

RIZAL'S 'SAD, WITHERED LIFE': "A CONTINUING DEATH..."

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In fraternal tribute to the memory of Bro. Jose Rizal
on the occasion of the celebration of the 152nd anniversary of his birth

Rizal's Dreams vs. Harsh Reality

In the following stanza of his untitled valedictory poem, Jose "Dimasalang" Rizal told Filipinas, his idolized native land:

*My dreams when life first opened to me,
My dreams when the hope of youth beat high,
Were to see thy lov'd face, O gem of the Orient sea,
From gloom and grief, from care and sorrow free,
No blush on thy brow, no tear in thine eye.*

By comparing Filipinas to a pearl (or gem) of the Orient sea, Rizal strongly suggested that his dream or burning desire throughout his "sad, withered life" was to see her emerge as an enviable place where would prevail once more the traditional ideals or principles of his people, to wit, *pagkakaisa*, *pakiksama*, *pagsasarili*, *pagkabayani*, and *pakikipagkapwa-tao* – ideals or principles which he enshrined in the objectives of La Liga Filipina (The Philippine League), the organization he established as the foundation or cornerstone of the emergent Filipino nation.

At that time, however, Rizal's vision was very far from realization because Filipinas was then "*nuestro perdido eden*" (our lost Eden) – a paradise which our ancestors had lost to the Spanish invaders, who in turn transformed it into a hell by committing innumerable acts of injustice, cruelty, and oppression at the expense of the greater masses of the Filipino people.

The young Jose Rizal was greatly saddened by the following stark and awful realities:

1. The ancient Filipinos allowed themselves to be enslaved, exploited, and oppressed by the relatively fewer Spanish colonialists, who used the divide-and-conquer policy to keep the former under their continued control.
2. Many Filipinos were so opportunistic and colonial-minded that they suffered themselves to be used as tools of the Spanish authorities for oppressing and exploiting their countrymen just because they were desirous of getting concessions or privileges from the *españoles*.
3. The Spanish ruling classes, particularly the conservative and reactionary ones, and especially the friars, unscrupulously made the *indios* live under subhuman conditions by keeping them in utter ignorance, constant fear, and abject poverty; unfairly hounded, harassed, and even persecuted innocent people, including members of his own family, relatives, friends, and others dear to him; and apprehended, tortured, imprisoned, or exiled enlightened Filipinos who courageously advocated and fought fearlessly for reforms and other righteous causes.

His Fatal Decision to Lead in Redeeming the “Lost Eden” from the Spaniards

He was quite young when, without any provocation, he was lashed at the back by a Spanish official. Afterwards, knowing that “*There are no tyrants where there are no slaves,*” he went to Malacañang to report the incident to the governor-general, but the latter did not do anything about his complaint. He was so disappointed with the governor-general’s inaction that he decided to expose the Spanish colonial government officials’ nonchalant attitude toward the natives’ complaints and clamors for reforms, as well as the Spanish colonialists’ abusive and excessive ways and their oppressive and unjust treatment of the natives.

Yes, he was quite young when he decided to take the lead in the task of regaining or redeeming Filipinas and her people from the deadly stranglehold of the Spaniards. He knew very well that his decision would eventually lead him to his death, but because he agapeically loved Filipinas, he consistently stuck to that decision.

In the first stanza of his valedictory poem, he would tell Filipinas:

*To give thee my sad, withered life, happy will I be.
Were it more brilliant, more fresh, more flowery,
I'd give it to thee, I'd give it for thy own good.*

Unquestionably, early in his life, Rizal understood the misfortunes of Filipinas and decided to work and redress them. He was highly resolved to promote her welfare and progress, as well as the happiness of the majority of her people, rather than the interests of his own person, family, and friends even to the extent of risking -- nay, losing -- his own life.

His Battlecry and Thesis

Rizal was, indeed, a veritable patriot or *bayani* since he was totally dedicated to his beloved country's welfare and happiness. "*Bayan muna, bago pamilya, bago sarili*" -- or "*Tayo muna, bago kami, bago ako*" -- became his battle cry in life and the thesis or controlling idea of many of his writings and discourses.

Mabini's Insight

Apolinario "Katabay" Mabini, who once served as the Secretary of La Liga Filipina and who later on was recognized as the "Brains of the Philippine Revolution," gives us the following insight in the *Memoirs* he wrote during his exile in Guam:

From the moment Rizal dedicated his life to the service of his native land, he very frequently vividly imagined the terrors of the death that awaited him; his life was therefore a continuing death, bravely endured until the end of his love for his country.

Rizal's Reaction to Spanish Racial Discrimination, Class Prejudice

Decidedly, the young Rizal's sensitive feeling was so gravely offended by the racial discrimination, as well as class prejudice, which the supercilious Spanish colonialists exhibited toward him and other *indios* that he resolutely engaged himself in an honest-to-goodness work and study, so that he would attain his own perfection or develop himself to his highest potential. By transforming himself into "a gem of a man," one adorned with the finest character and other sterling qualities, he would prove to all and sundry that the *indio* is not inferior to, but an equal of, the *español* or any other person of a different nationality.

He Wins Grand Prize in Two Literary Contests

In 1879, to further drive home his point that the *indio* was as intelligent as, if not more so than, the *kastila* or any other national, he participated in two literary contests, which were open to all residents in the country, including professionals. He was then a college student at the University of Santo Tomas.

His entry in the poetry-writing contest was an ode entitled "A la Juventud Filipina" (To the Filipino Youth), in which he called the youth "the beautiful hope of my country" and challenged them to gain knowledge and skills in the arts and sciences, which they were to use for promoting the welfare, happiness, and fame of their Mother Country, namely, Filipinas and not España.

His entry in the play-writing contest was an allegory entitled "Consejo de los Dioses" (Council of the Gods), in which he subtly suggested three possible solutions to solving their nation's problems, namely, revolution, represented by Homer's *Iliad*; assimilation, represented by

Vergil's *Aeneid*; and reforms, represented by Cervantes' *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. He insinuated that the Filipinos themselves must decide which of the three alternatives they preferred to use, although he hinted that he would prefer reforms.

Both entries won the first prize. But when the organizers of the contests learned that the first prize winner was an *indio*, they intentionally ignored him and, instead, praised the runners-up to high heavens, simply because they were *españoles*. This discriminatory and unjust act angered him so much that he lashed back at the organizers by dint of an incisive satirical essay entitled "Laughter and Tears."

He is Forced to Leave Posthaste for Spain

Feeling that Rizal had alluded to them in the satirical essay, the conservative and reactionary elements in the country, particularly the abusive friars, got very angry with him. Besides, they were apprehensive and afraid that he would turn out to be another Jose Burgos, who had exposed the abuses and excesses of the Spanish friars in his novelette entitled *La Loba Negra* (The Black She-Wolf) and played a lead role in the campaign for the secularization of Philippine parishes. Therefore, they subjected the young Rizal so constantly to hounding, harassment and persecution that he was forced to leave posthaste for Spain.

He Enters into a Covenant with His Kuya

Before his hasty departure for Spain, Jose Rizal entered into a covenant with his Kuya Paciano, an ardent admirer of Fr. Jose Burgos, whom the Spanish officials executed on February 17, 1872 on the false charge that he was one of the leaders of the Cavite Mutiny, which they described as the start of a Philippine revolution against Spanish rule. The expenses Jose would incur during his sojourn abroad would be shouldered by his Kuya, but he must do the best he could to train himself to lead the hapless Filipino people in emancipating themselves from Spanish colonial misrule.

The die was cast! A man of honor, he was highly resolved to keep his promise to his Kuya.

He Composes “Me Piden Versos”

Shortly after his arrival in Spain, Jose Rizal was requested by members of the Asociacion Hispano-Filipina (Spanish-Filipino Association) to write verses that might inspire them to campaign more earnestly than before for much-needed reforms. Acceding to their request, he composed “Me Piden Versos” (You Ask Me for Verses), which he read to them at a dance they gave in his honor.

In that poem, he described himself as “*planta apenas crecida arrancada del Oriente*” (a young plant uprooted from the Orient), which was transplanted in the deserts of Europe, where its growth would, naturally, be stunted. Further, he romantically recalled his native land, whose birds, cascades, spreading shores, and murmuring sea taught him to sing (i.e., to write verses). He told the members of the association that under her sky, he had left all his illusions, love, and enthusiasm, but away from her and the persons he dearly loved, he was not inspired to write poems; instead, he felt that the specter of death was following him everywhere he went.

He Engages Himself in Various Activities

Not losing sight of his covenant with his Kuya Paciano, he proficiently used his 24-inch gauge; that is, he immersed himself in many useful and pro-patria initiatives other than patiently and perseveringly pursuing his medical studies at the Universidad Central de Madrid. These initiatives include the following:

1. Getting actively involved in the activities of the Asociacion Hispano-Filipina.
2. Reading books and periodicals both extensively and intensively.
3. Pursuing artistic, scientific, and cultural endeavors.

4. Attending Masonic meetings and conferring with Mason friends who sympathized with, as well as actively assisted, the Filipino propagandists in their courageous campaign for reforms.
5. Writing articles for publication in *La Solidaridad*, the fortnightly publication of the Propaganda Movement, as well as countless letters to family and friends.
6. Traveling from Spain to other European countries in order to get ideas on how to promote the progress and prosperity of the Philippines.
7. Annotating *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (Events of the Philippine Islands), by Antonio Morga, in order to make his countrymen realize that before the coming of the Spaniards to the country, the Filipinos already had a rich culture, and that their Mother Country was not Spain, but rather the Philippines.
8. Writing and publishing the novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, the contents of which greatly incensed the conservative and reactionary elements in Spain, in the country, and in other places, particularly the abusive friars, who connived to get him out of their way.

Topics of His Writings and Discourses

In his writings and discourses, he advocated the emancipation of Filipinas and her people from Spanish tyrannical rule; exposed the Spanish colonialists' ineptitude to govern the country; scoffed at friars who abused their power and authority at the expense of the Filipino people; fought other moral evils brought about by the union of Church and State, especially what he and other reformists termed as "frailocracy" or "monastic sovereignty"; and untiringly urged his fellow reformists and other enlightened Filipinos to serve their own country by telling the truth about her in their own written works and speeches.

A Significant Statement in “Amor Patrio”

In his essay entitled “Amor Patrio” (Love of Country), Jose Rizal stated, *“Let us always love our country, desiring nothing but her welfare; for by doing so, we will labor in conformity to the purpose of humanity dictated by God, which is the universal peace and harmony among His creatures.”*

In that statement, he revealed himself to be both a staunch nationalist and a true cosmopolite or citizen of the world, and he strongly suggested that nationalism and internationalism are not disparate but rather complementary principles. We Filipinos must first dedicate ourselves to the development of our nation, so that it will be able to participate on free and equal terms with other nations in the attainment of human solidarity or in the establishment upon earth of a veritable Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God.

Rizal Adamantly Adheres to His Convictions, Principles

Desirous of persuading Rizal to retract his membership in Masonry and to destroy all that he had written against them, his adversaries exerted much pressure on him. But, adamantly adhering to his convictions and principles, he refused to do so. Consequently, they used another gambit: hound, harass, and persecute members of his family, his relatives, and his friends.

As a result of this unreasonable and unjust move of his adversaries, on June 19, 1892, when he was exactly 31 years old, Jose Rial decided to return to the country. This decision was accompanied by a premonition that he would soon die.

He Writes Two Important Letters

On June 20, he wrote two letters -- one to his parents, relatives, and friends, and the other to the Filipino people. He sealed the letters in two envelopes, which he marked with these words: *“To be opened after my*

death." Later, he gave the envelopes to Dr. Lorenzo Marquez, a Portuguese medical doctor in Hongkong.

Let's take a close look at the two letters because they are germane to Mabini's insightful statement cited earlier.

His letter to his parents, relatives, and friends reads as follows:

The affection that I have professed for you suggests this step, and this alone can tell whether or not it is sensible. The outcome judges things according to the consequences, but whether the result be favorable or unfavorable, it may always be said that duty urged me; so, if I die doing it, it will not matter.

I realize how much suffering I have caused you, yet I do not regret what I have done. Rather, if I had to begin all over again, I should do the same thing; for what I have done has been done in pursuit of my duty. Gladly do I go to expose myself to peril, not as an expiation of misdeeds (for in this matter I believe myself guiltless of any), but to complete my work and so that I myself may offer the example of what I have always preached.

A man ought to die for duty and his principles. I hold fast to every idea which I have advanced as to the condition and future of our country, and shall willingly sacrifice all to secure justice and peace for you.

With pleasure, then, I risk my life to save so many innocent persons – so many nieces and nephews, so many children of friends, and children too of others who are not even friends – who are suffering on my account. What am I? A bachelor practically without a family, and sufficiently undeceived about life. I have had many disappointments and the future before me is gloomy if light does not illuminate it with the dawn of a better day for my native land. On the other hand, there are many persons, filled with hope and ambition, who perhaps might be happier if I were dead, and then I hope my enemies will be satisfied and stop persecuting so many

entirely innocent people. To a certain extent, their hatred is justifiable as to myself and my parents and relatives.

Should fate go against me, you will all understand that I shall die happy in the thought that my death will end all your troubles. Return to our country, and may you be happy in it.

Till the last moment of my life, I shall be thinking of you and wishing you good fortune and happiness.

His letter to his countrymen, on the other hand, reads thus:

The step I am taking, or rather am about to take, is undoubtedly risky, and it is necessary to say that I have considered it for some time. I understand that almost everyone is opposed to it but I know also that hardly anybody else understands what is in my heart. I cannot live on seeing so many suffer unjust persecutions on my account; I cannot bear the sight of my sisters and their numerous families treated like criminals. I prefer death and shall cheerfully relinquish life to free so many innocent persons from such unjust persecutions.

I appreciate the fact that at present the future of our country gravitates in some degree around me, that at my death many will feel triumphant, and thus many are now wishing for my fall. But what of it? I hold duties of conscience above all else. I have obligations to the families who suffer, to my aged parents whose sight strikes me to the heart. I know that I alone, only with my death, can make them happy, returning them to their native land and to a peaceful life at home. I am all my parents have, but our country has many, many more sons who can take my place, even do my work better.

Besides, I wish to show those who deny us the boon of patriotism that we know how to die for duty and principles. What matters death, if one dies for what he loves, for native land, and beings so dear?

If I thought that I were the only resource for the consummation of a policy of progress in the Philippines and were I convinced that my countrymen were going to make use of my services, perhaps I would hesitate about taking this step. But there are others who can take my place, who can do my work to advantage. Furthermore, there are perchance those who hold me as an unnecessary being and so my services are not utilized, and I am reduced to inactivity.

Always have I loved our unhappy land, and I am sure that I shall continue loving it till my last moment, in case men prove unjust to me. My career, my life, my happiness -- all I sacrificed for love of it. Whatever my fate, I shall die blessing it and longing for the dawn of its redemption.

When he was writing the two letters, he must have believed that as a patriot, he was bound by both honor and duty to give his life for the welfare and happiness of Filipinas, his beloved country -- a belief which was so strong that it crowded all fear, hatred, and doubt from his mind. He must have thought, *"If the Spaniards will kill me, most likely my death will unify my people, who will eventually engage themselves in a protracted struggle against the Spaniards in order to regain their country's lost freedom."*

So, entrusting his future to Divine Providence, he decided to come home and expose himself to martyrdom. He did not hesitate to offer his life at the altar of sacrifice. Whenever there was something worthy of accomplishing, he did not leave the doing to others. Once he was convinced that there was need for action, he did it himself. A veritable leader, he unhesitatingly did what he could do.

He Writes a Letter to Despujol

On January 21, 1892, Rizal wrote another letter, this time to Governor-General Eulogio Despujol who he knew was also a member of the Craft and as such, obliged to extend his kind care, love and protection to Rizal, who in turn was obliged to extend the same things to Despujol. In that letter, he said in part: *"I am placing myself under the protection of the*

Spanish government, and the responsibility of whatever would happen to me is in your hands."

Unfortunately, Despujol did not fulfill his Masonic obligation to Rizal; rather, he ignored Rizal's letter to him; for he had allowed himself to be part of an organized conspiracy to get rid of such a nuisance as Jose Rizal. This may be gleaned from the fact that when Lucia and Jose Rizal left Hongkong on board the *Don Juan* for Manila (also on January 21), the Spanish consul-general in Hongkong, who had issued Jose Rizal's passport, cabled Despujol: "*The victim is in the trap.*"

Despujol Gives in to the Whims of the *Frailes*

Besides, shortly after the establishment by Jose Rizal of the La Liga Filipina (The Philippine League) on July 3, 1892, Despujol gave in to the whims of the powerful and influential friars, who instigated him to arrest Rizal and to file charges against Rizal because they had suspected that the Liga was subversive of Spanish interests. Thus, on July 7, 1892, the governor-general summoned Rizal to Malacañang and asked whether the latter wanted to go back to Hongkong. When Rizal answered in the affirmative, he produced handbills allegedly found in his sister Lucia's pillow on their arrival from Hongkong. The handbills entitled *Pobres Frailes* made fun of the rich Dominicans who had amassed great wealth, contrary to their "vow of poverty." (Planting evidence was already in vogue at that time.)

Subsequently, Despujol caused the filing of the following charges against Rizal:

1. Rizal published books and articles that were anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish.
2. After his arrival in Manila, there was found a bundle of handbills entitled *Pobres Frailes*.
3. His book *El Filibusterismo* was dedicated to three "traitors" – Gomez, Burgos, and Zamora.

4. The end he sought was to tear from the Filipino breasts the treasure of the Catholic faith.

Rizal's Reaction to His Exile to Dapitan

On the basis of the foregoing charges, Despujol sent Rizal to Dapitan as "*an enemy of the friars and of Spain.*" But Rizal did not allow this unfair development to break his indomitable spirit. Instead, he exhibited himself in Dapitan as a law-abiding citizen by living a normal life and staying away from controversy, hoping that his enemies would refrain from hounding, harassing, and persecuting those he dearly loved any further.

Moreover, he became a close friend of Captain Ricardo Carnicero, the governor-administrator of Dapitan and his warden, whom he found to be a better and truer Mason than Despujol and who assisted him in his initiatives to transform Dapitan and the neighboring towns into better and happier places to live and work in.

His Adversaries Persistently Persecute Him and Persons Dear to Him

Advertently, his adversaries, particularly the *frailles*, did not show any appreciation of Rizal's community-development efforts. On the contrary, they left no stone unturned to make him retract his membership in Masonry and destroy all that he had written against them. They even sent an emissary to Dapitan to offer Rizal a professorship at the University of Santo Tomas with remuneration of 100,000 pesos a year and a gift of an hacienda provided he retracted his Masonry and all his writings, particularly his two novels. But he frankly told the emissary, "*What my right hand did, my left will not deny. The two books I have written are like a mirror. If you are doing the things I have written about, then I have written about you. If not, then you have nothing to fear. You are trying to drown me in a glass of water, but shall not drown me even in an ocean.*"

Reportedly, when his sister Maria heard about the offer, she begged her brother to reconsider, and she jestingly asked him, "*Suppose they gave*

you half the Philippines?" And her impassioned brother replied, "No! Not even for that!"

Because Rizal held on steadfastly to his convictions and principles, his adversaries continued to hound, harass, and persecute him and those dear to him.

Consequently, he continued to view in the cinema of his imagination the terrors of the death that awaited him.

Carnicero Is Unlike Despujol

Obviously, Captain Ricardo Carnicero was very unlike Despujol although both of them were brothers in Masonry. An intellectual, he recognized Rizal's ability and his firm stand on the rights of man and the freedom of his country. Thus, he told his fellow Spaniards not to touch Rizal by harshness (*argumentum ad baculum*) and "better than thou" attitude, but rather by kindness.

Instead of lending attentive ears to Carnicero's wise counsel, however, the foolish Spanish leaders believed Father Obach, the *cura parroco* of Dapitan, who had accused the *Capitan* of not attending mass. Therefore, they had him taken away from Dapitan.

Rizal Finds Life in Dapitan to Have Gotten Monotonous

Captain Ricardo Carnicero, his friend and fellow Freemason, having been unfairly taken away from Dapitan, Rizal found life in that town to have gotten monotonous. There gossips, which sprang from jealousy and prejudice, spread as fast as a telegram or the wing of a hurricane. In fact, on many occasions, Rizal found those gossips to be insufferable.

Besides, he was constantly subjected to harassments and buffetings, which actually originated from ignorance and lies. He took those harassments and buffetings with utmost courage, but he sometimes got tired of them.

He Feels the Urge to Travel Again

Due to the reasons given above, Jose Rizal, in his solitude, felt the urge to embark again on his travels. Thus, he heeded the good and timely suggestion of Ferdinand Blumentritt, his close friend, that he apply for a post in the medical corps of the Spanish army in Cuba, which had started an armed struggle against Spain.

On December 17, 1895, he sent his written application to Governor General Ramon Blanco, who he knew was a fellow Freemason and who he hoped would approve his application.

Almost half a year had elapsed. But there was no word from Governor-General Ramon Blanco regarding his application. Besides, he had learned from some reliable sources that his friends and companions in Madrid, fearing that the Spaniards would file false charges against him, were formulating several plans to get him out of Dapitan. But considering the vast intelligence network of his adversaries, he knew that the plans of his friends and companions in Madrid would not materialize. So, while waiting for Blanco's reply, he fell into near-despair and therefore vividly imagined the terrors of the death that awaited him.

Blanco's Letter At Long Last Arrives

At long last, on July 30, 1896, the ship *España* arrived in Dapitan. Captain Juan Sitges, Carnicero's successor as *Comandante*, handed Rizal a letter from Governor-General Blanco. Written on July 1 in Manila, the letter approved Rizal's application to go to Cuba as a military surgeon. Ergo, like Carnicero, Blanco proved himself to be a better and truer brother to Rizal than Despujol.

Rizal Composes "Canto del Viajero"

In his joy at receiving the good news, Rizal composed "Canto del Viajero" (Song of the Traveler), which was sad and full of premonition. In

that poem, he compared himself to *“a leaf that is fallen and withered, tossed by the tempest (of harassment and persecution) from pole to pole.”*

Indeed, such a leaf was what was left of the young plant uprooted from the Orient and transplanted in the deserts of Europe, where his growth was stunted!

Rizal was fully aware that he would again roam abroad *“without purpose”* and *“without love, without country or soul.”* Thus, if he were to choose, he would rather be near his loved ones, whose faces he would often remember. But he was *“ever impelled by the invisible power,”* which destined him *“to roam from East to the West.”* He was not fazed by the prospects that he might find a tomb in the desert (i.e., another country) and that he would soon be forgotten by his own country and even the rest of the world. Rather, he left the whole plan to God, who alone could rest his soul. Again, although he might return to his country only to find it in ruins and his loved ones turned to ashes, he did not falter in his decision to embark again on his travels.

In the last two stanzas, he described the mission he would have to perform. Wrote he:

*Pilgrim, begone! Nor return more hereafter.
Stranger thou art in the land of thy birth.
Others may sing of their love while rejoicing.
Thou once again must roam o'er the earth.*

*Pilgrim, begone! Nor return more hereafter.
Dry are the tears that a while for thee run.
Pilgrim, begone! And forget thine affliction.
Loud laughs the world at the sorrow of man.*

Rizal Leaves Dapitan

On July 31, 1896, Rizal boarded the mailboat *España* bound for Manila. He was accompanied by Josephine Bracken, his sister Narcisa and niece Angelica, his three nephews, and six of his pupils in Dapitan -- Jose Aseniero, Francisco Eguia, Juan Dalman, Romulo Hamac, and Mateo and Ramon Edjawan. The first four were to serve as instructors in the academy that Rizal, together with Blumentritt, would establish in Manila upon his return from Cuba, while the last two were going home to their hometown, Paete in Laguna.

When the ship reached Dumaguete, Cebu, and Iloilo, Rizal was allowed to go ashore. But when it stopped at Capiz and Romblon, he was not allowed anymore to leave the ship.. Nor was he suffered to leave the ship when it reached Manila Bay. Therefore, he became very suspicious, and his suspicion grew stronger when he was transferred to the cruiser *Castilla*, where he was virtually a prisoner from August 6 to September 2, 1896; for the Spanish authorities suspected him to be the leader of the armed rebellion that had broken out in Manila and neighboring areas, although he had frowned upon the ill-prepared and ill-timed armed rebellion against Spain initiated by Andres "Sinukuan" Bonifacio. So, he again vividly imagined the terrors of the death that awaited him.

He Leaves Filipinas Again

On September 3, 1896, the *Isla de Panay* left Manila, with Rizal on board. When the ship reached Singapore, a British colony, other Filipino passengers went ashore and did not proceed to Spain. Prominent Filipinos in that country endeavored most earnestly to persuade Rizal to jump ship, too. But, Hamlet-like, he told them, "*I promised the Spanish government that I would go to Cuba, and I am going to carry on my part of the agreement. The word of a Filipino is a vow....*"

While he was on the *Isla de Panay*, he exhibited himself as a man of honor and as a model citizen, all for the sake of the persons he dearly

loved. But he could not help but vividly imagined the terrors of the death that awaited him.

He Has a Long Reunion with Despujol

When the ship reached Barcelona, Spain on October 3, he was imprisoned for three days in Montjuich Castle, the warden of which was Eulogio Despujol, the man responsible for his deportation to Dapitan. The warden visited the prisoner, and the two had a long reunion. Rizal found Despujol to be a changed man; so, he related to the latter all that had taken place in Dapitan. Despujol, in turn, told Rizal, *“You were treated unfairly since you had done nothing more than publish your ideas to gain reforms for your country. I found out by myself that you are a good man with honest beliefs and honest convictions. Because I respect and admire you, I now deeply regret my own personal action.”*

Their long reunion over, Despujol ordered his subordinates to give Rizal all the comfort possible during the time the latter was in Montjuich. He was, indeed, a changed man.

He Leaves Barcelona

On October 6, Rizal left Barcelona on the mail ship *Colon*. Because he was in chains, again he vividly imagined what would happen to him in Manila.

When the *Colon* reached Singapore, his friends, particularly his brothers in Masonry, again exerted all-out efforts to get him out of the ship. But, instead of accepting their sympathetic succor, he reminded them, *“The Colon is a government ship. Were I to jump ship now, an international trouble between Spain and England might be precipitated.”*

He is Again Detained in Fort Santiago

Upon his arrival in Manila, Rizal was lodged again in a cell in Fort Santiago.

Later, he found out that it was not Governor General Ramon Blanco but the Judge Advocate, Colonel Francisco Olive, who issued the order that he be brought back to Manila. This information caused him to again vividly imagine the terrors of the death that awaited him; for Olive was the same man who led the company of soldiers that went to Calamba five years before to evict Rizal's family and townmates, simply because he wanted to show to the *indios* that Spain was mighty and that, therefore, they must respect her rule.

During Rizal's detention in Fort Santiago, Doña Teodora and Josephine Bracken prepared food for him, and Aseniero, Hamac, and Eguia, his bright students in Dapitan, took turns to deliver the food to him. At times, the three students were allowed by kind-hearted guards to deliver the food personally to their master; at other times, however, they were prevented by mean guards from doing so. In this case, the food had to wait, get cold, and probably spoiled.

While awaiting trial, Jose Rizal could not help but vividly imagine what would happen to him at the trial and how he would die if found guilty of the false charges filed against him.

He is Condemned to Die by Musketry

In a mock trial, as he had expected, he was found guilty of the charges filed against him and condemned to die by musketry at Bagumbayan field early in the morning of December 30, 1896.

What He Strongly Suggests in His Valedictory Poem

On the eve of his execution, he wrote his last poem, in which he strongly suggested, among other things, that his soul agonized because the Spanish ruling classes continued to oppress and exploit the greater masses of the Filipino people. So, he apostrophized to his beloved Filipinas:

*Pray for all those that, hapless, died,
For all who have suffered the unmeasur'd pain,
For our mothers that bitterly their woes have cried,
For widows and orphans, for captives by tortures tired;
And then for thyself that redemption thou mayst gain.*

Later on, he requested Filipinas to pray likewise for his rest in God. Next, he told her:

*Beloved Filipinas, hear my very last farewell.
Here I leave all to thee: my parents, my loved ones.
I'm going to where there are neither slaves, executioners, nor oppressors,
Where faith does not kill, Where he who reigns is God.*

Clearly, Rizal was not an atheist, as his adversaries had portrayed him to be. On the contrary, he staunchly believed in the power of prayer, in the existence of God, and in a life after one's pilgrimage on earth.

Concluding Statements

From the foregoing considerations we can infer that Apolinario Mabini hit the nail on the head when he described Rizal's sad, withered life as "*a continuing death, bravely endured until the end of his love for his country,*" and that Rizal was a true Freemason and a true Filipino, who had a keen sense of nationalism, which he tempered with his spirit of humanist internationalism.

As the late nationalist and Senator Claro Mayo Recto would say, "*If we truly love our country, we must transform ourselves into a **nation of Rizals** – a nation which is so developed that it is capable of participating on free and equal terms with other nations in the attainment of human solidarity or in the establishment of a true brotherhood of men of all countries, sects, and opinions under the Fatherhood of God.*" This means, at least in part, that we Filipinos should make "*Bayan muna, bago pamilya, bago sarili,*" or "*Tayo muna, bago kami, bago ako,*" as part and parcel of our philosophy of life.