

## Rangers with Candy: INC Affairs and Religious Persecution

**In an all-out war against Oppression, how long could Faith last?**

**Despite all the hearsays and allegations surrounding INC, the brotherhood's devotion to the Church endures – for some.**

Confusion first broke out amongst us INC members when a certain video circulated throughout the internet which then later caught the attention of the media in a swift.

Ka Angel and Ka Tenny Manalo set off the big bomb when they appealed to the brotherhood thru the said video, claiming that their lives, together with a few allegedly abducted ministers, were in danger.

Even more shocking news was their expulsion the following day. As much as it was heartbreaking for our beloved leader to expel his mother and brother, his duty to protect the Church from those who threaten its preserved unity dominated his priorities.

Such incidents brought about by his own family had indeed dealt a tremendous blow on the credibility of INC's current executive minister, Ka Eduardo V. Manalo, along with the rest of the Sanggunian members.

Further suspicions on the present management within the INC Church, such as the misspending of tithes, arose during the chaos. Simultaneously, a few ministers who were supposed to be abducted, had finally stepped to the fore. Some denied the claim while others confirmed it. Until now however, accusers have been unable to provide even a single piece of solid evidence to justify their indictments.

As days pass by, the INC has become quite an intriguing topic amongst netizens, mostly non-members of the Church, who seem to know a greater deal than they actually do. Some would even go far as to publish their own versions of INC doctrines, only for the sake of hypocritically demonstrating the scope of their knowledge.

Even the offering of tithes, for instance, which has always been our sacred practice during worships, is now being held against us. While a few of us members could indeed offer a considerable sum of money, we have NEVER been asked however to give a fixed percentage of our income, let alone forced to. Our offerings have always been voluntary and we have long since accepted, wholeheartedly, the doctrine on tithes thus allowing us to give without reservation, unlike others who still consider them as mere donations to their church.

At any rate, INC has been catching a lot of attention from the mass lately. People have been furiously pointing fingers at us for merely being members of the Church. We could not really blame them. Regardless of religions, humans will always be humans. We will always be too frail and weak to completely resist evil, especially when it dwells within our very core. And by evil, that is to say the very pollution that dominates our minds, if you know what I mean.

While it is true that we were advised not to further meddle with any of these affairs or involve ourselves in such pointless debates, our leaders never meant to impede our rights to freedom of expression.

If anything, it was to protect us from harm. Prejudiced perspectives could only cause nothing but pain to others as much as to one's self.

Besides, we neither have the knowledge of the entire truth nor we do have the power to expose it, so is there even anything worth expressing? Nothing but subjective sentiments. There is much difference between being socially aware and being an insufferable know-it-all.

"He who restrains his words has knowledge. And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding" (Proverbs 17:27) To state it bluntly, "Haan kayo man agpakalaing gamin please."

Here then comes the real ethical dilemma. It's one thing not to let our faith falter, yet we could not just turn a blind eye on the matter at the same time. Not when it stares us right in the face.

Although we are greatly persecuted and so gravely confused at the moment, one thing is for certain – all these things happen for a purpose, whatever that is.

As a member of the brotherhood myself, I have already been asked a fair few times by friends on my views regarding these issues. My answer has always been consistent - "No comment."

I guess I might have sounded a little indifferent on the matter and I know I have barely satisfied their curious minds. In any case, I admit being affected by all these grievous incidents that continued to haunt our Church. That's right, folks. We hear the rattle of those sharp tongues and see those malicious looks people throw at us. We're neither blind nor deaf.

What with all the allegations declared by expelled members of the Church and even ministers who were formally part of the Sanggunian itself, who wouldn't be disheartened when the leaders of the Church you have grown to love and trust were being accused of such atrocities?

But wait, who ever said we should discard our faith due to some mere and groundless accusations? Regardless of the truth, God did no wrong. Our Church did no wrong. Our doctrines remain intact. So why should our faith have to waver?

No matter what kind of future is laid ahead of us, our love for our brothers and sisters, for the Church, and especially for the One True God, could only get stronger each passing day. My faith tells me so.