



President Arroyo prays during a healing Mass for former President Corazon Aquino at Malacañang yesterday. Also in photo are Mrs. Aquino's relatives Margarita Cojuangco (left) and former Sen. Tessie Aquino-Oreta. Story on Page 7.

GMA attends healing Mass for Cory

President Arroyo joined yesterday relatives of former President Corazon Aquino in a Mass for the speedy recovery of the ailing democracy leader.

Mrs. Arroyo led the offertory rites, with her Cabinet officials, including Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo, in attendance.

Aquino's sister-in-law Lupita Kashiwahara and niece China Cojuangco also took part in the offertory rites.

Deputy presidential spokesperson Anthony Golez said it was the President who thought of holding a healing Mass for Mrs. Aquino.

Vice President Noli de Castro, Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile, and Cabinet officials joined the Mass at the Palace's Ceremonial Hall.

Also at the Mass were the former president's sisters-in-law Margarita

"Ting-ting" Cojuangco, former senator Teresita Aquino-Oreta, and her spokesperson Lourdes "Deedee" Siytangco.

Siytangco said the children of Mrs. Aquino failed to attend the Mass at Malacañang because they were attending to their sick mother.

"Even in her sickbed, the former President continues to unite the country," a Palace official said.

"This is another phenomenon from our former President that teaches us to set aside our differences," Dangerous Drugs Board

chairman Vicente Sotto III said.

Sotto composed the song "Magkaisa" in 1986 after being inspired by the EDSA People Power Revolution that ousted the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos and installed Mrs. Aquino to the presidency.

Fr. Jason Laguerta in his homily said, "We add our prayers to the countless people who love her and care for her. We add our prayers no matter how unworthy it is, acknowledging, of course, that Cory Aquino is more prayerful than many of us."

"We gather here because we believe that beneath our positions and differences, underneath our loyalties and differences, we are basically the same. We are mothers, we are fathers, brothers, sisters, friends belonging to a family," Laguerta said.

Fr. Jimmy Giron, Fr. Pedro Galando, Fr. Mark Ulysses Castor, and Fr. Lorenzo Ruggiero concelebrated the Mass.

- Paolo Romero