

DE DESTIERRO A DESTINO

By Edwin D. Bael, KCR 1/

De lugar de destierro a lugar de destino. From place of exile to place of destiny.

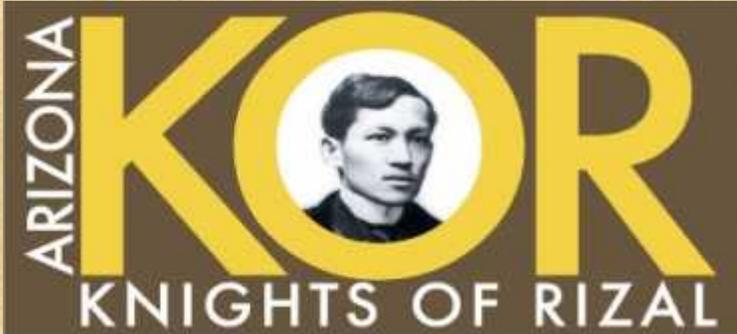
In Dr. Rizal's time (1890s), Dapitan, the province of Zamboanga del Norte (not yet in political existence then) and all of Mindanao were perceived by the Spanish colonizing powers and their local collaborators as so God-forsaken that to be exiled there was supposed to truly punish, sober up and isolate "trouble makers." It was a land fit for banishment.

That was irrelevant to Dr. Jose Rizal. According to a biographical sketch, "(w)hile a political exile in Dapitan, (Rizal) engaged in agriculture, fishing and business; he maintained and operated a hospital; he conducted classes - taught his pupils the English and Spanish languages, the arts; also the sciences, vocational courses including agriculture, surveying, sculpturing, and painting, as well as the art of self defense; he did some researches and collected specimens; he entered into correspondence with renowned men of letters and sciences abroad; and with the help of his pupils, he constructed a water dam and a relief map of Mindanao - both considered remarkable engineering feats. His sincerity and friendliness won for him the trust and confidence of even those assigned to guard him. (In general), his good manners and warm personality were found irresistible by women of all races with whom he had personal contacts; his intelligence and humility gained for him the respect and admiration of prominent men of other nations; while his undaunted courage and determination to uplift the welfare of his people were feared by his enemies.2/

He found a sense of at-one-ment with the universe through the peace and quiet of Talisay, serenaded by the music of cascading brooks and crashing waves of the sea 3/; and, instead of rotting in the hell of loneliness as the authorities intended, he flourished in the heaven of Josephine's 4/ love and in the respect of the local community he served and helped uplift...

In the "Himno a Talisay", he formulated a vision of how the Philippines should conduct itself as a nation: the national territory is sacred sanctuary (1st & 2nd stanzas); though late bloomers, we Filipinos [Talisaynons] are strong persons with vigorous character who know how to protect our families (3rd stanza); nothing scares us and, if necessary, we know how to fight, cool and quick (4th stanza); we play hard, build solid homes and have arms that reach anywhere, anytime (5th stanza); we fear no raging storms and would catch even Satan, dead or alive, if he shows up (6th stanza); great souls in not so large constitutions, unparalleled in the region (7th stanza), we dive deep and are virtually unbeatable as rowing team (8th stanza); studying exact sciences and history, we speak 3 to 4 languages and make faith and reason agree (9th stanza); we are multi-dextrous with tools that build and protect (10th stanza); we treasure our valued nation (11th stanza) and hold its memory as talisman and its name as peace in death even as we face life's struggles and sorrows (12th stanza). Firm and constant, always advancing, we march and triumph over the elements (chorus). 5/

In *Canto del Viajero* (Song of the Traveler), written just before leaving Dapitan, Rizal compared the traveler [him] to a dry leaf flying aimlessly, vainly seeking bliss and roaming from end to end; missing love, his soul holds emptiness and returns to find nothing more but being a foreigner in his own country; the traveler must face the fact that no cries follow goodbyes and the world mocks the pain of others. 6/



Rizal in Dapitan (1893-July 1896), practiced an ancient principle highly touted by today's self-help and happiness gurus: "It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters." 7/

In the Rizalian spirit, let us make things happen where we are.

Let us choose to take action to achieve and to make as our destiny his vision and his dreams. For: "Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved." 8/

And let us make those choices with firm resolve and steel determination. Because: "There is no chance, no destiny, no fate that can circumvent or hinder or control the firm resolve of a determined soul." 9/

Wherever a Filipino or kindred Rizalist soul may be in the universe, s/he can bloom and make a difference in that place. Any place one is can be made a place of destiny or a jumping board for greater destiny.

Nationally, whatever happens to and in our nation, we Filipinos can make it a nation of destiny. That is why Rizal believed so much in the new generations as the hope of the fatherland 10/ and faced the firing squad so calmly, certain that many more will take his place and surpass his achievements 11/.

From thinking global to acting local, in our province, we can make Zamboanga del Norte a destination, a place of high art and excellent education, a place to be seen in, a place to make money too, and be happy. We and our progeny shall walk on our shores: no longer a place of banishment, but rather a place of accomplishment; not just full of promises and potentials but bubbling up with kinetic realities of fulfilment... in the here and now!

De verdad, un lugar de destino! In truth and in fact, a place of destiny!

Notes:

1/ Edwin D. Bael, from Dipolog City, Knight Commander of Rizal, AB, LLB, MPA, MNSA; practicing attorney, policy analyst and project management consultant.

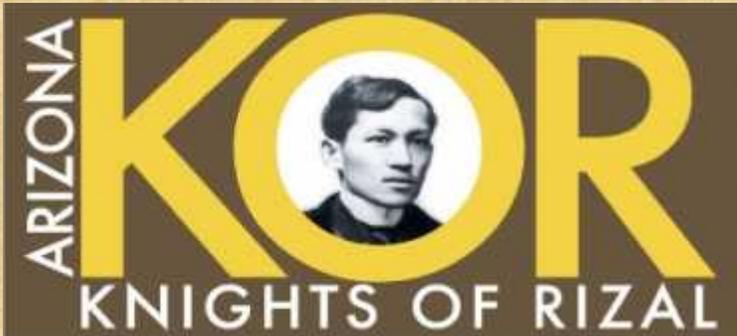
2/ Jose Rizal: A Biographical Sketch By Teofilo H. Montemayor,
<http://www.joserizal.ph/bg01.html>

3/ Josephine Leopoldine McBride Bracken, Irish, adopted by George Taufer who became blind and sought Rizal's treatment in Dapitan; she was the subject of "To Josephine"/Josephine, Josephine/ Who to these shores have come/ Looking for a nest, a home/ Like a wandering swallow/ If your fate is taking you/ To Japan, China, or Shanghai/ Don't forget that on these shores/ A heart for you beats high" and referred to in the Ultimo Adios as "dulce extranjera, mi amiga, mi alegría".

4/ Check his Mi Retiro @ <http://www.joserizal.com/mi-retiro/> and Nick Joaquin's English translation, posted at <http://jimboflores.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/jose-rizal.jpg>

5/ See the Spanish text with English, Filipino, and Cebuano translations in the blog 'Rizal's Significance' - <http://rizalsignificance.blogspot.com/>

6/ http://en.wikipilipinas.org/index.php?title=Canto_del_Viajero; see an English translation at <http://rizalsignificance.blogspot.com/>



7/ Epictetus (c.AD 55-c. 135), <http://EzineArticles.com/2269482>

8/ Quote from William Jennings Bryan

9/ Quote from Ella Wheeler Wilcox

10/ "A La Juventud Filipina - To The Philippine Youth", "*Hold high the brow serene O youth, where now you stand; Let the bright sheen Of your grace be seen, Fair hope of my fatherland!*" translation by Charles Derbyshire, <http://www.schillerinstitute.org/educ/hist/rizal.html>

11/ "*Besides, I wish to show those who deny us patriotism that we know how to die for duty and principles. What matters death, if one dies for what one loves, for native land and beings held dear? If I thought that I were the only resource for the policy of progress in the Philippines, and were I convinced that my countrymen were going to make use of my services, perhaps I should hesitate about taking this step; but there are still others who can take my place, who, too, can take my place with advantage.*" Letter to the Filipino People, a sealed letter written in 1892 before leaving Hongkong, with the Note: 'To Be Opened After My Death'. That was Rizal's hope; it is ours too. And we seek to make it real; otherwise we are bound to keep on repeating Padre Florentino's soliloquy in the "El Filibusterismo": "*Where are the youth who will consecrate their budding years, their idealism and enthusiasm to the welfare of their country? Where are the youth who will generously pour out their blood to wash away so much shame, so much crime, so much abomination? Pure and spotless must the victim be, that the sacrifice may be acceptable! Where are you, youth, who will embody in yourselves the vigor of life that has left our veins, the purity of ideas that has been contaminated in our hearts? We await you, O youth! Come, for we await you!*" <http://www.schillerinstitute.org/educ/hist/rizal.html>

(December 29, 2013)