

GMA says God, not luck, helped her survive crisis

DAVAO CITY – President Arroyo believes in prayer, not in luck.

“I do not believe in luck. I believe in Divine Providence. I know the Lord takes care of

me as He takes care of each one of us,” said Mrs. Arroyo, whose administration is struggling to survive yet another crisis.

By **EDITH REGALADO**

Albay Gov. Joey Salceda had earlier joked that the President is “the luckiest b**ch around.”

This came after the revela-

tion of Rodolfo Lozada Jr., a Senate witness on the broadband controversy, that Commission on Higher Education Chairman Romulo Neri called

the President “evil” during a meeting with two opposition senators last December.

Mrs. Arroyo said she draws strength from prayer as she has

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Pampanga priests pray over President Arroyo, as she faces a political crisis, at Malacañang yesterday.

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to face not only the daunting task of being president but also blows coming from all directions.

"I just do what I think is right. I do my best, I let God take care of the rest," she said.

And if there is one thing the President says she does when she is at her lowest point, it is to turn to Jesus Christ and his mother Mary.

"It is Jesus or Mama Mary, that is why I always hold the Rosary," said the President as

she faces mounting calls for her resignation.

"I pray that the Lord enlighten them," she said, referring to those who are urging her to give up the presidency.

Mrs. Arroyo also revealed what she prays for during Masses, during which television cameras often catch her praying fervently with her eyes closed.

"It depends on what part of the Mass. Like for instance, there's a common prayer like the Our Father or the prayer of the faithful, I close my eyes because I am internalizing the prayer with the rest of the community," she said.

She told **The STAR** that even her usual light blue wardrobe is part of her Marian devotion.

"I am as human as anybody else. But people go for leaders who are God-fearing, pro-poor, and who are not afraid to make tough choices; those who are hardworking and who are loyal to the people of the nation. And so, these are the values I also live by and expect to be judged on when I meet our Maker," she stressed.

She said she wanted to be remembered as a president who has done her best for the country's economy.

"My father (former President Diosdado

Macapagal) always told me the presidency is not a position to be enjoyed. It is a position where you have to sacrifice and if you have to suffer, you have to suffer for the people," the President further said.

"So, I am not looking for happiness and I am not talking about frustrations and regrets," added Mrs. Arroyo, who arrived in Davao Wednesday to meet members of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines-Mindanao cluster in a conference at a local hotel.

Meanwhile, more than 40 Catholic priests from President Arroyo's province of Pampanga rushed to the Palace yesterday and prayed over her on the eve of an inter-faith rally sponsored by various religious, business and civic groups, some of whom are calling for her to step down.

The priests arrived at 10:30 a.m. and proceeded to the Heroes' Hall where they held a "healing prayer" session with the President for nearly half an hour.

Reporters and other guests were told to leave the hall as the prayers were held behind closed doors.

"There are no political issues involved here," Monsignor Eugenio Mercado Jr., of the Lourdes Parish of Angeles City, told reporters.

"The Pampanga clergy came to Malacañang

to make a pray-over on the President. We pray for unity among Filipinos," he said.

Mercado said it was not the first time they prayed over the President. He said that sometimes they do it when she is in Lubao or on her birthday.

Several barangay officials from Manila, led by Vice Mayor Francisco Domagoso a.k.a. Isko Moreno, also met with Mrs. Arroyo to reiterate their support for her.

Mrs. Arroyo's convoy was just arriving in Malacañang from Cavite where she led the groundbreaking ceremonies of the widening of the Aguinaldo highway when she saw the barangay officials lining up at one of the Palace's gates.

She got off her limousine and walked with the local officials to the Palace.

The Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities (PACU) likewise called on various sectors, including political and religious leaders, and the public in general to exercise sobriety in the midst of the political turmoil.

"We urge you not to allow yourselves to be incited into acts of senseless violence and anarchy. The responsibility of safeguarding and maintaining peace lies within each and everyone of us," the PACU said in a statement.

- With Paolo Romero