



Sr. Emelinda Manuntag, OSB

June 9, 1958 – August 10, 2005

Who is FLOR MANUNTAG, "ATCHI" as she is called?

Flor Manuntag was the best Barangay Captain Angeles City never had. She grew up in Barangay Sto. Cristo, Angeles where she knew every single resident, young and old alike. From the corner of Sto. Cristo Street, children would flock to her to ask for her blessing. She would gather them on week-ends, teach them prayers and catechism, bring them to their barangay chapel and start initiating them as members of the Children of Mary Immaculate, better known as COMI.

She was like Darna, the Filipino comics heroine, who would come to the rescue of anybody in need in the barangay, in the school where she worked and the family where she belonged. She had all ears to those who sought her out for their problems and tried hard to find the possible solutions for them.

She was a consummate sacristan mayor. Fifteen minutes before the mass, she would grab the microphone and with her high-pitched voice invited the whole barangay with this phrase, "COME NOW, LET US GO TO MASS." She had a total of three Holy Masses on a Sunday. The first mass was an anticipated one on a Saturday at 6:30 in the evening at the barangay chapel. She would prepare the altar, the readers, the offerers, and practice the songs while waiting for the priest. If there were no readers, she would pitch in. Mind you, she was also the soloist of the choir. In other words, she was the mover and shaker of the barangay chapel, short of being the priest presider of the mass.

The second mass was at the Carmelite Monastery on Sundays at 6:00 in the morning. There she would join the choir of Imang Daisy Capili, the organist, and who happens to be the mother of another choir member, Liza, now Sr. Agnella. After the Mass, Mrs. Capili, Flor, Liza and all the members of the choir would rush to the choir loft of the Holy Rosary Parish Church to sing for the 7:30 a.m. mass while still gasping. Mrs. Capili categorized Flor as soprano. The major reason was her regular attendance and categorical commitment as choir member. She never failed to attend all the practices.

Had there been an ordination of women in Angeles City, Flor would have been the first woman priest ordained. She had a string of qualifications. She was the representative of her barangay to the Parish Pastoral Council, a treasurer of the COMI, an organizer of the block rosary and prayer leader for the sick and for the dying. Together with Loida Lugtu, now Sr. Martha, Flor was engaged in giving catechetical classes and helped in putting up the Altar of Repose on Holy Thursday. Here is a typical Flor to the rescue incident. During a "salubong" (meeting of Jesus and Mary) on Easter dawn, the angel who was supposed to unveil the sorrowful mother, had dizziness spells. Right there and then, Flor put on her invisible wings and substituted as the adult angel.

Since Flor did not aspire to become the barangay captain of Sto. Cristo or the Darna of the films, Sr. Virginia, the vocation promoter of Angeles in 1991, reminded her that she had not acted on her application to the aspirancy yet. Due to Sr. Virginia's persistence, Flor left her 13-year bookkeeping job at Holy Family Academy to join the Missionary Benedictine Sisters in 1992. She became Sr. Emelinda, a combination of her mother's name, Emiliana and her own baptismal name, Florida.

As a novice, Sr. Emelinda was sent to Baguio. Sr. Luisa, who was then a junior sister in Baguio, recalls how the novice Flor patiently helped her in her accounting work. Her companions in the novitiate, Srs. Michaela, Leah Ann, Celeste, Fatima, Mary Louise, Josefa, Leticia and Mechtilde called her ATCHI. True to her name, ATCHI, she was a caring and loving elder sister. According to them she was not only an elder sister but also a mother and a friend who was instrumental in bonding the whole group for the past 13 years. Everyone in the group is asking now, "who will unite our group?"

As a professed sister, she was assigned to Marikina as canteen manager and head of the general services personnel. Beth shares that Sr. Emelinda was a disciplinarian. She would suspend an erring worker for a week but at the same time would secretly ask Beth to send biscuits to the children of the suspended employee, since suspension meant a no-work, no-pay agreement. Sr. Edigna, who is now the canteen manager in Marikina claims, "she was super-kind and had a heart for the poor." Fely, another worker in the canteen, has these memories of her, "very hardworking, very efficient, there is no time wasted." Susan asserts, "generous, but she will first scold before she gives. You will really think if what you are asking is really needed."

Lapu-lapu was her last station. She had a special devotion to Our Lady of the Rule, the Patroness of the Parish. She would go to the Image of Our Lady with Sr. Felicity after Compline and would re-light all the candles that were extinguished by the wind. Sr. Emelinda was a very thoughtful soul. Every time she would come to Manila from Lapu-lapu, she made it a point to drop in at the Champaca Housing in Marikina to greet the families of the general services personnel. She would also go to her friends' house in Angeles even for a very short visit bringing them three to four pieces of mangorind wrapped in small plastic bags.

I can still go on extolling the good works of Sr. Emelinda. However, I would like to stop here first and invite you to thank the Lord for giving us Sr. Emelinda for a period of thirteen years in a life of ORA et LABORA in the School of the Lord's Service.

SR. EMELINDA, THANK YOU VERY MUCH. MAY THE LORD BLESS YOU.