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**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. AT
THE NATIONAL HEROES DAY**

[Delivered at the Libingan ng mga Bayani in Taguig City | 28 August 2023]

Thank you, Secretary Luc Bersamin. [Please take your seats.]

Joining us today is the House Speaker, Speaker Martin Romualdez; the Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps headed by the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Archbishop Charles John Brown III; National Defense Secretary, Secretary Gilbert Teodoro Jr. and other members of the Cabinet here today; the National Historical Commission of the Philippines Chairman Emmanuel Calairo; the Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff General Romeo Brawner Jr. and the commanders of the other major services; Taguig City Mayor Maria Laarni Cayetano; my fellow workers in government; ladies and gentlemen; distinguished guests, good morning.

We commemorate today National Heroes Day, and as we do so, let us collectively recall the heroic deeds of those who have fought for our honor and our dignity as a blossoming nation throughout the centuries.

From the warriors of old, revolutionary fighters, visionary thinkers, war veterans, and the countless patriots who have helped shape our country into what it is and what we are today—free, independent, and self-determined. To them we are eternally grateful.

May the stories of their courage and wisdom continue to be told and imparted to our youth, that they might be inspired and to strengthen their identity and cohesion of our nation for not today alone but for centuries to come.

In our journey forward as a nation, we must break free from the notion that heroes are only those who have earned a place in the National Pantheon, immortalized in monuments, or those whose names are inscribed in streets, or whose lives are chronicled in biographies. Like the “Unknown Soldier” buried in this hallowed ground, unnamed and unheralded heroes too deserve their due recognition.

While the memories of our heroes of our storied past will never fade, new ones continue to emerge. They are here amongst us, in the daily bustle of modern-day society, in our communities, in our own families and inner circles.

In their own ways—more often than not in less dramatic, less tragic circumstances—their selfless deeds and sacrifices have the same ability to inspire and to create a positive ripple effect in society.

It can be said that, “Most heroes are ordinary men and women.” But faced with the challenges of life, faced by the challenges to their lives, to their country, to their families, to their community, and to their beliefs, it is them who rise up and which show us the act of heroism that is extraordinary.

All of us can be heroes, one way or another. We unleash the hero in us when we act genuinely for the good of another, impelled by causes and motives greater and more noble than mere personal interest or vainglory.

Heroism is not only to be found in the grand battles and struggles; it also resides in the simplest acts of kindness, of empathy, [and] solidarity that not only move hearts, but also influence minds and actions, and change lives for the better.

We need the unfading memories and shining examples of our heroes not only to continually remind us of the noble causes that have led them to their heroic deeds. We also draw inspiration from them for our self-improvement, and to possibly develop our own heroic potential.

So, let us always tell the tales of the heroic deeds of our kababayans, whether they are in the country or – they are in the country or in outside in the rest of the world.

The tale might be the electric lineman from Bacolod City, braving the typhoon Egay floods and risking his life to repair broken electrical wires, to avert the greater danger to the neighborhood.

It may be the Filipino farmer, who prevailed over harsh weather and economic conditions to ensure a successful harvest that he might feed his countrymen. What to him was a mere personal triumph was a crucial fragment of a greater accomplishment: a high level of production of food, which contributes to our goal of food sufficiency for our people. A grand and as noble an aspiration as could we had.

There is also of course the Filipino teacher, who, in spite of a meager pay, strives not only to be a good educator to our youth, but a patient and persevering servant of government and of the people in many various activities outside of their strict job description. Elsewhere in the world, there is the story of Filipino teachers who lent a hand to an elderly neighbor in need during these terrible wildfires that we are witnessing.

We can never disregard the countless tales of our workforce, who have bounced back from the agonizing challenges of the pandemic to drive our nation's ongoing economic recovery. These include of course our overseas Filipino workers, whose remittances form a strong pillar of our country's economy.

We have – we must mention a dear and departed friend who we can only describe as well as a hero and that is our good friend who we just lost, Secretary Toots Ople. And she is a perfect example of what true heroism can be. She tirelessly dedicated the better part of her life to promote the welfare of our modern-day heroes.

Let not our recognition just be a vacuous expression of consolation for noble efforts. We must give a genuine appreciation and a promise for all of us to do better, to emulate those heroes who we so admire and so honor.

We shall not take their heroism for granted. We will not spare ourselves of the moral duty to perpetuate the ideals that they have fought for, and to rectify the unsafe, inequitable, or exceptionally difficult conditions that necessitated their selfless deeds. Failing in our duty, their sacrifices would have been all in vain.

Collectively, their heroic acts, small or large, go a long way and make our country and the world a better place. To them, we once again earnestly dedicate this special day.

Mabuhay ang ating mga bayani! Mabuhay ang kabayanihan na nasa puso ng bawat Pilipino!

Maraming salamat po at magandang umaga sa inyong lahat! [applause]

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