

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE**  
**PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**SPEECH BY**  
**PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.**  
**AT THE 81<sup>ST</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARAW NG KAGITINGAN**

[Delivered at the Mt. Samat National Shrine in Pilar, Bataan | 10 April 2023]

Thank you very much Transportation Secretary Jimmy Bautista. *[Please take your seats]*

The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Archbishop Charles John Brown; the Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps, today led by His Excellency Koshikawa Kazuhiko, the Ambassador of Japan to the Philippines; and the Chargé d’Affaires Heather Variava of the US Embassy here in Manila; Senator Francis Tolentino and other members of Congress who are here today; Bataan 2<sup>nd</sup> district Rep. Albert Garcia; Philippine Veterans Affairs Office Undersecretary Reynaldo Mapagu; AFP Chief of Staff General Andy Centino and all our service commanders; Bataan Governor Jose Enrique Garcia; Bataan Mayor Carlos Pizarro; the National Historical Commission of the Philippines Chairman Dr. Emmanuel Calairo; Most Reverend Bishop Ruperto Santos; most importantly, our valiant veterans who are with us this morning; participants to the 2023 Philippines-United States Balikatan Exercises; fellow workers in government; other distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

My beloved countrymen, we are here today to commemorate a defining moment in the history of our people.

We are here to once again remember the heroism, valor, and sacrifice of the countless heroes who—with every ounce of their being, and often with their passing—have made this hallowed ground.

We convene here at the Mount Samat National Shrine—built during my father’s time to memorialize the heroic struggles of Filipinos and their allies during the war, particularly during the Fall of Bataan some 81 years ago.

Teeming with rich historical and military significance, Mount Samat was a key part of the plan to defend the Philippines, through the so-called War Plan

Orange, which looked to Corregidor Island and Bataan Peninsula as the ideal strategic locations from which to defend Manila.

It served as a key observation post overlooking the entirety of Bataan, and as the bastion of our resistance against the enemy.

It is here on this sacred ground that on April 3, 1942, Good Friday, the enemy forces launched their final offensive to take Bataan Peninsula.

Facing them, on these imposing but pock-marked foothills of Mount Samat, were the 21<sup>st</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> divisions of the Philippine Army.

Battered by months of fighting, it was here that they made their last stand facing the combined military might of a battle-hardened, well-equipped, well-supplied force.

For six days, our soldiers fought bravely with “almost superhuman endurance,” fighting not only with the power of their arms but with the faith entrusted to them by their fellow Filipinos.

After days of the fiercest fighting yet seen in this theater, our brave soldiers yielded to the superior force of the enemy, with heads bloodied but unbowed, earning the respect of both their comrades and their enemies.

Now, we commemorate April 9 of every year as the Day of Valor.

Many dismiss the commemoration of the Bataan siege as ill-advised, simply because it had ended in a most agonizing defeat. But we cannot agree more with our historians, because what we had lost in this incipient battle, and had not finished the war, the war had yet to be won.

We lost great men and women during that time, ending with the Death March, our most important triumph though was that we kept on fighting, and that we never lost hope.

It has been said that it is inappropriate that we celebrate such loss. For although we lost the battle, the Fall of Bataan marked the beginning of the Filipinos’ resurgence as a fighting force to defend, and to take back the land of their forefathers.

Meanwhile, the ferociousness with which Filipinos fought for their country diverted enemy forces from action in other countries around Southeast Asia.

Also, the fall of Bataan triggered a series of events—spanning three years of patience, resilience, and physical and mental toil—during which Filipinos regrouped, fought side-by-side with their fellow citizens and allies.

Citizens from every walk of life quietly and bravely volunteered to join in the defense of our country.

It continued with the valiant resistance of our guerilla forces all over the country, culminating in the Battle of Bessang Pass in Cervantes, Ilocos Sur, where the 25,000 Filipino forces supported by American forces finally subdued the enemy.

In three years' time, Luzon would be retaken. The sheer unrelenting spirit of Filipinos working hand-in-hand with allies overpowered enemy forces' stranglehold over Luzon.

Through significant victories at the Balete Pass, Villaverde Trail, and Bessang Pass, it ultimately led to the defeat and surrender of the enemy later that year.

Our world has turned many times since that war.

We live in a different time now. Those who once faced each other in battle now work together for peace.

So one might ask, "Is there still a need for heroes? Do we still have within us Filipinos that character of heroism that has defined us as a people for all our history?"

We need only look around us to find the answer.

We see it in our veterans—some of whom are here with us today. They have passed on to us this shining legacy, this treasure, for us to burnish.

We see it in the eyes of every child who looks to the future with hope and eager anticipation.

The answer lies in every Filipino who toils and sacrifices to feed their families, help their communities, and serve their country.

And so we must celebrate these golden deeds that uphold the spirit of patriotism.

We celebrate all the individual acts of valor and of sacrifice. We celebrate the Filipino spirit. We celebrate our countrymen's deep, abiding love of every Filipino: love for our land, love for our people, and love for our freedom.

We have been called upon to stay true to that tradition, that tradition that Filipinos have demonstrated throughout our history. And so it is today that the spirit of heroism is once again asked of us by our country.

Perhaps not in the grand acts displayed on the field of battle, but in the everyday challenges that we must face to defend ourselves, to defend our people, to defend our country.

What better example of that Filipino nobility of spirit could there be than what was once again demonstrated in the last worldwide crisis, where our men and women rose to the challenge of facing an unseen enemy—a new global challenge.

Once again, Filipinos showed the world our purity of spirit and of compassion by willingly putting themselves in peril in the service of others.

So have faith. We can look to the future with confidence, girded with the knowledge that the most noble Filipino quality of heroism is aflame and burns brightly in every true Filipino.

For that we thank our heroes—those who fought, and bled, and died here, for they have shown us the way, not necessarily an easy way, to make us the best citizens of our republic.

So let us tread that path together, united by our faith in God and our love of country.

*Mabuhay ang bayaning Pilipino!*

*Mabuhay ang ating mga beterano!*

*Mabuhay ang Pilipinas! [applause]*

**--- END ---**