



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

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LET THE TRUTH BE HEARD

(A Pastoral Statement on Marcos Jr's 2nd State of the Nation address 2023)

"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another". – Ephesians 4: 25

"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15).

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and his family have been living extravagant lifestyles for the past 11 months while the majority of Filipinos wallow in extreme poverty and hunger as a result of skyrocketing inflation, low wages, and insufficient social services.

In an effort to hide the horrific history of his dictator father's Martial Law regime, he promotes dubious solutions like the Maharlika Investment Fund and resuscitates down the drain schemes like Masagana 99 program. *"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15).*

Based on observations and studies, the nation has not yet fully recuperated from the pandemic's ill-effects. The ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO) said *"The Philippine economy continues to face multiple downside risks and challenges in its recovery path, including a prolonged wave of the pandemic and a slower-than-expected global recovery. Businesses face potential financial distress with implications for lower potential growth due to the scarring effects of a prolonged downturn."* Since the Marcos administration has continued to implement neoliberal economic policies in the same manner as his predecessors, the country's economic track is still skewed in favor of local and international elite. Regarding his plans for the economy, Marcos Jr. has not been particularly clear. However, it is clearly evident that rather than changing failed neoliberal policies, his administration will build on the legacy of his predecessor. The first year was likely the most important time to break with the past, including poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment as well as the previous administration. The Marcos Jr. government did nothing with this opportunity and, if anything, shown its inability to even conceive of any significant fundamental reform. To the disadvantage of local workers and farmers, this has resulted in a continuous dependence on importation policies, service privatization and liberalization that has raised the cost of public utilities, and the suppression of salaries and labor rights.

Marcos Jr.'s' administration has definitely veered its allegiance more toward the US as it opens the way for more broad US military action and raised regional tension. As a lamblike gesture, Marcos has allowed the expansion of additional "agreed locations" under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.

Without taking tangible steps to end long-standing abuse patterns and ensure justice for previous human rights crimes, President Marcos' talks lack credibility. He needs to show more than just platitudes about democracy and the rule of law. President Marcos needs to do more than just issue statements about democracy and the rule of law to demonstrate a genuine commitment to human rights.

While Marcos Jr. has pledged to alleviate the situation of Overseas Filipino Workers, Mary Jane Veloso's case, who had been languishing in an Indonesian jail for a crime she was falsely accused of, has received little attention thus far.

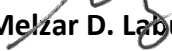
Hitherto, all his election campaign promises remain to be empty rhetoric and his avowals mere bombast words.


Marcos Jr's initiative to achieve genuine and long-lasting peace has not yet been seen. As of yet, there has been no evidence of the government's willingness to pursue peace negotiations with the NDFP as a viable option for bringing about peace and stability in the nation. Instead, he has carried on his predecessor's harsh counter-insurgency campaign to crush resistance and prop up power. The Marcos Jr. government has, in fact, bolstered its red-tagging against perceived enemies and critics.


As members of the church, we call on President Bongbong Marcos to tell the truth about the country's current state so that everyone can hear it. We also call on the Filipino people to join hands in the struggle for justice, peace and decent life. We say YES to good governance and a resounding NO to Maharlika Investment Fund! Uphold Philippine Sovereignty! +


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20 June 2023


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