



PHILIPPINES

MESSAGE

of

H.E. Ambassador Hilario G. Davide, Jr.
Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Philippines
to the United Nations in New York

during the

Lunch briefing on the topic: **“The Importance of Marriage, Family and Human Rights as Essential Foundation of Nations”** sponsored by the Permanent Missions of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, Republic of the Philippines and Saint Lucia, and the *Focus on the Family* and *Focus on the Family Malaysia*

Wednesday, 27 May 2009, 1:15-2:45 p.m.
Private Dining Room 6
UN Headquarters, New York

Excellencies, distinguished guests,
ladies and gentlemen:

I welcome this event as an occasion for us to consider and reflect on institutions or concepts whose influence and effects reach farthest in time, space, or relationships, and which affect not just nations and peoples, but humanity itself. I refer to the institutions of marriage and family, and the concept of human rights which are the core of the theme for this lunch briefing. Crisis in any of these institutions and violations of these human rights would be far worse than the current global crises we are facing today - climate change, food, energy, financial and economic crises. Crisis in any of these institutions and violations of human rights would make it difficult for us to find a solution to any of these global crises despite summits, high-level events or interactions, debates or dialogues in the UN or outside it.

Let me begin with human rights. It was in this same venue last 10 December 2008 when the *Focus on the Family*, in collaboration with the Permanent Missions of Malta, the Philippines and Uganda, commemorated the 60th anniversary of the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I then stated that for those who believe in the story of creation, human rights attain a deeper spiritual significance. 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.

In the preamble of the Charter of the UN, peoples of the United Nations proclaim their determination “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person”. The first paragraph of the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights solemnly declares that the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Do we need further proof to convince us that the global crises we face today are primarily caused by man’s inhumanity to man? Or, by man’s disregard

or violation of the human rights of others by his greed or lust for wealth, power, fame or glory? You can expand man and make him a sovereign State. By these man's or that sovereign State's greed or lust, the rhythm and balance of nature that assures us of a healthful environment has been destroyed. Thus we have the climate change crisis or global warming that has caused and will continue to cause the food and energy crisis and aggravate poverty and multiply diseases. The food and energy crisis contributed, in turn, to negative economic forces that impact on development and cause instability. By these greed or lust, violence, terror and war have become inevitable.

Man's inhumanity to man would first be felt in the family. This usually happens when in the family the passion to protect, promote and enhance human rights is absent and the family has ceased to be the garden of love, understanding, harmony, solidarity, justice and peace.

What is a family? Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines the family as the natural and fundamental group unit of society which is entitled to protection by society and the State. Section 12 of Article II (Declaration of Principles and State Policies) of the Constitution of the Philippines declares that "The State recognizes the sanctity of family life and protect and defend the family as a basic autonomous social institution. It shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception. This Constitution devotes one whole Article (Article XV) on the Family. Section 1 thereof proclaims that "The State recognizes the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation. Accordingly, it shall strengthen its solidarity and actively promote its total development. This formulation of the text was essentially the one I presented as a Member of the 1986 Constitutional Commission which drafted the Constitution (**Bernas, S.J.**, *The Intent of the 1986 Constitution Writers*, 1995, p. 1130). The Philippines is a Christian country. Christianity was first introduced to it in 1521. Nearly 91 percent of its current population of nearly 89 million are Christians and 81% of the Christians are Roman Catholics. Hence, the Philippines' understanding of the family has solid religious underpinnings. God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society or the basic unit in society. (Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 2003ed, 556, 557). Bringing you back to the Philippines, the leading Philippine authority on constitutional law, Joaquin Bernas, himself a member of the Constitutional Commission states in his book, *The 1987 Constitution of the Philippines, A Commentary* (2003 ed., p. 84) that the term family in the Constitution is understood to be as a stable heterosexual relationship.

Section 2 of the same Article XV of the Constitution of the Philippines declares that marriage is "an inviolable social institution" and "is the foundation of the family" which shall be protected by the State. Again this provision has

religious underpinnings. In the creation story in Genesis, the basis for the family unit was the married couple – the male or man and the female or woman. Thus in Genesis (2:18-25) we are taught: “That is why man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body”. The mother is, of course, a woman. From the union of the husband (a man) and the wife (a woman) the family expanded to include the children and also various relatives such as grandchildren, and others (Holman, op cit. 556).

Thus, it can be truly said that God instituted marriage; it is not just a ceremony. In the work of Holman I just cited (p. 1082) marriage is defined as “a sacred, covenantal union of one man and one woman formed when the two swear before God an oath of lifelong loyalty and love to one another, the sign and seal of which is sexual intercourse.”

I would say that marriage is sacred and covenantal because it makes the man and the woman a part of the mystery of procreation. Through the union of man’s sperm and the woman’s egg a child is born. According to Psalm 127, “Children too are a gift from the Lord, the fruit of the womb, a reward”.

Even the non-Biblical definition of marriage affirms that marriage is the union of a man and a woman. Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, copyright 2002, defines marriage as the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife; the mutual relation of husband and wife; the institution whereby man and woman are joined in a special kind of social and legal dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family.

Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights speaks of marriage and the family. It reads:

Article 16

- (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights and to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

The opening paragraph must be read together with the preamble of the UN Charter on reaffirmation of faith, in *inter alia*, “the equal rights of **men** and **women**”; the third paragraph of Article 1 of the UN Charter on the promotion and encouragement of “respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language and religion”; and Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provides that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as, *inter alia* “sex”.

Now, sex of course refers to the either of the two divisions – male or female – into which persons, animals and even plants, are divided with reference to their reproductive functions (Webster’s New World College Dictionary, 4th ed., copyright 2008).

Clearly then, the marriage that is spoken of in Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the marriage known and recognized from the beginning of humankind – that sacred and covenantal union of one man and one woman.

If then the protection, promotion and enhancement of human rights must begin in the family; if the family is the natural and fundamental unit of society or the foundation of the nation; and if marriage is the foundation of the family, it would logically follow that these three – human rights, family and marriage are indispensable cornerstones of every nation. They must be protected, preserved and strengthened at all times.

The destruction of marriage by any act, conduct or policy that degrades it destroys the family; the destruction of the family by any act, conduct or policy that diminishes its sanctity destroys the nation. The destruction of either or both marriage and the family is a violation of human rights.

Shall we allow these destructions to happen?

Beware of the handwriting on the wall.

Thank you and God bless us all.