



Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila

THIRD DIVISION

ARNOLD S.I. ALFONSO,

Petitioner,

G.R. No. 258705

[Formerly UDK No. 17095]

Present:

-versus-

CAGUIOA, *Acting C.J.*,
INTING,
GAERLAN,
DIMAAMPAO, and
SINGH,* *JJ.*

MICHELLE PAMINTUAN
ALFONSO and REPUBLIC OF
THE PHILIPPINES,

Respondents

Promulgated:

JUL 16 2025
MSPDCLD-H

X-----X

DECISION

GAERLAN, *J.*:

Before this Court is a Petition for Review on *Certiorari*¹ under the Rule 45 of the Rules of Court filed by petitioner Arnold S.I. Alfonso (Arnold) assailing the Decision² dated November 26, 2020 and the Resolution³ dated June 23, 2021 of the Court of Appeals (CA) in CA-G.R. CV No. 113342. The CA reversed the Decision⁴ dated April 2, 2018 of Branch 35 of the Regional Trial Court (RTC) of Gapan City, Nueva Ecija in Civil Case No. 4705-15, which granted Arnold's Petition for Declaration of Nullity of Marriage with respondent Michelle Pamintuan Alfonso (Michelle).

* On leave.

¹ *Rollo*, pp. 30–50.

² *Id.* at 8–21. Penned by Associate Justice Elihu A. Ybañez and concurred in by Associate Justices Rafael Antonio M. Santos and Tita Marilyn B. Payoyo-Villordon of the Tenth Division of the Court of Appeals, Manila.

³ *Id.* at 23–24.

⁴ Records, pp. 101–106. Rendered by Presiding Judge Mildred S. Villaroman-Hernal.

Factual Antecedents

Arnold and Michelle were high school classmates at Divina Pastor College. In 1997, or eight years after their graduation, they unexpectedly met again at a bus stop in Gapan City. Following their encounter, Michelle invited Arnold for lunch. Since then, Arnold and Michelle have become close and regularly exchanged phone calls. Despite being in a relationship with another man, Michelle often visited Arnold's apartment.⁵

Sometime in November 1997, Michelle asked Arnold to spend the night at the latter's apartment claiming that she could not find a place to stay in Manila. Arnold acceded to Michelle's request. However, Michelle's stay at Arnold's apartment went on for several days. Eventually, the two engaged in unprotected sexual intercourse, which resulted in Michelle's unexpected and unwanted pregnancy.⁶

At first, Michelle was contemplating abortion, but Arnold convinced her otherwise. To save Michelle's family from shame, Arnold asked for her hand and offered marriage. After the wedding, Michelle and Arnold resided at the parental house of Arnold in San Nicolas, Gapan City. They later constructed a house and opened a convenience store and animal feed business to provide financial support to their growing family. They were blessed with three children, namely, Alyzza Nicole, Ma. Patricia Anne, and Alexander John.⁷

The couple's short-lived happiness started to dwindle. About a year into the marriage, Arnold noticed the difference in Michelle's behavior. Michelle was depleting Arnold's financial resources and in instances where Arnold was unable to comply with her demands, Michelle would be verbally aggressive towards him, crying loudly to gain sympathy of their neighbors. Michelle also refused to do household chores or care for their children, instead relying on her mother to fulfill her domestic responsibilities.⁸

Michelle engaged in the jewelry business but spent her income on a luxurious lifestyle, purchasing expensive bags, clothes, shoes, bags, make-up, and jewelry. This luxurious lifestyle caused her to obtain looming debts from various people. At one point, Arnold's father paid Michelle's debt amounting to PHP 120,000.00 to save Michelle from being sued. Arnold pleaded with Michelle to curtail her excessive spending. Although Michelle promised to

⁵ *Rollo*, p. 9.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.* at 9–10.

⁸ *Id.*

change and become a responsible wife and mother, she failed to fulfill this commitment.⁹

In a further attempt to secure loans, Michelle fabricated lies about her marital life. She compelled Arnold to issue bank checks and turn over earnings from the paint shop, which eventually led to its bankruptcy and closure. Nonetheless, Michelle continued purchasing more jewelry, thereby increasing her debts to millions of pesos. Instead of changing her ways, Michelle blamed Arnold for not paying her obligations.¹⁰

Over time, Arnold felt Michelle's growing coldness towards him. Michelle disavowed to fulfill his sexual needs by making excuses that she is tired and not in the mood.¹¹

Sometime in 2010, Michelle informed Arnold that she had secured a job that required deployment to Bicol for one month. Trusting her, Arnold consented. However, to his surprise, Arnold learned that Michelle eloped with another man. Since then, Michelle refused to communicate with him and their children.¹²

On April 23, 2015, almost five years after being estranged from Michelle, Arnold finally decided to file a Petition for Declaration of Nullity of Marriage. In support of his petition, Arnold presented his very own testimony and that of their mutual friend, Primo Urbano (Urbano). He also submitted the psychological tests and evaluation conducted by Dr. Pacita Tudla (Dr. Tudla).¹³

Dr. Tudla diagnosed Michelle with Mixed Histrionic and Antisocial Personality Disorder, which she attributed to parental overindulgence, unreliable parenting of Michelle's parents, and lack of realistic feedback.¹⁴ The report concluded that Michelle's psychological incapacity is grave and serious enough that rendered her unable to assume the essential marital obligations of marriage. Dr. Tudla further opined that Michelle's psychological incapacity existed before the marriage although it only manifested after the wedding. On the other hand, Dr. Tudla found Arnold to be equipped with adequate personality make-up that renders him capable of assuming marital duties and responsibilities.¹⁵

⁹ *Id.* at 10.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.* at 10–11.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.* at 11.

¹⁵ *Id.*

Ruling of the RTC

In a Decision dated April 2, 2018, the RTC granted the Petition for Declaration of Nullity of Marriage thereby declaring Arnold's marriage with Michelle null and void. The dispositive portion of which reads as follows:

WHEREFORE, premises considered, the instant petition is hereby **GRANTED**. As prayed for, the marriage of petitioner ARNOLD S.I. ALFONSO and respondent MICHELLE PAMINTUAN ALFONSO celebrated on 9 May 1998 in Gapan City is hereby declared **NULL and VOID** under Article 39 of the Family Code.

The Local Civil Registrar of Gapan City, Nueva Ecija, and the Civil Registrar General, National Statistics Office (NSO) are hereby **ORDERED** to cancel from their records the above-stated marriage contract between the parties and render the same of no legal force and effect.

SO ORDERED.¹⁶ (Emphasis in the original)

On September 5, 2018, the Republic of the Philippines, through the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) appealed the RTC Decision.

Ruling of the CA

On November 26, 2020, the CA rendered a Decision reversing the RTC Decision, granting the OSG's appeal. The decretal portion reads:

FOR THESE REASONS, the appeal is **GRANTED**. The assailed Decision rendered on 02 April 2018 by the Regional Trial Court, Branch 35 of Gapan City, Nueva Ecija in Civil Case No. 4705-15 is **REVERSED** and **SET ASIDE**.

SO ORDERED.¹⁷ (Emphasis in the original)

Undaunted, Arnold filed a Petition for Review on *Certiorari* under Rule 45 before this Court.

Issue

Whether Alfonso and Michelle's marriage should be declared null and void on account of the latter's psychological incapacity.

¹⁶ CA rollo, p. 41.

¹⁷ Rollo, p. 20.

Ruling

In his Petition, Arnold maintains that the CA gravely erred in reversing the Decision of the RTC. He contends that the totality of evidence he presented before the court was completely sufficient to sustain a finding that Michelle was psychologically incapacitated such incapacity was grave, serious, and clinically incurable and that it existed before and during the solemnization of their marriage.¹⁸

On the contrary, the Republic of the Philippines, through the OSG enunciates that Arnold failed to present clear and convincing evidence that Michelle is psychologically incapacitated to comply with the essential marital obligations. To be specific, the OSG avers that Michelle's behavior, as narrated by Arnold, does not constitute psychological incapacity, nor does it form part of an enduring aspect of Michelle's personality structure that was shaped before the parties got married and caused by a genuinely serious psychic cause. The OSG further contends that Dr. Tudla's assessment are mere general conclusions without explaining in reasonable detail how the alleged condition could be characterized within the true concept of psychological incapacity under Article 36 of the Family Code.¹⁹

After meticulously weighing the evidence presented before Us, the Court resolves to **GRANT** the Petition.

Prefatorily, the State recognizes marriage as the foundation of the family and an inviolable social institution whose nature, consequences, and incidents are governed by law and not subject to stipulation except otherwise provided by law.²⁰ Additionally, marriage in this jurisdiction is not just a civil contract, but a new relation, an institution the maintenance of which the public is deeply interested.²¹ As such, it is incumbent upon the State to provide utmost protection and preservation to uphold the sanctity of marriage.²²

Nonetheless, the law, in certain instances, allows the dissolution of marital bonds when either or both of the spouses are psychologically incapacitated to comply with their essential marital obligations. Thus, Article 36 of the Family Code aptly reads:

¹⁸ *Id.* at 40–48.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 209, Art. 1, otherwise known as the Family Code of the Philippines.

²¹ *De Silva v. De Silva*, 913 Phil. 524, 535 (2021) [Per J. Lopez, First Division].

²² *Id.* at 540.

Article. 36. A marriage contracted by any party who, at the time of the celebration, was psychologically incapacitated to comply with the essential marital obligations of marriage, shall likewise be void even if such incapacity becomes manifest only after its solemnization.

Recently, in *Tan-Andal v. Tan*,²³ the Court had an opportune moment to shy away from the rigid and overly restrictive interpretation of Article 36, thereby redefining the parameters of nullity of marriage on account of psychological incapacity. This, owing to the fact and recognition that human relationships are imbued with varying complexities that should be perused on a case-to-case basis. In bringing new light to this new percept, psychological incapacity is now conceptualized as:

[N]either a mental incapacity *nor* a personality disorder that must be proven through expert opinion. There must be proof, however, of the **durable or enduring aspects of a person's personality, called "personality structure," which manifests itself through clear acts of dysfunctionality that undermines the family**. The spouse's personality structure must make it impossible for him or her to understand and, more important, to comply with his or her essential marital obligations.

Proof of these aspects of personality need not be given by an expert. Ordinary witnesses who have been present in the life of the spouses before the latter contracted marriage may testify on behaviors that they have consistently observed from the supposedly incapacitated spouse. From there, the judge will decide if these behaviors are indicative of a true and serious incapacity to assume the essential marital obligations.²⁴ (Emphasis supplied)

Albeit the paradigm shift, the Court did not depart from the fundamental elements required to sufficiently establish psychological incapacity—gravity, incurability, and juridical antecedence but nonetheless refined its meaning accordingly. This was elucidated in *Candelario v. Candelario*,²⁵ viz.:

First, **gravity** still has to be established, if only to preclude spouses from invoking mild characterological peculiarities, mood changes, occasional emotional outbursts as ground for nullity. Second, **incurability** should also be understood in the legal sense. So long as the couple's respective personality structures are so incompatible and antagonistic that the only result of the union would be the inevitable breakdown of the marriage, the psychological incapacity of a spouse or both spouses is deemed "incurable." Third, **juridical antecedence** or the existence of the condition prior to the celebration of marriage, is a statutory

²³ 902 Phil. 558 (2021) [Per J. Leonen, *En Banc*].

²⁴ *Id.* at 597.

²⁵ 944 Phil. 499 (2023) [Per J. Hernando, First Division].

requirement which must be proven by the spouse alleging psychological incapacity.²⁶

In nullity cases invoking psychological incapacity as a ground, the burden of proof falls on the petitioning spouse. Their case must be built by clear and convincing evidence.²⁷

With these precepts as a guide, We rule that Arnold has sufficiently established that Michelle is psychologically incapacitated to comply with her essential marital obligations.

First, anent the element of gravity, as earlier stated, “psychological incapacity must be shown to be a serious or dangerous illness, but that “mild characterological peculiarities, mood changes, occasional emotional outbursts” are excluded. The psychological incapacity cannot be mere refusal, neglect, or difficulty, much less ill will. In other words, it must be shown that the incapacity is caused by a genuinely serious psychic cause.”²⁸

Applying the foregoing jurisprudential yardstick, Arnold was able to illustrate before Us that Michelle’s personality structure exhibited an incapacity that was so grave or serious to a substantial degree thereby impairing her from carrying out the required ordinary marital duties. As shown in the testimonies and corroborated by the psychological report, Michelle’s incapacity was not limited to mere unwillingness or difficulty in performing marital duties. Rather, her personality structure exhibited a profound incapacity to fulfill the essential obligations of marriage. Collectively, Michelle’s acts constitute a serious dysfunctionality that impaired her capacity to render love, fidelity, support, and respect—duties intrinsic to the marital state.

To recapitulate, Arnold avers that Michelle is unfit to fulfill her essential marital obligations. According to Arnold, the extent of Michelle’s incapacity goes beyond mere refusal or neglect. Arnold testified that when Michelle was pregnant with their first child, the former was adamant about having an abortion. Thinking that marriage could save their relationship, Arnold asked for Michelle’s hand. However, during their marriage, Michelle’s already problematic character multiplied tenfold. Michelle indulged herself in a luxurious lifestyle she could not financially maintain, prompting her to obtain enormous debt. Indifferent to the growing needs of

²⁶ *Id.* at 513.

²⁷ *Navarro v. Navarro*, 922 Phil. 565, 573 (2022) [Per J. Perlas-Bernabe, Second Division].

²⁸ *Tan-Andal v. Tan*, 902 Phil. 558, 600 (2021) [Per J. Leonen, *En Banc*].

their family, Michelle diverted funds from Arnold's various businesses, ultimately causing their bankruptcy and closure.

Arnold also recounted that on several occasions, particularly when he was unable to meet Michelle's demands, she would become verbally aggressive towards him and deliberately cry loudly to elicit sympathy from their neighbors.

Michelle's marital dysfunctionality did not end there. She also refused to do household chores and look after their children. She instead brought her mother to their conjugal dwelling to take over her maternal responsibilities. Arnold also felt Michelle's growing coldness towards him as Michelle likewise failed to fulfill his sexual needs.

Finally, in 2010, Michelle abandoned her family in the guise of telling Arnold of an employment opportunity in Bicol. However, soon after, Arnold discovered that Michelle left not for employment but to elope with another man. Since then, Michelle purportedly refused to communicate with him and their children.

The claim of Michelle's psychological incapacity was further substantiated by the findings of Dr. Tudla, who diagnosed Michelle with Histrionic Personality Disorder and Antisocial Personality Disorder. This diagnosis was based on her psychological evaluation and the interviews she conducted with Arnold, Urbano, and Linda S. De Leon.

Histrionic Personality Disorder is a pervasive pattern of excessive emotionality and attention-seeking. A histrionic individual is perceived as selfish and unreliable. They want immediate gratification of their wishes and overreact to even minor provocations. They possess excessive aspirations for their own life. A person with this disorder is suggestible and lacks analytic ability.

On the other hand, an Anti-Social Personality Disorder is a pervasive pattern of aggressive, irresponsible, and non-conformist behavior. An anti-social individual cheats, fights back, acts promiscuously, and ignores family responsibilities. They behave in an impulsive, aggressive, and reckless manner and show no remorse for the harmful effects of their behavior.

To be sure, Dr. Tudla characterized Michelle's personality structure as follows:

1. Respondent Michelle . . . has been found psychologically incapacitated in assuming her marital duties and responsibilities by reason of being afflicted with mixed histrionic and anti-social personality disorders.
2. The parties' married life throughout the time they lived together under one roof was always pervaded by issues of lack of empathy, deceit, shallow emotional expressions and irresponsibility on the part of the respondent. The latter has been suffering from mixed histrionic and anti-social personality disorders long before she assumed her marital obligations. During her teenage years, it is customary to the respondent to borrow money without paying back just to gratify her capricious wants. She and her peer group were habitually drinking beer, putting on heavy make-up, smoking cigarettes and collecting shoes and bags[.]
3. The root cause of the respondent's personality disorders could be attributed to parental overindulgence, unreliable parenting, and a lack of realistic feedback. Without realistic feedback from parents and . . . peer groups, respondent [has] learned not to associate herself with honesty, hard work, accountability and commitment, which she considered to be inferior concepts. Michelle was always supported in her faulty ways. Her chosen peer groups exacerbated her promiscuity during her adolescence up to her adulthood.
4. The clinically identified disorders are grave enough that they destroyed the sanctity of marriage contracted by the parties. The gravity of her personality disorders debilitated her to recognize emotional needs of her husband much less provide her husband with emotional support. The gravity of her personality disorders interfered in her capacity to provide love, care, concern, respect and fidelity to Arnold.
5. The respondent's personality disorders are long-standing in proportion as she started to acquire her personality disorders during her adolescent years and continued to manifest during her adult years. Her personality disorders are incurable because she does not recognize any need for clinical intervention as her deficits are already for others to feel and not necessarily for her to accept or to be burdened with. Any treatment will only work temporary but will not alleviate at all her personality aberration.
6. The probability of curing personality disorders is nonviable. The afflicted person tends to conclude that it is her partner who has a problem and not herself and therefore between the two of them, she is the better person. Such factor alone will negate all the possibility of curing her personality disorders.

Basically, the respondent has no chance to have a harmonious second marriage due to the gravity, permanency and incurability of her personality disorders. So it is not advisable for the respondent to re-marry. However, if she finds a partner being identical with and relative to her personality, she, may as well, have a happy marriage in the future. This case is rare as there is a slim chance for a psychologically incapacitated person to find a partner who would tolerate her wrongdoings throughout her married life.

There is no reason to prolong the agony of the petitioner who still has the right to another blissful life either alone or in the company of another who is psychologically capacitated and who deserves the love and respect of the petitioner. The petitioner must be given an opportunity to move on to a new phase of his life. Annulment of marriage is therefore highly recommended.²⁹

Second, incurability, with respect to psychological incapacity transcends beyond medical or clinical attribution. To be considered incurable, it must be clearly and convincingly shown that the spouse persistently fails to fulfill his or her duty as a present, loving, faithful, respectful, and supportive spouse to his or her specific partner. An undeniable pattern of such persisting failure must be established so as to demonstrate that there is indeed a psychological anomaly or incongruity in the spouse relative to the other.³⁰

Obviously, the attendant facts would reveal Michelle's string of persistent failure to assume her essential marital obligations. Notably, the evidence before Us is replete of Michelle's irresponsibility not only as a wife but as a mother to their children. Her consistent wanton disregard for her family's welfare throughout their marriage is indubitably far from mere isolated and sporadic episodes of neglect and refusal.

Dr. Tudla's expert opinion also finds relevance in this case. According to her, the probability of curing Michelle's incapacity is nonviable. Michelle fails to hold herself accountable even showing no remorse. To Michelle's mind, it is Arnold who has a problem, and that the former is the better person within their relationship. These indicators negate the possibility of curing her personality disorders.

Lastly, as for the element of juridical antecedence, it is a *condition sine qua non* to prove that the incapacity has existed prior to the celebration of marriage albeit such incapacity manifests only after the solemnization. While admittedly, it may be difficult to determine with great accuracy the exact point in time when such incapacity existed, the Court allows the dissolution of marriage whenever the petitioner demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence, that such incapacity, in all reasonable likelihood, already exists at the time of the marriage's celebration, as We have elucidated in *Cabutaje v. Cabutaje*,³¹ citing *Clavecilla v. Clavecilla*,³² viz.:

²⁹ Records, pp. 97–98.

³⁰ *Tan-Andal v. Tan*, 902 Phil. 558, 600 (2021) [Per J. Leonen, *En Banc*].

³¹ G.R. No. 248569, January 15, 2025 [Per J. Dimaampao, Third Division].

³² 937 Phil. 488 (2023) [Per C.J. Gesmundo, First Division].

[T]he petitioner demonstrates, by clear and convincing evidence, that the incapacity, in all reasonable likelihood, already exists at the time of the marriage's celebration. To determine the reasonable likelihood of its existence at the time of the celebration of the marriage, the Court, in *Tan-Andal*, held that "proof of juridically antecedent psychological incapacity may consist of testimonies describing the environment where the supposedly incapacitated spouse lived that may have led to a particular behavior.

Moreover, **the concept of juridical antecedence must be understood to include the ordinary experiences of the spouses not only prior to the marriage itself, but more importantly, during their "lived conjugal life" together since, as the law itself states, a marriage can be declared null and void under Article 36 "even if such incapacity becomes manifest only after its solemnization."** As the parties have yet to assume any of the essential marital obligations prior to being married, the Court discerns that the experience of marriage itself is the litmus test of self-realization, reflecting one's true psychological makeup as to whether or not he or she was indeed capable of assuming the essential marital obligations to his or her spouse at the time the marriage was entered into.³³ (Emphasis supplied)

A more in-depth review of the records shows that Michelle's philandering ways were patent even before their marriage. To recall, Michelle and Arnold's affair started while Michelle had an already existing romantic relationship with another man. In fact, Michelle would often sleep over at Arnold's apartment and engage in carnal activities with the latter, knowing fully well that she is still committed to her current boyfriend. Too, when their philandering resulted in Michelle's pregnancy, she refused to take on her maternal responsibility and contemplated having an abortion.

Urbano, their mutual friend, also attested to this fact. In his testimony, Urbano stated that he had known Michelle prior to the consummation of Arnold and Michelle's marriage. To him, Michelle had a reputation for being a social climber who loved jewelry and other expensive items obtained from borrowed funds. Michelle even borrowed money from him on several occasions to pay off her debts. Urbano also testified that Michelle was known to be flirtatious with the men in their locality. Urbano further narrated that whenever he visits Arnold's house, Michelle never does any of the household chores. When he confronted Michelle about this matter, Michelle responded that it was her mother who did all the household chores when she was still single.

At this juncture, Dr. Tudla's assessment uncovered that Michelle's Mixed Histrionic and Anti-Social Personality Disorders existed long before

³³ *Cabutaje v. Cabutaje*, G.R. No. 248569, January 15, 2025 [Per J. Dimaampao, Third Division] at 8. This pinpoint citation refers to the copy of the Decision uploaded to the Supreme Court website.

their marriage. This was attributed to parental overindulgence, unreliable parenting, and a lack of realistic feedback. These pieces of evidence provide even more justification that Michelle's incapacity was deeply ingrained within her personality structure and existed prior to the celebration of marriage.

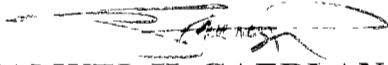
Arguably, while expert opinion is not indispensable in proving the spouse's incapacity, expert opinion may still be given due weight and consideration.³⁴ Notwithstanding, Dr. Tudla's assessment was not only based on Arnold's input but also on other sources, such as the people who had known Michelle and Arnold prior to their marriage. The probative value given to Dr. Tudla's findings adheres with Our pronouncement that psychological assessments based on testimonies of petitioner and the spouses' mutual friend may be given credence unless there are reasons to believe that the testimonies are fabricated.

As recognized under Article 1 of the Family Code, in every marriage lies the *vinculum juris* - the juridical bond that unites the spouses in a legally and morally binding union governed by law. This *vinculum juris* imposes upon each spouse the essential marital obligations of mutual love, respect, fidelity, and support. When it becomes manifest that one party is psychologically incapacitated to assume these duties, the very foundation of that bond is rendered void.

Thus, in the present case, We hold that Michelle's psychological incapacity existed prior to and during the celebration of the marriage, the *vinculum juris* is deemed never to have validly arisen.

ACCORDINGLY, the Petition for Review on *Certiorari* is **GRANTED**. The November 26, 2020 Decision and the June 23, 2021 Resolution of the Court of Appeals in CA-G.R. CV No. 113342 are **REVERSED** and **SET ASIDE**. The marriage of petitioner Arnold S.I. Alfonso and private respondent Michelle Pamintuan Alfonso is **DECLARED VOID** on the ground of psychological incapacity.

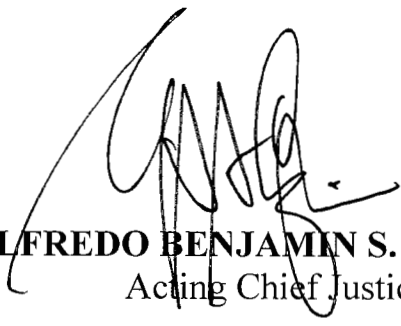
SO ORDERED.



SAMUEL H. GAERLAN
Associate Justice

³⁴ *Green v. Green*, G.R. No. 255706, February 17, 2025 [Per J. Leonen, Second Division] at 12. This pinpoint citation refers to the copy of the Decision uploaded to the Supreme Court website.

WE CONCUR:



ALFREDO BENJAMIN S. CAGUIOA
Acting Chief Justice



HENRI JEAN PAUL B. INTING
Associate Justice

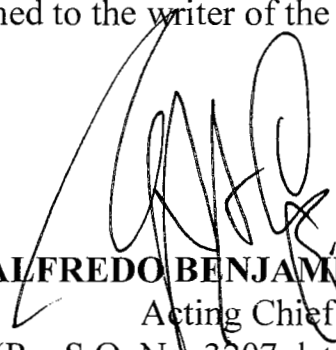


SAGAR B. DIMAAMPAO
Associate Justice

(On leave)
MARIA FILOMENA D. SINGH
Associate Justice

CERTIFICATION

Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 13 of the Constitution, I certify that the conclusions in the above Decision had been reached in consultation before the case was assigned to the writer of the opinion of the Court's Division.



ALFREDO BENJAMIN S. CAGUIOA
Acting Chief Justice
(Per S.O. No. 3207 dated July 11, 2025)