

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

At the end of the first détente session between President Erap and the members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), Jaime Cardinal Sin of the Archdiocese of Manila invited President Erap to attend mass the next Saturday. The mass was to be held at the cardinal's official residence in Mandaluyong City in Metro Manila.

So the next Saturday morning the President and his entourage traveled to the cardinal's residence. The chapel was full of Catholic prelates and nuns, lay leaders, members of the presidential staff and security and the presidential-beat reporters.

A few minutes after the President was seated on the front pew, he said to the bishop who was assigned by Cardinal Sin to attend to Erap's needs: "Monsignor, I am getting sophisticated."

The bishop answered: "I beg your pardon, Mr. President. Can you please repeat what you just said?"

"I'm getting sophisticated. I can hardly breath. Perhaps you should open all the windows, as the ventilation is not good," Erap said.

The bishop smiled and instructed a priest to open the windows and bring an electric fan to the front of the pew where the president was seated.

The mass went on without a hitch. And everybody proceeded to a reception area where the President and some of his cabinet members occupied a big table with the cardinal and some of his assistant prelates. A waiter approached the President.

The waiter said, "Coffee, Mr. President?"

After Erap said yes, the waiter asked: "Regular brewed coffee, Mr. President?"

"No, give me instead decapitated coffee," Erap said.

A bishop came to the rescue of the President. He told the waiter that the President wanted coffee without caffeine. And so coffee and the entire breakfast menu were served.

As they were eating, the cardinal asked Erap what his opinion of the homily was. The President said that he thought that the sermon was good but he doubted if people at the back understood

it due to the chapel's agnostics.

"Don't tell me, Mr. President, that there were non-believers present in the chapel during the service," Cardinal Sin said.

"I was not referring to their religious beliefs. I meant that your chapel's sound proofing and system are not state-of-the-art and so people at the back could not probably hear you right," the President answered.

Cardinal Sin asked if the President has had a chance to attend a so-called "Charismatic mass." The President said that he too - like the bishops -- belonged to the "Charismatic Movement."

The cardinal said, "You are a charismatic member, Mr. President?"

"Yes. Like you bishops, I have both the charisma and the *atik*," Erap said. ***(Editor's Note to the non-Filipino readers: "Atik" is the colloquial term in the Philippines for money.)***

The cardinal and the clergy smiled, as they did not know if the President intended to use a pun or he was having fun at the expense of the "Charismatic Movement."

"We heard that you visited Las Vegas during your trips to the United States," Cardinal Sin said.

"Yes, I did visit Las Vegas but I went there not to gamble but to address the Filipino-American associations in Southern Nevada," the President said.

"May we know what you told the Filipino Americans in Las Vegas?" one of the bishops said.

"I told them that they were fortunate for they were living in the fastest-growing city in America. I told also the Filipino Americans not to forget their Christian beliefs and practices for Las Vegas might be the modern-day equivalent of Sodom and Gonorrhoea," Erap said.

The bishops and lay leaders look at each other and smiled.

Erap continued his discourse. He said that the Catholic Church in the Philippines made a mistake in calling the "Born Again Christian" movement as such.

Cardinal Sin asked what was wrong with the term.

Erap said that there should have been a dash between "Born" and "Again."

"Ah, you mean a hyphen, to make it 'Born-Again Christian'" Cardinal Sin said.

"So you know what's a hyphen, Mr. President," another bishop said.

"Yes, a hyphen is the private part of a female journalist," the President said.

## Erap and the Bishops (Part III) - MabuhayRadio

Written by Bobby Reyes

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At this point, Cardinal Sin and the other prelates cried. # # #

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(As excerpted from the forthcoming book, ERAP-SPEAK.)

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