

“The Upsilon Dream of a One World With Peace and Freedom for all Peoples”

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The Credo sets out the basic principles Upsilonians pledge to observe during their lifetime of membership. It nurtures in the fellowship, quite grandly, an earnest sense of integration, tolerance and understanding (“one world”) and advances the loftiest of human aspirations (“peace and freedom”). During my 1966 neophyte months - yes, it took months to indoctrinate us wide-eyed “beggars” before we earned passage into the rolls of Upsilonians - it was a requisite to commit the CREDO to absolute memory lest the unforgiving wrath of “ROKBA” would be unleashed on the benighted one. It instilled in us a solemn obligation that, I am convinced, is true also with all my senior and junior brothers.

It may be fair to assume then that decades before the fancied words “ecumenism”, “interfaith dialogue”, “disarmament”, “non-proliferation” and “anti-terrorism” - terms now relevant to our quest for the “one world” and “peace and freedom” - gained currency in the international consciousness, Upsilonians through the CREDO were already their true believers and breathing disciples.

Ninety one years after the founding of our fraternity - the best in all U.P., we sing - it may be timely stock-taking to ask: where is the Upsilon dream of a “one world with peace and freedom for all peoples?” Are we getting near its fulfillment or are we actually drifting further away from it? Put in a more personal way, what have

Upsilonians done to carry out this ideal of the Credo? Offhand, I issue the caveat that I have omitted contributions of Upsilonians in many other areas of our political and economic life; they are covered in articles by other authors.

It is quite obvious that realities did not take too kindly on the long winding Upsilon dream. Let's scan the horizon: In our country, a pocket insurgency still begs for a lasting and durable solution while a protracted communist insurgency and a highly partisan animosity continue to sap our valuable national energy and resources. Add to this awful mix the havoc caused by typhoons "Milenyo" 3 years ago, "Frank" last year and "Ondoy" and "Pepeng" just recently and you see the potent elements of a dream wrecker.

Beyond our shores, there's the dim picture of Afghanistan and Iraq battling deadly religious wars while parts of the Middle East and Africa continue to reel from their own religious and tribal conflicts. The perils of nuclear proliferation are ominously lurking just nearby - Iran and North Korea are slowly but surely inching toward their horrific goal of building their own death-dealing stockpile.

Indisputably a "one world" is viable only when peoples of various ethnic, religious, and social stripes are able to live and work peacefully and harmoniously together. It is the ideal universe where Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists and even animists freely practice their respective faiths and beliefs without fear that some zealots will senselessly blow themselves up in their midst. It's actually the "one world" the United Nations started drawing up in 1945 whose members, however, now find themselves taking auxiliary refuge in regional or more parochial groupings - i.e.

European Union, ASEAN, NAFTA, CARICOM, African Union, OIC, perhaps in recognition of the difficulties of achieving it.

Realizing the “dream”, to be sure, can happen only when nations, like families, are able to live peacefully side-by-side because they have become worthy in their own right. But how can this worthiness be attained? For peace to reign, brotherly love must prevail over selfishness, wretched ambition, prejudice and taking advantage of one’s neighbor. Worthiness starts with integrity and self-discipline in the individual, his family, and his nation. With this progressive development, we see that our Credo’s ideal for a “One World” is not a pie-in-the-sky dream. It begins with the individual and each person can contribute something to fulfill it.

Upsilonians can proudly claim that they have been pitching in their best at building a society in the spirit and light of their Credo. Let’s start with Wenceslao Vinzons - he who paid the ultimate price for freedom. So did Ninoy Aquino- in another time. A few more from different sides of the political spectrum have fallen fighting in their own search for peace and freedom. Apin Saeed Daof continues this outreach to his Muslim brothers through his Foundation, believing that effective and substantial economic measures give the best solution to the big dilemma in that region.

Some fellows have decided to deepen their roots in Mindanao. In their own way, they have helped bridge the religious and ethnic divide in their communities. Tenggot San Agustin in Zamboanga City and Basilan, Rey Villarica, Don Sonny Garcia,

Mon Allado, Gari Tiongco, Dion dela Serna, and Manny Tan in Davao, Gani Amatong in Zamboanga, and other fellows have truly made a difference in their communities.

Let us not forget the invaluable contributions of fellows who decided to build their own bridges in their adopted communities abroad. Wherever they are, they make a difference by influencing others with Pilipino values such as love for God and family, hospitality, the “bayanihan” spirit, fortitude, and a good work ethic.

In the international arena, Upsilonians carried their message and mission with distinction. To mention a few, we have Justice Florentino Feliciano, Jr., foremost international law author and professor, who became a member of the Appellate Court of the International Arbitration Board, Estelito P. Mendoza, practicing lawyer *extraordinaire*, former Secretary of Justice and Solicitor General who once served as Chairman of the Legal Committee of the United Nations; Arturo Tolentino, Jr. (former Vice President and Secretary of Foreign Affairs) Chief Negotiator for the Philippines who successfully pushed for the adoption of the “archipelagic doctrine” in the Law of the Sea convention; Salvador P. Lopez, Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York who once tangled on peace and freedom issues with the best minds in that august body. Two Upsilonians, Doy Laurel and Turing Tolentino, have so far served as Secretary of Foreign Affairs, the foremost official who executes the foreign policy objectives of the country.

If a number of countries attained independence following the Second World War, you may safely assume that it was primarily because the U.N. Charter recognized the right of peoples for self-determination and ushered in trust territories

into gaining independence. It was reinforced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which enshrines the right of people to enjoy freedom and liberty. And here lies the enduring contribution of an outstanding Filipino diplomat, Jose D. Ingles, the U.N. rapporteur who drafted that magnificent piece of document which now serves as the common standard of achievement for the global community. Was it the Upsilonian dream of “peace and freedom for all peoples” that inspired him while drafting it?

When we talk of other “peoples” we are inevitably drawn into a reference to diplomatic relations between countries and governments. Diplomacy, in essence, brings peoples closer together, allows them to bridge gaps between each other’s culture and beliefs, with the ultimate aim of creating an enabling environment for political stability and economic progress in their respective countries. Throughout the diplomatic history of the Philippines, we have seen Upsilonians adeptly representing our posts in various capitals. They’re the likely vanguards in the Upsilon quest for a “one world”. Recently, we had Ed Espiritu to the Court of St. James, London. We had Jess Yabes to Singapore, Shanghai, and soon to Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kirghistan. At one time, we had Ike Zaldivar in Brunei, Tante Cruz in Yangon, Jose D. Ingles in Berlin, Madki Alonto in Tripoli, Yusoph Abubakar in Malaysia, Nanding Galenzoga in Rabat, Abe Razul in Riyadh, Al Glang in Kuwait, Boy Astraquillo in Abu Dhabi, Kasan Marahombsar in Cairo. I was myself at one time posted to Libya, concurrently to Niger, Tunisia and Malta, and much later on in Australia, Tuvalu and Vanuatu and the Peoples Republic of China, North Korea, and

Mongolia. Currently, we have Oca Valenzuela in Cairo (previously in Jakarta and Tehran), Julius Torres in Amman, and Jet Ledda in Macao as Consul General.

In my current post as Philippine Ambassador to Washington, D.C., I am placed in a position to serve in the context of our "One World" dream. At the same time, it provides me a front seat view of the dispiriting challenges strewn on this long road to its accomplishment. Despite significant progress already made, I can see that we still need to span the wide open gap that comes between our holy grail and an obdurate reality of broken promises, ignorance, pride and greed.

Whatever direction we Upsilonians may henceforth decide to go, I submit that we must first commit ourselves to continuous self-improvement and to be our brothers' keepers with greater vigor this time and less of the unnecessary dynamics, if we want to keep faith with the teachings of our Credo.