Professor Juan ‘Johnny’ Pedraza Ramos: Filipino, musician ... My tutor, My mentor by RAMON CF CUERVO III

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IT’S ALL SOULS DAY. I am at a wake. It’s cold, I am sad, and in grief. As I look down at Dean Johnny Ramos, I see that familiar peaceful face. He is in a very, very deep sleep.

I still remember his naughty smile at me as we joked about some artists, politicians, or celebrities from the ‘60s to ‘70s. Professor Ramos was always up-to-date with the news about personalities. With an affectionate smile, he would share stories and information about the “World of Celebrities…” A world that he was familiar with, being active in the circles of actors, singers, musicians and performers.

Now as I look at Johnny, I recall how I would drive for him from Manila to Balayan, Batangas, then all the way to Lingayen, Pangasinan. This was in early-1970s when I was in high school.

It was during these long trips, that we shared in conversation ideas about Life, Spirituality, Relations, and so many other topics. I was so amazed that Johnny had an answer to all my questions no matter the subject…

Eventually, Johnny would go deeper into my interior life, and draw me to take my Catholic Faith seriously. Slowly, I learned from him more about Opus Dei. It was in these long hours of conversation that I saw my way, a vocation to be a numerary in Opus Dei.
I look now at Johnny, and say… “Thank you!” For because of your tireless effort, followups, and prayers, I managed to attend the means of formation and Spiritual Direction, even if I tried to run away from any type of commitment.

Johnny was my tutor and mentor in high school. I met him at Banahaw Cultural Center, where I would go as a Youth Club member, then, eventually, as I got older in Third Year high school, I would go to study with my friends, share adventures, go to excursions, do sports, and receive Spiritual Formation.

When Johnny found out that I had difficulties in reading and writing, he organized classes on Reading Dynamics and made me read good books. One book I remember was “How to Read a Book” by Adler.

However, when it came to music I gave up. Even Johnny could not stand the way I sang, for often I am out of tune. As a young boy I tried to play the violin and the piano. But, my problem was that I could not read musical notes...

Never did Professor Ramos ridicule me, never did he make sarcastic remarks, not once did he make fun of my Disabilities. But instead, he encouraged me to go on, to stand strong, to have self confidence. This up to this day, I do try to practice and with GOD’s Grace, I managed to develop and capitalize.

An activity that Johnny used to organize were weeklong seminars on “Study Habits” and “Human Virtues.” We would have it at his ancestral home in Lingayen, during the Holy Week.

We had so much fun! The adventures of swimming in what was known to be the dangerous historical beach of Lingayen Bay… the Night Games of “Treasure Hunt” and other types of exciting recreation and sports… But Johnny would not join, he would just watch, smoking his pipe, looking very dignified… A true Professor, my tutor, my mentor!

Here I am now, cold, standing in front of the lifeless body of Johnny… Yet, I feel in my heart a fire of that love of his. So, I think of happy memories, as I try to hold back the tears… I smile
back at Johnny, as I imagine him smiling at me and saying: I have played my best concerto, I have won my battles, and in my struggle, I have finished the test, and now with GOD’s Mercy and Love, I am HAPPY forever.

The cold is turning to warmth, but still in grief, thinking how I will miss the Music of his Life with us in Kulyawan Center. The piano that played so well, with the talented welltrained hands of Johnny. He created beautiful music, sweet sounds, a symphony, and Prayer.

Johnny had a pinch nerve in the neck, a bad back, and had chronic pain, but still he played punctually every morning. With Heroic Perseverance, our dean of music played, like a grand Maestro, Johnny, managed to bring out heavenly harmony. With hidden sacrifice, Johnny, offered his music with the Angels, to Heaven, where with Hope and Faith he now plays his Music without Pain but in perfect happiness and peace.

THE PIANO was for Johnny an Altar where he would offer the Music as an Offering Prayer, playing the piano, next to teaching is what Johnny did best. A Godgiven gift, nurtured by his mother, developed by tireless practice, and polished with his specialized Education in UP and Catholic University, USA, that’s professor Johnny for us.

A three-term Dean of Music, Johnny Ramos gained professional prestige, I recall with awe, that solo concert he gave at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, sometime in 1973. It was a great success! It was a standing ovation, that the halls of CCP Rocked with the unified applause coming from the full auditorium of fans, friends, UP students, and people from all over who appreciate Classical Piano concert.

Tall, slim, the handsome Maestro takes a bow: Bravo! Bravo! We cheered... Now in the same way, in silence I cry out to Professor Ramos, Bravo! Bravo! For winning Heaven, for the symphony of your life well lived. For that perseverance in serving GOD, for all the help you have done: Bravo, Johnny!

LAST October the 30th, at 11:34PM, Johnny played the last musical notes... He took his final bow, with his last words... WOW!... He said ‘Wow,’ after having been read a letter coming from the Bishop Prelate of Opus Dei, Javier Echaverria, who we call “Padre.”
This was Johnny’s exit, with elegance, and blessings coming from the graces he received from the Sacraments. Being a Faithful Child of GOD, he was faithful up to the end where he showed confidence in Divine Mercy and Love.

The cold, sadness and grief have now turned to Warmth, Joy and Peace…

Thank you, Lolo Johnny, at 76, a good-looking debonair, a MAN of GOD, a true friend, my tutor, my mentor, and brother.

Hasta la vista, Johnny, Happy you are with GOD, with Saints and Angels singing your songs of Love from the Stars and Heaven above. eMG2 Edited by Marc Guerrero http://about.me/marcguerrerocomunicationsinc. #

ABOUT RAMON CF CUERVO III. He is a prodige of Filipino music professor Juan ‘Johnny” Ramos, but not in music.