

Promoting Nationalism Overseas

Talking about nationalism overseas appears contradictory. Nationalism is about loyalty and devotion to a nation. So we ask, “How can people nurture a national consciousness that promotes their culture and interests, when they are away from their homeland?”

The case of our Overseas Filipinos, who number about 11 million and account for about 11% of our population, forces us to face two realities on the issue of nationalism overseas.

First, the overseas or global Filipinos or the Filipinos in Diaspora are still Filipino. Whether they have kept their Filipino citizenship or not, whether they plan to return to the Philippines or not, whether they contribute or not to the remittances —18.8 billion dollars in 2010 — they are still Filipino.

Since they are, we must answer together two relevant questions. First, “what does it mean to be a Filipino?” Second, “why is it good to be a Filipino?”

The second reality that moves us to deal with nationalism overseas is the fact that nationalism is changing. Some now regard nationalism as transcending geographical borders. The concept of “long-distance nationalism” or “binary nationalism” allows for multiple, non-exclusive loyalties.

The national “home” has become the emotional center “where the heart is”, and the physical center “where our people are”. We can no longer assume that being away from the homeland means surrendering our love of the old country. As one overseas Filipino said, “I have a new home here, and I love my homeland.”

In light of this second reality, we must also answer together two relevant questions. First, “what does it mean for Filipinos to be nationalistic overseas?” Second, “what can we do to promote this new nationalism?”

Together, Filipinos residing here and abroad can take steps to promote Filipino nationalism globally. It begins with embracing the idea that wherever we happen to be, we share ties that make us brothers and sisters. It also means embracing the idea that we have a common purpose, wherever on the globe our individual purposes happen to be.

Ultimately, if this common purpose lies in the pursuit of Christ and his Kingdom, we can be confident that that this common purpose will be for all our good as Filipinos, whether our home is here or elsewhere.

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