

An interview with Jose De Venecia, past Speaker of Philippine Congress

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Question: You were a Speaker of the Philippines House of Representatives and president of the most influential political party in your nation. What is it about UPF that you have invested so much effort into the organization while in government and even in your post-government years?

I was invited by my friend Dr. Thomas Walsh and by my even closer friend, Rev. Moon, whom I met during his first visits to the Philippines, and Mother Moon. They invited me to the Universal Peace Federation and other organizations related to UPF. I found the movement to be genuine, to be positive and to be helpful to the lesser of our brothers and sisters in the community. So from that time on, I decided to become a supporter of the Universal Peace Federation, working with friends like Thomas Walsh and my colleague in Parliament, Dan Burton, formerly of the US Congress. I served as speaker of the Philippines Congress five times and throughout the years, I have been a supporter and friend of Father Moon and the Universal Peace Federation with their initiatives in Asia, in Africa, in Latin America and in other parts of the world.

Question: That you held dialogues with the Communist Party of the Philippines as well as Islamic separatists is admirable.

I negotiated the Peace Agreement with the Moro Liberation Front successfully. We signed a peace agreement with the MLNF and the wars with them ended. They have integrated within Philippine society. As to the other faction of the MLNF, which is another major grouping of Muslims in the Philippines, I also helped negotiate the first two annexes of the agreement with them, which were successful, but the last remaining agreement remains unfinished. By that time, I had retired from my fifth term as Speaker of the House of Representatives. But now, this peace movement with remaining Muslim group in the Philippines has been successful and perhaps the final agreement leading to the establishment of a Muslim -- not a separatist republic but a regional government within the Republic of the Philippines -- has been concluded and is about to be implemented. The other peace agreement that we are now working on is with the Communist Party and with Filipino Communists, which has been going on now for almost fifty years. I negotiated the first portions of that agreement. They were successful. Now the final leg of this agreement should -- with Gods benediction -- be complete in the next year or the next two years. This problem has been going on for fifty years! There have been too many murders, casualties, injuries and displacement of populations in villages, in barrios and in townships, so I think that with God's blessings, this will also come to an end.

Question: From your experience, how do you gauge the North Korean– South Korean relationship and what is going on there?

I have been working on this as well. In 1990, the founder and the first president of DPRK, the People's Republic of Korea, North Korea, invited me to North Korea. I had a very good meeting with President Kim Il-sung in Pyongyang, where I visited for almost a week. I requested from him and he gave me an official letter addressed to the Communists in the Philippines, which was very useful. Many of them surrendered to government forces because of the letter from President Kim Il-sung. During my five-day visit to North Korea, I invited the number two man in North Korea, the Deputy Prime Minister, Kim Dahl-hyun to visit the Philippines. A week after I arrived in Manila, he arrived in the Philippines. As a

result of his visit, we completed formal diplomatic relations between the Philippines and North Korea.

We had Philippine diplomats accredited to Pyongyang via Beijing and North Korean diplomats via Bangkok. It resulted in something concrete and very positive between the Philippines and North Korea.

Question: That must have been an early exchange of diplomats for North Korea.

Yes. I visited North Korea with one of our congressmen (who has since passed away) as a result of which other successful visits ensued. A political leader in Japan, Shin Kanemaru, visited Pyongyang six months after my visit. They started informal and formal talks between Japan and North Korea and a few years thereafter a former US president, Jimmy Carter, flew to Pyongyang and had important, groundbreaking talks with the North Korean government.

I am reminded of the reception Father Rev. Moon received when he visited North Korea. As you know, he is from North Korea, born in Pyongyang, as was his wife, now Mother Moon. As a result of their work and their successes, you know, Father Moon built an automobile factory and a hotel in North Korea, because he wanted to develop positive relations with the North Korean government with the view to contributing to the possibility of unification.

Do you know what he did? He donated his automobile factory and his hotel to the North Korean government and the North Korean people. I am mentioning to you some of the events that happened after my visit to North Korea and events and stories related to me by no less than Father Moon and Mother Moon and also by officials of the North Korean government.

I treasure my talks with the founder and first president of North Korea, Kim Il-sung. I received an invitation last week from the grandson, the present leader, Kim Jong-un, for their seventieth anniversary, next week on September 8. I'm seriously considering making the visit with my son, Congressman Christopher De Venecia, to see the new developments that have happened since my last visit in 1990, twenty-eight years ago.

I'm still working, up until now on the possibilities of peace on the Korean peninsula. I am hopeful that at some point, we will have unification on the Korean peninsula -- difficult, even far-fetched, but not impossible. There have been so many critics of the American president, President Donald Trump, in my several speeches and columns, including in my speech today in Seoul, I praised and complimented the American president for making the journey to Singapore and meeting the grandson, the young leader of North Korea. They had a good, positive meeting a few weeks ago, which was quite successful and which I hope will lead to a series of small but progressive agreements, until the denuclearization of the peninsula is achieved. I think this process, however, might take five to ten years -- not six months or one year. It is good to be very accurate about our predictions in order not to mislead governments and the people of the region, especially Japan and China and North Korea and South Korea -- the people of Asia who are looking forward to a final peace on the Korean peninsula. I am optimistic that at some point, perhaps, a confederation can emerge between the two Koreas, where a government or a republic will emerge in the North. You now have an existing, positive, modern republic in the South. A series of presidents have contributed to the modernization and growth of South Korea after the ravages of war in the 1950s. We have now a successful Korean president in the person of President Moon Jae-in, who has been quite a successful, competent, dynamic president, who made, I think, two trips to the demilitarized zone and in a sense, helped bring home the bacon. Now, we have to move forward. This could lead to a final unification, which of course will take time -- maybe five years, ten years or even more, but at least the movement for peace on the Korean peninsula is moving forward.

The other large question is was some breakthrough achieved by President Trump and the young leader in Singapore (which was very positive) with continuing talks at a lower level perhaps at the level of foreign minister. Secretary of State Pompeo is working hard on this visit and I predict, with God's benediction, there could be a final peace between North and South and further, with God's blessing, a unification, like the unification of the two Germanies and the two Vietnams, which were deemed impossible, but in God's own time took place. Now you have a unified Germany; now you have a unified Vietnam. This could also happen on the Korean peninsula.

Question: I have one final question: You spoke at Father Moon's ascension ceremony six years ago, on this anniversary, could you comment on your experiences with him?

Rev. Moon was a modern prophet and both a religious and a political leader. He looked forward. He looked toward the great future and did not just talk about it but did something about it. His movement has spread from North Korea to South Korea, from Seoul to Japan and the entire Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia and parts of Central Asia. He moved towards the United States. He was not afraid to spread his views among the American people. At first, he was not well received, but finally he was well received in America. He was received in the White House, was received by Democrats and Republicans and by governors and mayors and congressmen. I think there is a fairly large population of members of

the UPF movement in the United States of America. Then, he brought his movement to South America, to Latin America. He has branches in Europe. He has branches in Africa. He has branches in Australasia. You have to give credit to Father Moon and Mother Moon and the leadership of the Universal Peace Federation. There are Americans. There are Koreans -- South Koreans and some North Koreans. There are Filipinos. There are Indonesians. There are Burmese. There are Thais. There are Cambodians and French and Germans and British and East Africans and South Africans and West Africans. They are from all over the world. The Universal Peace Federation has spread and grown by leaps and bounds, propagating the philosophies and work of Rev. Moon, which is quite close to the work of the Catholic Church and of the Christian churches and of the other great religions of the world. Father Moon was a unifier. UPF is a unifier.

This is something great and very positive. Their work is appreciated by many people. That is why you don't see resistance to the work of UPF. Before, there was some discrimination, some unreasoned fear, because they did not understand, but over the years they have seen that the work of UPF is concrete, simple, humane and positive. Many, even among the sophisticated people of America and Europe and Asia, now embrace the Universal Peace Federation. It is not a negative force, but a positive force, useful to governments, to nations, to communities and families. So, there are more and more adherents. Nobody is forced to contribute. Nobody is forced to abandon his religion. I am a dedicated Roman Catholic. Nobody asked me to become a non-Catholic to join UPF. My wife and I appreciate our work and our fraternity with the Universal Peace Federation. Dr. Walsh is our friend. My fellow congressman, Dan Burton, and I work together closely. He was a congressman for thirty years in the US House of Representatives. I get to be interviewed by the *Washington Times* one of the great newspapers of America from time to time.

We have the UPF movement in the Philippines, with maybe fifty to a hundred thousand people. So, UPF is a positive force. It is a good neighborly association. There is nothing negative about it, so I encourage friends and relatives to join it and contribute to its work in the Philippines and other parts of the world.