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JOHN PATRICK C. GREGORIO

Chairman

Philippine Sports Commission

FROM TAX AWARENESS TO TRUST

Reimagining Service
in Public Institutions
with BIR Commissioner
Charlie Mendoza

**RCM - RCMFI
Reading Literacy/
Teacher Training Project
with Reading Specialists, Inc.**

WHEN THE SEA CARRIED THEIR DESTINY

The Love Story of
Nico Valencia and
Zyrene Parsad,
Written in Faith,
Shaped by Providence,
and Promised Until
Life After Death

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PROGRAM



ROTARY CLUB OF MANILA 21st Weekly Membership Meeting Rotary Year 2025-2026

Thursday, February 12, 2026, 12:15 PM
Manila Polo Club

Moderator: DIR. EDWIN H. HERNANDEZ

PART I

11:00 AM Registration /Lunch

12:15 PM Call to Order
PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA

Invocation | **RTN. NICOLO S. "Nic" HALLARE**

Philippine National Anthem | **AVP**

Rotary Club of Manila Hymn
RCM WF Music Chorale

The Four (4) Way Test | **ISAA NAGI ZEITOUNI**

Acknowledgement of Guests
DIR. EDWIN H. HERNANDEZ

Welcome Song | **RCM WF Music Chorale**

Birthday Celebrants

Feb. 06 PP Ebot Tan

Feb. 08 Rtn. Paco Magsaysay

Feb. 09 Rtn. Cris Acosta

Rtn. Dong Benedicto

Rtn. Val Co

Feb 10 PP Chito Zaldarriaga

Maligayang Bati / Happy Birthday Song
RCM WF Chorale

PART II

12:35 PM President's Time
PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA

*Announcement/Launching of the
RCM Pro Patria Journalism Awards*

PD AMADO D. "Amading" VALDEZ

*Chairman, RCM Pro Patria Journalism Awards
Committee*

12:40 PM Introduction of the Guest of Honor & Speaker
DIR. MICHAEL JAEY C. "Mike" ALBAÑA

Guest of Honor and Speaker

HON. JOHN PATRICK C. GREGORIO

Chairman

Philippine Sports Commission

1:15 PM Open Forum / Q&A

1:30 PM Presentation of Certificate of Appreciation
PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA

1:45 PM Adjournment
PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA

EDITORIAL

Reginald T. Yu
Editor-in-Chief



WHEN John Patrick G. Gregorio, Chairman of the Philippine Sports Commission, steps before the Rotary Club of Manila as Guest Speaker for its 21st Weekly Membership Meeting, he does so at a moment when Philippine sport — much like Philippine society itself — stands at a crossroads.

Sport, in its truest sense, has never been merely about medals, rankings, or momentary triumphs. It is about discipline before applause, sacrifice before recognition, and character before victory. These are values Rotarians know well. They are values forged not in the spotlight, but in training halls, grassroots programs, and systems that quietly insist on excellence long before the world notices.

Chairman Gregorio represents a generation of public servants who understand that sport is not an ornament of nationhood, but a foundational pillar of it. In a country where talent is abundant but opportunity often uneven, the role of leadership in sports governance becomes nothing less than a moral obligation — to widen access, professionalize structures, and ensure that promise is not lost to neglect or politics.

Under his stewardship, the challenge is clear: how do we transform isolated athletic success into a sustainable national system? How do we ensure that the victories

EDITORIAL

we celebrate today are not accidents of individual brilliance, but outcomes of deliberate policy, inclusive development, and long-term investment?

For Rotary, this conversation resonates deeply. Service above self is not foreign to the world of sport. Every coach who stays after hours, every trainer who believes in an athlete before results come, every administrator who chooses integrity over expediency — these are Rotarian virtues expressed in another arena.

Chairman Gregorio's presence reminds us that leadership is not defined by the microphone, but by the ecosystem one builds. A sports commission that functions well does more than produce champions; it cultivates hope, discipline, and national pride. It offers young Filipinos—regardless of background — a fair field on which effort matters more than privilege.

In welcoming him, the Rotary Club of Manila does more than host a

speaker. It affirms a belief that sport, when governed with vision and conscience, can be one of the most powerful instruments of social cohesion. That athletic excellence and civic responsibility are not separate pursuits, but parallel expressions of the same commitment to the common good.

As Rotary embraces the theme “Unite for Good,” this dialogue could not be more timely. Nation-building does not happen only in boardrooms or legislatures. It happens on tracks, courts, pools, and fields — where values are tested daily, and where leadership, when done right, leaves a legacy far greater than a scoreline.

This week's meeting is therefore not simply another gathering on the calendar. It is an invitation to reflect on how excellence is cultivated, how systems endure, and how service — whether through Rotary or sport — ultimately shapes the kind of nation we aspire to become.

GUEST OF HONOR & SPEAKER



**JOHN PATRICK C.
GREGORIO**

*Chairman
Philippine Sports Commission*

PATRICK “Pató” Gregorio is a seasoned sports, tourism, and corporate executive with a track record of linchpin contributions in every industry he has served.

As a tourism executive, he was historically the first to be awarded the Ten Outstanding Young Men for Tourism in 2003 for his contributions to the industry. Pató’s track record in corporate affairs and government relations has trained him in navigating the nuances of public and private sector engagements, a skill he has leveraged successfully in assisting the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) in facilitating the historic management transition of Camp John Hay’s legacy properties to interim operators in 2025.

As a corporate sportsman, all national sports organizations that he helmed as a top official (basketball, boxing, and rowing) qualified consistently for the Olympic Games during his period of service. He also helmed the great revival of the Tour of Luzon in April 2025. Since his appointment as Chairman of the Philippine Sports Commission in July 2025, he has been instrumental in advancing strategic initiatives that integrate sports development with tourism, infrastructure, and national positioning, most notably the establishment and strengthening of Regional Training Centers, the reinforcement of clear grassroots-to-elite athlete pathways, and the strategic hosting of major international sporting events as catalysts for sports tourism and economic impact.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A GOLDEN BOND BEYOND BORDERS: CELEBRATING 56 YEARS OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF KOWLOON EAST

TOGETHER with my wife, Myls, and our daughter, Melissa -- and in the company of fellow Manila Rotarians Past District Governor Vince Carlos, International Committee Chair / IA Nick Locsin, and Past Director Ner Lonzaga with his wife, Famy -- we spent a truly memorable weekend in Hong Kong with our long-time friends from the Rotary Club of Kowloon East. Our visit to this vibrant and bustling city was anchored on the celebration of RCKE's 56th Anniversary.



Raoul C. Creencia
President

What began as participation in a milestone event beautifully evolved into something far more meaningful: a powerful reminder of what Rotary genuinely represents -- enduring friendships, a shared commitment to service, and a fellowship that transcends borders, cultures, and generations.

As Rotarians gathered to mark more than five decades of service by our long-standing sister club, the atmosphere was filled not only with celebration but with a deep sense of continuity. The Rotary Club of Kowloon East's journey over the past 56 years reflects the very best

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

of Rotary ideals -- Service Above Self expressed through meaningful community projects, principled leadership, and an unwavering commitment to building goodwill and peace.

For the Rotary Club of Manila, the occasion carried special significance. Our relationship with the Rotary Club of Kowloon East now spans half a century -- a remarkable 50 years of partnership that stands as one of the longest and most cherished international linkages of our club. What began as a formal sister-club relationship has grown into a genuine friendship rooted in mutual respect, shared values, and countless shared experiences.

Over the years, this bond has been strengthened through reciprocal visits, joint service initiatives, and the simple yet profound act of showing up for one another -- whether in times of celebration or challenge. Over the weekend, that history was palpable. Every handshake, shared meal, and exchange of stories echoed decades of collaboration and camaraderie, reminding us that Rotary's global network is not abstract -- it is deeply personal.

A day before the Anniversary Ball on February 7, the Rotary Club of Kowloon East graciously hosted a sumptuous welcome dinner in our honor, capped by an evening of spirited karaoke singing. The night proved truly memorable as we were joined by fellow Rotarians from the Rotary Clubs of Taipei East, Bangkok, Sae Seoul, and Taipei Ricardo. Amid an abundance of fresh seafood, generous libations, and joyful singing, the gathering became a delightful prelude—setting the tone and camaraderie—for the formal anniversary celebration that unfolded the following evening.

The formal anniversary celebration that followed underscored the internationality of Rotary in the most authentic way. In a world often divided by geography and ideology, Rotary continues to prove that service can be a universal language. That evening, cultural differences faded into the background as Rotarians connected through a shared commitment to leadership, ethics, and community service. It was Rotary at its finest: diverse in perspective, united in purpose.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Witnessing the pride and warmth of the Rotary Club of Kowloon East as they celebrated their legacy was inspiring. It reaffirmed the importance of institutional memory, continuity, and intergenerational leadership—values that resonate strongly with Asia's First Rotary Club. More importantly, it reinforced our shared responsibility to ensure that the next 50 years of this partnership are just as meaningful and impactful as the last.

As we look ahead, the 56th Anniversary of the Rotary Club of Kowloon East stands as a testament to what is possible when clubs commit not only to service within their communities, but also to friendship beyond their shores. It was an evening that celebrated the past, honored the present, and strengthened the bridge to a future of continued collaboration between the Rotary Club of Manila and the Rotary Club of Kowloon East -- a golden bond that truly exemplifies Rotary Without Borders.

AREAS OF FOCUS



PEACEBUILDING AND
CONFLICT PREVENTION



DISEASE PREVENTION
AND TREATMENT



WATER, SANITATION,
AND HYGIENE



MATERNAL AND
CHILD HEALTH



BASIC EDUCATION
AND LITERACY



COMMUNITY ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT



ENVIRONMENT



cover story

FROM TAX AWARENESS TO TRUST

*Reimagining Service
in Public Institutions
with BIR
Commissioner
Charlie Mendoza*

by PE Reginald T. Yu

THE 20th Weekly Membership Meeting of the Rotary Club of Manila was formally called to order by President Atty. Raoul C. Creencia, marking another purposeful gathering in the Club's continuing tradition of fellowship, public service, and informed civic engagement. Held at the venerable Manila Polo Club, the meeting reflected Rotary's enduring role as a forum where leadership, governance, and national concerns intersect meaningfully.

An atmosphere of attentiveness and collegial warmth set the tone for the proceedings, as members and guests alike prepared for a program that would blend Rotary ritual, fellowship, and substantive discourse on one of the most critical pillars of nation-building: taxation and public trust.

Invocation and Patriotic Observances

The meeting opened with an invocation led by Rtn. Abdulgani M. “Gani” Macatoman, grounding the assembly in reflection and gratitude. This was followed by the solemn rendition of the Philippine National Anthem, affirming shared responsibility to country and community.

The Rotary Club of Manila Hymn and the recitation of The Four-Way Test, led and performed by the RCM WF Music Chorale, reminded everyone present of the ethical compass that guides Rotarians in thought, word, and deed — principles that would resonate deeply throughout the day’s discussions.



President Raoul C. Creencia called the meeting to order.



DSAA JOHN MICHAEL CUTTER moderated the meeting.

Acknowledgment of Guests and Fellowship

The acknowledgment of guests was undertaken with warmth and grace, reinforcing Rotary's culture of inclusivity and appreciation. The Moderator, DSAA John Michael "John" Cutter, ensured the smooth flow of the program, balancing formality with the ease of fellowship.

A welcome song by the RCM WF Music Chorale added a celebratory dimension to the gathering, reminding everyone that Rotary meetings are not only venues for discourse, but also spaces for camaraderie and shared joy.

Birthday Celebrants

In keeping with Rotary tradition, the Club paused to honor its birthday celebrants, acknowledging life milestones that bind members beyond professional and civic roles. The singing of "Maligayang Bati / Happy Birthday" by the Chorale was a moment of lightness and unity — small gestures that strengthen the bonds of fellowship at the heart of Rotary.



Rtn. Abdulgani M. "Gani" Macatoman led the invocation.



PIA Jordan M. Pizarra led the recitation of the Four-Way Test.

President's Time

During President's Time, President Raoul C. Creencia addressed the assembly with reflections that underscored the Club's ongoing momentum and its commitment to relevance.

His message reinforced the Rotary Club of Manila's role as a thought partner in national conversations—one that does not shy away from complex issues but approaches them with integrity, respect, and service above self.



President Raoul C. Creencia during the President's Time



During his "President's Time," President Raoul Creencia invited DGND/DSG Herminio S. "Hermie" Esguerra to speak and give an impromptu account of his positive experiences at the recent District Midyear Report, which took place in Da Nang, Vietnam, from January 22 to 24, 2026.

Introduction of the Guest of Honor and Speaker

The Guest of Honor and Speaker was formally introduced by PDG Alexander P. "Alex" Cureg, whose introduction framed the occasion not merely as a ceremonial visit, but as an opportunity for learning, dialogue, and mutual understanding between public institutions and civil society.



PDG Alexander P. “Alex” Cureg introduced the Guest of Honor and Speaker.

The presence of Hon. Charlito Martin R. “Charlie” Mendoza, Commissioner of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), lent the meeting particular significance. His address came at a time when tax reform, digital governance, and public trust are central to national development.

“Mahusay na Serbisyo, Katumbas ng Buwis Mo” in Practice

Commissioner Mendoza opened his address with candor and quiet humor, greeting the assembly not with a Valentine’s salutation, but with a timely reminder: February is Tax Awareness Month, as declared by

the President of the Philippines. This framing immediately positioned taxation not as a burden, but as a shared civic responsibility — one that underpins public services, infrastructure, and social equity.

At the heart of his address was the BIR’s reform and legacy agenda known as BIR-DARES, a five-pillar framework designed to modernize tax administration, strengthen accountability, and rebuild public trust.

Digital and Data Transformation formed the first pillar of the agenda. Commissioner Mendoza emphasized that digitalization is not merely about technology, but about predictability, transparency, and standardization. He detailed the expansion of electronic invoicing, receipting, and sales reporting systems, as well as the development of QR-based verification tools to combat fraud. Central to this transformation is the forthcoming Taxpayer Portal, envisioned as a single platform where taxpayers can clearly view and verify their compliance status—from registration to filing and payment — aligned with the Ease of Paying Taxes Law.



*Guest of Honor and Speaker
Hon. Charlito Martin R. "Charlie"
Mendoza, Commissioner of the
Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR)*

The second pillar, Audit Reform and Accountability, addressed long-standing concerns of taxpayers regarding audit exposure and fairness. Commissioner Mendoza explained the relaunch of audits under a reformed framework, highlighting the consolidation of multiple audit types into a single audit per taxable year, clearer rules on Letters of Authority (LOAs), and the abolition of redundant audit task forces. Of particular note was the introduction of an LOA Verifier, allowing taxpayers to confirm the authenticity of audit notices online — an important safeguard, especially for those in rural areas.

He further stressed that audit reform is ultimately about balance: securing rightful revenue while ensuring clarity, fairness, and predictability for taxpayers. Legal reforms aimed at streamlining documentary requirements — such as the dramatic reduction of documents required for socialized housing tax exemptions — were cited as concrete examples of reform in action.

The third pillar, Revenue Collection and Base Protection, focused on enforcement as a means of fairness rather than punishment. Commissioner Mendoza cited recent nationwide operations against illicit vape products and cigarettes, as well as the filing of multiple tax evasion cases related to flood control projects, involving billions of pesos in liabilities. These actions, he noted, are meant to protect compliant taxpayers and ensure a level playing field.

Employee Empowerment and Welfare Promotion, the fourth pillar, was described as essential to sustainable reform. Commissioner Mendoza spoke with evident pride about the Bureau's investment in merit-based recruitment, professional development, and the

remarkable achievement of over a hundred BIR employees passing the Bar examinations. A professional, competent workforce, he stressed, is both a governance and anti-corruption measure.

The final pillar, Service Excellence and Stakeholder Engagement, underscored the BIR's shift toward a more responsive, taxpayer-centric institution. Initiatives such as the digital tax calendar, regular tax education programs, the creation of dedicated taxpayer services for registered business enterprises, and integration with local government e-BOSS systems were highlighted. Equally important was continued engagement with the private sector through structured consultative platforms, ensuring that reforms are informed by real-world experience.

Commissioner Mendoza concluded by returning to the campaign theme, *"Mahusay na Serbisyo, Katumbas ng Buwis Mo,"* describing it not as a slogan but as a standard by which the Bureau expects to be judged. Delivering on this promise, he affirmed, requires systems that work, clear rules, fair enforcement, and genuine partnership with stakeholders — principles that resonated strongly with the Rotary audience.



BIR Commissioner Mendoza engaged in a Q&A session with Rtn. Romy Nones, Rtn. Cris Acosta, PDG Rudy Bediones,



DGND/DSG Hermie Esguerra, Sec. Anton Mauricio, PSAA Gunter Matschuck, Rtn. Geof Yu, PDG Alex Cureg, DE Del Lorenzana, and AIA Mike Roxas.



Open Forum and Exchange

An open forum followed, allowing members to engage directly with the Guest Speaker. The exchange reflected Rotary's hallmark of respectful inquiry — questions rooted in practical experience, met with clarity and openness.

In recognition of his time, insights, and commitment to dialogue, President Raoul C. Creencia presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Commissioner Mendoza. The gesture symbolized Rotary's appreciation for public servants who engage transparently with civic institutions.

Adjournment

At exactly 2:00 pm, President Creencia formally adjourned the meeting, closing a gathering marked by substance, sincerity, and shared purpose. As members departed, the discussions lingered — not merely as information received, but as renewed commitments to ethical leadership, informed citizenship, and partnership in nation-building.

President Creencia adjourned the meeting.



President Creencia presented the Certificate of Appreciation to BIR Commissioner Mendoza, in the presence of Rtn. Gani Macatoman, PDG Alex Cureg, and PIA Jordan Pizaras.

Meeting Fellowship



Meeting Fellowship



CLUB ADMINISTRATION

RCM Members' Attendance Report RY 2025-2026



ATTENDANCE REPORT February 2026

FEBRUARY 2026	February 05, 2026 BIR COMMISSIONER ATTY. CHARLITO MARTIN R. MENDOZA
MEMBERS PRESENT	40
MEMBERS PRESENT %	19%
MAKE UP ATTENDEES	10
EXEMPTED	5
ON LEAVE	0
Total Active Members	50
Total # of Members	212
TOTAL %:	24%
ROTARACTORS	15
MEDIA	2
EMBASSIES / DIPLOMATIC CORPS	0
DG, DGE, DGN, PDG	0
GOHS / GS	2
VISITING ROTARIAN	0
Guests of RCM MEMBERS	7
TOTAL ATTENDEES	64



LIST OF ATTENDEES February 5, 2026

- 1 Acosta, Crispiniano G.
- 2 Bartolome III, Arsenio M.
- 3 Bediones, Rodolfo P.
- 4 Carlos, Vicente J.
- 5 Carranceja, Arvin Arik B
- 6 Castro, Karlo Eugene Josef M.
- 7 Creencia, Raoul C.
- 8 Cureg, Alexander P.
- 9 Cutter, John Michael
- 10 Davis, Raymond N.
- 11 Egan, Brendan W.L.
- 12 Esguerra, Herminio S.
- 13 Guevara, Jr., Domingo S.
- 14 Guevara, Ricardo S.
- 15 Koh, Paul Anthony T
- 16 Lacambacal, Alvin D.
- 17 Locsin, Arsenio Z.
- 18 Lonzaga, Reinerio C.
- 19 Lorenzana, Delfin
- 20 Macatoman, Abdugani M.
- 21 Matschuck, Guenter Gerhard G.
- 22 Mauricio, Antonilo DC
- 23 Nolido, Ramon Alberto B.
- 24 Nones, Romeo C.
- 25 Obrado, Daniel Calzado
- 26 Peliño, Wilfredo M.
- 27 Pizarra, Jordan M.
- 28 Ra, Ingill
- 29 Recto, Philip H.
- 30 Reynolds, David J.
- 31 Roxas, Michael D.
- 32 Serapio, Carlos G.
- 33 So, Warren S.
- 34 Yu, Geoffrey C.
- 35 Yu, Reginald Tieng
- 36 Hiroyasu, Kanda
- 37 Valderrama, Jason
- 38 Pantaleon, Oliver
- 39 Ginez, Winston M.
- 40 Tamesis, Chris C.

CLUB ADMINISTRATION

List of Members Who Have Paid Their Annual Dues for RY 2025-2026

As of February 10, 2026

1	ABOY, VALENTINO G.	48	DEL ROSARIO, OSCAR
2	ABRIAM, ARIEL	49	DIONISIO, RAFAEL
3	ACOSTA, CRISPINIANO G.	50	DOMINGO, RICO, V.
4	AGNES, JERRY A.	51	DOMINGUEZ, CARLOS G.
5	ALBAÑA, MICHAEL JAEY	52	DY, MANUEL
6	ALDAY, ALBERT S.	53	EGAN, BRENDAN
7	ALINGOG, ALDOUS REX A.	54	ELDEBS, ISSAM
8	ALUNAN, RAFAEL M.	55	ENRIQUEZ, EDUARDO III
9	ANDAL, AVELINO L.	56	ESGUERRA, HERMINIO S.
10	ARAGON, JOSHUA RUEBEN G.	57	ESQUIVIAS, JOAQUIN PABLO A.
11	ARAMBULO, JOAQUIN JR. L.	58	EUGENIO, JOHN EMYL G.
12	ARGUELLES, PABLO C.	59	EUGENIO, ERIC
13	AVENTURA, AVELINO JR. L.	60	FAJARDO, BEDA G.
14	BAGATSING, VALENTINO	61	FERNANDEZ, ANTONIO JAIME JOSE V.
15	BALANAY, ARIES B.	62	FOLLOSCO, CEFERINO JR. G.
16	BARTOLOME, ARSENIO III M.	63	GARCIA, HERBERT JOEY
17	BAUTISTA, JOHN JR.	64	GARCIA, PAUL JOSEPH M.
18	BEDIONES, RODOLFO P.	65	GARCIA, THEODORE Q.
19	BELLA, GERONIMO JR. D.	66	GARCIA, VICTOR III G.
20	BENEDICTO, BERNARDO III T.	67	GASPAR, FERNANDO
21	BENEDICTO, SIXTO T.	68	GINEZ, WINSTON M.
22	BERTELSEN, BERTEL INGMAR	69	GO, DANNY C.
23	BLANCO, MANUEL M.	70	GO, HENRY S.
24	BOGOVICH, JASON M.	71	GONZALES, JONAS R.
25	BOLTON, WILHELM	72	GONZALES-LA'O, EMIL
26	BRANELEC, JACQUES	73	GUARIN, MICHAEL ARCATOMY
27	BUENDIA, CARLOS	74	GUEVARA, DOMINGO JR.
28	CABANGON, EDGARD	75	GUEVARA, RICARDO S.B.
29	CABUNAG, ROGELIO	76	HALLARE, DELFIN JR.
30	CAMAT, NATHANIEL	77	HALLARE, NICOLO
31	CAMPOS, JOSELITO JR. D.	78	HERNANDEZ, EDWIN H.
32	CANON, RAUL JR C.	79	HESSE, UWE
33	CARLOS, VICENTE J.	80	IBUYAN, BENEDICT JULIUS F.
34	CARRANCEJA, ARVIN ARIK B.	81	JUCABAN, JERIC J.
35	CASTRO, KARLO EUGENE JOSEF M.	82	KALAW, TEODORO ALEJANDRO IV Y.
36	CATALAN, RODILLO	83	KANDA, HIROYUSI
37	CHAHWAN, RAMI	84	KATIGBAK J ALFONSO L
38	CHAN, ROBERT JR.	85	KE, ERIC CHAN
39	CID, DEAN	86	KHO, RALPH VALENTIN
40	CO, VAL CONSTANTINE L.	87	KLEBS, DAVID
41	COYIUTO, ROBERT JR. G.	88	KOH, PAUL ANTHONY
42	CREENCIA, RAOUL C.	89	LACAMBACAL, ALVIN
43	CUREG, ALEXANDER P.	90	LAYA, JAIME C.
44	CUTTER, JOHN MICHAEL	91	LIAMZON, ROMEO THADDEUS M.
45	DAYANG, JUAN E.	92	LIM, RICHARD
46	DAVIS, RAYMOND N.	93	LAUREL, RICARDO P.
47	DE CASTRO, JUAN ARTURO ILUMINADO	94	LAZARO, JUAN MIGUEL

CLUB ADMINISTRATION

List of Members Who Have Paid Their Annual Dues for RY 2025-2026

As of February 10, 2026

95	LEDDA, JAIME VICTOR B.	141	RODRIGUEZ, JOAQUIN ANTHONY JR. H.
96	LEE, RICHARD L.	142	RODRIGUEZ, JOAQUIN SR. C.
97	LI, RICHARD JOSEPH C.	143	ROMUALDEZ, FERDINAND MARTIN G.
98	LIM, DAVID EDUARDO T.	144	ROMUALDEZ, JOSE MANUEL G.
99	LOCSIN, ARSENIO Z.	145	ROÑO, MARLON
100	LONZAGA, REINERIO C.	146	ROXAS, MICHAEL D.
101	LOPEZ, ANTONIO	147	SARMIENTO, RICARDO MANUEL M.
102	LOPEZ, ARTHUR M.	148	SCHMITZ, STEFAN
103	LORENZANA, DELFIN	149	SCHNEIDER, BERND
104	MACAPAGAL, MICHAEL T.	150	SERAPIO, CARLOS G.
105	MACATOMAN, ABDULGANI M.	151	SEVILLA, LUIS ANGELO L.
106	MAGSAYSAY, FRANCISCO D.	152	SHIMODA, SHIGERU
107	MANALAYSAY, CESAR P.	153	SIBAYAN, JOSELITO H.
108	MANGALILE, SENEN	154	SIMON, JUANITO AYSON
109	MARTINEZ, RONALD	155	SO, WARREN
110	MATSCHUCK, GUENTER GERHARD G.	156	SOBREPEÑA, ROBERT JOHN
111	MAURICIO, ANTONILO DC	157	STRANATHAN, IKE EDWARD
112	MAURICIO, FRANCISCO ROBERTO C.	158	SYJUCO, JOSE, JR. A.
113	MENDOZA, MIGUEL	159	TAGAYSAY, HECTOR O.
114	MENDOZA, RAYMUND JOSEPH D.	160	TALAMPAS, JOSE ANGEL L.
115	MOMMAERTS, STEVE	161	TALUSAN, FERDINAND E.
116	NOLIDO, RAMON ALBERTO B.	162	TAMANO, SHALIMAR H.
117	NOMURA, KAZUHIRO	163	TAMAYO, VICTOR L.
118	NONES, ROMEO C.	164	TAMESIS, CHRIS
119	NUÑEZ, JOSE A.	165	TAN, EUSEBIO V.
120	OBRADO, DANIEL	166	TAN, JOHN G.
121	OCAMPO, TEODORO J.	167	TAN, LAWRENCE L.
122	ONG, PHILIP	168	TEE, TEDDY JR. B.
123	ONG, ROWEL JANSON S.	169	TEJUMAL, MICHAEL
124	PAGDANGANAN, ROBERTO M.	170	TILLMAN, HANSEL JOSEPH MICHAEL L.
125	PALACIOS, ALBERT S.	171	VALDES, JOELC.
126	PALLASIGUE, JOHN BRIAN C.	172	VALDEZ, AMADO
127	PANTALEON, OLIVER	173	VALDEZ, JASON ROLAND N.
128	PASCUAL, ABRAHAM	174	VALDERRAMA, JASON ROMEO
129	PAYUMO, FELICITO C.	176	VALENCIA, JOHN NICO P.
130	PELIÑO, WILFREDO	177	VALENCIA, RODOLFO G.
131	PINEDA, JESUS JR. M.	178	VAZQUEZ, EVARISTO JR.
132	PINEDA, PATRICIO JR. F.	179	VILLARICA, HENRY R.
133	PIZARRAS, JORDAN M.	180	YAP, ENRIQUE JR.
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RC Manila's Board of Directors and Officers for Rotary Year 2026-2027 Hold a Planning Session



THE Rotary Club of Manila's incoming Board of Directors and Officers for Rotary Year 2026-2027 held a planning session with the District 3810 training team.

Held on February 7, 2026, at the Palms Country Club in Alabang, the full-day session was also attended by DGND/DSG Hermie Esguerra, PDG Joyce Ambray, Secretary Anton Mauricio, and IPP Jujut Enriquez, supported by the RC Manila Secretariat.

RC Manila's Board of Directors and Officers for Rotary Year 2026-2027 Hold a Planning Session



Luneta Ocular: Preparing for Rotary Year 2026-2027 Induction Ceremonies



ON February 10, a quiet but purposeful step was taken at Luneta as preparations for the Rotary Year 2026–2027 Induction Ceremonies moved into sharper focus.

Chairman Lance Tan led a second ocular visit to the grounds under the stewardship of the National Parks and Development Committee, fine-tuning logistical requirements ahead of the July 2 inauguration of the new directors and officers.

Joining him were PE Reginald Yu, Ms. Rosalie Celis-Abaño, Administrative Assistant of NPDC, and Ms. Maryola Manansala, NPDC Consultant. Together, they walked the historic space with measured intent — aligning vision with ground realities, and ensuring that the Luneta leg of the ceremonies will unfold with dignity, precision, and reverence befitting both place and moment.



An Afternoon of Counsel, Conversation, and Continuity

ON a quiet afternoon marked by reflection and camaraderie, President-Elect Reggie Yu was graciously hosted to a sumptuous Japanese bento lunch by Past President and Chief Justice Art Panganiban at his residence — an intimate setting befitting a conversation that ranged widely yet returned, time and again, to the enduring question of leadership.

Over carefully prepared dishes — each precise, balanced, and unhurried — the dialogue unfolded with the same deliberation. Politics and law naturally surfaced, shaped by decades of experience at the highest levels of public service. Stories from Justice Panganiban's life and times were shared not as reminiscence alone, but as living lessons — quiet reminders of principle, restraint, courage, and the long view required of those entrusted with stewardship.

An Afternoon of Counsel, Conversation, and Continuity



At the heart of the exchange was a thoughtful, generous offering of counsel: how to lead a storied institution with humility; how to listen without losing direction; how to honor tradition while allowing renewal to take root. For President-Elect Reggie, the guidance was both affirming and clarifying — anchored in the understanding that leadership of a legacy club is less about imprinting oneself upon history than about serving as its careful custodian.

It was in this spirit that President-Elect Reggie formally extended an invitation to Justice Panganiban to attend the

upcoming induction ceremonies on July 2, marking the formal turnover of leadership of the Rotary Club of Manila. The invitation carried with it more than protocol; it was an acknowledgment of continuity — of wisdom passing to responsibility, of experience accompanying enthusiasm.



The afternoon ended not with speeches, but with gratitude. In a single lunch, shared over food prepared with intention, the past and the future found common ground. And in that quiet convergence, the promise of principled leadership — tempered by counsel, enriched by memory, and guided by service — felt very much alive.

Fourth RCM Golf Cup Committee Meeting



A special thank you to Rami for providing the venue, Chair Karlo for the food and drinks, and Chair Alex Cureg for dinner.



ON February 5, 2026, the Fourth RCM Golf Cup Committee held a meeting at Barcino Uptown BGC. The session was led by Golf Cup Chair Karlo Castro and attended by RCMFI Chair Alex Cureg, PP Jujut Enriquez, RCMFI President-elect Mike Roxas, Rtn. Arik Carranceja, Rtn. Jop Esquivias, Secretary Anton Mauricio, STAR Rtn. Jonas Gonzales, and RCMFI staff Jonathan Lagarto.



At the newly-opened Ramen Ibuki



RCM - RCMFI Reading Literacy/ Teacher Training Project with Reading Specialists, Inc.

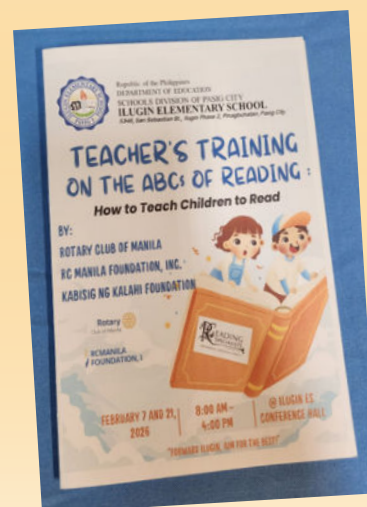


**BASIC EDUCATION
AND LITERACY**

February 7, 2026
Ilugin Elementary School, Pasig City
Chairman: Nicolo Hallare

Organized by **Reading Specialists
Inc. (RSI)**, in cooperation with the
Department of Education and
Ilugin Elementary School, Pasig

Attended by RCMFI Pres Jujut
Enriquez and Secretary Anton Mauricio



RCM - RCMFI Reading Literacy/ Teacher Training Project with Reading Specialists, Inc.



BASIC EDUCATION
AND LITERACY



On Day 1 of the 2-day training at Ilugin Elementary School (IES), 45 teachers volunteered to participate in the program.

To recall, we learned that many public school students are reading 2-5 years below their grade level. Sadly, this is a common situation in public schools across the Philippines. This reading gap tends to widen as students move through the grades, leaving them struggling in high school with reading and comprehension skills equivalent to a 3rd or 4th grader.



RCM - RCMFI Reading Literacy/ Teacher Training Project with Reading Specialists, Inc.



**BASIC EDUCATION
AND LITERACY**

Although DepEd already has its own program the scale of the problem is such that private sector help is welcomed to help reverse this trend, to uplift literacy from the grassroots level.

*Secretary
Anton
Mauricio led
the invocation.*



*RCMFI President Jujut Enriquez
delivered his message of inspiration.*



RCM - RCMFI Reading Literacy/ Teacher Training Project with Reading Specialists, Inc.

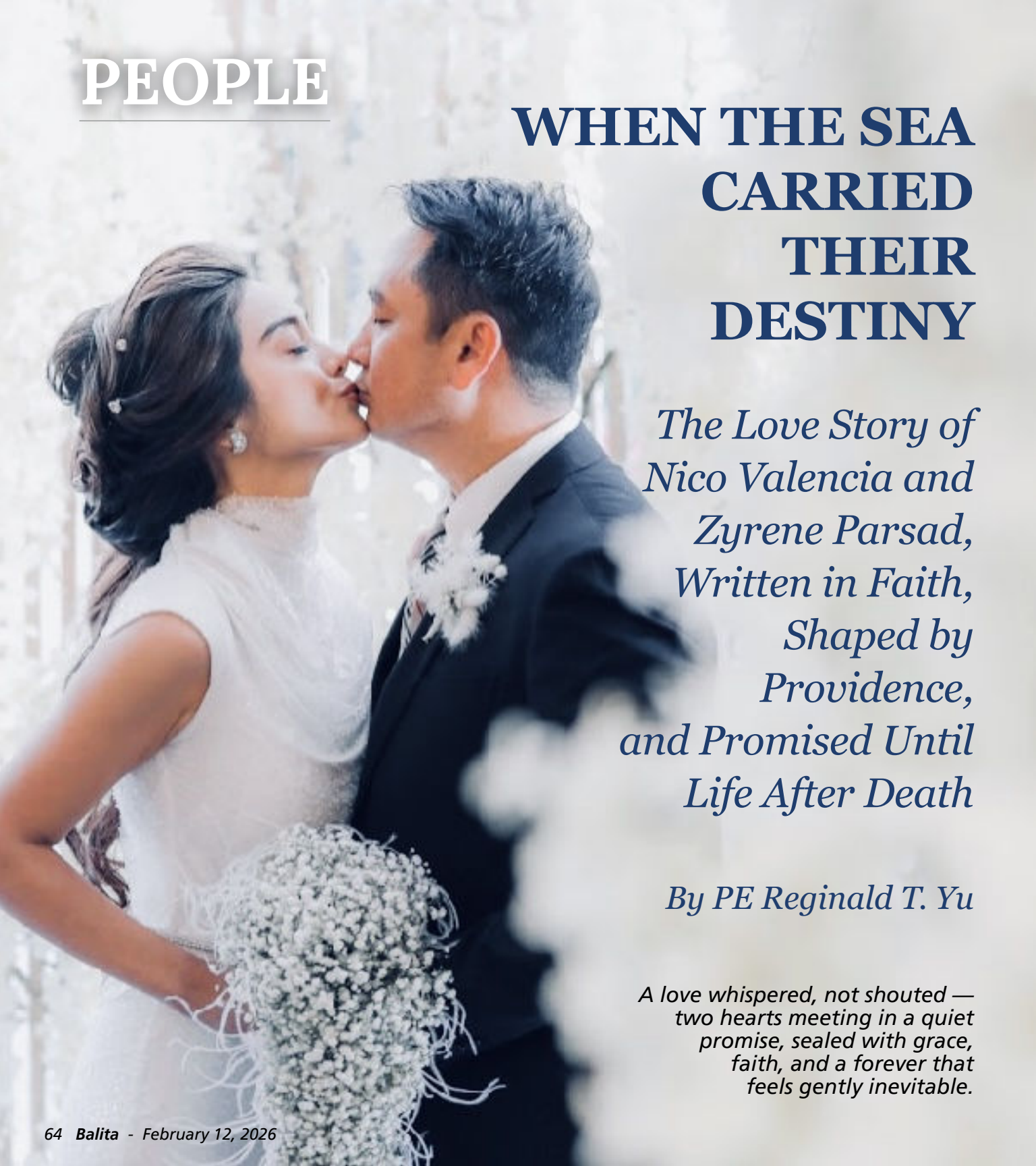
RCM and RCMFI is on its second year of partnering with RSI as sponsors of this project. RSI has a proven more effective approach in teaching reading literacy, resulting in increased comprehension and faster learning of children. The novel approach uses RSI materials and their network of educators, who volunteer as trainers.



BASIC EDUCATION
AND LITERACY

The audience are volunteer teachers who are being trained in this more effective way of teaching students how to read. They teach students outside of their required teaching hours. This supplemental training is crucial in addressing the problem of low reading literacy, comprehension, and critical thinking among Philippine students.



A romantic photograph of a bride and groom in their wedding attire. The bride, on the left, has her hair styled in an updo with small white flowers and is wearing a white sleeveless wedding dress. She is holding a large bouquet of white baby's breath flowers. The groom, on the right, is wearing a dark suit with a white shirt and a dark tie, and has a white boutonniere on his lapel. They are both smiling and kissing each other on the lips. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with white flowers and greenery.

PEOPLE

WHEN THE SEA CARRIED THEIR DESTINY

*The Love Story of
Nico Valencia and
Zyrene Parsad,
Written in Faith,
Shaped by
Providence,
and Promised Until
Life After Death*

By PE Reginald T. Yu

*A love whispered, not shouted —
two hearts meeting in a quiet
promise, sealed with grace,
faith, and a forever that
feels gently inevitable.*

WHEN THE SEA CARRIED THEIR DESTINY

*The Love Story of Nico Valencia and Zyrene Parsad, Written in Faith,
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FOR this month of February — Valentine's Week — the editors of The Balita chose to do something refreshingly different. For the first time, the PEOPLE segment steps away from individual profiles to feature a love story: that of Director-Elect Nico Valencia and his wife, the lovely Zyrene Parsad. Rooted in faith, shaped by providence, and lived with quiet purpose, their journey is shared in the hope that it will inspire others to believe in love that endures, deepens, and gives meaning to service.

There are unions which appear, to the careless observer, to be the consequence of circumstance — of a fortunate introduction, a shared social circle, a timely invitation. Yet those who have lived long enough, and prayed hard enough, tend to smile at such explanations. They know that what is called chance is often merely Providence in plain clothes, going about its business without demanding applause.

So, it was with **Nico Valencia** and **Zyrene Parsad** — two lives formed, each in their own manner, by a certain seriousness of faith and family, and each brought — by means so ordinary they might have been dismissed — to a meeting that would alter the meaning of “forever” for them both.

A Gentleman Raised to Stand, Yet Never to Forget His Roots

Nico's beginnings were marked by a particular kind of strength: not the strength of noise or insistence, but the steadier kind that is learned early in a household where love is assumed, responsibility expected, and character quietly inspected.

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*The Love Story of Nico Valencia and Zyrene Parsad, Written in Faith,
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He was raised among siblings — one of four — in a **Christ-centered, family-oriented home** where independence was encouraged, but family remained the foundation. The arrangement of such a household, as many will understand, requires the continual practice of patience, respect, and regard for others — not as lofty sentiments for Sunday conversation, but as habits as regular as meals and as necessary as rest. Nico learned early that a home is not merely a roof; it is a school of the heart.

His father, Rod, stood close to him — sometimes in counsel, often in example — particularly in the world of business, where a man may be tempted to measure success by quick wins and loud victories. From his father, Nico learned **discipline, hard work, integrity**, and the subtle art of standing on one's own feet while still lifting others as one climbs. It is not a common lesson. Many become independent only by becoming indifferent; others become generous only by becoming impractical. But Nico's upbringing carried an expectation of balance: strength with decency, ambition with fairness.

If his father shaped the way Nico walked through the world, his mother, Chalie, shaped the way he knelt before God.



***Nico:** Quiet strength, steady faith, and a heart grounded in devotion — this is a man who learned that love is not measured by grand gestures alone, but by constancy, courage, and the daily choice to stand beside the one entrusted to him. In his calm confidence lives a promise: to love faithfully, serve humbly, and walk through life with grace, hand in hand with forever.*

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She taught her children how to live as better Christians — not merely through prayer and church attendance, but through kindness, humility, and service. In such homes, goodness is not discussed as theory; it is practiced in small daily choices. Faith is not a costume; it is a compass. Thus, Nico grew with the sense that values must be lived, not displayed — an education that, in later years, would do far more for him than any fashionable philosophy of love.

The Gentleman Who Was Content — Yet Unanchored

In his younger years, Nico possessed what society often praises most readily: charm, sociability, and the enviable ability to enjoy life as it came. He was **carefree and outgoing**, surrounded by friends, always in motion — attending parties, traveling, laughing, and living in the bright immediacy of the present.

There is a particular temptation in such happiness. When life feels full, one begins to assume it is complete.

Yet Nico — honest enough to name his own interior weather — admitted that emotionally he was **content but unanchored**. Spiritually, he believed in God, but his faith had not yet been refined by the demands of deep

commitment. He was satisfied with life, but he had not yet encountered the kind of love that insists on forming a man rather than merely pleasing him.

And because his life was pleasant, and the world made no immediate demands for surrender, he carried a conviction that would later be challenged in the gentlest, most decisive manner.

Nico **did not truly believe in marriage**. He doubted “forever.” He regarded relationships as temporary chapters, not lifelong covenants; commitment felt limiting rather than sacred.

Such a belief, it must be said, is not always rooted in cynicism. Sometimes it is simply caution — an unwillingness to promise what one cannot yet imagine oneself faithfully performing. There are men who speak of forever with ease and break it with ease; there are others who distrust the word because they respect it too much to offer it lightly. Nico’s disbelief had the tone of a man not yet persuaded that unconditional love exists in any durable form.

And yet — even with those convictions — he was not restless.

His focus, in those years, was **personal growth**. He sought wisdom not in

WHEN THE SEA CARRIED THEIR DESTINY

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display, but in listening. He valued the counsel of older individuals, intentionally spending time hearing their stories and learning their lessons. He believed growth came from humility: the willingness to observe, to listen, to improve.

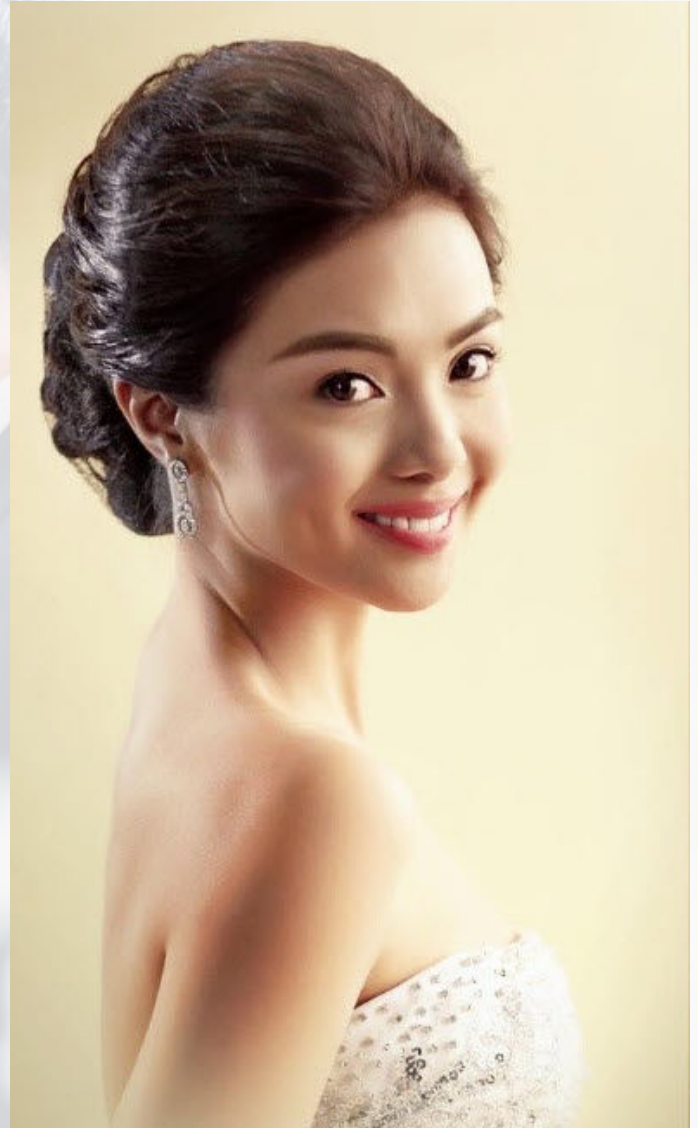
It is a curious thing: men who do not “believe in forever” often still prepare for it. They call it maturity, prudence, success. But Providence, which loves to laugh softly at human certainty, is never deceived by what we call our plans.

The Prayer He Did Not Call a Search

Nico did not set out to find love. In fact, he said plainly that he never actively searched for it.

Instead, he placed his trust in God. He prayed, simply, that if the Lord were to give him a life partner, it would be according to His will. Even his preferences were offered with a kind of innocent specificity: **someone ten years younger, someone his parents would introduce, someone who sings in church.**

There is something profoundly human about such a prayer — earnest, practical, and yet somehow romantic in its



***Zyrene:** Grace in her smile, faith in her eyes, and a quiet strength that turns love into devotion. She carries beauty not just in how she looks, but in how she loves — gently, steadfastly, and with a heart surrendered to forever.*

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simplicity. It is the prayer of a man who does not believe in romance as an idea, but still believes in God as a Father who delights in giving good gifts.

And in time, Nico would come to understand that he had not been searching for love at all — he had been waiting for God's timing. And God, in His characteristic generosity, would answer not only the prayer Nico spoke, but the deeper prayer his heart had not yet learned to articulate.

A Young Lady Formed by Devotion and a Quiet Kind of Joy

Zyrene's beginnings were of a different texture, but no less steady.

She describes herself as **abundantly blessed by Jesus** with a loving, Christ-centered family — her Papa Alejandro, her Mama Arlene, and her sister, Zydney Joyce. From the earliest days, her life revolved around them: family as safe place, teachers, and greatest earthly blessing. The language of her memory is not extravagant; it is grateful. It suggests a childhood in which love was not scarce, and therefore did not need to shout.

Her formative years were filled with the simple rituals that become, in retrospect,

the most sacred: weekends traveling together, faithful church attendance every Sunday, walking and biking side by side in the park. Those moments taught her a gentle truth that many learn too late: happiness is found not in excess, but in togetherness; not in noise, but in presence; not in things, but in love grounded in faith.

Her parents planted values in her with consistency: love your neighbor, respect every person, serve God faithfully through the Church. These were not lessons spoken only when convenient; they were values lived daily — shaping character, softening the heart, anchoring the soul in Christ.

And so, Zyrene grew into a young woman with a steady devotion — a faith that did not demand attention, yet influenced every decision.

The Dreamer Who Once Considered the Cloister

Before meeting Nico, Zyrene was a dreamer — deeply in love with Jesus. She held a “list,” but not of achievements; it was a list of who she hoped to become. There was a time when she even dreamed of becoming a nun, because she longed to be with Jesus every day — her life a quiet offering of love and devotion.

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She also dreamed of becoming a host, a singer, a news anchor — roles that would allow her to use her voice, her presence, her heart, and she enjoyed the idea of it.

In any other narrative, these dreams might be presented as competing: devotion versus ambition, solitude versus public life. But Zyrene's faith made the conflict less dramatic. Her life was not about insisting on a particular outcome; it was about surrender.

As life unfolded, she realized God's plans were different from her own — and, to her, far more beautiful. She embraced His will wholeheartedly, becoming a wife and then a mother — roles that sanctified her dreams and transformed her purpose. Above all else, she became what mattered most: a faithful follower of God, walking the path He had prepared.

In her understanding, love was sacred — rooted in God's will, never forced, never rushed, never self-centered. It was something entrusted by God at the right time and in the right way. And if love was from God, it would lead her closer to Him.

This is not the language of idle romance. It is the language of a woman formed by prayer.



Caught in shared laughter and effortless closeness, this is love in its most honest form — unposed, unguarded, and perfectly at home in each other's arms. Rooted in faith and chosen with clarity, their love is marked not by numbers, but by purpose. A Business Management graduate of De La Salle–College of Saint Benilde, Nico — 11 years Zyrene's senior — stands beside her not as a difference to be measured, but as a partner perfectly aligned.

"We never fight," Zyrene shares. "We do argue — because fighting is different from arguing." There is joy in that distinction, and peace in what follows: "I'm happy. This is God's plan for me, for us. When you are married, you don't think of yourself anymore. We put God at the center of our marriage."

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On Timing, Fate, and the Unseen Hand

Zyrene believed wholeheartedly in God's perfect timing. She learned early to surrender everything — dreams, plans, fears, future — to Jesus. She trusted that nothing happened by accident: every encounter, every waiting season, every answered and unanswered prayer was part of divine design. What is meant will come, not when demanded, but when God knows the heart is ready.

Her quiet hope for life was not success or recognition. It was a family that reflects God's love, grace, and faithfulness; a home filled with prayer, love, and service; a household walking in His light.

It is worth observing, at this point, how perfectly the foundations of these two lives corresponded — though neither would have described it so.

Nico, raised in discipline and integrity, was learning the dignity of covenant even before he believed in it. Zyrene, raised in surrender and devotion, was learning the steadiness required to love a man who would need to be persuaded that “forever” could be safe.



Between the love that raised her and the love she is about to begin — Zyrene walks toward forever, guided by her Papa Alejandro and Mama Arlene, carrying with her a lifetime of prayers, devotion, and a heart ready to be given.

Nico had prayed for a woman his parents would introduce, someone younger, someone who sings in church.

Zyrene had surrendered her future to God and trusted His timing.

Neither of them, at this stage, knew how specifically God answers prayers.

A Small Turning Toward the Sea

And thus we arrive at the edge of the chapter where all preparation becomes plot.

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For it is a truth seldom acknowledged, but often proven, that a single introduction — made without flourish — may become the hinge upon which an entire life swings.

Their first meeting, by their own account, unfolded in an unexpected yet meaningful place: **on a boat bound for Oriental Mindoro**. Zyrene was present as a news anchor, preparing to interview Nico's father, who was then serving as a congressman. In that quiet moment between destinations, Rod, Nico's father, introduced them — and what seemed a simple courtesy became the opening of a chapter written by God Himself.

At the time, the sea did what it always does. It kept its counsel.

But Providence — always attentive, always patient — had already begun to move.

When the Sea Carried Their Destiny

There are meetings that announce themselves with noise and ceremony, and there are others that enter the story of a life with such quiet propriety that one scarcely notices the threshold has been crossed. Yet it is often the latter

that prove most consequential. The heart, it seems, is not persuaded by spectacle so much as by a gentle, unmistakable sense of rightness.



A son shaped by love, now standing on the edge of a promise — Nico waits for his bride with a steady heart and quiet reverence, flanked by Daddy Rod and Mommy Chalie, the first witnesses to the man he has become and the forever he is about to begin.

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So, it was on that unassuming day upon the waters bound for Oriental Mindoro.

The boat moved steadily, obedient to its course, cutting through the sea with neither haste nor hesitation. Around it, the horizon lay wide and open, a line between what had been and what was yet to be. Zyrene, composed and attentive, prepared for her professional duty as a news anchor, arranging her notes for the interview she was to conduct with the congressman. Nico, accompanying his father, stood in the easy confidence of a son long accustomed to observing public life without being consumed by it.

Introductions, when they came, were polite and brief. No one paused. No one remarked upon the moment. And yet — within Nico, something stirred.

It would not be accurate to say that he was struck by beauty alone, though he did indeed notice it. Zyrene's youth, her grace, the gentleness of her expression — these were immediately apparent. But there was also about her a certain calm that could not be attributed to appearance. It was the sort of composure that suggests an ordered interior life, a heart at rest in something deeper than circumstance. To Nico, she appeared almost otherworldly, and the word that came most readily to him, without irony or exaggeration, was *angel*.

Zyrene, for her part, regarded Nico with an interest that was equally unforced. She found him attractive, yes, but more than that, she sensed in him a groundedness — a manner both strong and courteous, confident without being loud, attentive without seeking attention. He was well-spoken, composed, and carried himself with the ease of one who knew who he was, and therefore felt no need to prove it.

They exchanged only a few words that day, yet those words lingered. There was in their conversation an immediate comfort, as though each had stumbled upon a familiar cadence in the other's voice. They spoke of family, of personal life, of the small details that, to the discerning heart, reveal far more than grand declarations ever could. The sea rolled on, indifferent to the quiet significance unfolding upon its surface, but Heaven, no doubt, was listening closely.

In later reflection, both would agree that what they felt was not a sudden blaze of passion, but something gentler and more enduring in its promise. It was a quiet magic, an unspoken recognition that this meeting mattered. Nico felt a sincere desire to know Zyrene more — not out of idle curiosity, but from a sense that something within him had been addressed, though he could not yet name it. Zyrene, too,

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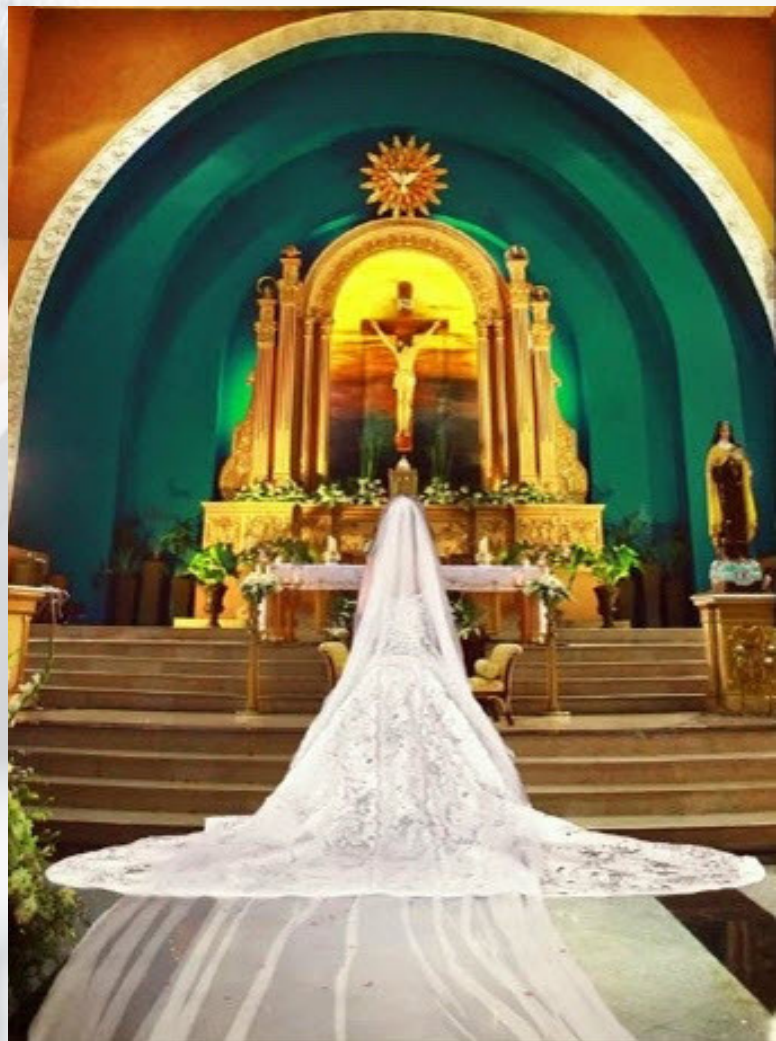
perceived in him a goodness that invited trust rather than caution.

Thus began a correspondence of hearts, conducted at first in the most modest of ways.

Their conversations, when they resumed, continued to revolve around family and faith, around the paths that had brought them to where they stood. There was no effort to impress, no attempt at performance. Each spoke as one accustomed to being honest before God, and therefore unafraid to be honest before another. It was in this ease that the first true connection was formed.

Time, however, has a way of revealing what the heart is reluctant to confess. It was not long before both began to notice that moments together felt too short, that conversations ended only when necessity demanded it, and that silence in each other's company carried a warmth rather than an awkwardness. The realization came quietly, yet decisively: this was no longer "just another person." This was someone whose absence was already felt before it had truly begun.

It was Nico who proposed their first proper outing, and it was to Tagaytay



Before vows are spoken and forever begins, she pauses in quiet surrender — offering her love, her future, and her heart at the altar, trusting that the God who led her here will carry her gently into the life she is about to begin.

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that he chose to take her — a place of cool air and wide views, where one might think clearly and speak freely. He planned the day with a thoughtful care that revealed more than he likely intended. They shared a simple lunch at Buon Giorno, the lake stretching before them in serene invitation, and spoke of hopes, of pasts, of the curious ways in which God orders lives long before those lives are aware of His designs.

Afterward, they boarded a speedboat and sailed across Taal Lake. The wind was brisk, the water lively beneath them, and laughter came easily. It was, by all accounts, a pleasant afternoon. And yet, as so often happens in stories shaped by Providence, the most memorable moment arrived unannounced.

As they traveled, Nico began to sing.

It was not a performance prepared for applause, but an offering made in the simplicity of the moment. His voice carried across the water, and just as the melody rose, the sky, which had seemed so calm, opened and released a sudden rain. The timing was so perfect, so almost theatrical, that it might have invited laughter — and it did — but it also invited something deeper: a sense that this moment had been gently arranged.

Rain fell, music lingered, and two hearts, already inclined toward one

another, felt the unmistakable stirring of destiny.

It was in such unguarded moments that affection grows into something sturdier. Over time, what had begun as interest matured into admiration, and admiration into respect. They discovered in one another a shared commitment to faithfulness, a trust that did not need to be negotiated, and a devotion to God that quietly bound them more securely than any declaration could have done.

After a year, they found themselves, quite simply, inseparable. Life, when lived apart, felt incomplete. Each began to recognize in the other not merely a companion for pleasant hours, but a partner for the shaping of a life.

Yet even as love deepened, neither could have anticipated the trial that would soon test it — nor the grace that would prove its strength. For the same God who brings two hearts together in peace sometimes allows them to be united more firmly through suffering.

And it was upon this path — from quiet meeting, to growing affection, to an unspoken promise of “us” — that Nico and Zyrene now found themselves walking, unaware that their love was about to be refined in a way that would forever change their understanding of faith, courage, and the meaning of forever.

WHEN THE SEA CARRIED THEIR DESTINY

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The Storm That Proved the Covenant

It is often supposed that love is most truly known in moments of ease — when laughter comes readily, when plans unfold without resistance, when the future appears generous and obliging. Yet those who have walked long enough with another soul will attest that affection, however sincere, does not become covenant until it has been asked to stand in the presence of fear.

For Nico and Zyrene, that moment came not as a gradual unease, but as a sudden and sobering truth.

Zyrene was diagnosed with a brain tumor.

The words themselves carried a weight that no amount of composure could entirely soften. They altered the atmosphere of every room they entered. They made time feel both urgent and suspended. For a young woman whose life had been shaped by trust in God's will, the news was not met with rebellion — but neither was it met with denial. She received it with the quiet courage of one who had long surrendered her life to divine keeping, and who therefore knew that even suffering must, in some mysterious way, be permitted for love's sake.



A first kiss as husband-and-wife offered before heaven and held in grace — two lives joined, two hearts surrendered, sealing a love promised not just for a lifetime, but for eternity.

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Nico, who had once believed that “forever” was a promise too fragile to be trusted, now found himself standing at the edge of a question that could not be postponed: Was he willing to love without condition, without guarantee, without the assurance of a painless future?

There are moments when a man discovers the true measure of his heart. Not through words spoken in confidence, but through the decisions he makes when fear threatens to become sovereign.

He did not retreat.

Together, they turned to the only refuge that had ever truly anchored them — faith. They prayed. They surrendered. They asked not first for explanations, but for grace. In those days, love ceased to be merely the sharing of joy; it became the sharing of vulnerability, the holding of hands in silence, the offering of one’s strength when the other’s had momentarily failed.

And then, through what can only be described with reverence, healing came.

Through the ministry of a healing priest — an instrument, as they would later say, of God’s miraculous power —

Zyrene was restored. The shadow that had threatened to darken their horizon lifted, and in its place stood a testimony that would forever mark their union. They had seen what it meant to entrust a life not to circumstance, nor even to love alone, but to God Himself.

From that moment, doubt no longer had a voice in Nico’s heart.

The man who had once questioned the very existence of “forever” now understood it not as a romantic exaggeration, but as a sacred responsibility. Love, he learned, is not proven by how brightly it burns in comfort, but by how steadfastly it remains when tested.

What had been affection was now conviction. What had been hope was now certainty.

They spoke often of the future — not in the vague language of youthful dreaming, but in the considered tones of two people who had measured life and found it precious. Prayer preceded every plan. Gratitude shaped every conversation. The question was no longer whether they would walk together, but how they might best honor the God who had so clearly preserved them for one another.

WHEN THE SEA CARRIED THEIR DESTINY

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It was in this spirit that thoughts of marriage arose — not as a social milestone, but as a calling.

Both had begun, quietly and almost simultaneously, to imagine a life no longer divided into “mine” and “yours,” but united in the gentler, more demanding language of “ours.” They prayed. They spoke with their families. They sought not only happiness, but blessing.

And when the time came for Nico to ask Zyrene to become his wife, he chose once more the place where so much of their understanding had deepened: Tagaytay.

The evening was prepared with a care that reflected the gravity of the moment. There was a candlelit dinner, music waiting softly in the background, and witnesses present not to intrude, but to remember. A pianist, a photographer, a videographer — all were arranged, not for display, but to preserve what would become one of the most sacred memories of their lives.

Nico sang.

The song was *Grow Old With You*, and in its lyrics lay the very promise his heart had learned to keep. As the final notes lingered, he knelt. Fireworks rose into the sky, their brilliance momentarily illuminating the dark with



A table lit by candles, a melody lingering in the air, and a question asked with a steady, hopeful heart. Surrounded by quiet witnesses — not to intrude, but to remember — this was the night love chose forever, preserved not for display, but for a lifetime of remembering how it all began.

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light that seemed to echo heaven's own celebration.

And then, with a voice steady with certainty and reverence, he asked Zyrene to be his wife.

Though she had sensed the proposal was near, the words themselves arrived with a weight that no anticipation could lessen. Time seemed to slow, the world to quiet. In that stillness, she recognized not merely a question, but a calling — a continuation of the surrender she had offered God long before she had known the shape it would take.

Her answer was simple.

Yes.

It was a “yes” to a man, to a future, to a life shared. But more than that, it was a “yes” to the will of God, made visible in the love that stood before her.

From that moment, their path toward marriage was no longer tentative. It was assured, not by human confidence alone, but by the peace that follows obedience.

What remained was to stand before God and the world, and to seal with vows what had already been written upon their hearts.



Before heaven's stones and under God's vast sky, they chose each other once more — renewing vows not because love faded, but because it deepened. In the heart of Vatican City, faith and forever met again, quietly affirming a promise first made with trembling hands and now held with unshakable grace.

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A Home Built on Prayer and Promise

When two people have passed through joy and trial together, when they have learned both the sweetness of laughter and the solemnity of surrender, the vows they exchange are no longer mere formality. They are recognition. They are thanksgiving. They are the natural language of hearts that already know where they belong.

Nico and Zyrene's wedding day, therefore, was not simply a celebration; it was a consecration.

They had once imagined something intimate and quiet, but love, when shared by families and friends who have prayed over it, rarely remains small. With the guidance of their parents, their union was marked by two grand gatherings: one at the Marriott Grand Ballroom, attended by hundreds, and another in Oriental Mindoro, where thousands came to witness what God had so clearly ordained. Yet amid the scale of it all, what mattered most to them was not the size of the assembly, but the Presence before whom they stood.

When the bishop blessed them and pronounced them husband and wife, introducing them to the world as Mr. and Mrs. Nico and Zyrene Valencia, the



*In a moment touched by grace
beyond words, love kneels in
gratitude — Nico and Zyrene receive
a blessing from Pope Francis, sealing
their renewed vows with faith,
humility, and a forever entrusted
once more to God's gentle care.*

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moment carried a gravity beyond ceremony. It was the sealing of a covenant, the public affirmation of a private devotion. They stood not only before family and friends, but before God Himself, offering their lives in mutual trust and holy promise.

It is often said that the true character of a marriage reveals itself not on the wedding day, but in the ordinary mornings that follow. In the home Nico and Zyrene built, those mornings begin with prayer.

They worship together at the start of each day, inviting God into every decision, every plan, every concern. Scripture is not an ornament upon their shelves, but a guide in their conversations. Disagreements, when they arise, are not met with raised voices, but with quiet pauses, prayer, and the humility to listen. They have learned that love does not demand victory; it seeks understanding. Forgiveness is not delayed; it is practiced as a discipline of the heart.

What has surprised them most about married life is not its difficulty, but its depth. Love, they have found, does not diminish with familiarity. It grows. It settles into something richer and more enduring. It becomes less about feeling and more about faithfulness, less about expression and more about presence.



Side by side, laughing into the unknown — proof that love doesn't need a perfect path, only the courage to ride together. Wherever the journey leads, it's lighter, braver, and far more joyful when shared.

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Their daughter, Zarlle Jesuico, entered their lives as the living embodiment of their gratitude to God — a reminder that love, when entrusted to Him, multiplies. In her laughter, they hear echoes of their own joy. In her dependence, they are reminded daily of the responsibility that comes with being entrusted with a soul.

Together, as a family, they continue the mission that first united their hearts: to serve God and others. Through BridalWalk at St. Michael Church, they help prepare couples for marriage, guiding them not merely toward a beautiful ceremony, but toward a life rooted in prayer, communication, and grace. In doing so, they offer what they themselves have received — a testimony that love, when centered on God, is not only possible, but sustaining.

They pray over one another each morning. They worship together. They travel, they laugh, they play sports, they explore the world with their child. And in all these things, they remain mindful that the greatest journey they undertake is not across seas or cities, but into deeper faith and greater charity.

Looking toward the future, their hopes are simple and steadfast: to continue serving God with grateful hearts, to



Love, now multiplied — two hearts holding a promise they have not yet met, wrapped in quiet joy and gentle wonder. In this tender moment, Nico and Zyrene cradle not just a child, but a future shaped by faith, devotion, and a love that continues to grow.

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raise Zarlie in the light of His truth, to build a home where love is patient, where prayer is constant, and where forgiveness is as natural as breathing.

They hope that what never changes is their unconditional love. They hope that what continues to grow is their faith in Jesus. And when they imagine their legacy, it is not of wealth or recognition, but of a marriage that has become an instrument of God's love to others.

In a letter to their future selves, the words would be few, yet sufficient: *"I thank God for blessing me with you."*

For Nico, who once doubted the very idea of "forever," love has become a daily, chosen certainty. For Zyrene, who surrendered every dream to God's will, marriage has become the fulfillment of that surrender in its most tender form.

And if one were to ask them now to define their love in a single sentence, they would answer not with poetry, but with promise:

"I will love you until life after death."

It is a declaration that does not rest upon emotion alone, but upon faith. For they know that what God has joined together is not confined to time, and



From "I do" to we are — their love now cradles a miracle. In gentle awe and grateful hearts, Nico and Zyrene welcome Zarlie Jesuico, discovering that the deepest romance is love made new through life, faith, and the sacred joy of becoming a family.

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that the love He authors does not end where life's chapters close.

Thus, their story, begun quietly upon a boat crossing the sea, continues in a home where prayer rises each morning and gratitude closes each night. It is a story not of coincidence, but of calling; not of chance, but of grace; not merely of romance, but of covenant.

And in that covenant, written first in heaven and lived daily on earth, Nico and Zyrene walk forward — hand in hand, heart to heart — trusting the God who brought them together to carry them, faithfully and gently, all the way into forever.

Until Life After Death: A Love That Continues to Unfold

There are stories that conclude with a wedding, as though the vows themselves were the destination. But in truth, a wedding is only the opening sentence of a longer, quieter chapter — the one written not in ceremony, but in constancy. For Nico and Zyrene, the promise of forever did not settle into stillness; it deepened into a living rhythm, shaped by days that asked to be met with patience, humility, and prayer.



Beneath the glow of Dubai's horizon, with the iconic Burj Al Arab Jumeirah rising behind them, they stand close — proof that even in a city of seven-star wonders, the truest luxury is choosing each other, wherever the journey leads.



Their first journey together — laughter carried by the desert wind, love finding its footing on shifting sands. In the dunes of Dubai, they learned early that wherever the road leads, adventure feels lighter when love does the carrying.

They learned, as all devoted couples do, that love matures in the ordinary. In the unremarkable hours that follow remarkable moments. In the steady repetition of choosing one another when the world grows loud, when schedules crowd, when weariness visits. It is there, in the faithful keeping of small promises, that great vows are honored.

Nico, once the man who questioned the durability of “forever,” discovered in marriage a gentler certainty. He learned

that constancy is not a cage, but a shelter; not a narrowing of life, but its quiet expansion. With Zyrene, he found that commitment does not limit the heart — it steadies it. It teaches it where to rest. And in that resting, he came to know a peace that the most spirited independence could never provide.

Zyrene, whose life had always been shaped by surrender, found in marriage a new form of offering. Loving Nico did not replace her devotion to God; it refined it. In serving her husband and

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nurturing their home, she discovered that the smallest acts — spoken with kindness, performed with patience — were themselves prayers. Her faith, once expressed in youthful dreams and whispered hopes, now took shape in daily attentiveness, in the gentle governance of a heart entrusted with another's.

Together, they learned the language of shared discernment. Decisions were no longer solitary exercises, but conversations held in the presence of God. They prayed before speaking. They listened before responding. And when misunderstanding arose, they did not rush to victory, but to understanding. For they had learned, through trial and healing alike, that love is preserved not by winning, but by yielding — first to God, and then to one another.

Their home became, in the truest sense, a sanctuary. Not because it was free of noise or effort, but because it was ordered by grace. Morning worship set the tone for the day; evening prayer gathered its loose ends. Scripture was not confined to formal moments; it echoed in the choices they made, in the patience they extended, in the forgiveness they offered without delay.

And then there was Zarlie Jesuico — their daughter, their joy, their living reminder that love, when entrusted to God, bears fruit beyond what the heart dares to imagine. In her presence, they saw the reflection of their own vows: dependence met with care, trust met



Seventeen years in, love has learned to rest — quiet, certain, and deeply chosen. Wrapped in faith and shared pages, Zyrene and Nico prove that when priorities are clear and hearts are steady, there are no regrets — only gratitude for a love that was never a hard decision, but a forever one.



Hand in hand, they walk forward through a garden of promises — two lives aligned, two hearts at ease, beginning a forever that feels both sacred and joyfully certain.

with protection, growth met with guidance. Every laugh, every question, every small triumph became an invitation to gratitude. In raising her, they learned anew what it meant to love with both courage and tenderness, to hold while also letting go, to guide while also allowing wonder.

Their service through BridalWalk grew not from obligation, but from gratitude. Having walked their own path from uncertainty to covenant, from fear to

faith, they felt called to accompany others along the same journey. They spoke not as distant instructors, but as witnesses — offering couples the gift of preparation, the wisdom of prayer, and the reassurance that love, when centered on God, is not merely sustainable, but transformative.

They did not present perfection; they presented perseverance. They did not promise ease; they promised grace. And in doing so, they extended the reach of

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their own story, allowing it to become a quiet encouragement to many.

When they looked toward the years ahead, their hopes were neither grand nor vague. They wished to grow older together with the same reverence that had marked their beginning. To remain teachable. To remain grateful. To remain anchored. They hoped that faith would continue to deepen, that love would continue to soften, and that their home would always be a place where God was welcomed not as a guest, but as the constant Presence.

They knew, as all who love deeply must know, that time would bring its changes — new seasons, new responsibilities, new challenges. But they also knew that what had bound them was not subject to fashion or circumstance. It had been forged in prayer, tested by trial, and sealed by promise.

And so, when they spoke of “forever” now, they did so without hesitation, and without fear. For they had learned that forever is not a distant horizon; it is a daily practice. It is the continued choice to be kind. To be faithful. To be patient. To be present.



*In the quiet closeness where words
fall away, love lingers — soft,
playful, and deeply at ease. Two
smiles, one shared breath, and a
thousand unspoken promises
floating gently between them.*



*Two hands, two rings, one
quiet promise — love lived
not in grand declarations,
but in the gentle certainty
of choosing each other,
every day.*

In the quiet of their shared life, in the steady unfolding of days, the words they once exchanged took on ever-deeper meaning:

“I will love you until life after death.”

It was not a poetic flourish, but a statement of conviction. For love, as they had come to understand, does not end where time ends. It is carried forward by the God who authored it, sustained by the grace that first brought two hearts together upon a boat crossing a wide and waiting sea.

And thus, their story continues — unfolding not in grand chapters, but in faithful ones; not in spectacle, but in steadfastness; not in noise, but in the enduring music of two lives harmonized by Providence.

Hand in hand, they walk on.

In prayer.
In gratitude.
In hope.

Toward a forever that has already begun.

RCM Past President/Former Supreme Court Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban's Column in Philippine Daily Inquirer

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OPINION

Editor
Juliet L. Javellana

Drilon should have been PH President

One of the most inspiring statesmen I have met, former Sen. Franklin M. Drilon, is launching this evening his autobiography, neatly titled "Being Frank, a Memoir." He has given me the honor of writing his book's "Foreword," which I am pleased to reproduce as my tribute to his nobility of character.

"FRANKLIN M. DRILON SHOULD HAVE BEEN PRESIDENT of the Republic of the Philippines. Among all the politicians of his time, he was the most qualified, most experienced, most effective, and most trustworthy. He was, and still is, patriotic, sharp, humble, outspoken, pro-poor, unblemished by any scandal or wrongdoing, and as a national politician, he has never lost an election; in fact, he had topped the senatorial polls more than once; and had been Senate President several times and Senate Minority Leader a few times.

"Competent, prudent and collegial, he knew how to think, act and work when he was the leader of the majority and how to fiscalize the majority, defend the national will and protect the marginalized when he headed the minority.

"I tried my best to inveigle him to aspire for the presidency as I was sure the retiring, popular President Benigno Aquino III would support him. With him as presidential candidate and either Mar Roxas or Grace Poe as his vice-presidential teammate in the 2016 elections, he would—in my humble opinion—have been unbeatable. In fact, Rodrigo Roa Duterte would not have run had he known Drilon would be the top contender. As my arguments, I pleaded motherland, patriotism, common welfare, and assured victory, but I could not budge the distinguished former Senate President.

"When a vacancy for the Office of the Chief Justice opened in 2012 due to the impeachment and removal of Renato C. Corona by the Senate Impeachment Court, I asked him to consider being the replacement. I hounded him daily with personal meetings—and after he 'escaped' to San Francisco, California, to avoid me, I still called him daily.



WITH DUE RESPECT
ARTEMIO V. PANGANIBAN

"I pleaded with him to complete his service to the three branches of government, the Executive, the Legislative and the Judicial. When he finally returned home, he promised to go—as he did go—direct from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport to my home to discuss with finality his refusal to heed my insistent advice.

"BY HIS INCORRIGIBLE REFUSAL, he created a crisis in the Supreme Court because then President Benigno Aquino III did not want to appoint any of the incumbent senior associate justices who were named there by his predecessor, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

"On the other hand, these justices signaled they would not object to Drilon as the first outsider to become Chief. Normally, only one of the two most senior justices were named Chiefs; this was the unbroken tradition since the Court was founded in 1901, the only exception being during World War 2, when then Speaker Jose Yulo became CJ. Given his impeccable legal track record and the fact that he was already nearing 70 years (the compulsory retirement age in the judiciary), he would serve only a few years, thereby giving the senior justices an opportunity to become Chief soon enough.

"Because of his steadfast refusal, President Aquino III appointed Maria Lourdes P. A. Sereno, a very junior member who had served only two years (2010-2012) as an associate jus-

tice and was ranked among the last third of the 15 justices. For this and other reasons which I will no longer discuss, Sereno was ousted by her colleagues, voting 8-6, via quo warranto—not by the constitutional process of impeachment—due to her failure to file some of her annual Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN) while she was a member of the law faculty of the University of the Philippines.

"I will not preempt Frank and leave it to him to explain to his readers and admirers in this Memoirs why he steadfastly declined to be President and/or Chief Justice.

"FRANK'S FIRST WIFE, VIOLY CALVO, fully and absolutely supported his political career. In fact, I venture to say that she was not merely the wind beneath his sails; she was the driving force, the 'activist' who inspired and helped catapult him to his meteoric political career. I personally knew the lovely, kind and candid Violy, who was an upcoming leader of the National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP), which I founded and headed earlier on.

"And before she died due to an incurable illness, she helped choose Frank's new wife, Mila Serrano Genuino, a widow whom Violy knew would fit Frank's career and would take care of him—as indeed she did, and still does—lovingly, tenderly, eternally.

"More than this earthly life, Mila has uncannily and invisibly led him to imitate our Lord Jesus, whom Frank has proclaimed, like many of us, as his Lord and Master and vowed to imitate Him and to join Him in Heaven one day in the far future.

"Anyway, though now retired from active politics, as he writes his Memoirs, Franklin M. Drilon remains a legend for what he has done and continues to do for our country and people. He can rightly claim, as St. Paul did, that 'I have done my best. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.' Amen."

Comments to chiefjusticepanganiban@hotmail.com

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Manila Rotarians Attend RC Kowloon East's 56th Anniversary Celebration



Prelude to the welcome dinner
hosted by RC Kowloon East



RC Kowloon East welcomed RC Manila
delegates on February 7, 2026



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Welcome Dinner by the Rotary Club of Kowloon East for visiting sister clubs



President Raoul Creencia with RC Kowloon East Club President George Kay

Rotary Club of Kowloon East's 56th anniversary celebration



DISTRICT EVENT

RI District 3810 Chinese New Year Celebration



DGND/DSG Hermie Esguerra, PDG Rudy Bediones with Lady Sharon Bediones, President Raoul Creencia, Dir. Warren So, DE Mike Roxas, Club Secretary Anton Mauricio, and Special Assistant to the Governor-Manila SDG Albert S. Alday attended the District Chinese New Year Celebration of Rotary District 3810 hosted by the Rotary Club of Bagumbayan-Manila, Rotary Club of Downtown Manila and the Rotary Club of Quirino Manila Central last February 10, 2026 at the Golden Bay Fresh Seafoods Restaurant in Pasay City.

FELLOWSHIP

Aleco Monday Breakfast Fellowship



Aleco Monday Breakfast Fellowship on February 9, 2026, hosted by Past Director Jun Hallare. Discussions on the role of DBP in relation to other government institutions, such as Maharlika, LandBank, and National Development Company (NDC).

Present were (clockwise from bottom left) PD Abe Pascual, PDG Jackie Rodriguez, PD Jun Hallare, former member Francis Juico, PD Pepo Nuñez, PD Rod Valencia, Sec. Anton Mauricio, former member Eric Severino, PP Archit Bartolome, former member Jorge Salazar, Rtn. Willie Peliño, and PP Ebot Tan.

RECOGNITION CORNER

Celebrating Three Decades of Dedication

Dr. Jose Brittanio S. Pujalte Jr. receives the 30-Year Service Award from the Philippine Orthopedic Center, honoring his exceptional commitment and unwavering service to the institution.



From left: Dr David Alagar, Philippone Orthopedic Center (POC)'s Chief of Hand Surgery POC, Dr. Jose Brittanio S. Pujalte Jr., and Candelaria Cuyco, POC's Chief Pharmacist (designated to present the 30-year Service Awards)





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