

(Reprinted as part of the Niños Inocentes Edition, Dec. 28, 2008,)

The story goes that Lucio Tan, the Filipino-Chinese economic mogul of Imperial Manila, arranges not only a truce between President Erap and the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) but also a détente. Lucio says that it's more of a "leconciliation" (sic, as most Chinese have a hard time pronouncing the "R"). At first the President says to Tan, "Why should the bishops and I meet under a tent, when we can have the Manila Hotel as a venue?" Tan says that he will do so and he arranges for the President and the bishops to have a breakfast meeting at Manila Hotel.

At the meeting Erap says that the CBCP members misunderstood his desire to change the constitution. The President says that he actually refers to his physical nature and the constitution of the lay and religious leaders of the Philippines. Erap says that many bishops and he himself are too fat and they all need to go on a diet. The bishops say that if the president refers only to "amending" their build and the other leaders' physique, then they can drink to it.

A bishop says that the President's concern for the bishops' constitution was also his cup of tea. The President replies that he actually prefers to drink coffee.

Erap then says that what he and the CBCP members have to do is to find common grounds. Erap continues the dialogue by saying that all of them are sinners and that the Redeemer came down to Earth to save not the saints but the sinners, including Jaime Cardinal Sin, the archbishop of Manila. Next he says that the bishops and he like to drink. He likes to sip brandy while the bishops use wine daily in celebrating masses. Erap then says that he should not be called a "man of the masses," as he does not go to church and hear mass daily. The bishops laugh and one of them says that the president is after all a smart aleck.

The President tells the bishop that his first name is Joseph and not Alec.

Cardinal Sin says that in spite of the President's vices, as some of his detractors say, Erap actually is a "Good Samaritan" at heart.

Erap objects to Cardinal Sin's statement. He says that he comes from the City of San Juan and not from Samar.

The bishops now ask what can they do to help the President. The President says that he will shortly make state visits to Brazil and Argentina, which are in Latin America. He asks if Cardinal Sin or any other bishop can give him a crash course in Latin.

Détente between Erap and the CBCP (Part I of "Erap and the Bishops") - MabuhayRadio

Written by Bobby Reyes

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The bishops tell Erap that Argentina actually speaks Spanish and Brazil's language is Portuguese. But nevertheless they will teach the President conversational Spanish and Portuguese. Cardinal Sin says that the President should impress his hosts by learning something about the country that he will be visiting.

The President says that he has no problem with Argentina, as he knows how to sing its national song. Cardinal Sin asks the President to sing a few notes of Argentina's anthem and Erap belts "Don't cry for me, Argentina."

Erap then says that he knows very little of Brazil and he wonders if the bishops can teach him something about that country.

Cardinal Sin says that perhaps the Brazilian hosts will appreciate it if Erap talks of soccer, which is the national game of the country.

Erap says that was a good idea. He says that to break the ice when he lands in Brazil, he will mention the national slogan of the Brazilians.

The bishops ask in awe the Brazilian national motto. Erap replies that the national slogan of Brazil is "a soccer is born every minute." At this point the bishops start to cry.

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Notes from the Preface of "ERAP-SPEAK":

I continue to write with humor for political jokes are the weapons of a wounded people. Folks use humor to get back at their oppressors and at the corrupt and abusive public servants. As important as the people's freedom of speech is their "freedom of spits" (sic). As long as people can spit at the portraits of their leaders and crack jokes at them, democracy is alive and vibrant in any country. I have been researching on the wit, wisdom and humor of the Filipino people. I have in fact gathered so many political jokes and included them in my political novel "*One Day in the Life of a Filipino Sonovabitch*" and essays.

For so many years now I have subscribed to the motto of the late American literary legend, Jessica Mitford. She said that while her writings might not be able to change the world, at least she could embarrass the guilty.

Happy reading then.

Roberto Reyes Mercado

*From the forthcoming book, "*ERAP-SPEAK. How Not to Speak Pigeon (sic) English.*"
Copyrighted by Roberto Reyes Mercado. In his book Roberto says that ERAP is the acronym of "English Resembling Americanized Pidgin."

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Acknowledgment is made to poet-pundit Fred Burce Bunao, for contributing the jokes on the smart aleck and that about soccer.

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