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BIG DEAL

By Dan Mariano

'Filipinos do not love the Philippines'

The following article, "My Short Essay About the Philippines," was written by Jaeyoun Kim, a Korean studying in the Philippines. It was sent by e-mail by Lirio Mapa, vice president of the Center for Leadership and Change, through Ateneo de Manila professor Terry David, a high-school classmate of mine.

In introducing the article, Mapa noted: "As you know, we have plenty of Koreans currently studying in the Philippines to take advantage of our cheaper tuition fees and learn English at the same time.

This is an essay written by a Korean student we want to share with you."

I am reproducing it—unabridged and unedited—in this column because of the author's keen insight about us Filipinos.

My Short Essay About the Philippines

By Jaeyoun Kim

Filipinos always complain about the corruption in the Philippines. Do you really think the corruption is the problem of the Philippines? I do not think so. I strongly believe that the problem is the lack of love for the Philippines.

Let me first talk about my country, Korea. It might help you understand my point. After the Korean War, South Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world.

Koreans had to start from scratch because entire country was destroyed completely after the Korean War, and we had no natural resources.

Koreans used to talk about the Philippines, for Filipinos were very rich in Asia. We envy Filipinos. Koreans really wanted to be well off

like Filipinos. Many Koreans died of famine. My father's brother also died because of famine.

Korean government was awfully corrupt and is still very corrupt beyond your imagination, but Korea was able to develop dramatically because Koreans really did their best for the common good with their heart burning with patriotism.

Koreans did not work just for themselves but also for their neighborhood and country. Education inspired young men with the spirit of patriotism.

40 years ago, President Park took over the government to reform Korea. He tried to borrow money from other countries, but it was not possible to get a loan and attract a foreign investment because the economy situation of South Korea was so bad.

Korea had only three factories. So, President Park sent many mine workers and nurses to Germany so that they could send money to Korea to build a factory. They had to go through a horrible experience.

In 1964, President Park visited Germany to borrow money. Hundred of Koreans in Germany came to the airport to welcome him and cried there as they saw the President Park. They asked to him, "President, when can we be well off?" That was the only question everyone asked to him. President Park cried with them and promised them that Korea would be well off if everyone works hard for Korea, and the President of Germany got the strong impression on them and lent money to Korea.

So, President Park was able to build many factories in Korea. He always asked Koreans to love their country from their heart. Many Korean scientists and engineers in the USA came back to Korea to help developing country because they wanted their country to be well off.

Though they received very small salary, they did their best for Korea. They always hoped that their children would live in well off country. My parents always brought me to the places where poor and physically handicapped people live.

They wanted me to understand their life and help them. I also worked for Catholic Church when I was in the army. The only thing I learned from Catholic Church was that we have to love our neighborhood. And I have loved my neighborhood.

Have you cried for the Philippines? I have cried for my country several times. I also cried for the Philippines because of so many poor people. I have been to the New Bilibid prison.

What made me sad in the prison were the prisoners who do not have any love for their country. They go to mass and work for

Church.

They pray everyday. However, they do not love the Philippines. I talked to two prisoners at the maximum security compound, and both of them said that they would leave the Philippines right after they are released from the prison.

They said that they would start a new life in other countries and never come back to the Philippines.

Many Koreans have a great love for Korea so that we were able to share our wealth with our neighborhood. The owners of factory and company were distributed their profit to their employees fairly so that employees could buy what they needed and saved money for the future and their children. When I was in Korea, I had a very strong faith and wanted to be a priest.

However, when I came to the Philippines, I completely lost my faith. I was very confused when I saw many unbelievable situations in the Philippines. Street kids always make me sad, and I see them everyday.

The Philippines is the only Catholic country in Asia, but there are too many poor people here. People go to church every Sunday to pray, but nothing has been changed.

My parents came to the Philippines last week and saw this situation. They told me that Korea was much poorer than the present Philippines when they were young.

They are so sorry that there so many beggars and street kids. When we went to Pasangjan, I forced my parents to take a boat because it would fun.

However, they were not happy after taking a boat. They said that they would not take the boat again because they were sympathized the boat men, for the boat men were very poor and had a small frame. Most of people just took a boat and enjoyed it. But my parents did not enjoy it because of love for them.

My mother who has been working for Catholic Church since I was very young told me that if we just go to mass without changing ourselves, we are not Catholic indeed.

Faith should come with action. She added that I have to love Filipinos and do good things for them because all of us are same and have received a great love from God.

I want Filipinos to love their neighborhood and country as much as they love God so that the Philippines will be well off.

I am sure that love is the keyword which Filipinos should remember. We cannot change the sinful structure at once. It should start from

person. Love must start in everybody in a small scale and have to grow.

A lot of things happen if we open up to love. Let's put away our prejudices and look at our worries with our new eyes. I discover that every person is worthy to be loved.

Trust in love, because it makes changes possible. Love changes you and me. It changes people, contexts and relationships. It changes the world.

Please love your neighborhood and country. Jesus Christ said that whatever we do to others we do to Him. In the Philippines, there is God for people who are abused and abandoned.

There is God who is crying for love. If you have a child, teach them how to love the Philippines.

Teach them why they have to love their neighborhood and country.

You already know that God also will be very happy if you love others. That's all I really want to ask you Filipinos. Now I will second her/his curiosity. Is the Philippines worth crying for . . .

Who will shed tears for the Motherland?

Who will lend a hand to lift her spirit, to hold the lonely Flag that symbolize her name? ♦

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