



Order of the Knights of Rizal

Diamond Chapter – Antwerp – Belgium

Your Excellency, Consul Lolita Capco,
Ladies,
Brother Knights of Rizal,
Honored guests,
Friends,

One of the objectives of the Order of the Knights of Rizal is to commemorate his birthday (19 June 1861) and the day of his untimely death, which we are doing here today, 116 years later.

The years that followed his execution, changed the situation in the Philippines completely. All of us know, at least to a certain extent, what influence the novels of Dr. Jose Rizal had. Other colonized Asian nations started to realize that they also had the right to live a life of their own, based on their cultural traditions formed by their historical backgrounds.

But I would like to take you back a bit further in the past, namely to the childhood of Rizal and his upbringing. After all, to build up knowledge you need a strong base, a foundation strong enough to make wise judgments and live according to it without reservation.

He was born in a **strong** family, and I mean strong in different ways. Both his parents lived for at least 80 years and so did his only brother, Paciano, and several of his 9 sisters. Indeed his mother gave birth to 11 children. His father was himself the youngest of 13 off-springs.

Besides the physical aspect, his parents were both intelligent and well-educated. His mother was religious but also hard-working with a good feeling for business. All this did not withhold her to teach her children to read and to write. She taught her son to read and write at a very young age. Jose wrote his first poem (Sa Aking Mga Kabata) at the age of 8. I think not many succeed to do the same, not even at present times. Besides literature he also had skills of pencil drawings and sketches and clay modeling as well. The degree of 'Bachelor of Arts' at 16 was no more than the logical result of his talent.

Later he built up further his **strong** knowledge in 'Philosophy and Letters' as well as 'Medicine' at the Santo Thomas University, where he realized that the Filipino students were being discriminated and stopped his studies in the Philippines to continue later in Madrid. At the age of 23 he became a 'Licentiate in Medicine'.

The list of his studies continues almost endlessly, but we were asked to keep our speech short.

To be able to use his intelligence and skills in full, it is also important to keep the body in good shape. Probably that is why he practiced fencing and some martial arts like arnis as well as shooting, all popular sports among Filipinos at that time.

In between all these studies and sportive activities he even found time to have debates with his fellow countrymen and writing columns for La Solidaridad and not to forget his 2 novels written in Spanish: 'Noli Me Tangere' (Berlin, 1887) and 'El Filibusterismo' (Ghent, 1891).

Both describe the unbearable behaviors towards the original habitants of these Asian islands called The Philippines. Many of the stories are based on real happenings to his family because they also had their pride and strong principles. Although he got the support from family and several Filipino friends, during his travels in Europe, Rizal also had to endure hard times due to limited budgets, consequently leading to hunger, coldness and sickness but because of his **strong** believe in a better live for the Filipinos, he did not give up.

During his exile of 4 years in Dapitan (1892-1896), he practiced many of his skills and built up a **strong** community. A few hours before his death, he wrote the **strongest** statement of his conviction, later called 'MI ULTIMO ADIOS'.

My point is, that besides our hero Dr. Jose Rizal, we should not forget to honor the people who made it possible for him to learn, travel, experience and grow in wisdom so that he was able to make the right decisions in order to become a **strong** inspirer for his fellowmen. After all, these persons are the bricks and the cement upholding the monument that Rizal became.

Thanks for listening.

Salamat po.

Sir Paul Verloo, KCR
Chapter Commander 2011-2013
Deputy Area Commander for Belgium 2012-2014

Philippine Embassy, Brussels
Rizal Day
Sunday, December 30th, 2012.