

## How I pray about corruption in the Philippines

By Beverly Goldsmith

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It was a long, hot taxi ride to the airport from the luxury of my hotel in up-market Makati, near Manila. Leaving the affluent area behind, I traveled through shantytowns where people live in makeshift cardboard and corrugated metal shelters. Traffic clogged the poorly made roads.

To pass the time, the driver and I started chatting. I learned that he spoke excellent English, had a university degree, and was passionate about Philippine politics. He said that too much of the country's power and money resided in the hands of just a few wealthy families. There was widespread corruption. Not enough was being done to provide citizens with basic amenities such as water, sewerage, power, telephone services, and roads.

I'd noticed it myself. Life was difficult here. Yet the people impressed me. They were hard workers who bore their situation with grace and cheerfulness. I told my driver that they deserved a better life.

As we parted company at the airport we shook hands and he said, sincerely, "Thank you for caring about us. I'm going to pray that you will come back to my country and run for President. We need you!"

I smiled and said, "I can't see myself as President. But I do promise to pray for your country."

Sitting in the airport waiting for my flight back to Australia, I began there and then to fulfil the promise I'd just made. It seemed hard. Could one person's prayers really help a nation? Thinking about this, I reasoned that God's love reaches worldwide. Geographic location and numbers of people are no obstacles to God or His healing power. So prayer that embraces those in need and seeks to "unite all interests in the one divinity" (see *Science and Health*, p. 571) is beneficial. I had seen this happen when I was a high school music teacher.

A pupil's instrument had been stolen. I reported it to the principal. He said he'd call an assembly and speak to the 1,700 students. Fellow staff members told me it was a complete waste of time. I decided to pray to understand that all of the students were, in their true nature, honest. God had made them this way. The person who had taken the instrument could know the difference between right and wrong. The Christ, which is the voice of good always present in everyone's thinking, was speaking to that individual. I knew that he or she had the moral courage to listen to the Christ, do what was right, and give the instrument back.

At the lunchtime assembly I was surprised when the principal simply said, "Something is missing from this school. Would the person who took it please have the moral courage to give it back? Just leave it where we can find it."

The result? The next day *two* instruments came back, as well as three stolen bicycles, dozens of missing library books, pens, pencils, and other items. All were left around the school where their owners could find them. One deputy principal said to me, "I've been a teacher for over 30 years, and I've never seen anything like this before!"

Encouraged by this recollection, I turned my thoughts back to the Philippines. I prayed, "Dear Father, honesty, integrity, and wisdom belong to each of us. We are Your children. You made us this way. Dishonesty is no part of our true nature. Neither poverty nor greed can tempt us to be corrupt."

Then I thought, "in the world of God's making there are not 'haves' and 'have nots.'" Each person has the right to live a happy, secure, and peaceful life. No one can be deprived of this good." I prayed, "Father, justice and freedom are for everyone. It doesn't matter where they live. You are there caring for them. No political or social situation can change that fact. Satisfaction, stability, and peace come from You. They are universal – for everyone everywhere."

Since that visit, I've continued to pray about countries where there is human rights abuse. Such spiritual thinking is a potent force for good. How do I know this? Because I've seen huge, seemingly "set in concrete" ways of life change – apartheid in South Africa, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the Marcos rule in the Philippines that was overturned by people power. I never thought that these things would change, but they did.

That's why I continue to pray about human rights. Every prayer you or I utter has the potential to wipe out corruption, cruelty, social injustice, and to bring freedom. For me, this is a goal worth joining together with others and praying for.

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