

MOMENTS

Enjoy now, pay later?

By: Fr. Jerry M. Orbos SVD

THE story is told about a passenger who said to the flight attendant: "I know this is the economy section, but showing the copilot's home movies is carrying it a bit too far."

In today's Gospel (Lk. 16, 19-31), Jesus tells us the story of a rich man who had all the comforts, and a poor man, named Lazarus, who had all the torments in this life. It is a reality that some travel first class or business class, and some travel economy class through life. As it were, others just enjoy, while others endure life.

The good news is that there is a chance for an upgrade, and a change in seating arrangements in eternity! Those who are comfortable now will be tormented then; those who are tormented now will be comfortable then. Divine justice, though slow, catches up, sooner or later.

Being rich, per se, is not bad. But being filthy rich, dirty rich, greedy rich, proud rich, oppressive rich and Godless rich is. For those who have much in life, ask these two questions: How did I acquire, and how am I using or sharing what I have?

The rich man in our story did not do bad things, but he did not do good things, either. Remember, we will be judged by the bad things we have done, and likewise, by the good things we could have done, but did not do.

Enjoy now, pay later, or endure now, and be paid later. Which lifestyle are you living? Which philosophy of life do you adhere to? On a deeper level, is your life all about the here and now in this world, or do you believe that there is a hereafter? Do you believe that you have a body AND a soul?

A timely reminder from Psalm 62: "Do not put your trust in oppression nor vain hopes on plunder; do not set your heart on riches even when they in-

crease; for God said only one thing, only two do I know—that to God alone belongs power, and to you, Lord, love, and that you repay each man according to his deeds."

If we look at the lives of the saints, none of them lived comfortable lives. In fact, many of them gave up their comfort, career and fame, and followed Christ, their Master. Many of them, too, were misunderstood, maligned, persecuted and even martyred. The saints remind us that what matters most in the end is that we obeyed and loved our Master and did His will.

"Itepel mo labat, anako (Just endure, my child)." "Anosan mo labat, anako (Just be patient, my child)." Heartwarming words we often heard from Papa and Mama, teaching us to be strong, especially in difficult and trying times. And they always ended up with the words: "Mandal ka labat, anako (Just pray, my child)." We did not have much, but our parents gave us much love, worthy values, and they gave us God.

It's October once more. Inviting you to our Walk with God to Manaoag this Oct. 5, Saturday, starting at 5 a.m. in Urdaneta, Pangasinan, ending with a Misa de Gracia at the Shrine of Our Lady of Manaoag at 9 a.m. One with you in gratitude, and prayerful intercession for our country and our people.

Think about this: "You are always opening your Facebook and your inbox to see if there are messages, but you are not opening your Bible which has a lot of messages, especially for you."

A moment with the Lord: Remind us, oh Lord, that it is okay to endure now for a while, and be paid later, rather than enjoy now and suffer later, forever. Amen.

PUBLIC LIVES

Death at the Fort, command responsibility

By: Randy David

PRESIDENTIAL spokesperson Salvador Panelo is invoking national sovereignty to protest "foreign interference" in the country's judicial processes. This nationalism, a sentiment that is swiftly awakened in response to criticisms from the United States and Western Europe, stays dormant otherwise, where nowadays it matters more—in our relationship with China.

What provoked Panelo's latest patriotic fulmination is an amendment introduced by American senators Richard Durbin and Patrick Leahy during the deliberation of the 2020 US Appropriations Bill for State and Foreign Operations. The controversial initiative reads: "Prohibition on Entry—Section 7022(c) of this act shall be applied to officials of the government of the Philippines about whom the secretary of state has credible information [that they] have been involved in the wrongful imprisonment of Sen.

Leila de Lima, who was arrested in 2017 on politically motivated charges." While it has passed the Senate committee level, it has yet to be approved by the whole US Congress.

But the point has been made — the American political establishment is keenly watching this case. It conveys the warning that any Filipino government official who was complicit in the wrongful detention of Senator De Lima could be barred from entering the United States.

Presumably, a list would be compiled by the state department and given to US Immigration. The names could include, among others, all the witnesses who supplied fabricated testimonies, the prosecutors who prepared the fake charges against De Lima, the judges who set aside the basic requirements of fairness when they admitted the case for trial despite the almost complete reliance of the case on the testimonies of convicts, and denied her the



Fiddling while the country burns

IN case our representatives in Congress have been living in a cave, here is the current state of the nation in terms of significant components in the economy, as highlighted in recent columns by former Neda (National Economic and Development Authority) chief and Inquirer columnist Cielito Habito:

On economic growth: The country's economic progress as reflected in the gross domestic product (GDP) is decelerating, the second-quarter figure of 5.5 percent representing two successive quarters now falling below the average 6-7 percent of the last eight years — "a disturbing trend that we must find a way to arrest," warned Habito.

On overall investments: "There are no ifs and buts about it: The news on overall investment in the country isn't good," said Habito. "For the first time in 30 quarters (seven and a half years), fixed capital formation in our economy actually fell, registering -8.5 percent growth in the second quarter of this year... Our foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows fell by a steep 39 percent in the first half of this year, and by an even steeper 54 percent counting the second quarter alone... The global economic slowdown is no excuse for this, as FDI inflows to neighbors like Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam have actually jumped this year so far."

On manufacturing: "Our manufacturing sector, which had sustained impressive growth at 7-8 percent annually from 2010 to 2018, has seen a significant slowdown in the last four quarters, to just 4-5 percent."

On housing: The Philippines, noted Habito, has the lowest public housing expenditures as a ratio to GDP among the

original five members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, at only 0.12 percent from 2000-2014 compared to, say, Singapore, which spent 13 times more at 1.6 percent. "The Philippine Development Plan notes that housing has consistently received less than 0.5 percent of our government budget" despite "the 1.7 million households targeted for direct housing assistance from 2017-2022. This target is still far less than our people's actual housing needs."

The news on the public-health front, of course, is even graver: simultaneous outbreaks of dengue, measles, polio and now diphtheria as the government's mass vaccination program has suffered a meltdown, even as the health department's budget has been cut by as much as P10 billion. And while 2.3 million new jobs have been created over the past year, "the unemployment rate actually remained at 5.4 percent, the same as last year," according to Habito.

In other words, the house is practically tottering and needing serious repair, but what's occupying the minds of lawmakers these days? (Or, in the vernacular, ano ang inaataupag nila?)

Charter change, that's what. More specifically, moving to extend their hold on power by giving themselves and local government officials longer terms of office from the present three years to four or five years.

The grasping proposal Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano had first floated in his bid to secure the speakership is being pushed by Cagayan de Oro Rep. Rufus Rodriguez, chair of the committee

on constitutional amendments, who said the "prevailing sentiment" among his colleagues was that "three years is too short for good work." Natch.

Rubbish. The three-year system has been good enough for outstanding LGU executives like the late Jesse Robredo, the Fernandos of Marikina, even the former mayor of Davao City who would go on to fame and the presidency on the back of that renewable three-year term of office.

Three years is indeed too short for a good official (who then deserves reelection), and too long for a lousy one (who then must resort to desperate measures such as outsize election spending and public-relations ploys to gain reelection).

But if it would take an official at least three years to go from clueless to halfway competent, he has no business doing the job in the first place, the critical work of public office not being a platform for on-the-job training.

The cabal of unblushingly self-serving lawmakers now intent on term extensions is mistaken to think the public will take this abomination sitting down, with the rest of the country beyond the Batasan enclave virtually fraying apart from their neglect and opportunism.

As surveys have repeatedly shown, there is absolutely no clamor for Charter change, let alone for term amendments. That concern, in fact, comes dead-last in the people's priorities, food and jobs being always the most urgent needs. For Congress now to busy itself with yet more ways to feather its members' nests is to fiddle while the country burns.

right to post bail; and, not to forget, President Duterte himself, who, from the beginning of his presidency, had vowed to jail the undaunted woman senator who has pursued a relentless investigation of his human rights violations.

Panelo has condemned this move as "a brazen attempt to intrude into our country's domestic legal processes given that the subject cases against the detained senator are presently being heard by our local courts." I don't know how this could be viewed as interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign country. It is not unusual for other nations to criticize the way other governments conduct their internal affairs, particularly if these touch upon values that are supposed to be shared by both. The latter can always rebut these criticisms.

No outsider is ordering any
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