
Book Review by Rev. Fr. Roy Cimagala

Contributed by Administrator
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BusinessWorld- May 18, 2007, Daily Zamboanga Times May 19, 2007 Pinoy pilgrim By FR. ROY CIMAGALA
That's the title of a book written by a friend of mine. It's subtitled, "In search of Filipino identity," and is a personal testimony of what he thinks is our national character and the rich potentials that character possesses.

He believes this national character ought to be developed further, purifying it of some negative traits while highlighting the many positive elements it contains. He is convinced ours is a true blessing from God, endowed with a special mission. The testimony is based on the author's insights and the many lessons he learned from his family, his priceless work experiences, travels, encounters with people high and low. He's a product of the school of hard knocks. He says all these in an anecdotal style, homey, funny, engaging, much like how the writer is in real life. He's now in his 70s, at least a generation ahead of me, kind of retired but still available to serve anyone who wants to take him. Actually, the book also left me teary eyed in some delicate moments. I first met Manoling de Leon when I started my first job after college in Manila. In my early 20s, I was selling condominiums which at the height of the Martial Law years in the mid-70s were selling like hot cakes. I remember we finished selling our project along Roxas Boulevard in Manila, a 100-unit affair, in one month. And there was no building yet. We were only showing drawings to our customers. That's was my first time to join a killing. Those were dangerously intoxicating days for a young man like me at that time, but I managed, with the help of my guardian angels, to remain sober and focused. I thank God I survived. I managed to sift out the poison that usually went with the perks of a successful business. Manoling struck me as a very likeable uncle, friendly, cheerful and all. He was not a regular staff of the office, but rather a consultant to our president, or as he likes to say, an intellectual entrepreneur, paid only to think and advise. At that time, I did not know what he contributed to our office. He was so unassuming that it is only now after reading his book that I realize he brought a real wealth of experience and expertise to our young outfit. He was the groundbreaker of the condominium business that caused a sea change of the economy at that time. That's what he is good at—creating very sellable innovative ideas, making money almost out of nowhere. But he is much more than this. He was a construction and gas station manager, advertising and marketing executive, and consultant to tycoons and Philippine Presidents. Even without a college degree, he gave lectures to MBA students. The story of his life is very inspiring, to say the least. The 9th of 15 children, he had to struggle for survival early in life. Good Catholics, his parents instilled sense and virtues to the children in spite of tremendous difficulties they had. Manoling learned quickly how to fend for himself and to care for the whole family. At age 16, after the war, when things were difficult, he went to work in Guam, a young OFW, his baptism of fire. In the process, he knew what his strengths and weaknesses were. One day, his mother asked him to sell "maruya" in school to augment the family income. He could not sell a single "maruya" to his classmates, but he managed to dispose the product by selling to a rich neighbor with a large family. Lesson: he was bad at direct selling, but good at bulk sales. From then on, he was always trying to know more about himself, and to observe very keenly the things around him. He also read, studied and prayed. That's the secret of his fertile mind. The title of the book, Pinoy pilgrim, refers to his belief that each man's life here on earth is a journey toward our definitive homeland in heaven. Whether we are aware of it or not, we have a relation with God. Would that we be more aware of it so as to actively develop it!