

MESSAGE
OF
H.E. AMBASSADOR HILARIO G. DAVIDE, JR.
Permanent Representative of the Philippines
to the United Nations in New York

During the commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the
Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Hosted by *Focus on the Family* in
Collaboration with the Permanent Missions of Malta,
the Philippines, Senegal and Uganda
10 December 2008
1:15 to 2:45 p.m.
Delegates Dining Room

Excellencies, Dr. Malik,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Rejoice!

If there is anything great enough that we must thank God for in 2008, it is the commemoration today of the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Indeed this day is a very special day for all humanity. Sixty years ago today, or on 10 December 1948 – millions of years from the birth of humanity – the General Assembly of the UN proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). By any standard or measure the proclamation came too late in history. Yet it was most historic, and could be recorded as one among the greatest events in the history of mankind. For the first time, and in one stroke, there was a universal recognition that human rights and humanity are inseparable. And, a proclamation thereof was necessary because many have not only refused to recognize them, or have merely taken them for granted; worse, throughout history, peoples and States have been violating them with impunity.

For those who believe in the story of creation, human rights attain a deeper spiritual significance. And this is it. In Genesis of the Old Testament, we are told that “God created man in His own image; in the divine image He created him; male and female, He created them”. The Christian faith also tells us that each one of us is a temple of God and that God’s spirit dwells in that temple; and God’s temple is holy (1 Corinthians 3:16). Judaism teaches us that man must always consider himself as if the Holy One dwells with him. In the Qu’ran God says: I have breathed into man my Spirit.

Thus, indeed, at the core of human rights is human dignity. And human dignity is made sublime and sacred because it is the embodiment of the Creator who makes the human person His temple. Therefore, proclaiming human rights and advocating with intense passion their protection, promotion and enhancement are themselves a prayer; and the translation of this passion into actual labor on the ground is a work of love.

For the celebration, we have the distinct privilege of having with us Dr. Habib C. Malik, son of H.E. Ambassador Charles Habib Malik, who shall give us an account of the UDHR and his father. His father, Lebanon's first Permanent Representative to the United Nations and the 13th President of the General Assembly, was one of the architects of the UDHR. With pardonable pride, may I also state that the Philippines' Permanent Representative to the UN in 1948, H.E. Carlos P. Romulo, was likewise one of the architects of the Declaration. He was the fourth President of the General Assembly and was a close friend of Ambassador Malik. Both left a legacy of dynamic participation in the debates on various issues and sublime fidelity to the purposes and vision of the UN.

I also commend the **Focus on the Family** for the initiative in holding this special celebration. The foundation of humanity is the family. The human family is the foundation of the world. In every nation, the family is its foundation. In the Philippines, the fundamental law of the land devotes one Article (Article XV) on the **Family** whose Section 1 provides that the State recognizes the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation. And in its Declaration of Principles and State Policies (Article II) it solemnly declares that the State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution. Since, as I said earlier, human rights and humanity are inseparable, the family must at all times proclaim human rights. It must be the model in the protection, observance, promotion and enhancement of human rights.

With these thoughts, I thank you all for being here with us today.