

## How CBCP blew a chance to make a difference

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines says the basic fault in the country's political culture is the subordination of the common good to the private good.

It places most of the blame for the failure to promote the common good on the people. It did not even so much as slap the wrist of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's administration for its failure to lead in the effort to promote the common good.

The CBCP did not call the administration to account for the many "sins" that have been imputed to it. On the contrary, it called the many problems of the country "simply rumors, fears, suspicions, imagined wrongs."

Corruption in government is part of the "rumors, fears, suspicions"? Have the bishops not heard or read

### OTHERVOICES what they say

#### Philippine Daily Inquirer

about the US\$329 million National Broadband Network deal with ZTE Corp of China in which hundreds of millions of pesos were given or offered as bribes to certain key officials? Have they not read or heard about the diversion of the P728 million fertilizer fund and the anomalous P1.3 billion poll computerisation deal?

The CBCP at least lamented the "inexplicable lack of action" on the extrajudicial killings "despite strong

suspicions about their perpetrators in the military establishment."

But will it use its moral influence to pressure the administration to put a stop to these killings and arrest, prosecute and jail the people responsible for them?

The CBCP made no mention of the deteriorating crime situation. Neither did it mention the problem of poverty which is resulting in the death of thousands of children and is plunging hundreds of thousands of people into the depths of misery, hopelessness and despair.

True, change must start with individuals. But the government should set the example in subordinating private interest to the common good. And the Catholic Church, like a good parent, has to guide the government toward the path of morality and ethical conduct.

## So much for Western clones: Where have all our great talents gone?

### PINOYDIMSUM observations

#### Isabel T Escoda



First it was Leah Salonga, some years ago, and now there's Arnel Pineda who's on the way to making his name abroad. I have to admit that, living in Hong Kong as I do and not up on the latest rock stars at home, I'd never heard of Arnel. But my niece informed me that he's a terrific singer and well known in Pinoy musical circles. So now he's headed for international stardom as well.

Obviously I've been on the far side of the generation gap, being clueless about who's cool in Manila's music world.

And so everyone's delighted that Arnel was discovered and hired by the US rock band "Journey." I'd also never heard of the group, having sort of given up after the Beatles because what followed them has been loud and dissonant, on top of which they sport bizarre names like The Rolling Stones, The Grateful Dead, U2, Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, The Police, etc.

All that rebellious punkness, to me, can't be classified as music – it's just plain noise.

So I've stuck to classic jazz, Dixieland, Latin music, '50s tunes, even going as far back as the Golden Oldies (the sort that Hong Kong disc jockey Rey Cordeiro features on RTHK's Radio 3, which

Aurora Pijuan who, when asked how many languages she spoke, said she only used her native tongue with her servants. The poor dear, of course, merely reflected the feudal nature of her country.

So now with our singers making it to the big time, shouldn't we stop and think: will Pinoy singers just continue being clones of Western ones? Does making it abroad mean our artists' main goal is continually to ape Westerners?

Lord knows we've had our Pinoy versions of Frank Sinatra, Andy Williams, Tina Turner, Celine Dion, etc, and it looks like we'll continue duplicating other popular ones. So are these really the country's greatest achievement?

I think it was only when Nora Aunor came on the scene that we had our Tunay na Pinoy epiphany.

What was appealing about her was not only that she didn't look like

### We really should be asking ourselves why countries like India and China, even Singapore, can produce persons of great accomplishment

I'd enjoy more if he didn't preface everything with his corny spiels. All those have tunes one can whistle and lyrics that make sense.

And one can dance to them, instead of having to stomp around and shake to today's rock noise with its migraine-inducing drum beat.

No doubt about it, Pinoy singers can say, like that George Gershwin song goes, "I got rhythm!"

Weren't we all thrilled when Leah Salonga won both the London and New York awards for her role in "Miss Saigon"?

That was reminiscent of the time Manila went wild, first when Gemma Cruz won the Miss International crown, soon to be followed by Gloria Diaz, Margie Moran and Aurora Pijuan.

A string of our beauties kept winning more international crowns, and nowadays the reaction seems mainly to be smug satisfaction, as though we're saying "So what else is new?"

So we take for granted that Pinay beauties are as plentiful as our fine mangoes in the summer, and we beam when some can actually reply to presenters' questions without sounding too dumb.

I don't think any have been like

an elite mestiza, she didn't try to imitate Western crooners. Her music reminded us of our inherent love of music, our romantic native nature.

She could make us think of the traditional kundiman because she didn't sing pale reflections of Western ballads.

But sadly, her promoters Westernized her music – and her looks – and now she's been swallowed up by American culture in California.

We really should be asking ourselves why countries like India and China, even Singapore, can produce persons of great accomplishment in the different fields of endeavour.

Where are our world-class scientists, writers, poets, painters, architects and inventors?

We do have excellent artists and writers (think Bencab and Jose Dalisay), and we like to trot out that line about a Pinoy having had a hand in creating Nasa's moon buggy.

But where are the genuine intellectuals, wizard technicians and world-class medical scientists?

Let's hope the new budding generation, if not the next one, will surprise us.



### TRAFFIC BUSTER

Traffic in Metro Manila's side streets is expected to ease after authorities launched a crackdown on illegal parking last week. The Pink Line campaign, led by Metro Manila chief Bayani Fernando, began in Makati and Pasay and will soon be implemented across Metro Manila. The campaign netted a number of illegally parked vehicles.

## Reality check for glamourized outsourcing sector

Call centers – or, more accurately, the business process outsourcing industry under which they fall – have done much to increase the share of the services sector as a percentage of the total gross domestic product. From 46 per cent in 2001, services now account for nearly half of total output.

The outsourcing sector, which includes non-voice back office, software development, transcription, engineering services and animation, has fueled personal consumption with agents' starting salaries generally higher compared to those in other industries.

But some say the industry has been glamourized and the prospects exaggerated.

For one, only those from the big cities are absorbed into the sector. Insiders also say that while it is easy

### OTHERVOICES what they say

#### Manila Standard Today

to get into these companies, upward movement in terms of promotion, even on merit, is difficult.

The expected growth in manpower is "slightly less than expected", according to an official of the Business Processing Association of the Philippines.

The industry has also suffered from the sharp appreciation of the peso against the dollar.

To be sure, the targets remain. Industry revenue is expected at US\$7

billion, up from US\$5 billion in 2007. The 40 per cent growth is seen to go on for the next three years. The market remains lucrative because under the threat of a slowing US and global economy, companies would opt to do business from cheaper offshore centers.

Of course, the language facility as well as the cultural affiliation with the West helps, though it should not in any way invite complacency.

Some analysts think the focus on outsourcing is misplaced and should be channeled instead to the manufacturing sector – the true engine of economic growth.

But if the outsourcing industry can capitalise on global opportunities while making itself less vulnerable to external shocks, its contributions to the economy can be realistic, reasonable and sustainable.