Podium Makes History “1st Asian Schools Debate Champions” page3

Bicameral Legislature page6

Life and Times of Cory Aquino page7

The Role of our Catholic Church in Politics page7
THE RIDGE

We, the editors and staff of The Ridge, commit ourselves to the highest level of professional journalistic ethics. We promote among our fellow students a love for noble ideals and a desire to overcome personal egoism.

We foster an awareness of social problems and encourage fraternity in keeping with the school’s family spirit. We love the truth thus we report with facts, without judging intentions, upholding the legitimate diversity of opinions in a calm way, without resorting to personal attacks. We seek the truth, love it and humbly tell it.

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E D I T O R I A L

By JM Batuhan

Why a Special Issue on Politics?

To those wondering why on earth an entire issue of our biannual school publication is devoted to the dark and often nasty world of Philippine politics, let me assure you that we, at the Ridge, have not succumbed to dementia, and that this was an entirely lucid decision on our part. After many a long night pondering the ramifications of such a move, we unanimously agreed that this issue is exactly what we all need, right here, and right now.

We’re taking a breather from the light and airy topics that we’ve grown accustomed to, and dishing out some heavy reading. If you were in search of an easy read to while away the time as you make your daily appointment with the toilet, then you’d be better off putting this paper down. Wouldn’t want you to hurt yourself.

But on a serious note, never has there been a more timely opportunity for us, the so-called “sheltered” and the “privileged”, to learn of the political happenings of our country. To see us all get acquainted with the political climate, as well as to familiarize ourselves with the happenings and goings-on in our country is the end to which this issue ultimately arrives. It’s a crash course, if you will, for the uninitiated. And by the looks of it, that’s you and me, amigo.

“Why should we care?” one might ask. Why leave the safety of our cozy little diversions and take a long, hard look at the real world, a place we have proven adept at evading? Why unfurl intrusion into our superficial lives, lives untouched by the issues plastered all over the TV screens and headlining all the papers? Content to remain passive and detached, we keep to the safety of what we know, secure in our aloofness.

Yet once in a while some thing or another has pierced our selfish little bubbles, disrupting our carefully constructed illusions, and brought us news of a world far removed from our own. And still we go about convincing ourselves why we need not get involved. We’re too young, what can we do, it doesn’t concern us. These and many more are the feeble bases for our perpetual state of indifference.

How conveniently we forget that we have a starring role to play in the future of our nation; that our actions are intrinsic to the direction in which our nation is headed. We think: our time will come soon enough, why waste the too few moments of idleness and bliss that youth affords us?

Well, news flash: the ‘real’ world isn’t going away any time soon. The very real problems that plague the nation aren’t going to roll over and play dead just because we close our eyes and wish them away. It’s high time we acknowledge that it is us that the helm of our nation will soon be entrusted, and it is by our hands that the world will witness either our nation’s triumph—a glorious blaze of progress which will illuminate the corridors of history with its light and cast in shadow our past failings—or perhaps its ruin.

So wake up brother. Our apathy does not benefit anyone, least of all ourselves. Our ignorance of important national matters reflects merely on the shallowness of our existence. No, it does not make us cool to know nothing of anything—it just makes you look like a dullard, a loser, and a fool. And the key to saving our sorry bums is social awareness.

There may be no better time to clean up our act than right at this very moment, for it would seem as if the fates have aligned themselves to our cause. Here we sit on the cusp of adulthood, just as our country finds itself in a time of momentous change. The past, the present and the future are converging upon us. As we live in the shadow of a government rife with corruption and helmed by a villainous schemer, we celebrate the life and mourn the passing of a shining beacon of democracy; a veritable David who toppled a tyrannical Goliath and his oppressive regime—and now we turn to look with hope upon the distant horizon for the gleam of a new dawn, a chance to begin anew.

Surrounded as we are on all sides by the weight of history, both ancient and in the making, and armed with the vigor of youth, it is an obligation on our part to at least be aware of what’s happening today. You don’t have to be some picket-toting radical out on the streets to make a difference. It is enough to keep abreast of current events and to stay informed of the latest happenings.

We will be the future leaders of our country, the captains of industry, the movers and shakers of society. Unless you were planning to spend the rest of your life living under a rock, you had best know what’s happening right in your own backyard. And the path to political enlightenment begins right here, within these very pages.
Winning isn’t all that debate’s about, though we did do that. It’s far more than simply the verdict awarded at the end of a hard fought round, than the conclusion of a heated and passionate debate. It’s about the moments you spend up on that podium. When you stand in front of a crowd of over a hundred debaters, adjudicators, moderators, friends from all over Asia, time stands still. When you make your seven minute speech and everyone’s listening with bated breath, it’s easy for one’s resolve to waver at the prospect of failure and embarrassment. After 11 rounds of intense debating, you begin to wonder why you’re there and if it’s all worth it. Then, you remember that what’s at stake is a chance to become part of history.

Last September 9-13, the De La Salle Debate Society convened the 1st Asian Schools Debate Championship (ASDC), which was held in the Br. Andrew Gonzales Hall of De La Salle University—Manila. It was a five-day competition, consisting of seven preliminary rounds that were held across the first three days and four ‘break’ rounds leading to the finals for the top 16 teams of the tournament in the latter half. Held in the popular Asian Parliamentary, ASDC drew in an astounding 80 teams. That’s 240 debaters, not including the adjudication core. Teams from Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Qatar, and, of course, the Philippines competed for the title of Asian Champion.

The Podium, PAREF Southridge’s official debate varsity, fielded five teams: SR A (Marty Gonzaga, RJ Lim, Justin Jabines), SR B (Sluggo Rustia, Michael Yap, Joseph Ledesma), SR C (Pempen Chiang, Lance Katigbak, Julian Ferrer), SR D (JM Batuhan, Mark Lozano, JV Valerio), SR E (Vico Ubaldo, Joaquin Coromina, Alvaro Adizon). SR C broke as the 5th best team in Asia, but, unfortunately, was eliminated by Philippine Science High School A in the octo-final round. SR A, who had only one loss during the preliminary rounds (ironically, from the same team that beat SR C, Phil. Science), broke as the third best team in Asia, coming out of the preliminaries with a 6-1 record.

It seemed to be inevitable that Daewon Foreign Language High School from South Korea would sweep the tournament, having the only perfect win record after the preliminaries and the highest scores, as well. However, after a series of upsets that lead to the elimination of the first and second breaking teams (Daewon and Ateneo High School, respectively), it seemed that, on the opposite side of the bracket, Xavier School (in San Juan), would be meeting Southridge in the finals.

Xavier School had held the title of champion in this tournament since 2006. They were responsible for knocking out Daewon from the tournament in the quarterfinals. On the other hand, Southridge, was the underdog team that reached the finals by eliminating Pattumwan Demonstration School A (Thailand), Xavier School C, and Claret A. After an intense final, on the motion: “THW not give non-taxpayers the right to vote” with Xavier as government (for) and Southridge as opposition (against), we would learn that making history would mean dethroning giants. Both finalists gave it their all, but, eventually, there had to be one winner.

The panel of eleven adjudicators deliberated on the extremely contentious finals, and, in a 6-5 split decision, Podium was the Asian Champion. RJ Lim was awarded as the best speaker of the final round, and Marty Gonzaga was awarded as the 9th Best Speaker in the Tournament Overall (9th Best Speaker in Asia).

However, debate was, is, and always will be more than just an empty climb towards attaining victories, medals, and trophies. Perhaps, it could be best explained with an excerpt from a note that Pempen Chiang posted on Facebook. He writes, “Do not get me wrong; debating is fun, but it’s not that fun. I do not want to talk about debate, but rather the things associated with it, the friends and experiences.”

ASDC wasn’t just another competition. It was a life-changing experience, where we would build friendships that would last beyond the seven minutes of a speech. The social events, the conversations in between rounds, the dancing Korean girl from Daewon Foreign Language High School, Jenna Song, and the open-party themed break night (debaters have parties!) were all tools for us to break the ice and forge friendships with people all across Asia. All these things: the laughs, the awards, the friendships, the exchange of cellphone numbers and probably the 50 new Facebook friends we were what made the whole experience great. This was what debate has always been about—changing perspectives through an exchange of ideas—different cultures coming together through discourse.

The Podium made history (and Wikipedia) by becoming the first Asian Champion. This season, the debate team is breaking all records set by the previous years. This is our golden age. This is The Podium’s debating renaissance.
s we delve headlong into this new and exciting world of politics, it's time to take a look at what we newly engaged neophytes will face in the coming days. Times are a changing, as Bob Dylan sang, and they are changing rapidly. Our country is perched on the verge of great and momentous change, change that can either ruin us or deliver greatness to our doorstep. And the greatest ally in our quest to see good come of it is knowledge. If we can know exactly what is happening in our country, we have half the battle won.

There was a time not too long ago when the youth of the nation was much more involved and in the know regarding the political sphere than we are today. Ask your mom and dad, they would know. Though our parents have been roaming the earth give or take about thirty years longer than we have, they've only had one president that we didn't. Why? Because their generation was born and raised in a Philippines in the iron grip of martial law and ruled by a despot whose tenure in power far exceeded his welcome.

Imagine your parents at our age, in a Philippines vastly different from the one we know. They lived much of their childhood and schooling years under an oppressive regime. Yes we have been regaled with tales of rights violated; writs and laws suspended by Marcos and his administration, both at home and in many a long history class. But still this falls short of the reality of actually living and breathing in a page right out of our history textbooks, living in the time of Proclamation No. 1081.

Let's put ourselves in their shoes. Everywhere you looked you saw the mark of the politics of the day and your hostile government. There was simply no way you could not know about what was going on. Many times it was necessary for survival. There was no escaping the necessity of knowing what was going on around you, of learning the truth and the facts. And unlike today, these were not easy to come by. With all the major media outlets censored and monitored constantly, you would only hear what the government wanted you to hear.

The tentacles of the government found their way into every aspect of life, and there lingered always the insidious traces of their touch. Our parents had their freedoms curtailed, and many of the things we enjoy and take for granted were freedoms unknown to them for many years. They lived under a curfew for most of their lives, not one enforced by their individual households, but one imposed by a government that would not hesitate to haul you to prison should you be caught out after dark.

Politics ruled the lives of the people, so it was only logical that much of their time and energies were spent in its study and learning. It was a topic never far from their minds, and one they kept close to their hearts.

This was the way things were back then, and obviously this wasn't a pleasing state of affairs for majority of the Filipino people. Many wanted out. There was vast opposition to the oppression that was heaped upon the Filipinos. The Filipino's temper was flaring, his blood was boiling, and his heart ached for freedom. He had had enough, and only needed the slightest push to bring him to the edge.

That last straw needed for the massive upheaval that took place was the slaying of the staunchest, most vocal, and best loved political opponent of Marcos', Senator Benigno Aquino. Though Marcos never admitted to any involvement in the affair, he didn't need to. His fall was in place the moment Ninoy was gunned down. And the rest of this story gets much more familiar.

Behind this latest and most heinous crime against freedom, and incited by Cardinal Sin and the slain Aquino's widow, the Filipino people arm in arm against the military might of a man who was unwilling to relinquish his hold on power. In the face of tanks and guns the Filipino stood his ground that February day in 1986, and won his freedom and the light of democracy.

The People Power Revolution toppled a dictator and ushered in a new era. The new government led by Cory Aquino amended our constitution and set about righting the wrongs inflicted by Marcos. For the first time in many dark and dire days there was the hope of a better tomorrow, of a Philippines free of the evils that had plagued it for so long. There was hope in the air, and talk of change and dreams for a bright and glorious morn. Finally, people could see the light at the end of the tunnel. This was it they thought, this was the new beginning, the fresh start that they had fought for, prayed for, hoped for, and bled for.

Let's fast forward to the present. The idealistic notions held by the hopeful masses who found themselves at the end of such a dark time in our history, with dreams of a Philippines standing strong, free, and proud, are truly at odds with the Philippines of today. The optimism and the passion that accompanied the regaining of a freedom lost seem to have waned and downright evaporated into the mist.

Far from being the paragon of virtue and model for growth and stability that was envisioned, our country is still drowning in the muck of its problems, bogged down by the shortcomings that seem to hound us without letup. Our situation has not approved dramatically from the dark days of Marcos and Martial Law, if at all.

There's a lot to be said about what we can learn from the past, for the saying that history repeats itself is without a doubt one of the truer lines ever uttered. Now that our political senses have begun to awaken, we can see just what kind of vicious cycle we find ourselves trapped in.

The problems of Martial Law have come back
with a vengeance. A lot of things are a sordid mess. Take the number of Filipinos living below poverty line, the shrinking middle class, and the brain drain of our young intellectuals, as well as the OFWs who leave our country in droves to earn what they cannot on our own soil.

These seemingly insurmountable problems of ours clamor to be addressed. To begin to solve them we must give time to establish the cause and the root of these problems if we wish to better understand them and thereby find ourselves better equipped to deal with them.

What seems to be the matter then? What is the black heart of these problems that we might see our country rid of them forever? What keeps these weeds alive and thriving? What have we failed to change from our past that allows them to recur? Could it be the political system? Could it be our leaders? Or could it be ourselves?

There's no real one answer that will solve all our problems in an instant and grant us a utopian society. The answer lies in finding what we can change for the better in just about all aspects of Philippine society and government, but most importantly in our own selves; we who are the cornerstone of a democracy.

And we, the people, will soon have a chance to set many things wrong with our country, right. A power will be placed into our hands that will allow us to decide our own fate and chart the course of our future. If done right it can see us into good waters and calm seas, but if not can continue our downward spiral into oblivion. It is the most sacred civic duty that we possess, and that is the right to choose the people we put into office.

The 2010 national elections will provide us with an opportunity that we cannot, under any circumstances, afford to squander. When we determine who best can serve the needs of the people and the country, we are casting our vote on what tomorrow will look like. We entrust these people with the power to change our world, and we must be damn well sure we pick the right ones.

Though there are many problems that need to be straightened out if we want to have the elections we need, thankfully there are people trying to work them out. Efforts have been made to try and address the issues that need to be solved, and one of the most prominent is that of the Commission of Elections' automation of the voting process.

For years our elections have been a criticized and ridiculed as a joke, and our government positions derided as being simply handed out to whoever has the deepest pockets. Cheating and rigging of votes and ballot boxes were a hallmark of Philippine elections. Hopefully by automating the way we vote, we can see an end to the rampant and blatant mockery that was made of our elections, by limiting the opportunities and avenues for cheating.

Now comes the tricky part.

The term of a president whose tenure is shorter than that of Ferdinand Marcos, and who was under fire and criticism for most of it, is drawing to a close. None too soon, many say. Our nation is still stinging from the scandals that rocked our country during President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's stay in office.

Narrowly avoiding a repeat of the revolution that ended a dictatorship in our recent history, she hung onto her presidency by sheer force of will. She weathered and stymied many attempts by the opposition, both by legal means and the military coups staged, to oust her. She beat off all her detractors and critics through any means that ended a dictatorship in our recent history, narrowly avoiding a repeat of the revolution that ended a dictatorship in our recent history.

Our nation is still stinging from the scandals that rocked our country during President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's stay in office. Now comes the tricky part.

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The ironic problem that we face though is this; with the opposition to GMAs government so vast and strong in number, with just about the whole country opposed to someone from her camp winning the presidency, we find that there are simply too many people running for president. What this means is that though an overwhelming number of votes are for the opposition, since there is no concerted effort and no unified candidate, this splintering of loyalty may very well lead to problems down the line.

If we cannot find ourselves a candidate who can unite the people and will make a capable president, all the candidates will likely cause widespread division amongst the voters. Luckily though, we may have found our man in Noynoy Aquino, the son of former president Cory and martyred Benigno. Mar Roxas, who was a strong contender for the presidency, stepped down from the presidential race in deference to Noynoy.

But all this doesn't mean that we shouldn't study each candidate thoroughly and decide for ourselves who we believe to be most qualified for the position. Our vote, our ballot, is a sacred thing, and should be made of our own volition entirely. Cast your vote in whatever way you see fit, based on your own honest judgment and assessment. What many Filipinos seem to be unable to grasp is that elections aren't popularity contests. Our decisions must be based on the platforms and principles that the candidates espouse, since these are what allow us to gauge their worth as an aspiring president.

But beyond this, there is one thing above all that we must take to heart, and that is that when all is said and then, it is up to each one of us to make the changes happen. We are the change we seek, as U.S. President Obama said in many a campaign speech. The elections are merely a means to progress, because by electing competent and qualified government officials, we are assured that our public servants have our best interests in mind.

We grant them power when we put them in office; by entrusting them with our votes, we give them the reins of our country. But they are powerless to enact the reforms that we so dearly need, if they cannot count on our support. Democracy is founded on the principle of an involved and active citizenry, without which it cannot function. Our civic duty doesn't end with the selection of our government officials. It is our obligation to support them in their endeavors, and also to ensure that they stay true to their campaign promises.

All this can only be achieved through a continuing dedication to upholding our democratic ideals. To mold ourselves into a informed and vigilant citizenry is the key to our future. And it's never too early to start to be politically minded.

Someday all of us will be a part of the elections that are the heart and soul of any democracy. Maybe one of us will even run for office with the solemn belief that he can be of service to his country. But whether or not you are ever called to serve one's country as a public servant, you owe your country and your government your utmost loyalty and your unwavering support. Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.
Bicameral Legislature

By Santi Limjoco

Due to the efforts of the late and former president Corazon Aquino’s administration regarding the Marcos dictatorship, the 1973 constitution was abolished. President Aquino made sure that during her administration, the democratic institutions of the country were to be restored. Through the creation of a Constitutional Commission, the 1987 Constitution was drafted. This was presented to the people for a referendum pending its ratification.

The most salient feature of the 1987 Constitution was the restoration of the Congress of the Philippines, which is comprised of the Philippine Senate and the House of Representatives. The Congress of the Philippines is a democratic institution wherein the citizens elect the representatives of the people. The senators and congressmen represent the nation in the legislature, whose prime purpose is to pass laws to improve the health, economic stability, and education of the people who elected them. Moreover, they control the proposed expenditures of the government such that there will be no waste of public funds by those who hold positions of power.

Senators and congressmen differ from each other in that the former represents the entirety of the Philippines while the latter represents particular geographical districts in the country. The senate consists of 24 members who have a term of six years each. Though, every three years, half of the members of the senate are replaced with a new set, voted by the citizens. On the other hand, the Philippine congress consists of about 268 members with a term of three years each, much more than that of the senate. The two branches work together, hand in hand, serving each other.

The congress creates laws, makes decisions and enforces regulations, whether in an economical, financial or educational manner, for their own districts. These are passed over to the senate for them to analyze, study and finally to vote on. This system is not only practiced one way, but in vice versa as the two compliment each other. However, the senate is faced with a more difficult task to look out for our nation, unlike the congress who is only faced with dealing within their individual districts. The laws proposed by the senate are also voted on by congressmen in order for the laws to be thoroughly scanned through and finally established.

Given that it is in human nature to disagree with one another, it is not feasible to live in a country where there is no authority and direction set by a designated and carefully chosen group of individuals. On the other hand, when just one person possesses all the power over a state, catastrophic consequences are likely to ensue. These outcomes include, but are not limited to: embezzlement, corruption, and limited freedom of the population. This is where the senate or House of Representatives comes into play. When there exists an efficient and productive congress, revenues and benefits generated for the nation will be maximized by government agencies in order to provide the optimum lifestyle for the population. One of the primary responsibilities of the congress is to subsidize the costs of nation’s education in order to shape and build the minds of the citizens such that they may grow into upright and invaluable members of society.

Because the Philippines is a third world country, where majority of the population live in poverty, it is in the hands of the Philippine House of Congress to aid in the education of the masses. Doing so benefits not only the student but the whole of Philippine society as well; people will have a higher educational attainment and will therefore be able to foster a more prolific society. In essence, the congress aims to maintain a productive nation and establish what is most needed in every country: peace and progress. However, the duty of the congress is not limited to drafting laws and regulations for the citizens to follow; the members of the congress are also obligated to set examples for the public to emulate. This means that they are prohibited from exploiting the law and using their eminent positions as justification for not abiding by the legal code. It is unfortunate that it is commonplace to hear about instances in which a member of congress of this country was found to be dishonorable and unlawful in his or her actions in. In the list of most-corrupt nations, the Philippines never fails to pop up. Nevertheless, the Philippine congress has managed to rise above such matters and continue on in serving the country and its people.

The benefits of having a reliable congress are not confined to reaching the citizens alone. When a country has a productive congress, it can improve its relations with other countries and thereby gain from the things that cannot be attained otherwise. For example 30 years ago, on 7th of August 1979, the Philippines became a signatory to the United Nations (UNESCO) Agreement on the Importation of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Materials. This had enabled Filipinos who live in the Philippines to obtain literary material from other countries sans custom duties or other charges that would make it difficult for stores to accumulate an adequate supply of books, instrumental aids, etc. This act truly enhanced the educational and cultural status of the Filipinos for more opportunities to be exposed to other cultures and studies arose.

Ultimately, the function of the senate and congress of any given country is to ascertain that the overall yield of the country, whether it is education-wise, economics-wise, etc., is positive. It is in the name of a country’s best interest that congress formulates their decisions; senators and congressmen take it upon themselves to decide the optimal course of action for nearly every dilemma that a country faces and to make sure that, as time passes, the country evolves into a better and more profitable one. Through the creation of a set of laws, senators and congressmen initiate the comprehensive development of a country that will ensure harmony and prosperity among the people. ■
The Life and Times of Cory Aquino

BY GJ AGREGADO

The ephelets of revolutionist, the freedom fighter, the leader, the woman in the yellow dress, and the mother, are but a few things we can say for one of the greatest icons of Philippine democracy. Cory Aquino fought a long and hard battle against colon cancer, and only recently passed away. However, what we remember most about her will always be how she fought for liberty and how she led with full sincerity and humility. She was brave and daring in that she stood up against a dictatorship, doing what many saw as suicide. She was the voice of hope and freedom for the Filipino people, as seen when everyone rallied together to support her. Yet given what she had done to restore democracy to the Philippines, those in the younger generation cannot quite understand how paramount and significant her actions really were to the Filipino people.

Cory Aquino was born January 25, 1933. She was born sixth of eight children into, what was said to be, the second richest Chinese-Mestizo family in the country, the Sumulong family. Her parents Don Jose Cojuangco and Dona Demetria Sumulong played a great role in her life raising her as a child in the province of Tarlac. She graduated valedictorian in her early school years at 1943, and eventually enrolled in Ravenhill Academy at Philadelphia in 1946. She finished her junior and senior years at Notre Dame College in New York and obtained a bachelor of arts, major in French at Mount Saint Vincent in New York City in 1949. While she was in the US, she worked as a volunteer in the 1948 presidential campaign for Republican Thomas Dewey against Democratic candidates Harry Truman, one of her first political exposures. In 1953, she returned to the Philippines to take up law at the Far Eastern University, but then abandoned further studies in 1955 to marry Benigno Aquino Jr., who was then a promising young journalist. Her husband eventually got into Philippine politics, rose through the ranks, and became senator. Cory on the other hand, became a loving mother of 5 beautiful children, Maria Elena Aquino, Aurora Corazon, Victoria Eliza, Senator benigno Aquino III, and Kris, a TV and movie personality. She was simply a housewife, who simply stayed on the sidelines, watching her husband take the spotlight. Ninoy Aquino began to gain popularity, challenging the faulty administration of Ferdinand Marcos. When Martial Law was declared, he was thrown into jail and was eventually sentenced to death. Luckily enough, they were sent into exile into the United States, living their lives peacefully for a good three years.

Ninoy eventually returned to the Philippines in 1983 on his own attempt to overthrow a dictatorship. However, the moment he set foot on Philippine soil, he was shot point blank. This left the Filipino people outraged, and it gave enough reason for Cory Aquino to return home and avenge her husband’s death, by standing up and rallying the Filipino people under one banner to restore freedom. Almost immediately, Filipinos saw Cory as a symbol of a revolution.

Three years after the assassination of Ninoy, Cory, the pious, widowed, yet dauntless housewife, decided to run for the 1986 presidential elections against Ferdinand Marcos, who was self-assured of a landslide victory in his favor. Despite the media control by the government, Cory’s campaign was able to garner millions of supporters for the cause of freedom. When Marcos undeniably cheated his way towards victory, millions came together in a bright vibrant yellow, holding their hands up in an “L” so as to emphasize their Laban, a struggle to gain back their liberty.

The days that followed, remembered as the EDSA People Power Revolution, changed the lives of millions of Filipinos, overthrowing Marcos and proclaiming Cory Aquino as the new president of the Philippines on February 25, 1986. This was a defining moment not only in Philippine history, but also for the entire world, manifesting a successful non-violent revolution, full of nuns and priests barraging the streets with the rosary as their only weapon at hand. This non-violent means of revolution eventually spread to other countries and influenced different people to not resort to brute force, but in peaceful protest.

However, her administration was not as glorified as expected. During her term in office, the Philippines was politically and economically unstable. Though she may have studied in the United States, she lacked political experience in that she was naive, and indecisive in her political decisions. She implemented agrarian and economic reforms that failed. She could not put an end to communist uprisings. Above all, she could not even control her own military. Critics would say that her greatest achievement in office would have to be surviving the eight coup attempts and lasting her six-year term as president alive; but for many, that’s all that mattered.

All that was beside the point. Filipinos remembered her for the hope that she manifested of a better day in which a true Philippine democracy would be restored. The Filipino people were fed up with Martial Law, and the stood up against this when others did not, even if she knew she was putting her life and the life of her family at great risk.

“The only thing I can really offer the Filipino people is my sincerity” she said in an interview, and indeed this was enough to make a change in the lives of the Filipino.

She died in the early Saturday morning of August 1, 2009. Hours after her death, her remains were brought to La Salle Greenhills for public viewing and eventually to Manila Cathedral. After going through 8 hours of funeral procession, due to hundreds of thousands of Filipinos lining up to pay their last respects, she was laid to rest beside her husband in Manila Memorial Park in Paranaque City on August 5, 2009.

In all reality, it is because of Tita Cory that we live in this democratic country we live in today. It is because of her that we have the freedom of speech, the freedom to express ourselves without having to be persecuted or tortured by the government. It is because of her that we can hope for a better tomorrow, knowing that if we once showed greatness, bravery and perseverance as a people, than we can most definitely do it again.

Cory Aquino has set a path for us to follow towards a more glorious day where we can hold our chins up high and be proud as a Filipino people. Though our government today may be full of inglorious, nefarious, self-indulgent officials, it is up to us, the youth and the next generation of leaders, to pick up where Cory has left off, and by following her example by becoming leaders with utmost sincerity, respect and humility.
T he Church and the State are separate bodies coexisting within society. Occasionally we hear the Church strongly disapproving the plans of our government to enact laws promoting the use of artificial contraceptive devices, abortion, and same sex marriages. Then too we would have heard of pastoral letters from the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) that strongly condemn the lack of government backbone in rooting out graft and corruption by key officials. The truth is that all these are legitimate concerns of the Roman Catholic Church whose mission is to lead her children to heaven precisely by struggling to live the gospel’s message. As such her mission necessarily involves concern and great interest for the cultural, moral, and spiritual development of all persons. When Politicians delve into Moral Issues then it is the duty of the Church to oversee its own purview. Yet still the man on the street may not appreciate the Church’s significant role in the development of society and technology. History shows the Catholic Church’s contribution to the advancement of knowledge. However, despite the Church’s significant role in our society, some ask if it continues to be necessary for the Church to “interfere” with the passage of laws and other political issues. In the end this lack of understanding is a failure to appreciate the historical truth that the Church carries out her mission fully aware of the respective autonomy and competence of Church and State. Indeed, the distinction between religion and politics is a specific achievement of Christianity and one of her fundamental historical and cultural contributions.

The Church has recently commented on a number of issues. One issue is the Reproductive Health Bill where some members of Congress believe that the promotion of artificial contraception will solve problems such as hunger and poverty. In this bill terms like reproductive health and reproductive rights are used as covers for abortion and the promotion of artificial contraceptive practices that promote promiscuity and cheapen human dignity. On the other hand we see the Church firm in her stance on doctrine based on a natural the natural law, the dignity of each human being and the special role of the Family in society.

When it comes to politics, Martial Law and the People Power Revolution were the two greatest political issues the country faced. Democracy was halted. Freedom of speech and assembly was curtailed. Corruption was systematized by the awarding of state run monopolies to cronies friendly to the interests of the ruling regime. Cardinal Sin focused on using God’s teachings to solve our problems and on peacefull means to promote democracy in our country. He did not seek it but his unswerving stance earned him the title as one of the successful “Architects of the People Power Revolution.” The core of his actions was to champion the poor without advocating violence and without engaging in partisan politics.

In the coming year the greatest political issue the country faces is the election of leaders who are truly competent and who are guided by correct moral principles. In this regard it will be expected that the CBCP will give the general guideline of asking voters to consider candidates who will protect human life, promote family life, pursue social justice, and practice solidarity. However, it will not happen that the CBCP will ask the Catholic voters to cast their ballots en masse for a particular candidate.

No matter how much the Philippines thrives for truth and honest governance, the Church’s stance in politics will always be as Counselors, well composed and reasonable. The moment the dirty tricks of politics are played on Filipinos, they can turn to the Church for guidance but in the end they exercise their personal freedom with responsibility. After all that is their job as lay faithful to bring the gospel’s message to everyday events in society. Bishops don’t do that, we do.

On Charter Change
“Church values the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of the citizens in making decisions. The Church endorsed the possibility of both of electing and holding accountable those who govern them, and of replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate.” (Compendium of Social Doctrine, 40a)

“Changing the Constitution, involving major shifts in the form of government, requires widespread participation, extraordinarily different from the consultation that allows for rational discussion and debate. This is best done through a Constitutional Convention.” (CBCP, January 2006)

On the 2004 elections that may be of help with the decisions we make at the onset of the May 2010 elections:
In this critical moment, we hear Jesus’ assuring words, “Be not afraid” (Mk 6:50). We therefore courageously face up to the following challenges:
1) We have to uphold the constitutional process and the rule of law. Clean, honest, and orderly elections are the hallmarks of a working democracy. There are indeed shortcomings and threats to our democratic way of life. But the freedoms we cherish are best safeguarded by a vigilant and informed citizenry during times of crisis. The opposite scenario would be recourse to violence, attempted coups, and anarchy.
2) We have to work together. In various parts of the country, citizens’ movements for clean elections and good governance have sprung up. These are often multi-sectoral, interfaith groupings of concerned citizens involved in political education, scrutiny of candidates’ qualifications, and poll-watching. With the advances in communications technology, these citizens’ groups have the potential to reach out to all sectors of society. We commend their efforts.
3) We have to believe in our own power to transform society. Clean and meaningful elections and transformed politics depend on ordinary people and on each one of us. We start with our own values and attitudes (e.g., walang hihinting na panahon ng eleksyon). Let us encourage our children, the youth, the police force, military people, and others directly involved in the elections to exercise their roles uprightly.

Independence Day letter
In 1998 during the Centennial Celebration of our Independence, the CBCP already stated that “our liberty is eroded not so much by foreign invaders, by as inequality and lack of participation, injustice and exploitation, deficient cultural values and mindset, destruction of the ecosystem, and deterioration of peace and order.”

On corruption in the Philippines:
We are convinced that the search for truth in the midst of charges and allegations must be determined and relentless, and that the way to truth and integrity must be unhammered, especially at the present time when questions about the moral ascendancy of the present government are being raised.

For this reason, we strongly:
1. Condemn the continuing culture of corruption from the top to the bottom of our social and political ladder.
2. Urge the President and all the branches of government to take the lead in combating corruption wherever it is found.
3. Recommend the abolition of EO 464 so that those who might have knowledge of any corruption in branches of government, may be free to testify before the appropriate investigating bodies;
4. Ask the President to allow her subordinates to reveal any corrupt acts, particularly about the ZTE-NBN deal, without being obstructed in their testimony no matter who is involved;
5. Appeal to our senators and the ombudsman to use their distinct and different powers of inquiry into alleged corruption cases not for their own interests but for the common good;
6. We make a plea to the media as a positive resource of seeking the truth and combating corruption by objective reporting without bias and partiality, selective and tendentious reporting of facts;

On Moral Accountability:
On moral accountability “Political authority is accountable to the people. Those who govern have the obligation to answer to the governed” (Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church, 408). President Macapagal Arroyo has admitted and apologized for a “rapeseed judgment” for calling a COMELEC official. The admission further eroded that people’s trust on the already suspected electoral system and raised serious questions on the integrity of the elections. Beyond apology is accountability. Indeed, with forgiveness is justice.

On Effective Governance: "Public authority in order to promote the common good... requires also that authority be effective in attaining that end" (Pacem in Terris, ch. IV). Together with competence, personal integrity is one of the most necessary requirements of a leader. Ineffective governance may be due to a lack of personal integrity or lack of competence. It could also be the result of a confluence of factors that have eroded trust and credibility and hence effectiveness. In our present situation we recognize that blame could be attributed to many, even to all of us. Yet we would ask the President to discern deeply to what extent she might have contributed to the erosion of effective governance and whether the erosion is so severe as to be irreversible. In her heart she has to make the necessary decision for the sake of the country. We all need to do the same. Indeed, moral discernment is very difficult since it is not based on political allegiances and alignments but no moral considerations.
23 YEARS AGO, the high school student leaders of Southridge envisioned a rock concert featuring high school bands that would raise funds for the poor. The idea immediately won the cause of many students who loved the idea of having homegrown talent play for the public as a means of raising money and awareness for the less fortunate.

Despite the enthusiasm and drive to organize a benefit concert in school grounds, the concert did not happen. 3 years ago, SOUL revived the idea, naming the concert “Rock For Life” (R4L) and attempted to make it happen. Right before auditions were held, the preparations were called off once again postponing the debut of Rock For Life.

In response to the recent typhoons, Ondoy and Pepeng, which ravaged the provinces of Luzon in a span of a month, the leaders of the Musicians Interact Club (MIC) of Southridge decided to take the lead and attempt to finally make Rock For Life happen. After consulting the Student Council and Mr. Ong, the Head of Student Affairs, the R4L Council composed a formal proposal and submitted it to the school which was gratefully approved.

Under the constant guidance of Mr. Ong along with the support of the Student Council, preparations for the concert went smoothly and efficiently. The measures for security were greatly addressed by hiring extra security guards and bouncers; sponsorships by 101 NY Clothing and iFrogz earphones and parents were received; MIC held auditions for the 3 high school band slots and the program was bolstered by the addition of two professional acts namely Miguel Escueta & Angulo in addition to alumni bands Mango Float and Ars Moriendis; a professional and complete lights and sounds set up were acquired; posters were put up in Southridge, tickets began to be sold and even sent to Woodrose for further support and advertising.

At 6:00 pm, the auditorium was ready and transformed into a real rock concert venue! The chairs on the ground floor were removed, the stage was filled with equipment for the bands and the lights and smoke machines added more hype to the atmosphere! Finally, everything was in place and ready for the show! The doors opened at 6:30pm and the show was officially opened by a video of the Ondoy and Pepeng Typhoons followed by an opening speech from the chairman, Sluggo Rustia.

Asylum was the first band to rock the crowd with their debut performance as they played cover songs. Following them was Set Lasers To Stun, the quartet of sophomores who also made their debut performance with an acoustic set that warmed the hearts of the audience.

Next was the performance of the senior band, The Reminiscent who rocked the audience with their stellar, melodic and powerful originals “Eternity” and “Believe”. The alumni band, Mango Float, returned to their alma mater to perform their popular originals “Again” and “Save Me”, sweet music to the ears of those who have long listened and loved their band! Ars Moriendis once again claimed victory and glory as their blow-out performance featured their originals “Inri” and their anthem “Kampana”.

ACROSS
1. Mayor of Makati City
2. dam situated in Norzagaray, Bulacan
3. Senate President
4. Congressman of Muntinlupa City
5. Supreme Court Chief Justice
6. 2nd typhoon to hit in September 2009
7. PGMA’s predecessor
8. leader of Oakwood mutiny
9. Oakwood mutiny group of rebel soldiers
10. Nueva Ecija dam filled by waters of Pampanga basin
11. city where President Village is located
12. city where President Village is located
13. 1986 revolution overthrowing FM
14. 1st woman president of the Philippines (2 words)
15. president of the Philippines
16. Mayor of City of Manila
17. Senate President
18. Vice-President of the Philippines (2 words)
19. speaker of the House
20. condition of the land
21. official resident of the Philippine president
22. member of Sangguniang Barangay
23. woman president of the Philippines (2 words)
24. Supreme Court Chief Justice
25. LP presidential candidate
26. Mayor of Muntinlupa City (2 words)
27. month of 2010 elections
28. COMELEC Chair
29. form of Philippine political government
30. form of Philippine political government
31. name of a dam on the land
32. # of years regular term of Philippine president

DOWN
1. Senator of the Philippines
2. dam situated in Norzagaray, Bulacan
3. Senate President
4. Mayor of Parañaque City
5. 2nd typhoon to hit in September 2009
6. international name of typhoon Ondoy
7. leader of Oakwood mutiny
8. Oakwood mutiny group of rebel soldiers
9. Nueva Ecija dam filled by waters of Pampanga basin
10. city where President Village is located
11. 1986 revolution overthrowing FM
12. Mayor of City of Manila
13. Vice-President of the Philippines (2 words)
14. speaker of the House
15. condition of the land
16. condition of the land
17. woman president of the Philippines (2 words)
18. Senate President
19. condition of the land
20. condition of the land
21. condition of the land
22. woman president of the Philippines (2 words)
23. woman president of the Philippines (2 words)
24. woman president of the Philippines (2 words)
25. condition of the land
26. Senator of the Philippines
27. condition of the land
28. condition of the land
29. condition of the land
30. condition of the land
31. condition of the land
32. condition of the land
The Ridge

Whitesands School representatives visit Southridge

BY NICOLLO ORDONEZ

Last November, our school was fortunate to have Mr. James Efekado and Mr. Babatunde Akerele from Whitesands school. Mr. James is the school director while Mr. Tutu is a senior faculty member. Whitesands is a 9-year-old exclusive boys high school based in Lekki, Lagos, Nigeria. The school wants to see how established all boys schools in the Philippines work.

With only 72 students divided into 2 classes in the school’s debut, they have come a long way in becoming an institution that focuses on holistic formation. They have established the collaboration of the home and the school coming in the form of a family day, an annual event similar to our Father’s Day in Southridge. Despite not being run by PAREF (Parents for Education Foundation), the school functions in much the same way a PAREF school would.

We had the opportunity to sit down with them, and they have shared with us wonderful observations of our school. Here are some questions from the interview that showcase their first impressions, comments, and what they learned in visiting our school:

Ridge: What was your first impression of our school?

Mr. James Efekado: Your school is a very nice one. It feels like home because it’s much like ours. The system works pretty much the same way. We have a mentoring system that helps students in their personal formation. Just like you guys, we also organize annual camp outs with families and sons to highlight the important role of fathers in the family. We’ve also recently made a scholarship program that we patterned after Southridge’s afternoon scholarship program. Although we’ve just taken in 3 scholars in this school year, we’re hoping to help more students in the future.

Ridge: Are all of the students students enrolled in Whitesands Catholic?

Mr. Efekado: Actually, we don’t only take in Catholic students but any student with any religion. We do our best to avoid discriminating the students based on their faith.

Ridge: Given these circumstances, is it harder to forward value formation?

Mr. Efekado: Well, we do our best not to discriminate and teach universal values. But Opus Dei is currently guiding our catholic faith and we see to it that when one student graduates, he is a man well equipped with good and sound values.

Ridge: Are the students in Whitesands required to go to mass?

Mr. Efekado: They are encouraged but they’re certainly not required. We want to do our best to make it like Southridge wherein big events such as First Friday mass require all students to attend mass for respect towards God.

Ridge: How are the teachers in Whitesands like?

Mr. Efekado: Currently, we have 50 teachers in our school. It’s very much similar to Southridge because there is also one adviser guiding the class in accomplishing their extra-curricular and academic activities.

Ridge: What is the best thing you’ve learned so far in visiting our school?

Mr. Efekado: The maximizing of facilities and classrooms... I mean, it’s already great that Southridge takes in scholars like the afternoon school. That’s probably the best way for the rooms to be maximized. In our school, for example, we have our classrooms used for only about 8 hours a day because facilities like our laboratories are locked during the afternoon. Southridge has done a good job in the schedule of its students.

Whitesands school may only have been a fresh 9-year-old school but its knowledge in turning its students into role models is quite advanced. The school has certainly prepared well in its first few years. They even make use of the mentoring program, which is patterned after PAREF’s integral component in shaping students. According to them, this has been very useful in the students’ personal formation. They’ve definitely come a long way with their 9 years.

We are truly thankful for the opportunity to share how our school works with others and hope it continues what it does best—breeding gentlemen.
We've all probably heard of the movie, 2012, by now. 2012—The movie with the really cool trailer that depicts the end of the world? Yeah, that one. Well, it's got me thinking. What's the deal with 2012 anyway? How will the world end exactly? Why do we care so much? The internet is abuzz with theories that range from something as outlandish as alien contact to something mildly plausible like geomagnetic reversal. Geomagne-what? That's what I thought too. You see, that's the modus operandi of these fear mongers. They make a statement that sounds scientific throw in a few fake statistics, facts, and figures, then package it as something palatable to an average, reasonable person. What you get is...well, the 2012 phenomenon we have now.

This isn't the first time that we thought the world was going to end too. Remember that "earthquake" that hit Manila in 2008? Or how the year 2000 would be the end of the world? My theory is that people are just bored with their lives and find amusement in "drama" caused by the threat of impending doom. Whatever the reason why these hoaxes continue to propagate, I don't think you should start writing your last will and testament just yet. If you're still adamant about 2012 though, here's a quick overview of the four most popular doomsday scenarios and reasons why we still have more than 3 years left to live.

**Scenario 1: The End of the "Mystical" Mayan Calendar**

**FACT:** The forecast is based primarily on what is said to be the end-date of the Mayan Long Count calendar, which is presented as lasting 5,125 years and as terminating on December 21 or 23, 2012. December 2012 marks the ending of the current baktun cycle of the Mesoamerican Long Count calendar, which was used in what is now Central America prior to the arrival of Europeans.

**THEORY:** If the cycle ends on that day, then the world ends too.

**FICTION:** First of all, the idea of the apocalypse is a completely Western construct, and the Mayan people had no concrete idea of the world ending. The end of a cycle to them just meant the beginning of a new one—no implications of 'mass extinction' whatsoever.

The issue is complicated further by the fact that many different Maya city-states employed the Long Count in different ways. At Palenque, evidence suggests that the priest timekeepers believed the cycle would end after 20 baktuns, rather than 13. A monument commemorating the ascension of the King Pakal the Great connects his coronation with events as much as 4000 years after, indicating that those scribes did not believe the world would end in 2012.

**VERDICT:** MYTHBUSTED

**Scenario 2: Galactic Alignment**

**FACT:** The planets align. We've all heard this before. The winter solstice (shortest day of the year) will happen in December 2012. There is a supermassive black hole in the center of our Milky Way galaxy.

**THEORY:** When the solstice comes, the planets will align with the supermassive black hole and the world will get sucked in!

**FICTION:** While it sounds plausible, all scientific evidence points to the contrary. Apart from the fact noted above that the "galactic alignment" predicted by Jenkins already happened in 1998, the Sun's apparent path through the zodiac as seen from Earth does not take it near the true galactic center, but rather several degrees above it. Even if this were not the case, the black hole is 30,000 light years from Earth, and would have to be more than 6 million times closer to cause any gravitational disruption to our Solar System.

**VERDICT:** MYTHBUSTED

**Scenario 3: Geomagnetic Reversal**

**FACT:** The Earth has two magnetic poles—the north and the south. People claim to observe that the Earth's magnetic field is weakening. Scientists believe the Earth is overdue for a geomagnetic reversal, and has been for a long time, even since the time of the Mayans, because the last reversal was 780,000 years ago. Massive solar flares can affect the Earth's magnetic field.

**THEORY:** A greatly diminished magnetic field during a reversal period will expose the surface of the earth to a substantial and potentially damaging increase in cosmic radiation.

**FICTION:** It sounds scientifically sound, but remember what I said about fake statistics?

**VERDICT:** MYTHBUSTED

**Scenario 4: Planet X a.k.a. Planet Nibiru Collision**

**FACT:** Is there even fact with this one?

**THEORY:** The Nibiru collision originated with Nancy Lieder, a Wisconsin woman who says that as a girl she was contacted by gray extraterrestrials called Zetas, who implanted a communications device in her brain. She said it would happen in 2003, then when it didn't she said something along the lines of, "I was lying...a white lie...to fool the establishment. It's really going to happen in 2012." Right.

The Nibiru collision idea fails on several basic scientific grounds. For instance, such an object so close to Earth would be easily visible to the naked eye (Jupiter and Saturn are both visible to the naked eye, and are dimmer than Nibiru would be at their distances), and would be creating noticeable effects in the orbits of the outer planets. Some counter this by claiming that the object has been hiding behind the Sun for several years, though such a claim is geometrically impossible. For some strange reason, this is one of the most popular 2012 theories. Also, how can we have a 10th planet, when Pluto, the 9th "planet" isn't a planet?

**VERDICT:** MYTHBUSTED

Critics claim geomagnetic reversals take up to 5,000 years to complete, and do not start on any particular date. Also, NOAA now predicts that the solar maximum will peak in 2013, not 2012, and that it will be fairly weak, with a below-average number of sunspots. In any case, there is no scientific evidence linking a solar maximum to a geomagnetic reversal.

Even if there was a reversal, Homo erectus and their ancestors certainly survived many previous reversals. There is no uncontested evidence that a magnetic field reversal has ever caused any biological extinction.
Each school year, tasks and responsibilities are handed down from one council to the next with the mindset to fulfill and accomplish them promptly and flawlessly, and at the same time carry them out with eagerness and gusto. It may be simple things such as informing and making the entire student body conscious of the forthcoming activities and events during morning assemblies and student assemblies, or it may even be the grander things such as successfully managing an enjoyable and unforgettable Father’s Day for all to experience; however, it all boils down to effectively and efficiently serving the school and its members.

Southridge, once again, welcomes a new Student Council for school year 2009-2010 with open arms. Southridge is very pleased to present to everyone the new Student Council which is composed of seven outstanding students with an immeasurable desire to make a difference. Their assiduous work together and produce something magnificent which can then be imbedded in the thoughts and ideas of every student so that they might actually do anything in the grand scheme of things. They look towards people, individually, question whether their ‘minute’ contribution will be cheerful in spite of the tragedy that befell them. The next question that I asked was “Sim, kaya sa tingin nyo ang may kalasanang ng laba at ng ito?” Jely then immediately said, without any second thought, “Ilay rin naman po eh. Kasi nagtatapon tayo ng mga basura sa ilog at kung saan-saan kaya nagbabara yung mga kanal.” When it comes to the status of their daily needs such as food and drinking water, this is their reply. “Hun ug mga unang awang, marami pa ang dumadating pero ngayon konti na lang kaya nagakanya-kanya na po kami.” They shared that the schedule of their classes is back to normal even as evacuees still occupy the covered court of the school.

They said that they might celebrate this year’s Christmas in the evacuation sites because it will take some more time before the flood will totally subside. Their attitude astonished me. The way they think and talk suggests that their age is already in the 30’s even though they are not. Somehow tragedy has helped them to be mature.

After this whole catastrophe, considering the fate of some people and the current situation of the evacuees, do you think we still have the right to complain?

A Brief, Shining Instant continued from page 4

Facebook became our eyes and ears when cellphone batteries ran out. Facebook became the final line of communication left standing—the indispensable tool for dispensing information that it was never intended for.

Even in the aftermath of the event, status messages regarding the Typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng dominated Facebook news feed instead of warnings; however, the posts became calls to action. People were tagged in photos telling everyone to go out and donate relief goods to the victims of the typhoon. People posted status messages about numbers they could call. People were taking a stand, going out to their local parishes or schools and volunteering. The overwhelming support for these projects was unprecedented, considering the fact that most of the volunteers came from the youth sector.

I can only think of two possible explanations for these two phenomena, the latter more reasonable than the first. One explanation is that people were ignorant on the Internet. The overwhelming support for these projects was unprecedented, considering the fact that most of the volunteers came from the youth sector.

My second theory seems a lot more reasonable. People aren’t ignorant by nature. In fact, I think people are generally intelligent and more aware than they might come across as. The thing is that people, especially, apathetic to the plight of society that they are aware of. So what changed? I think it had a little something to do with positive peer pressure and a diffusion of responsibility.

There is a saying; “no single drop of rain blames itself for the flood”. People, individually, question whether their ‘minute’ contribution will actually do anything in the grand scheme of things. They look towards the government or the large NGO’s to do everything for them. This time, however, it was our friends and peers who took the lead. It gave a sense of responsibility, a sense of individual responsibility, seeing our classmates, cousins, and teachers urging everyone to go out and help pack relief goods and volunteer.

Social networking sites became the catalysts for change. For even a brief, shining instant, Facebook became more than just a way to kill time. It became a tool to save lives. When all other lines of communication were silenced, Facebook was roaring. In a calamity, when it seemed as if we’ve become deaf and blind, Facebook became our eyes and ears. Facebook was our change. Facebook was a new hope, even for just a brief, shining instant. 

Why do you complain? continued from page 3

“Masaya naman ako kasi ang dami kong kalaro dito.” Then I asked them if they were scared during the height of typhoon “Ondoy.” Jely said, “OK lang naman po kasi second floor naman ung bahay kaya hindi umabot ung baha” Michael, a first year student said jokingly, “Masaya kasi nakakita ako ng nagkiliparan mga bubong ng kapit-bahay.” I was amazed that these kids could find ways to be cheerful in spite of the tragedy that befell them. The next question that I asked was “Sino kaya sa tingin nyo ang may kalasanang ng laba at ng ito?” Jely then immediately said, without any second thought, “Ilay rin naman po eh. Kasi nagtatapon tayo ng mga basura sa ilog at kung saan-saan kaya nagbabara yung mga kanal.” When it comes to the status of their daily needs such as food and drinking water, this is their reply. “Hun ug mga unang awang, marami pa ang dumadating pero ngayon konti na lang kaya nagakanya-kanya na po kami.” They shared that the schedule of their classes is back to normal even as evacuees still occupy the covered court of the school.

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After this whole catastrophe, considering the fate of some people and the current situation of the evacuees, do you think we still have the right to complain?
With over 300 million active users worldwide, Facebook, along with other social networking sites, have grown to be a part of modern day human life. Social networking sites are online communities where people communicate ideas in a variety of ways. Social networking sites have evolved in purpose to an entity that even their founders did not foresee. Sites like Facebook and Twitter have transcended to the point that they no longer just act as mediums for old friends to reconnect. They have become so much more by becoming indispensable lines of communication to dispense vital information during times of crisis.

Late last September, the Philippines was struck by a calamity of epic proportions. Homes were completely submerged. Families were torn apart. Lives were lost. What continues to amaze me is the overwhelming reaction of the Filipino people to the call for help. With over 300,000 Filipino users, it shouldn’t be surprising, but still, curiosity got the better of me and I set out to look for an explanation for this remarkable phenomenon.

Let’s be realistic; on a normal day, posts of bored users would dominate a typical Facebook Live Feed. Mafia Wars, FarmVille, “How Smart are [sic] You?” are the keywords of the day. Facebook seemed like nothing more than just another website for bored teenagers, who use it as a way to pass the time as they procrastinate doing that newspaper article that’s still due in…uh, six hours.

When the typhoon struck, Facebook, even for just a fleeting instant, changed. It was a temporary flash of brilliance. Users were discouraged from flooding the news feed with posts from ‘useless’ applications that hide more important posts. Instead of the usual status messages of “is bored” or “just saw X person HAHAHAHA”, we saw posts like “X person has been missing for over 24 hours. Mother is worried. Can anyone contact him?” and “House is flooded, but we are okay. We are on the roof now. Food stores are running low.”

The plight became so much more real to the citizens of the virtual world. Videos, depicting the flooding of homes and major roads like Katipunan Avenue were uploaded to YouTube. We saw celebrities like Christine Reyes dragged down to earth, pleading for help on 300% because of the big blow to flower supply. The effect was felt especially during the days leading up to November 1, as it was a holiday that by tradition has people flocking to flower stalls to give colorful plants to their loved ones. Vegetable prices have also shot up to 300% because of the typhoons. Carrots, for example, were originally P60 per kilo, but are now P180 pesos per kilo. Both vegetables and flowers are sourced from Northern Philippines, and it is this section of the country that suffered the most during Pepep. And, as a result, the rest of the nation was affected.

But the picture is not all gloom and doom. Officials believe that remittances will offset economic damages brought about by the two major weather disturbances that hit the Philippines. Dennis Arroyo, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) director assured the public that remittances will shield the losses and damages incurred during the periods of calamity. While the country’s growth forecast was cut down by 0.2 percentage points but generally, NEDA is still confident, keeping their growth targets because of vigorous remittances from overseas Filipino workers. Plus, they have the numbers to support their claims. Economists see only further increase in total remittances, since from January to July this year, they have already risen 3.8 percent to about $10 billion, boosting consumption spending, which comprise 70 to 80 percent of the economy.

There will always be a sense of fear prevailing around the nation, which up to now is still trying to recover from the two typhoons while at the same time surviving the seemingly endless inflow of natural disasters headed its way. Filipinos were traumatized by the unbelievable sum of rainfall which sank portions of Luzon underwater for considerable amounts of time. The future is unclear. University of the Philippines economist Benjamin Diokno said that it is too early to really get a full-picture of the effects that Pepeng and Ondoy had on our country. But, if anything, the ruin and wreckage that our nation endured gave birth to a unified awareness of the Philippines’ social situation. In the end, it will be up to us to jump-start our economic prosperity.
Why do you complain?

BY SIMON ARCIAGA

Typhoons are like robbers and hooligans who sneak in and then leave after having caused destruction and damage. This is exactly what typhoon “Ondoy” did to our country. People were not expecting the typhoon to be strong and many were unaware of its coming. The lack of warning coupled with the unexpected amount of rainfall resulted in the loss of possessions and lives.

In the wake of the typhoon and rising flood waters, Jelyn Arciaga, Kagawad of Putatan Muntinlupa, said that the first priority was to house flood victims while waiting for the waters to subside. After their transfer, donations of food, drinking water, some blankets and clothes started to arrive. Nowadays, the goal is to help the evacuees move on so that they can vacate the schools. To help them start again, the Barangay of Putatan has provided evacuees with livelihood projects like fish ball stalls so that they could earn and save money to buy materials with which to repair houses and provide for their daily needs. Affected families deal with disconnected electricity, water-damaged furniture, and unsalvageable appliances that were just some of the effects of the flooding. She also noted that it will take time before the people can go back to their houses because the water level remains high.

According to Health Emergency Management Service (HEMS) 8 out of 9 Barangays in Muntinlupa are still underwater. This is the reason why the local government designated some public schools to accommodate the homeless families in a total of twenty-two evacuation sites. Madolin Hernaez, HEMS Coordinator, said that aside from the relief goods to feed people, medical missions are likewise in every site because diseases start to spread at this particular time. In fact, there are cases of deaths in Muntinlupa caused by diseases such as Leptospirosis and dengue fever. These types of diseases cause diarrhea and uncontrolled internal hemorrhaging. Leptospirosis is commonly transmitted to humans by allowing water that has been contaminated by animal urine to come in contact with unhealed breaks in the skin, eyes, or with the mucous membranes. Victims can have flu symptoms that escalate to liver and kidney damage. She shared that the toilet to person ratio in the evacuation centers is 1:1000, way beyond the ideal number of users of a toilet. She also noted that the local government advised the people not to return to their houses anymore since they will just be at risk if they still return. To help the people move on, the local government implemented a project called “Balik Probinsya” wherein money for transportation will be given to those who are willing to relocate or return to their home provinces.

Jelyn, John and Alfrain are children evacuees living in Putatan Elementary School, Muntinlupa. I met them in the middle of their game, Tumbang Preso. I was pleasantly surprised at the happy scene that greeted me. I knew the street where they lived and the water level in that area remained knee level deep.

I asked them, “Kumusta ba kayo ngayon?” All of them replied that they are doing fine even though their situation seems to tell that they’re not. Jelyn noted, “Sanay na lang naman yan eh, sa una lang malapit.” John answered, feed people, and clean parts of the affected communities. Thousands of high school and college students helped in those two prominent schools, and likewise thousands were aided. Moreover, there were many smaller but direct efforts coming from other schools and village associations around Metro Manila. Our school actively participated in helping Muntinlupa City recover quickly. Here in Southridge, the student council organized a relief effort for our neighboring areas—Barangay Kabulasan, Barangay Kupang, and more—and sent out the word through the school network. Food bags good for a family of five each were prepared, and clothes were segregated for distribution. The efforts began on the Tuesday after Ondoy, and ended Friday of that week. Around fifty students, alumni, and teachers in total came to help at our school throughout the duration of the relief efforts, while many parents came with generous donations in cash and in kind. After the four days of working undermanned at around fifteen volunteers per day, Southridge was able to produce a little over two thousand five hundred food bags distributed around Muntinlupa and to some parts at Laguna. The week after, the relief efforts continued and another two hundred bags were sent to a distressed area in Antipolo. All said, the relief efforts at our small school may not have been as grand as those of Ateneo or De La Salle Greenhills, but it all definitely made a big difference nonetheless.

We have to be proud of our school, and all the more of the parents, teachers, students, and alumni who volunteered and actively participated in helping our nation recover after the storm. If you who are reading this is among those who helped, feel happy to know that the thousands affected appreciate your little efforts with eternal gratitude.

Six months before full recovery, the government says. A barrage of around seven more typhoons headed our way before 2009 ends, PAGASA says. Our school, and the communities around us, will not stop helping for as long as help is needed that we can offer. Duty calls, so what do YOU have to say? Ondoy may have destroyed Metro Manila with all the flooding and we can probably do only very little to help, but it’s time for us to make some waves of our own—that can make all the difference.
Recently, our budding social consciousnesses were inundated by the news and images of the relentless waters from Ondoy and Pepeng. Known internationally as Ketsana and Parma respectively, these two storms spelled double trouble for our poor, beleaguered nation when they came knocking, no, crashing upon our door. Together they wrought devastation and proved catastrophic in terms of property loss and in the number of people displaced from their homes.

In the aftermath, many a person, be they sensationalists or rumormongers began to wonder and to question just what indeed this awesome tag team of storms meant. Were they merely a manifestation of Mother Nature’s darker side, or were they portents of an impending event, harbingers of an approaching doom? This notion of their supposed prophetic aspect is tackled in an expose of the 2012 hype in this very issue. But I digress.

Ondoy hit first, with Pepeng hot on his heels. These two bringers of destruction may not have been the strongest of storms ever to rock our socks off, but they certainly knew how to hit us where it hurt. In fact, Ondoy was actually written off as a major threat by our weather analysts on the grounds that it wasn’t a powerful storm by any standard. It was, they said, weak. What we couldn’t have known was that it would jettison four month’s worth of rainfall on our heads in the span of a few hours, effectively flooding our streets and our homes, and leaving many distraught and afraid, and in full retreat to rooftops that provided a singular view of the deluge that had engulfed neighborhoods.

Now, let’s be honest here. How many of you who call the areas of Alabang home have a hard time relating to the above paragraph? I’d say a lot. And it’s nothing to be ashamed of. We should count ourselves blessed that our homes were spared from the calamity that befell many of our neighbors in Metro Manila. But this does not mean that we can afford, at the cost of our moral responsibility and civic duty, to stay remote and uninformed. We have been granted a reprieve from a painful burden, but excuse us from our duty to God, to country, and to fellow man, it does not.

Many of us in relatively unaffected areas flipped through TV channels whose images looked straight out of a nightmare. Dark ominous skies framed images of whirling torrents of water, or of people swimming in streets where chest-high muddy waters concealed hunks of metal lining the roads that are barely recognizable as cars. We stared in confusion at our screens and it took a while for it to sink in that this was happening right in our own country, not several miles from where we are seated comfortably on our plush couches. We switched on our computers and for a brief moment, irritation overcomes us. Links and posts that showed Marikina, Quezon City, and Manila under water interrupted our normal Facebook games. We dashed to our windows and peered out fearfully upon our street, expecting to see a similar scene of carnage. But lo and behold, all was quiet outside, unremarkable except for a faint drizzle and a pall of gloom.

In this imagining of a typical Southridge student’s experience, I see a distinctly drawn parallelism to our situation as newly socially conscious people. Through luck or design we have found that the evil hand has not passed over our heads. But this does not mean that we can afford, at the cost of our moral responsibility and civic duty, to stay remote and uninformed. We have been granted a reprieve from a painful burden, but excuse us from our duty to God, to country, and to fellow man, it does not.

Within these pages you will find information on the events that transpired, and with the clarity of vision that hindsight provides you will hopefully see in a light as clear as day, the import and the impact that these storms had on the Philippines. Though many of us admit that our personal involvement with the tragedies brought by the storms is limited at best, this should not rob us of our ability to empathize and commiserate with our brothers who bore the brunt of Ondoy and Pepeng’s wrath. We who remained untouched by the storms must use our fortunate position of strength to be of service to our countrymen, and to offer ourselves, our time and our resources to assuage the plight of the less fortunate.
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OPERATION ONDOY

STUDENT VOLUNTEERS
FLOCKED RELIEF CENTERS
DURING THE WEEKLONG BREAK

ROCK4LIFE
BENEFIT CONCERT FOR
TYPHOON VICTIMS
PAGE 8

A BRIEF, SHINING INSTANT
HOW SOCIAL NETWORKING
GIVES TIMELY UPDATES
ON ONDOY
PAGE 4

WHY DO YOU COMPLAIN?
INTERVIEW WITH
ONDOY VICTIMS
PAGE 3

AFTERMATH
AN ANALYSIS OF
ONDOY'S IMPACT
ON THE ECONOMY
PAGE 4