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## World Vision Article

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# *Last Visit with a President...*

**by Bob Pierce**

I hold in my hand a very beautiful pearl inlaid cane. It has a meaning for me today that it did not have the morning it was handed to me, for it was a gift from President Ramon Magsaysay, who lost his life

recently in that tragic plane crash in the Philippine Islands. Why did the President give me this cane? It happened like this:

Our Manila Crusade had been going for a few nights when the most popular radio commentator in the Philippines, who was also one of President Magsaysay's personal friends, attended one of the meetings. After I had preached that night and gone to my hotel, this news commentator called me about midnight.

"I have just had a phone conversation with President Magsaysay," he said. "He had called me earlier, but I was in your meeting; and so when I came home and called him, he said, 'Where have you been?'"

"I said," the news commentator continued, "that I had been listening to Dr. Pierce at the Sunken Garden.

"President Magsaysay said, 'Well, what did Pierce say?'"

"I said, 'Well, Dr. Pierce talked tonight about the fact that God sees everything that is happening, and He knows everybody, and He knows every secret; and he said that God walks through the back alleys and God walks through the churches; but He also walks through the conference rooms of the politicians and the business executives and sees every deal—not only when it is done, but when it is being planned. And he even said that God walks through the halls of Malacanang Palace. Dr. Pierce said, 'God listens to the conversations of the politicians—yes, He even knows what President Magsaysay says.'"

My friend continued, "Right there the



President broke in and asked, 'Did Pierce say that?'"

And my friend replied, "That's what he said."

"Then," said the President, "I'd like to have him come over for breakfast." And so for the first time ever, President Magsaysay himself phoned and arranged for a Protestant preacher to come to breakfast. It was planned that we should be there forty minutes, but instead, President Magsaysay himself kept us there for an hour and fifty minutes. He called on our quartet, the Visionaires, to sing, and they sang the Gospel for him. When they had finished singing, I said, "It's too bad that Les Barnett, our organist, couldn't play for you."

And he said, "Well, we have a brand new organ in the music room. Let's go over there."

So we went over, and the rest of our team played and sang for him. He was so interested and friendly that we sensed somehow that it was important to him to have this little time with us as we talked about Christ and sang the Gospel, the story of Jesus' love for men. We knew it was important without knowing why, so we just stayed as long as he asked us to; and at the end, I turned to

him and said, "Mr. President, could we pray together?"

And he said, "I'd appreciate it."

So I opened my heart to God, and prayed for this man who had the destiny of a great nation in his hands, that God would give him wisdom as He once gave it to Solomon. I prayed that God would help him to be upright and wise and good, and cause him to do what was for the benefit of his country, because it was so important that they have a godly President. Then I prayed that above all, in the business of ruling his country wisely, he might, in his own heart and life, have the personal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. When we were through, there was silence for a moment, and then the President came to me and put his arm on my shoulder and said, "Thank you. I feel that I have been lifted up somehow."

At three o'clock in the afternoon, he called the man whom he had called before, my correspondent friend, and he said, "You know, I haven't forgotten that group who were at breakfast this morning, and I can't forget Dr. Pierce's prayer. When I was a young man, I worked for a Protestant who gave me a job, but who required that once a week

I go to a Bible class held by a little Methodist teacher, a missionary from America. For some months, once a week, I heard her teach the Bible and pray for me."

President Magsaysay continued, "The years passed, and then, during World War II, I was the general in charge of the guerrillas fighting the Japanese in the mountains. We had to have some kind of connection between the mountains where we fought and what was happening inside the walls of Manila, and so at great risk," he said, "this same American missionary lady, who stayed the whole time in Manila and ran a little hospital there, was our contact. One time I came through the lines and into the walls of the city, on my way to meet her at her home, when I was delayed because there were dangers that made me hide. I was an hour late, and when I came to her house, it was surrounded by Japanese police. I knew that somebody had betrayed me, and so I turned and fled. But you know, if I had gone on that day, I wouldn't be here in Malacanang Palace. I never would have been President, because the Japanese, that day, when they could not find me, took that American missionary who had taught me the Bible, and cut off her head. There were two other women with her, and so three missionaries' heads were taken instead of mine."

And then President Magsaysay finished, "You know, nobody has ever prayed for me since those days when that missionary prayed like these young people and Dr. Pierce prayed for me this morning."

So now I sit here looking at the beautiful

pearl inlaid cane that the President handed to me as we walked out of the palace that morning. I didn't know that that would be the last time I would ever see him. But I am glad that there was a little missionary, sent to the Philippines, who cared enough to be very, very faithful about witnessing to a young mechanic. No one ever dreamed that he would someday become the President, but she taught him the Bible; and finally, by his own lips, there came this testimony that she prayed for him in a way he never forgot.

Pray for your missionaries. There are difficult spots all over the world now where the humble people you send forth from your church may be doing far more for Christ than ever you dream of, in places far more important that we will ever know.

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