

Patriot and Cosmopolitan: the example of Dr. José Rizal

We live in a time where often the love for the national identity and traditions is presented as opposite to cosmopolitan engagement. However, the life and activities of Dr. José Rizal provide a convincing example that both orientations need not be in contrast, but can be complementary.

Of course, the inspiring and patriotic role of Dr. José Rizal and his catalytic function in bringing about the struggle for the liberation of the motherland, are evident and remarkable.

But at the same time he is known to have been an active visitor of various European countries. He studied, practiced and engaged in relevant societal life in those countries far from home, not only within Philippine communities, but also in prominent intellectual circles in those foreign countries.

It helped, that he was an exceptional talented linguist, even actively mastering about eight foreign languages, and passively mastering a lot more.

So the example of Dr. José Rizal as an outward looking patriot and at the same time as a fatherland loving internationalist, is still relevant and inspiring. Especially in our world, where on the one hand people are sometimes afraid of losing their national identity and traditions and, where on the other hand, we witness more and more globalization. As said, both aspects can be complementary, not contradictory.

Sometimes also Dr. José Rizal is presented as somebody who had difficulties with the faith. I think that impression deserves correction.

All his life, he was a convinced - and convincing – Christian, catholic.

His sharp criticism concerned the practices and the behaviour of the Spanish friars and their behaviour in the Philippines. It strikes me that comparable criticism was given by Our Lord Jesus regarding the hypocritical and selfish practices of the Jewish Pharisees of his time. To put it succinctly: Dr. Rizal said: “Practice what you fundamentally ought to preach”.

Finally I should like to mention one other aspect of the example our hero gave us. And that is his courage, manifesting itself in speaking out against injustices and abuses in society, notwithstanding the consequences. He paid dearly for it, with his life, something he forefelt already.

Mostly, the price of courage, asked of us, is far less.

Thank you very much.