

EULOGY FOR AMB. ROBERTO ROMULO
At the Holy Mass hosted by DFA
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Mme. Olivia Romulo and Family,
The Hon. Teodoro L. Locsin, Jr., Secretary of Foreign Affairs,
Distinguished Officials of the Department,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,

Thank you for inviting me to briefly share some thoughts with you this afternoon. We are gathered here in grief to recall the life and service of former Ambassador and Secretary of Foreign Affairs Roberto “Bobby” Romulo.

Allow me if you will, to begin by proffering our deepest sympathy on the passing of our dear friend.

Bobby was a very good man. He cherished his family. He was held in the highest regard by those of us that he called friends. And he even earned the respect of those who disagreed with him.

Bobby began his career in the world of international business. He worked assiduously for many years in the multinational context, at home and abroad.

But when his country called him, as it called others of us in the private sector, Bobby answered. First he served as our Ambassador in Belgium. And then in our DFA Headquarters as one of my most distinguished predecessors as Secretary of Foreign Affairs, of course, along with his father the General.

In that position, Bobby lent his business expertise to his endeavors to modernize the processes of the Department and the Foreign Service.

He did so with the support and the enthusiasm of the younger officers, who avidly sought to use modern ICT in their work.

Bobby's greatest legacy was in making the Department and the Foreign Service more serious about economic diplomacy. He brought in new thinking and technology to this task. He forged links with Philippine businesses.

He pursued investments, technology transfer and export markets. And he focused on crafting and implementing an economic diplomacy program.

He was deeply committed to ensuring that our country had a voice in ASEAN and APEC. He wanted the Philippines to seize boldly the fresh opportunities in an expanding regional economy. He was an advocate of globalization as the Asia-Pacific became the driver of global growth.

Furthermore, Bobby was a patriot. He always sought to protect the national interest, through diplomacy and reason.

He was perhaps the first Secretary of Foreign Affairs who had to manage the looming problems in the South China Sea, which sadly remains a focal point of overlapping multilateral claims.

It is imperative that we continue to work with others to prevent conflict there and to use law and diplomacy to protect our sovereignty and sovereign rights.

Above all, Bobby championed democracy. He opposed revisionism that sought to make us forget the dark days of Martial Law. He called out the cronyism that he saw undermining decades worth of economic reform.

In recent years, despite his serious illness which had taken a heavy toll on him, he remained firm in pursuing the tasks of nation building.

Perhaps Bobby sensed that he was nearing the end of his time. He had been publishing his views ever since he retired from government service.

But the last few months saw an outpouring of almost anguished writing calling attention to what he believed was happening to our country.

He was deeply disturbed. I think he saw our country's legacy of liberty in peril. He wanted the people to wake up and vote wisely in the forthcoming elections this year. Regardless of political view, we can all agree that the country deserves free, fair and transparent elections.

So, as we take our leave of Bobby, let us call to mind his patriotism, his hard work, his dedication to excellence and his basic human decency.

He did his utmost to bring the Department and Foreign Service up-to-date. He wanted to equip it to embrace new tasks in order to embark on a deeper engagement with the world.

He had a special place in his heart for the men and women of the Service. He believed in investing in our people. He also believed in pushing them to seek their full potential.

However, he did not view the Department as a faceless tally sheet of strengths and weaknesses. He saw it as a team where each could contribute the best of his or her abilities to the improvement of the whole.

Bobby's love of country, and of the Department and the Foreign Service, should inspire us all. As we move forward, remember that we are the legatees of men and women like Bobby who devoted so much of themselves to the service of our country. Their example should live on in our memories, and we who are their successors, should pass this proud heritage on to those who follow us.

We will remember Bobby as a giant of a man who at all times, sought to leave this world a better place than when he had found it.

And so, farewell my dear friend. May you rest in peace in the arms of our good Lord.

Thank you all.