



Lecture D: Family Sanctity: Fidelity of Soldiers to their Family
Police Director General Enrique Bulan (Ret)

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Manansala B Hall, Sulo Riviera Hotel

Quezon City, Philippines

Lecture Highlights

Police Director (Ret.) Enrique Bulan's lecture *Fidelity of Soldiers to their Family* provided a perspective on Filipino military families and how they have evolved. He argued that the family of a Filipino soldier could be described as extended (including in-laws and even pets), characterized by the priority of the Service to that of family relations and where the wife is expected to take care of the home when the former is on deployment. Majority of Filipino soldiers come from poor families, had to work early in life, disciplined, industrious, motivated to have better life. Unfortunately they are subjected to physical and psychological abuse and he brings this to his own family. Then drawing on his personal experiences, he enumerated the stages of relationship between the Serviceman and his family.

The first stage (Living Home) is defined with his relationship with other family members and the values they hold. His best friends are family members. He looked up to his father and maternal grandfather who also served in the military.

The second stage (Joining of Families) as a newly married couple can be characterized as an extended family where the husband and wife have to address different family issues and values as well as environmental backgrounds and intra-family relationship dynamics. From his wife's family, he imbibed values of strong faith, achievement in school, respect for elders and close family ties. They also agreed to live modestly although his wife was well-to-do. Likewise, they had to live with her parents at this stage while Mrs. Bulan had to also work. As a young couple, they had to address stressors such their gender, different values and family origins, health, finances, and outside events.

The third stage (families with young children) adjusts the marital system to make space for the children by joining in their caring, financial support as his wife resigned from work, single parent upbringing (by the mother) and joining church activities on the part of General Bulan. One issue they had to face was when they transferred their daughter to another school without consulting her. It was also this time that he decided to take time to attend to special events in his family like birthdays, first communions and the like.

The fourth stage when the children become adolescents redefines the relationships to permit the former to move in and out of the family system still within the context of a single parent arrangement. Their children now have their own friends. One issue that needed to be addressed was the differing positions of parents so General and Mrs. Bulan decided to have a single decision in relation with their children. The couple also allowed their children to choose their courses in college although they gave appropriate advice.

The fifth stage (Launching Children and Moving On) renegotiates the marital system towards an adult-to-adult relationship as their children get married and raise their own families. One manifestation of this was that the speaker now had to share in the household chores. New relationships were formed with in-laws and grandchildren while developments like the disabilities and deaths of parents occurred. He remembered that one of the hardest things he did was to give away his daughter for marriage but he accepted that. This was also the time when he became the patriarch of his family as the eldest sibling after his father died.

The sixth stage is families in later life wherein, in Director Bulan's case, he and his wife had to celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary and mark in memory several milestones. He retired from the Service early at the age of 52, had a second job, studied and now has to cope with illnesses while his wife still continues teaching.

Throughout these stages however, the underlying principle is the family is the most important value a Filipino treasures.

Open Forum

During the Open Forum, the following questions were asked: what was General Bulan's assessment of the families of servicemen in the light of controversies? What was the role of the military chaplain in his life? Were there instances of temptations to misbehave and how did he cope? What was the difference between his family when he was in uniform and then when he retired? On the first question, he stated that it all depended on how a serviceman holds and adheres to the values he or she proclaims. But one thing a serviceman must not forget is service to God and Country. On the second question, his personal view was that chaplains should come up with a seminar on those who intend to get married and provide couples with the picture of what a military family is. There should also be a program for soldiers to prepare them for military life. Third is to have counseling services. On question three, he said that he joined all-male groups that were family-oriented that served as his support group against misbehavior.

Mrs. Bulan added that as a military spouse, she did not have time to be lonely by keeping busy by managing the home. She also emphasized the importance of faith in God to cope up with long separations during General Bulan's deployments. Likewise, she added that the synergy of her and General Bulan's family values made her an undemanding wife. Last but not the least was the company she kept which also hold faith in God as a common value. On the fourth question, the obvious difference was his presence in the family which was very limited when he was in the Service. Another difference was the stress caused by the dangers of his profession. He added that personally, there is not much difference between families living in the barracks and those living out but families have their own stresses