



FRANK REED HORTON MEMORIAL LODGE NO. 379, F. & A. M.

UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF THE PHILIPPINES

Lecture No. 04 **SIGNIFICANCE OF FILIPINO MASONS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE**

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By: VW Antonio C. Zeta

This month of June, in celebration of Philippine Independence, let us focus and reflect on the role of Filipino Masons in the struggle for Philippine independence.

About 13 years ago, a newly-raised mason, an apprentice of sorts, asked his mentor: "I want to contribute to Freemasonry but I see it is already complete organization, laws and regulations, rituals, etc. How can I help? What more can I do?" To this his mentor replied: "My young apprentice, you cannot contribute to Freemasonry. Here you will study and learn all you need to learn of its teachings, its tenets and principles, its virtues, its laws and regulations, and bring and show to your world in your behavior whatever it is you have learned as a Mason. Just like our heroes, they contributed little to Freemasonry, neither did they excel in the fraternity; but learned a lot they did and these they brought to the world in which they lived from the Spanish era to the Japanese occupation of World War II."

The apprentice thought: "What do I know of our national heroes? I learned very little about them when I was in school and people seldom talk about them. I am no hero. Which world will I bring the tenets, principles and virtues I have yet to learn from the mystic circle if I can understand them at all?" The apprentice carried this thought through the years. He was diligent in learning, listened to the lectures and with constancy and consistency checked his day-to-day demeanor if they were in accord with the teachings of Freemasonry, if his passions were being subdued and his desires circumscribed toward all mankind, if his conduct was beyond his prejudices and personal interests. Little did he know that he was slowly growing up and developing himself into a regular mason as all brothers and fellows have done, who have gone this way before.

There is very little, or perhaps nothing at all, written about the Masonic life of our national heroes. Perhaps, the lodges to which they belonged have information only of the particulars of their conferral dates and the various positions they held during the tenure of their active membership. But let us look into how our national heroes, masons and non-masons alike, lived simple lives and conducted themselves to confront the crises of their times:

Jose Rizal was a peace-loving citizen of his country. He studied hard and through science helped his countrymen in the upliftment of their lives and well-being.

Nationalistic stirrings, fanned by colonial injustices, racial degradation and discrimination, particularly in clerical appointments, flagrant agrarian exploitation by the religious orders, resulted in numerous regional uprisings against the Spanish colonial administration. Deeply distressed by rampant clerical economic oppression, religious bigotry and neglect of the Filipinos, he joined the reform movement and became an active contributor to the *La Solidaridad*, the organ of the propaganda movement in Spain. He established the *La Liga Filipina* aimed at uniting the Filipinos and to promote progress through commerce, industry and agriculture. Brother Jose Rizal was the inspirational fount for the revolutionary movement and his martyrdom moved his successors to focus on violence and armed revolt to achieved freedom and independence for the Philippines.

Marcelo H. del Pilar, Galicano Apacible, Graciano Lopez Jaena, Gen. Antonio Luna, Jose Ma. Panganiban and Mariano Ponce were founders and active voices in the *La Solidaridad* which objective was to raise the national spirit and restore the dignity of their countrymen. They became the moving spirit behind the propanganda movement to denounce the oppression and abuses. They were not advocates of revolution; rather they sought reforms within the existing order.

Jose Palma, Rafael Palma and Fernando Ma. Guerero together with Gen. Antonio Luna founded and contributed to the *La Independencia* in the Philippines which was the organ of the revolution denouncing the same oppression and abuses.

Andres Bonifacio founded the secret society, *Katipunan*, aimed at overthrowing the Spanish sovereignty in the Philippines. Then started the Philippine Revolution. Emilio Jacinto was his adviser, secretary and fiscal; he wrote the *Kartilla*, the primer of the Katipunan which contained its rules and regulations.

Fathers Gomez, Burgos and Zamora were intellectual clerics who crusaded for reforms. The 13 martyrs of Cavite likewise joined the reform movement. They were executed for their patriotism.

Brother General Emilio Aguinaldo proclaimed the Philippine independence with him as its first President. He continued the armed struggle through the American occupation.

Apolinario Mabini, the sublime paralytic, was the “*brains of the revolution*“. He advised Aguinaldo to change the form of government from dictatorial to revolutionary, organized the municipalities, became the first prime minister of the Revolutionary Congress and helped outline the Malolos Constitution.

Gregorio del Pilar, one of the most romantic figures in Philippine history and the youngest general in the Revolutionary Army, is remembered as the “*Hero of Tirad Pass*“. In this historic place, the young general fought and held back the strong

invading Americans with only a handful of men, thus giving Aguinaldo ample time to escape the conquerors.

Jose Abad Santos never bowed to the Japanese occupation forces.

The apprentice asked himself: “What is the Masonic significance of their heroism?” In due time he soon realized—plenty.

In Rizal is personified the principal Tenets of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth—that as children of the same Father, we are to aid, protect and support each other; that linked together with an indissoluble chain of sincere affection we are to soothe the unhappy, to sympathize with their misfortunes, to compassionate their miseries, and to restore peace to their troubled minds; by the dictates of truth, we are to endeavor to regulate our conduct and promote each other’s welfare and rejoicing in each other’s prosperity. He used his Trowel to unite his countrymen into one society of friend and brothers to promote that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who best can work and best agree.

In Marcelo H. del Pilar, Galicano Apacible, Graciano Lopez Jaena, Gen. Antonio Luna, Jose Ma. Panganiban, Mariano Ponce, Jose Palma, Rafael Palma and Fernando Ma. Guerero together with Fathers Gomez, Burgos and Zamora and the 13 martyrs of Cavite are personified the search for truth for they not only “proclaimed the good news” of reforms but also “denounced the evil” of Spanish oppression. In them are also personified the Masonic cardinal virtue of Prudence—which regulated their lives and actions agreeably to the dictates of reason to wisely judge and prudentially determine on all things relative to their present as well as our future happiness.

In Emilio Aguinaldo, Apolinario Mabini and Emilio Jacinto are personified the Masonic cardinal virtues of Fortitude—that noble and steady purpose of the mind whereby we are enabled to undergo any pain, peril or danger when prudentially deemed expedient; and Justice—that standard or boundary of right which enables us to render unto every man his just due, without distinction, a virtue not only consistent with divine and human laws, but is the very cement and support of civil society.

In Gregorio del Pilar is personified our primary obligation to a brother in distress—to fly to his relief provided there be greater possibility of saving his life than of losing our own; and one of the Five Points of Fellowship—that we are never to hesitate to go on foot and out of our way to assist a distress worthy brother.

In Jose Abad Santos is personified the Hiram Abiff in all of us—when assaulted by the “*ruffians*” of the Japanese forces, he chose rather to lay down his life than forfeit his own integrity. An example, my Brothers, worthy of emulation.

From the passages in the poem *Desiderata*, I quote:

"Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant, they too have their story."

"Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let not this blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism."

There are countless other heroes—then and now.

Then, in the persons of: Melchora Aquino who provided food and shelter for the Katipuneros; Gregoria de Jesus, Trinidad Tecson, Teresa Magbanua, Marina Dizon and Gabriela Silang who fought in the armed struggle for independence; Leonora Rivera who inspired Jose Rizal; and Marcela Agoncillo who made the first Philippine flag. In them, too, are personified our principal Masonic tenets and cardinal virtues.

Now, in the persons like: the taxi driver who returned your wallet yesterday; the security guard who told you that your eyes light up the world when you smile; the small child who showed you the wonder in simple things; the poor janitor who offered to share his lunch with you; the rich man who showed you that it really is all possible, if only you believe; the stranger who just happened to come along, when you had lost your way; the friend who touched your heart, when you didn't think you had one to touch.

The ideals exemplified by these heroes are like tenets, generically-speaking. They are obviously true, universally accepted, self-proving and realities we believe without question. Masonic teachings are similar in nature; but, we commonly treat them as highly desirable but not practicable, a vision to be dreamed but never possess. Masonic teachings are self-evident realities—not that they *"ought to be true"* for our own good but that they *"are true"*. The question now at hand is: "What are we going to do with them?"

In the words of Robert Francis Kennedy about his brother, John Fitzgerald Kennedy: "As he said many times, to those he touched and who sought to touch him: *'Some men see things as they are and say why. I dream things that never were and say why not.'*"

In our little way, we can join in the reform movement in our craft to address the contemporary oppressions of passions, ignorance and apathy. If we do our duty, if we meet our responsibilities and our obligations, not just as Masons, but as citizens in our local cities and towns and farms and our provinces and in the country and in the world as a whole, then we may perhaps stop contributing to the problem, arrest the deterioration of the craft and start to contribute to the solution in strengthening our ancient and honorable institution by building enduring walls with perfect ashlar and tempered mortars.