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Message of Pope John Paul II upon His arrival in the Philippines, February 17, 1981

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Tuesday, 17 February

MANILA, ARRIVAL IN THE PHILIPPINES

Mr. President

Your Eminences and venerable brother Bishops,

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Dear people of the Philippines,

Salamat sa Poong Maykapal! (Thanks be to God!)

With profound gratitude to God for being able to come to the Philippines, I offer my heartfelt greetings of love and peace to you all. It is a great joy to set foot on the soil of this beloved country, and I look forward to spending the coming days in your midst.

2. I come to you in the name of Jesus Christ, whose servant I am. And I come on a

visit of a religious and pastoral nature to proclaim his Gospel, to proclaim salvation in His name. As successor of the Apostle Peter, it is my desire to strengthen my brothers and sisters of the Catholic Church in their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who is our justice and peace, our greatest treasure and the one source of our hope.

3. In the very first week of my pontificate, Cardinal Sin spoke to me about the possibility of my coming to the Philippines on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the Church of Manila. At that time he requested the Beatification here in this capital city of Lorenzo Ruiz. Although it was not possible to fulfill this request in the jubilee year 1979, I desire at this time, through the first Beatification of a native son, to bring completion, as it were, this centennial celebration. This is my first and principal reason for coming. The Beatification, which also renders solemn honor to fifteen other Christian martyrs, is indeed an historic event for this country and a great blessing for the Church throughout the world. The heroic life of this Filipino layman and the faithful witness of his companions remind us that we are all called to holiness of life, and that, as Saint Paul wrote, God's power, "working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine" (Eph. 3:20).

4. And so I come to share with the Filipino people this occasion of great joy and Christian pride. From the history of the Church in my own nation, I know how important the first canonization of a native son, Saint Stanislaus, was for all the people of Poland at that time. It took place in Assisi in 1253. You know that in modern times any ceremony of this nature usually takes place in Rome at the See of Peter the center of universal Church. By way of exception a Beatification rite will take place for the first time now outside Rome. It will be told in a different way, but truly in the midst of the Church, in the local Church where Blessed Lorenzo Ruiz grew up in the faith.

This extraordinary event will illustrate in a clear manner how the two dimensions of the one Church – the universal and local dimensions – are complimentary and include each other. It is fitting that the setting for such an event should be the Philippines, a nation known for its dynamic Christian faith and at the same time for

its strong tradition of unquestioned fidelity to the Bishop of Rome.

5. In relation to this ceremony I am also happy to make a pastoral visit throughout the Philippines. Its extensive program will give me the possibility of meeting people of different regions. How much would I have liked to go everywhere to meet all the flourishing Catholic parishes, to be with the people of the barrios all over the land, but the time is limited. All the people of the Philippines will be in my heart and prayers when I visit the different communities that are in the program.

In this regard I am very grateful to you Mr. President, and to the national and local authorities for making all this possible, and for extending to me the hospitality of the Philippines.

6. I likewise wish, by means of this apostolic journey, to show my respect and esteem for the whole of Asia, for all the countries which are your neighbors in this part of the world. To the members of other Christian Churches, whom I also have the happiness of calling brothers and sisters in Christ, I offer cordial and fraternal greetings. And to all those who belong to the non-Christian religious I extend a sincere greeting as a friend and a brother into the one family of mankind.

7. As God gives me the privilege of visiting your country which is made up of thousands of islands, I am moved to repeat, in praise of our Creator, the words of the Psalmist: "The Lord is King; let the earth rejoice; let the many isles be glad" (Ps. 97:1). Indeed may the many islands of the Philippines be glad and rejoice in the loving mercy of our God!

May God bless you!

May God bless the Philippines!

Mabuhay ang Pilipinas! (Long live the Philippines!)

Source: Miguel de Benavides Library, University of Santo Tomas

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