

When Righteous Anger Meets Filipino Fatigue

Jesus once stood on the Mount of Olives, overlooking Jerusalem, and wept. “If you had only recognized this day, and everything that was good for you!” His lament was not resignation but grief that demanded vigilance. His heart bled for a people numbed by occupation and injustice, for a city that had lost sight of what was sacred.

We Filipinos know this numbing well. Our sense of *kapwa*, that deep recognition that another’s suffering is also our own, has been dulled by years of betrayal. Systemic corruption has worn us down until fatigue passes for normal. We shake our heads, mutter *wala na talagang magbabago*, and move on. Yet Jesus’ example does not permit us to shrug and move on. His own righteous anger, driving out the merchants who had turned the temple into a den of thieves, shows that confrontation, not resignation, is the posture of faith.

A scandal that mirrors us

Consider the latest scandal that has flooded headlines, and ironically, literal communities. Since 2022, the government has allocated about ₱545 billion to flood-control projects meant to protect lives and livelihoods. But recent investigations revealed many of these projects as ghost infrastructures, unfinished or substandard, siphoned off by layers of kickbacks.

Testimonies before the Senate identified at least 17 legislators, along with DPWH officials and favored contractors, accused of pocketing as much as 25% in kickbacks. A mere handful of firms cornered an outsized portion of the contracts. Meanwhile, ordinary Filipinos trudged through waist-deep water, homes washed out, children missing school. The national treasury bled, but more painfully, it was our *kapwa* who drowned.

The corrosion of conscience

Here we find the distortion of a word central to our culture: *kasalanan*. Its root, *sala*, means simply “misaligned.” To treat corruption as *sala*, a misstep, a bend in the rules, is to cheapen sin. In that reduction, accountability dissolves.

Apathy itself becomes corruption of the soul: the refusal to be moved by the hard knocks of injustice, a callousness dressed up as tired realism. When everything is labeled as a misalignment, nothing feels grave enough to confront. *Ganito na talaga* becomes the lullaby we sing ourselves.

But fatigue, though understandable, is dangerous. Every time outrage is cut short by resignation, corruption hardens into habit. What was once shocking becomes background noise, like the floodwaters that rise every monsoon.

Jesus’ tears and anger

Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem cuts through resignation. He did not look away. He named what was broken, and when the temple was defiled, he confronted it. His was not apathy but love expressed as anger.

We tend to sanitize Jesus into meekness, forgetting the tables he overturned. His righteous anger was not cruelty but a defense of what was holy. For him, tolerating corruption in sacred spaces was not an option. And what is more sacred than the lives of ordinary, hard-working Pinoys, who continue to pay for the greed of the powerful?

Filipino fatigue, Filipino hope

The Filipino heart is known for tolerance. We endure with humor, find joy in hardship, forgive too easily. But tolerance has a shadow side: it numbs us to injustice. When combined with a shallow sense of *kasalanan*, as though corruption were merely *sala*, a slight misstep, our tolerance mutates into complicity.

Yes, the fatigue is real. After decades of recycled scandals, we are tired of demanding reforms only to watch the well-connected thrive. But Jesus' example insists that fatigue cannot excuse indifference.

For those who claim faith, not being watchful is not an option. Vigilance may feel small against billions siphoned away, but it is what keeps conscience alive. Prayer may feel powerless, yet history shows that movements for change often begin with whispered prayers and stubborn persistence.

The flood-control scandal is not just another anomaly in a long ledger. It is a mirror held up to our collective conscience. Will we accept that the water rising in our streets is not only due to typhoons but to moral collapse? Will we continue to excuse ourselves with fatigue while children wade through knee-deep mud to school?

Jesus wept because he loved. His lament was born of hope that peace and justice were still possible. For us Filipinos, to recover our *kapwa* is to refuse apathy. It is to grieve corruption as our own wound, to feel righteous anger when systems cheat the vulnerable, and to stay awake even when exhaustion tempts us to sleep.

Fatigue is human. But faith calls us to more: to vigilance, to prayer, to action. For if even Jesus refused resignation, so must we. For the faithful, not being watchful is not an option.

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