but the future of my fellow detainees is even more unclear. What will happen to me when I return to Hong Kong? What will the Bishop of Hong Kong do to me? Where will I be next year? I begin to breathe slowly. I am becoming anxious and wastefully anxious over things that I cannot control. There is a price to pay for involvement. I have paid dearly for many of the things I have said and done. Manila Pen will exact a price. In fact, it already has. These soldiers have paid more dearly than me. It is now almost five years since they were implicated in the Oakwood Mutiny. Gen. Lim has already served three years since his involvement in the Coup of 1986 and in the February 2006 "Withdrawal of Support." I have spent two weeks in Crame Custodial Center and three days in Quezon City Jail. Nothing, a negligible, laughable nothing. These men's sacrifice humble and awe me. I salute them. They may not be all religious and pious. Some of them may not even be Christians but the spirit of sacrifice could not be more evident in their lives.

This is the least I can do to show my support and admiration for my new found family and friends. I will stay and I will keep in touch. I have written this little diary and hope that one day it will serve a purpose.

I will not be an over-eager free man, an ex-detainee cleared of any charge. I will stay and celebrate the victory of Manila Pen. We may be behind bars but our convictions, our dreams and aspirations are intact and whole. Ours is a moral victory, even a political victory. We don't apologize for saying what we said and did. This government is rotten and violent. This government does not serve the people but serves only the interest of those who control it. This government is promoting poverty not only material but cultural, moral and spiritual poverty. Our people do not deserve this government. This government should, for the good of our people, as soon and as peacefully as possible, end.



Gloria Macapagal Arroyo did not win the election. There was cheating. And there is proof. People heard voices. One said Hello Garci, another answered. The name of General Esperon clearly came up. This government does not and will never have legitimacy nor the moral ascendancy to rule us. As it continues to rule without legitimacy, it dictates upon a sovereign people.

Noise... Detention noise again. Earlier, I brought the guards some food. The same guards are noisy keeping me awake. I decided to stay in my cell and breathe deeply. After all, it is my last night. I can consider the noise a blessing. I can choose to pray for these noisy guards and ask God to bless them and their families as I have so many times done for my fellow detainees. These guards are no different than we are. They are also citizens with the same dreams and problems. They, we and many others may yet realize how we benefit from the sacrifice of others, the sacrifice of Manila Pen.

# 15

## — Day Fifteen —

**December 14, 2007, Friday**

It was a short sleep. I felt rested all the same. This was our last day. We are already over-staying since the court ordered our release yesterday.

7:00 a.m. Ran with Danny Lim for the last time. We did some kind of a “freedom run,” not only for me, since I was being released but for all who hope for the day that they will not only walk out to find freedom for themselves but for all. I thanked Danny for all the help that he and his wife Aloy have extended to me. Every single breakfast

in jail was food that came from Danny's relatives and friends. Breakfast was a relaxed and refreshing part of the day that I shared with Danny and Sonny Trillanes. Our conversations were always spirited and challenging.

8:30 a.m. After a quick wash, we joined the others in the hall for breakfast. The atmosphere was almost festive. Captain Julian Advincula, Argee Guevarra, JV Bautista and I were being released before lunch. We promised to visit our Nov. 29 family as often as possible. It will be a bit difficult but not impossible, for me if and when I go back to Hong Kong.

9:00 a.m. I was given a haircut by our co-detainee barber that shared with me his life as one of the make-up artists of ABS-CBN. After a quick trim, I said goodbye and wished him good luck. I returned to my cell and packed my things. I went to the other men in detention and shared food stuff and some clothes with them. I went to Gen. Caloy Garcia and said goodbye.

11:00 a.m. We were ready to leave. Our things were all in the hall. We shook hands and said goodbye to our brother-soldiers, our Nov. 29 family and promised to be back.

As we stepped out of the Crame Custodial Center, the four of us, Captain Julian Advincula, Argee Guevarra and JV Bautista and I raised our right hands and clenched our fists before media. We were defiant then against the lies, corruption and oppression of the administration. We still are and will continue until truth, justice and peace prevail in our land.

Laban ng Masa had prepared a press conference just across the street. Tri-media crowded into a tiny canteen to hear our statement for that day. The police tried to stop us but for some reason were less aggressive as usual. They tried stopping us as we crossed from the gate of the Custodial Center to the canteen diagonally across. We walked determined, surrounded by media. We made our statement and conceded to end to an imploring and worried police officer, who kept repeating, "Sir, this is Camp Crame, don't make your statements here...."

Our statement was simple. The problem remains. Manila Pen

was all about that problem. There is unrest because people are jobless, homeless and hungry. There is unrest because the government is not transparent and have in fact proven itself capable of lying and cheating. There is unrest because of the extra-judicial killings and disappearances that continue unabated. Unless these problems are answered and resolved, unrest will remain. Manila Pen was only meant to address the problems and pressure the government to do what it is supposed to do in the first place. Failure to do so is dereliction of duty, a betrayal of public trust, a betrayal of the Filipino People.

We walked out of the canteen and marched towards the gate where our friends and family awaited us. We reached the gate and walk towards the happy greetings, the handshakes and embraces of those who are relieved that we are safe and free once more...



# Manila Pen and Beyond

## Prisons... Cages?

One year ago, I lived in a cage called the Crame Custodial Unit. I call it a cage because of its stark similarity to enclosures which cage animals. Cages usually contain animals or non-humans which are purposely placed there for the fun and enjoyment of humans. Zoos are big, institutionalized cages. Prisons are similar with the difference that the public is normally not allowed to watch those inside. However, prisons are not completely impenetrable to the public eye. When Leo Echegaray was to be executed on January 4, 1999, the entire public was glued on television and radio waiting for that fateful moment when Malacanang would call to inform the warden to go ahead or stop the execution for the meantime. I was running in a loop from the Catholic chapel to the main gate of the National Penitentiary in Muntinlupa. All tri-media was present for the scheduled first execution of a Filipino after the Capital punishment was abolished by the 1987 constitution. Not only politicians and media were cashing

in on the misery of a condemned man, even local gamblers put up a bet on whether Leo would go or not. The politicians like President Erap and media won, the local gamblers who cast their bets on Leo's execution lost.

The prison I shared with the soldiers and civilians implicated in the Manila Pen siege was in a cage which was not shielded from the public eye. The incident hugged the front pages for a while. Good and bad things were said about us. The most maligned and demonized were the soldiers who earned a wide range of unpalatable titles from spoiled brats to violent military adventurers. I was not spared, with new not so edifying tags added to my name.

### **The "Crime"**

It was clear how another more unkind and punitive prison existed beyond the cyclone wires, barbed wires and guarded high walls of the Crame Custodial Unit. Prison is only a part of a multi-tiered reality that constantly interacts for good or bad. Who goes into prison and stays there is decided by an entire bureaucracy of persons driven by an agenda at once individual and collective. Why persons are imprisoned, what offence merits imprisonment are definitions and decisions made according to either law or whim. What is criminal, its species and degree, from petty to heinous, and the corresponding penalty or punishment, according to severity are technicalities decided by courts either civil or military in a given political environment and climate. The word immediately bannered by the government to describe the crime that was Manila Pen was "rebellion". In common parlance, it is a crime against the state, carried out by people who wish to bring it down through violent or armed means.

### **Malacañang**

The obvious target of the so-called rebellion was Malacanang, which responded more than adequately to the perceived threat. But was there really a rebellion? From the time a small group of people prayed at the Ninoy Aquino Monument and began marching towards Manila Peninsula Hotel, to the time I found myself in one

of the conference rooms with Bishops Labayan and Tobias, former Vice-President Guingona and former University of the Philippines Dodong Nemenzo, and finally to the moment of our arrest, the only guns and violence I saw came from the outside. No one whether by word or action seemed ready to mount a violent uprising or rebellion. Through the glass window, we saw a rapid build up of soldiers, tanks and APCs. Later, we heard shots fired from the outside, followed by tear gas and finally an APC ramming into the front entrance and parking at the hotel lobby. All the violence came from the outside but where was the rebellion?

Malacanang, the center of power disliked many if not all of the inmates who shared prison with me. I also am not by any measure, held in good esteem by people in Malacanang. Malacanang's in house spin doctors have continually demonized Senator Trillanes and the Magdalo soldiers. This was their chance. They can do more than the usual black propaganda. There was reason to use violence, counter-violence because of the perceived violent threat. We felt and knew how serious the situation was. If Malacanang decides to unleash all the available force upon us, we would all be dead. The only block was media. Media had to be moved out of the hotel otherwise the government may end up guilty of an unjustifiable carnage. And yet the question still begs for an answer, "Where is the rebellion?"

Tear gas meant to flush out media forced them instead, deeper inside, until media and we were together packed in a small conference room. More tear gas was fired. Now the situation blurred into a mixed blob of gas and coughing, crying people. And, yes, where is the rebellion? We decided to surrender to pre-empt further harm for there is no telling what could come next. Thanks to media too, who transmitted our decision to surrender, all we had to endure was the searing effect of the gas on our eyes and lungs. Thank God, no one was hurt, only a hotel's earnings for that day.

### **Unique Pilgrimage**

The journey from Manila Pen to Bicutan and finally from Bicutan to the Crame Custodial Center was more than an ordinary

journey. It was and continues to be a pilgrimage, a journey in faith with others of similar dreams, visions and aspirations. Prison was a blessing in many, wonderful and mysterious ways. I have remained connected with the physical prison called the Crame Custodial Unit. I visit my November 29 family as often as I can. Even when I am not there, a spirit that began and was deeply sown into the field of my soul continues to grow.

I am grateful and even consider my brief detention with these men a grace and a blessing. For one, I was given the chance to encounter the persons behind and beyond the tags, stereotypes and black propaganda. Prison is not about steel and concrete. It is after all about flesh, blood, sweat and tears. For sixteen days, from our arrest to the last day of detention, I encountered real persons, real men and patriots who are where they are because of conscious choices made not for self but for the people. It was another school where one learns about the outside from inside. In detention while the outside strains to see what goes on inside, those inside don't struggle to see. We experience the very effects of the contradictions and prevarications of structures and authority that endeavor to confine the truth and deny justice.

## **Prisons Outside**

There are prisons outside our prison. Institutions have particular needs, expectations and interests to satisfy, fulfill and protect. Institutions that benefit from the established order or the status quo would tend consciously or not to identify with the latter. Politics in our country has degenerated into so-called "trapo" or traditional politics. The established order could be roughly called "elitist democracy" which subscribes to neo-liberal capitalism. As such, it is a democracy run by the political elite who control the various systems from the political to the economic (business, banks, etc), legal, cultural and religious. These systems form a sophisticated virtual prison similar to actual prisons which Michel Foucault described in terms of a "panopticon," a structure which allows those being watched to be seen from all angles and at all times. All of society is under the careful scrutiny of a hierarchy of wardens. In a sense, institutions are always

on the watch to promote both public order and welfare and also to preserve themselves.

Thank God, we are still relatively free in the Philippines. Democratic space has not completely disappeared. Recent events however are wake up calls, alerting us to the shrinking democratic space due in part to an increasingly insecure and desperate administration, which does not hesitate to silence, frighten and imprison those who criticize and disagree. For as long as we can still speak and share our thoughts, feelings and dreams without getting arrested then we are free. But how many dare make use of their freedoms through the exercise of their fundamental rights?

### **Chilling Message**

Manila Pen, November 29, 2007 was a display of brute force meant to give a chilling message across the land, "We can do this again and next time we can and will do more!" The threat was non-verbal, blatantly acted out around and within a hotel in full view of the Nation and the world. There were force available and a state ready to use it against anyone. With a handful of soldiers and civilians trapped in a hotel in Makati, the response was not only overwhelming but over-acting. Outside the hotel, there were hundreds of heavily armed soldiers. Helicopters hovered over head. Tanks and APCs surrounded Manila Pen. When the dead line expired, tear gas was fired and eventually, tanks crushed into the Hotel front door and parked at the Hotel lobby. Several media workers were arrested together with more than thirty civilians and soldiers. I remember the breathtaking build up of the events of November 29, 2007 from the morning when I marched with a handful of people from Ninoy Aquino statue in Paseo Roxas, corner Ayala Ave. to the Manila Peninsula Hotel, the events in the hotel, our arrest and processing in Bicutan and finally our detention in the Crame Custodial Center.

### **Change?**

With Manila Pen but a memory of an event one year ago, we may well ask whether things have changed for the better for those in

actual prisons like Senator Trillanes, Gen Danny Lim and company and those in virtual prisons like us?

I have been released from Crame Custodial Center for almost a year now, but has my life changed, improved for the better? Am I already free? Am I no longer in prison?

I am no longer in an actual prison, in a real jail, but am I safe? Can I rely on the protection of the police or the military?

Since I returned to Hong Kong on December 19, 2007, I have had difficulty with Philippine immigration. In spite of the dismissal of my “Rebellion” case, my name invariably appears on the Hold Departure Order or the Watch list of the government. I have had to argue my case each time I left the country. I would always say the following: “I am not a flight risk. I have nothing to hide, you may ask me questions.” I also had difficulties with church officials both in the Philippines and in Hong Kong. Ironically, I never had any problems with the guards of the Crame Custodial Center, who, dutifully required me to go through the tedious routine of filling out log books and visit slips and finally let me into the compound that houses my November 29 family. When I am inside my former prison, I feel happy and free. I sit down and share food, stories and my undying dreams of a better Philippines with men and their wives who feel and think the same. I have often asked, “Who then is in prison, those who freely dream or those who begrudge both dreamers and their dreams?”

## **Dreams**

November 29, 2007 was all about dreamers and their dreams. More, it is about doers who have dreams. Both doers and dreams live on, more alive and motivated than ever. It is of the nature of dreams to be free and expansive. Prison does not destroy either dreamer or dreams. In fact, prison sharpens, deepens and energizes dreams, which in turn imbues values and character in the prisoner. One famous prisoner survived and in a very real way thrived while in prison. Nelson Mandela served 27 long years and then led his people out of the prison of apartheid. The soldiers often joke that they are willing to do a Ninoy who spent about seven years in prison but not a Mandela. It took Mandela twenty seven long years to hone his dreams

and develop the character required to make them real. Soon my soldier friends will complete six years. Something good has happened and continues to happen to these men and their families. Once, I saw James Layug teaching his three year old son Shamu how to read maps. It was a simple game between father and son. But as I watched more carefully, I saw the playful transmission of two loves: for family and for country.

In Foucault's panopticon not everything can be watched and seen. What happens within remains intimately hidden from the public eye. Some members of our November 29 family would soon complete six years in detention. I would be completing three years since I began my own fascinating journey and adventure in and out of various prisons. Every place is simultaneously prison and open space. Every place exercises a particular set of rules either to discipline, punish or control its constituencies. Freedom is not a given. Freedom is risky. It is riskier in certain places and less risky in others. I write this in the so-called "land of the free," America. In the speeches of McCain and Palin, there was a tendency to speak to the so-called "true American," which of course was a category that fits into the Republican definition of "true." Freedom in fact is not a given but always a work in progress. The predominant spirit in the U.S. now is hope and the symbol is a black man who is not on the margins but suddenly at the very center of power, President Barack Obama. Many Americans who are tired of war and suffering from recession have clung to Obama's words "Change," "Yes we can." From the sinking feeling brought on by the Bush Administration's sponsored wars against terror and the collapse of American capital, these are not only words of one man but the desire of an entire nation. We need change, Obama promises it but we will work with him to get it.

## Roots

I hear the same clamor in the Philippines, the only problem is I don't yet see an "Obama" in sight. So many have begun posturing as probable successors, but all of them are old and jaded, more of the same. Cosmetic and superficial characterize the emerging alternatives and even the so-called opposition. In jail, one recognizes

and understands the meaning of “radical.” Prison is the experience of “Radix,” which is the Latin word for root. In prison, there is time to look, think, reflect, feel and discern roots, whether it is the roots of one’s talent or virtue or of one’s problems, weakness or ailment or that of one’s country. In prison there is time and opportunity to go back to the roots of everything. Prison helps bring depth and maturity until the doors are open and one is allowed to walk out to share from the depths of one’s roots.

### **Priesthood and Prison**

Prison has touched, marked and transformed my life as a priest. I am not alone. Several priests are now behind bars, in prisons of varying kinds. The two actual prisons where I was briefly detained are somehow reduced to a past experience marked in time by dates: May 27 to 29, 2002 (Quezon City Jail, Libel) and November 29 to December 14, 2007 (Crame Custodial Center, Rebellion) I have left those prisons some time ago but a wider prison still casts its ominous shadow upon me. For as long as I seek and speak the truth, for as long as I seek and fight for change, for as long as I refuse to comply and support the established order or the status quo, there, not too far away, a prison looms. Many who have gone ahead of us priests were also in prison. Jesus was imprisoned because he dared criticize the Scribes and Pharisees of his time. Many years ago, in the sixties and seventies, when as a young boy and seminarian I met and listened to Jesus, he was a Jesus who spoke the truth “in season and out of season.” I followed this Jesus then until now and got used to the discomfort and even perils that came. My life as a priest has been a constant and conscious choice between discipleship and stability, discomfort and an easy life. Prison has helped me better see and follow Jesus. Prison has helped me make better choices. Prison has helped me grow in my priestly commitment and identity.

### **Fr. Jose “Boy” Superiaso**

As I write this conclusion, I reach out to a brother priest who has been behind bars in an American jail. Fr. Jose “Boy” Superiaso has been languishing in an American jail in California since 2003. He is

one reason why I am now in the U.S. Early on in his imprisonment, Fr. Jose, who was my classmate in grade school in Malabon also wrote a book, which he called, "My Sabbatical with God." In his book, Fr. Jose talks about his prison experience and shares his struggle for meaning and spirituality in prison which he fondly calls "Club Red." I will try to facilitate Fr. Jose's release in whatever legal way possible. Getting Fr. Jose out of prison is only one thing. It is another, when he gets out. Wasn't Fr. Jose in another prison long before he found himself in Club Red? If and when Fr. Jose steps out into the open, will life be the same? Shortly after Fr. Jose was arrested he experienced the gradual withdrawal and distancing of the people he used to collaborate with. In time, he lost dear friends and what pains him most is how the church has done little to help him get out of jail.

### **Offender and/or Victim?**

There was another prison that Fr. Jose had to deal with. It had to do with structure and laws, with hierarchy and ecclesiastical culture. Problems in the Catholic Church are decided unilaterally, from top to bottom. Fr. Jose's case happened at a time when it was popular to prosecute before really investigating. Unfortunately, the law acted swiftly on both fronts, civil and church. Power was exercised and exercised swiftly and methodically. In the first world, there is an increasing shift from the punitive to the restorative perspective on justice. In Fr. Jose's book, the church seems wanting in terms of consistency. While the church continually declares its mission of love and compassion to the least, which of course embraces the victim, isn't she occasionally remiss when by her very neglect and forgetfulness of one of hers, she in turn creates another victim?

While I have had to deal with a similar situation in and outside jail in the last three years or so, Fr. Jose has had to endure everything behind bars. Lise Goett who wrote the foreword to Fr. Jose's book, describes the canonical and theological bases of the Church's attitude towards Fr. Jose: "As with the conference of bishops in Medellin in 1968, which established a preferential option for the poor, the church's thrust might be viewed as a compassionate "preferential option for

the victim” but so too, this language obviates the question of the church’s complicity and excuses the church of its obligation to Fr. Jose by allowing it to simply wash its hands of its own servant. Because the Gospel has always been subversive in relation to the disorder of this world, as Christians our contemplation cannot stop there. The most deplorable outcome of such language may be in its power to galvanize perception of a priest’s life into a single, yet-to-be-explained action and by its institutionalization — unwittingly perhaps — of a policy of non-redemption and non-forgiveness that only Jesus Christ himself can legislate. As Pope John Paul II reminds us, the movement of Christ is always toward, even toward the contemplation of the leprosy of our own judgment.”

### **Fr. Stan Soria, Muhammad Stan**

Fr. Jose, the men in Crame Custodial Center and I are more fortunate because we are alive. Last July 6, 2008, a priest friend of mine died after a lingering illness. It was early morning in Hong Kong when Msgr. Clem Ignacio of Quiapo called me up. Msgr. Clem gave this message, “Robert, *patay na si Stan. Bago siya namatay, hinahanap ka niya. Mahal ka ni Stan at alam niya na mahal mo siya.* (Robert, Stan is dead. Before he died, he was looking for you. He loves you and he knows that you love him. ”

Sometime early January this year, I was informed that Stan was confined in Pasig General Hospital. I went to visit Fr. Stan accompanied by Ed Castro, Ningning Racelis, Diane Catibog and Ruby Alcantara of Kubol Pagasa. We found him in a dimly lit ward lying in a corner bed. When I called his name, he immediately tried to sit up. I approached him and gave him my usual hug. He smiled and was clearly happy that we were there. His wife Hannah was also happy. Stan was suffering from severe diabetes which was seriously affecting his heart. About five years ago Fr. Stan converted to Islam. His story is long, complicated and painful. Suffice it to say that he struggled long and hard to stay a priest. In his last will and testament which Hannah recently gave me in a sealed and yellowish envelope, Stan expressed a very deep pain:

“This church is in a sorry state indeed. Would to God... there would be reform. There are times I want to be a Muslim. But I believe in Jesus, my incarnate God — otherwise *sinusuka ko ang morals ng mga corrupt na cardinals, obispo at ang kanilang mga henchmen*. (... otherwise I vomit the morals of corrupt cardinals, bishops and their henchmen.) In Christ that I love, Fr. Stan Soria.”

These are very strong words. I hesitated many times to have them on print but in deference to the sacred wish of a brother and friend, I let his truth be heard beyond the grave. Not all cardinals, bishops and priests are corrupt. Many are not but Stan’s words should serve as a reminder of how we forget to be brothers if not friends toward each other. A brother sees the other as equal in dignity and need. How easily tempted we are when we occupy positions of power and authority to forget this. How our loyalty to law and authority blinds and numbs us to the desperate cries of a wounded brother.

I know who Fr. Stan was referring to. He has often expressed his pains and frustrations towards those with power and how their very power blinds them from recognizing the possibility of grace and redemption in persons of flesh and blood. It is pointless to name names. It is important to show how power, authority and rigid structures can destroy and eventually kill a man. When Stan stayed with me at the Parish of the Holy Sacrifice in U.P. Diliman, he was in some kind of prison, more aptly, “house or rectory arrest.” He asked to stay with me while he heals and sorts out his life. He was safe in U.P. until he received a number of letters urging him to resign from the priesthood.

### **Compassion, Forgiveness and Love**

Fr. Stan, out of his pain and frustration with the institutional church converted to Islam. One day after his conversion, he asked me, “Robert, we always teach about love and compassion, why is the church doing this to me. I want to remain a priest. I love the church. I love the priesthood. I want to remain a priest...”

On July 6, 2008, five months after I last saw him, Stan died amongst Muslims. He was immediately buried the following day

according to Muslim rites. I could not go because I was in Hong Kong. The pain that I felt when I journeyed with Stan came alive. I recall how cornered, harrassed and compelled he was by a system which, because he was intelligent and courageous, he was able to distinguish from Jesus, the Lord and Master he has followed all his life. I saw him pursued, wounded and bruised. I stood by him and tried my best to provide a home of compassion and love. He tried until he ran out of energy and words. He surrendered and converted, perhaps out of exhaustion, perhaps for something more, that he failed to find in his own . In the end, the church where he was baptized, catechized and nurtured into a priest became a prison which he had to flee in order to live and find himself again. The last five years of his life were brief but eventful.

He converted to Islam; was sent on scholarship to Saudi Arabia; returned and married Hannah; ran a radio program; taught in a Madrasa; and dreamt of someday building his own school where he could pass on his Muslim faith and wisdom. Stan was also with me at the beginning of my forty four day fast at the People Power Monument. He believed in the power of prayer, made more powerful by the fast. The few times that I spoke to Stan and asked him how he was, his answer was beguilingly simple, a smile and a happy, "yes Robert." He found peace, happiness and meaning. God found Muhammad Stan and Muhammad Stan found God.

I thank my Muslim brothers and sisters for receiving my brother and friend Stan. I thank you all for letting his wounds heal in your compassionate and loving embrace. Where he is, there is no longer judgment and punishment, pain and tears, only love and compassion, only mercy and forgiveness.

How I wish to have been part of Stan's on-going journey as a Muslim and Filipino. I remember many long hours of sharing with then Fr. Stan about how the church and the government can still change to better serve the poor. Stan never left the poor. He was poor and wherever he was assigned, he championed their causes. In the end, his lot was with them as he died poor among a marginalized sector of our society.

## Unloving Government

There are still soldiers who are still detained at the Camp Crame Custodial Center. Unlike Stan, they do not ask why the state does not love them? From Marcos to the present, the state has revealed its true color. It does not love its citizens. It does not even love itself. The state is a tool of those in loved with their power and wealth. The state is a cold and violent instrument that can punish, imprison and silence others at will.

Fr. Jose "Boy" Superiaso is still in a prison in California. Fr. Jose has not exactly stopped asking the same question. He has begun asking other questions, more important than survival, questions of life, questions of meaning.

The church as institution can become cold and unfeeling. The church can either be an instrument of the spirit or that of spiritless persons obsessed with power and control.

Prison has and continues to change persons. Confinement has not broken the soldiers' spirit, their capacity to dream and sacrifice for their dreams. I am a part of what these men dream of. As priest and Filipino, I believe in a Military that is loyal to the constitution, competent, honest and clean. I believe in a Government of Padacas, Panlilos and Robredos. I likewise believe in a church of, faith, virtue, principle, compassion and love. Outside, where I now am, there are many of us who wish these men were out rather than in. Outside, there are those of us who have not stopped working towards eliminating the many prisons that destroy and kill us.

I was recently talking to a relative of one of the recently released Tagaytay 5. The relative spoke about the difficult life of his cousin who now has to be constantly cautious and careful about where he goes and what he does. His family, in a way was more at peace when he was in prison. Now that he is free, he faces a far more complex and unpredictable prison... The prison out there.

I have been working for so many in actual prisons, for Abadilla 5, Paco Laranaga, Aquino-Galman. I have also been working for so many and so much in virtual prisons: the families of the victims of M/V Princess of the Stars; Farmer-Beneficiaries of land reform;

the urban poor; vendors; nature besieged, raped by golf courses, malls, industrial estates, subdivisions and the like; the tri-peoples of Mindanao trapped in a senseless and selfish war; the truth hostages by partisan politics; the Filipinos people continually oppressed and abused by corrupt and violent leaders who have turned this whole nation into an actual prison of poverty, injustice and violence.

### **The Sacrament of Daily Fellowship**

I celebrated mass several times during my detention. The eucharist I celebrated was not in a big, elaborately decorated church but in an open common room enclosed by cyclone wires and barbed wires. This is where we ate, watched TV, welcomed visitors and met regularly. James Layug was my regular sacristan, new readers were assigned each time. The homily was always shared. We listened to each others' stories and reflections. Often, we paused and listened to the soldiers' wives, parents, children and friends whose assuring words were like blessings washing away the weariness of confinement. It was during these moments that Jesus' presence was most palpable. We were nourished as individuals, families and as a community as well. Those regular Eucharistic celebrations built up what we fondly call our November 29 family.

In those Eucharistic celebrations we came as we were — soldiers, priest, wives, children, parents, friends and Filipinos. We knew who we were and why we were there. The mass brought together our common purpose, thoughts, feelings and aspirations. We gathered all these and offered them together with the bread and wine. We received Jesus many times over during mass through his words; his body and blood and in and through each other's nourishing and assuring presence. During mass, we feel and deeply sense how we become the body of Christ, offered, broken up and shared.

### **The Cost of Discipleship**

While in prison, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote an important book, "The Cost of Discipleship." The Nazi Prison or the Konsentration Lager brought Bonhoeffer suffering and misery. It also led him to

a deeper faith, love and compassion towards his fellow inmates in Hitler's prison, the concentration camp.

Prison is costly. Its cost to the soldiers and their families is immeasurable. It has also cost me. But it has also been an investment with equally immeasurable returns.

Beyond Manila Pen, beyond prison is a society not only built by our sacrifices, but most of all, by our dreams, principles and convictions. This society is coming, perhaps before or after 2010, but coming all the same. We who have lived and those who continue to live in prison, know this in our hearts. It is coming, as sure as the sun comes every single morn, even as we wake up behind bars. Freedom is coming, in fact in many ways it has already come for those in prison. The fullness of freedom is coming for all and there is hope, much hope for we see and have seen how it has come for those who have gained greater freedom through its very sacrifice.

### **The God of Compassion, Life and Hope**

In the last three years, I have kept touch with a little group of individuals who have faithfully made a journey in faith and hope with me. Every time I come home, I make an effort to reach the members of Kubol Pagasa. Ever since I left for China in 2006 until today, I have kept in touch with them and continued the mission we began at the People Power Monument on July 10, 2005. I marvel at how they have kept both their faith and idealism. Their passion to serve and do their part in the transformation of society is testimony to an unwavering faith and enduring idealism. Where so many have surrendered and compromised, this small group of people has stayed on the path of truth, justice, compassion and hope. This little group of friends and fellow-pilgrims is proof that nothing can imprison the human spirit.

Here in Hong Kong, amidst pettiness, suspicion and intrigue, I found real friends who have bravely journeyed with me. I wish I could name them to thank them directly, but I choose to spare them from the injustice and persecution that I have learned to endure. My situation is difficult and painful, but I am learning to weather it without bitterness and the desire to retaliate. I have had my detractors

in the Philippines. It is not new then, to have detractors wherever I am. The almost three years of pilgrimage is some kind of “dark night” which God invites me to enter in order to deal with my own ego and idolatry. In many ways, an actual prison is safer than the real world, with its own kind of prosecutors and judges, wardens and guards. But God continues to send friends and fellow-pilgrims who continually open my eyes and heart to the presence of the God of compassion, love and hope. Through these wonderful friends and fellow-pilgrims, I hear God’s reassuring whisper, “Walk on, run on, sail on, fly on and fear not for I am with you till the end of time.”

### **Poverty and the Kingdom**

Many years ago, I discovered St. Francis of Assisi, and learned how to walk and yes, run as well. When I went to Rome more than twenty years ago, I knew I would visit the “poverello” (poor one) in Assisi. I eventually did and reflected on his life of poverty. He walked among the rejects, outcasts and sinners. He feared lepers but was eventually transformed to love them. Earlier, I entered San Jose Seminary, run by Jesuits. There, I learned about St. Ignatius of Loyola and his unique militancy for Christ and the kingdom. These seem to be two poles in my life: one, a wandering pauper and the other, a valiant soldier.

The interplay of wandering pauper and soldier has produced very unique results in my life. Since I left the Philippines, I have learned to rely more and more on divine providence. Without institutional support, my means were fixed and limited. This has taught me a different kind of poverty, less romantic and more concrete. I continued doing my advocacies in the real world and discovered that it would not be possible if I did not have the support and collaboration of others. St. Francis continues to lead me in my journey towards greater poverty and simplicity, and a more fruitful life of solidarity with the poor. St. Ignatius continues to inspire me in the fight for the Kingdom of God wherever I am, in the Philippines, Hong Kong and now for a short while, in the U.S.

## Traveling Light

Prison was an invitation to understand the call to indifference and detachment in my very guts. Prison too, and this time with soldiers teaches me a more profound activism and militancy, more than how I am usually parodied and stereotyped in media. The peaceful struggle for the kingdom continues without the usual title, support and protection. It continues with greater reliance on and trust in God. Without the usual network of support that I enjoyed before my extended sabbatical, life has become an exciting adventure into the unknown. What does one need for a long, un-chartered journey? Travel light, travel free, carry the barest and most essential minimum.

In prison, I returned to running and discovered how I shared the same passion with Gen. Danny Lim. Long runs require endurance, strength, patience and a very high threshold of pain. It calls for great indifference and detachment so that as one churns the miles, one lets go and abandons oneself to the flow of the run. Unless one is competing, the long distance or ultra-runner learns to run oblivious to the myriad distractions that weaken and discourage and detract from the goal. The dream that we share and aspire for, requires the discipline of an ultra-run. Prison life is an ultra-run that trains and prepares us for the long haul. So much unwanted and unnecessary baggage has and continues to be given up, in order to travel more easily and smoothly towards our destination. The stripping, simplifying, the training on the run continues. We move and run lighter, more easily and smoothly, closer and closer to our destination... our goal.

## Prison, Breath, Peace

The daily runs with Danny Lim were a great help. After the run, I would cool down and settle into a routine of yoga asanas (postures) which lead me back to my breath. I would go through each pose slowly, synchronizing each move with my breathing, breathing in one movement, breathing out another. This relaxes, calms and rests the bones, muscles, internal organs which take a beating during the run. Slow movements paired with ever deeper breaths, bring me to

the now where all is still, where all is peace.... The running, walking, journeying rhythmically, comes to a stop each day and flows into slow yogic movement and breathing. Then all movement stops. I sit and am perfectly still, only aware of my breath. I breathe in and breathe out, taking in the Spirit with every in breath and releasing all heaviness with every out-breath. Prison is not easy.

There are discomforts, the least of which are physical, the greater ones psychological, emotional and spiritual. Breathing slowly and deeply, as my body flows into precise poses, I achieve space, distance from the burdens, the pains and discomforts, the suffering. The separation dis-identifies me from the suffering, enabling me to see and think with a certain clarity and freedom. I enter deeper into the breath and follow its inflow and outflow. There is peace in the breath. There is peace in prison. The breath is peace, Prison is peace.

This daily routine of running, yoga and breath meditation helped me survive prison. First, it softened my defensiveness so that instead of struggling with my many inner demons, weaknesses and sins, I was able to calmly dialogue with them. Second, it was both purifying and liberating. The physical benefits of the routine were clear, but various dimensions of my person needed to be cleansed and un-knotted. Anger, resentment, guilt and the memories associated with these would emerge each day. The Buddhist practice of "RAIN" was a great compliment to the breath. As I breathed slowly and deeply, as thoughts, feelings, memories and images surface, I do RAIN: Recognize, Accept, Investigate and Non-identify. Prison was truly a great opportunity to re-visit another prison, the prison within and beg for God's graces: mercy, humility, wisdom, courage, patience, endurance and faith.

### **November 29... Family... Community... Spirit...**

My November 29 family: the soldiers in Camp Crame Custodial Unit and the many others who have left prison but continue the struggle for a better, more honest, cleaner more just and peaceful Philippines; my friends and fellow-pilgrims in Kubol Pagasa and in Hong Kong are living and exciting testimonies to the undying God of

Compassion, Hope and Life. We have gone out into different ways but always with the same spirit and goal. One year later, we may say that we have gone beyond prison and even November 29. We have moved on. Really? Or have we instead really gone back to where we were and still are?

For those who have left, it may seem to have been a hurried and excited trip to get out of jail. For those who have not left and are still there, November 29 then and now are steps towards the same direction. One year later, we really have not moved on but moved deeper within, learning to see, hear, understand and follow the spirit that was there and will always be there, the spirit of freedom, the spirit of Manila Pen.

November 11, 2008  
Seattle, Washington  
U.S.A.

# Appendix

## List of detainees

**(provided by the Philippine National Police)**

1. Julian Advincula y Lacoste (retired Navy captain)
2. Jose A. Albert
3. Capt. Garry Alejano y Cajolo
4. Julio Ancheta
5. Atty. J.V. Bautista
6. Francisco Bosi y Narag
7. Myrna H. Buendia
8. Ltsg. Manuel Cabochan y de Guzman
9. Eduardo A. Castro
10. Leodor dela Cruz y Giol
11. Ryan Custodio
12. Romeo S. Dacles
13. Cpl Clearte Dahan y Danda
14. Atty. Elsid Fajardo
15. Roel Gaduin y Juliano
16. Evangeline Gatdula Mendoza
17. Cezari Yassir T. Gonzales
18. Lt. Eugene Louie Gonzales
19. Atty. Argee Guevarra
20. Estrella Guingona
21. Former Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr.
22. Pfc Juanito S. Jilbury
23. Bishop Julio Labayen
24. Maamor D. Lanto
25. Herman T. Laurel

26. Ltsg. James Arandia Layug
27. Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim y dela Paz
28. Rey A. Linaac
29. Pfc German Linde Manuel
30. Sonny Madarang
31. Julius Mesa y Julliza
32. Francisco Nemenzo
33. Capt. Segundino Orfiano y Pidot Jr.
34. Elizabeth Orteza Siguion Reyna
35. Lt. JG Arturo Pascua Jr.
36. 1Lt. Billy Pascua y Salcedo
37. Francisco Peñaflor
38. Ens Armand Pontejos y Garrido
39. Rev. Father Robert P. Reyes
40. Rhommel Rivero y Lorete
41. Dominador Ireneo Rull Jr.
42. Ferdinand Sandoval
43. 1Lt Jonnel P. Sangalang
44. Romeo Solis y Campato
45. Pfc Emmanuel Tirador
46. Leonido Toledo Jr.
47. Lt. Andy Torrato y Gebilaguin
48. Antonio Trillanes III y Fuentes
49. Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV y Fuentes
50. Edgardo Tulaylay y Vianna

Source: [http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/inquirerheadlines/nation/view\\_article.php?article\\_id=104160](http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/inquirerheadlines/nation/view_article.php?article_id=104160)





On **November 29, 2007**, after a hearing at the Regional Trial Court of Makati, several military officers being tried for the Oakwood alleged coup d'état led by Senator Antonio Trillanes IV, walked out of City Hall together with their witness BGen. Danilo Lim and several others.

The march led to the Manila Peninsula Hotel where a call for the ouster of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was made in protest against the perceived sins of her government.

The call to action ultimately ended at Bicutan and Camp Crame.

The incident ignited the declaration of a curfew that was reminiscent of martial law and a virtual war on media practitioners who flocked to the hotel and refused to leave without the officers, soldiers and civilian sympathizers. The subsequent actions of the Marines and law enforcers who surrounded the area and eventually apprehended the participants, was likewise the subject of much heated discourse.

“Running priest” **Fr. Robert Reyes** was one of the civilians who proceeded to the Manila Pen and was later incarcerated at Camp Crame for two weeks.

In this book, Fr. Robert shares his personal diary written from November 29 until his subsequent release on December 13. His detention became a journey of faith and a discovery of a brotherhood with military men and civilians alike bound by their love for country.

Included too are the narrations and reflections of his fellow detainees-- Gen. Lim, Sen. Trillanes, former UP Pres. Francisco “Dodong” Nemenzo, Magdalo soldiers Navy Ltsg Eugene Gonzalez and Marine Lt. Jonnell Sangalang, columnist Herman Tiu Laurel, and poet-activist-lawyer Roberto “Argee” Guevarra-- as well as a contribution from Marine Capt. Nicanor Faeldon, who slipped out of the Manila Pen at the height of the siege and has been missing since.



ASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION