

Doctor of Humanities, honoris causa

H.E. FIDEL VALDEZ RAMOS



***P**resident Fidel V. Ramos occupies a singular and strategic position in the troubled history of the Filipino people: between a past fraught with crises and a future of great hope and promise. Imaged in the past as the "sick man of Asia," many indicators today show a Philippines ready to make the leap into the twenty-first century, its confidence in its ability to survive and flourish buoyed up by the strides the country has taken in many aspects of its economic and political life.*

Under his stewardship, remarkable progress has been achieved in the economy. The determination and courage which have inspired his initiatives at deregulating telecommunications, banking and financial services, and power generation have led to the long-awaited liberalization of the economy. In the process, these moves have allowed the country to integrate its future with the larger global economy by unlocking the genius of the Filipino entrepreneur and enterprise to compete more effectively for the world's riches in trade, industry and technology.

Since his assumption of the presidency in 1992, the pace of overall economic growth has increased beyond population growth. While still needing fundamental infrastructure and change, agriculture has grown. Growth in manufacturing is 2.6 times the growth of population. At the same time, the increasing productivity of the economy is holding inflation down. Exports have been growing at notable rates. The country's international reserves have risen to US\$11.8 billion. There is surplus in the government budget.

But for him there are greater goals than these economic gains. In a recent speech, he said: "We cannot in the end measure our economic success purely by industrial or commercial benchmarks or parameters. History will measure our success by how well we have raised the quality of life in all of our communities. There can be no question that the economic growth we are now experiencing will remain empty if it does not engage and if its benefits do not reach the greatest number of our people especially those in the countryside."

Thus he has made the Social Reform Agenda the focus of the second part of his term. The coverage has been expanded beyond the 20 poorest provinces in the country to areas in all 77 provinces needing special attention. The goal he has said is to bring to reality the still unrealized dream of the majority of Filipinos: "adequate and nourishing food, decent shelter, a good job, healthy bodies, affordable education and speedy justice under the law."

He has made solid breakthroughs in our country's search for unity and peace. Most important is the historic agreement with the MNLF, which led in 1996 to the creation of the ZOPAD (Special Zone for Peace and Development) with the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) to promote it. This has moved the country closer to the resolution of the age-old conflict in Mindanao that has caused massive dislocation and the loss

of thousands of lives. While much has yet to be done to make the fruits of peace felt in the lives of our brothers and sisters in the south, this peace has been the necessary first and major step. Erstwhile military rebels have been reintegrated into civil society, even as the process of dealing with their grievances continues. Peace talks continue with the National Democratic Front. While the road remains long, it is clearly a road towards unity and peace.

For forty-seven years of public service, he has kept faith with the code of conduct nurtured from his earliest years of study and military training. He has manifested this in various ways: quelling insurgency in the Philippines, fighting for democracy on the Korean Peninsula and building infrastructure in Vietnam, being a key leader in the restoration of our democracy in EDSA 1986, defending our newly restored democracy against numerous coups, mediating conflicting claims on our long road to unity and peace.

For his steadying presence and effective leadership, which have raised the confidence of the international community in the Philippine economy; for his bold economic vision of a Philippines which will be globally competitive in the next millennium; for his focus on the Social Reform Agenda with the goal of ultimate victory over the tyranny of poverty; for his relentless pursuit of dialogue with all dissidents towards the building up of a Philippines for all Filipinos, **the Ateneo de Manila University, an institution animated by Ignatius of Loyola—a soldier turned priest—is proud to confer on a distinguished alumnus of the Ateneo Graduate School of Business, His Excellency, Fidel Valdez Ramos, the degree of Doctor of Humanities, *honoris causa*.**



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