

No parties for this royalty

By DJ Yap

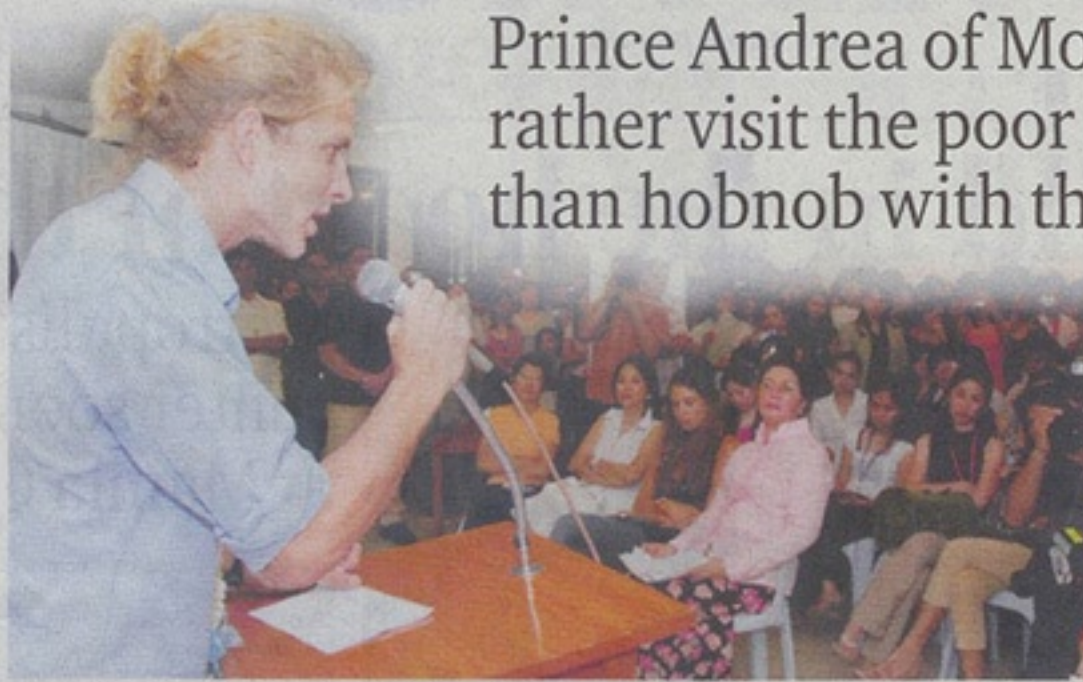
UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN MANILA, Andrea Pierre Casiraghi of Monaco was deluged with invitations to parties and social engagements, but the handsome prince politely declined most of them.

One of the world's most eligible bachelors would much rather spend his time with the boys and girls of Payatas, Quezon City.

The 22-year-old son of Princess Caroline was not in town for a social call, but to touch base with Filipino children living in some of the most destitute communities in the country and find out what can be done to help them.

He came upon the invitation of Amade-Virlanie Foundation, an organization dedicated to giving shelter and support to abused children, of which his mother is a patron.

The visit was, in his own



PRINCE Andrea speaks before students of the Ateneo.

AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Prince Andrea of Monaco would rather visit the poor in Payatas than hobnob with the elite

like no other in developed countries. But I've seen extreme poverty, too. And these differences cannot continue," he said.

Father Carmelo Caluag, one of the organizers, said Andrea's schedule for his trip to the Philippines spoke volumes about his commitment toward helping children.

No time to relax

"For his original itinerary, he was supposed to go on trips to our world-class resorts, but he asked that most of them be cancelled so he can have more time to visit the places being served by Amade-Virlanie," he said.

"When told that more people wanted to host parties for him, again he politely declined. He said he had more important work to do," Caluag said.

He said what impressed him most about Andrea were his photos in the local press the past days: "A young man simply dressed, carrying a poor infant, seated with less privileged, smiling kids, the picture of youth that exudes kindness, and compassion and hope."

Andrea is the eldest son of Princess Caroline and her second husband, Stefano Casiraghi, an heir to an Italian oil fortune. He is second in line to the throne after his mother.

Blonde and athletic, he was named one of People Magazine's 50 Most Beautiful People in 2002. He is fluent in English, French, German and Italian.

words, his way of "making a difference, a very small difference" in the lives of poor Filipino children.

On Friday, Andrea spoke before a group of students at the Ateneo de Manila University about the role and the responsibility of the privileged class in helping the less fortunate among them.

"No step is too small. As my mother always says, if you have to turn off a volcano with a glass of water, you should do it," he said.

Glass of water

"Think of yourself as that little glass of water that makes a difference in the world," he said.

Andrea recalled an experience at

Paco Market: "Suddenly, 15-16 kids appeared out of nowhere: Five-, six-, seven-year-old orphans using drugs, not knowing how to read, never having had a roof to sleep under."

Wake-up call

He told the students: "You are very, very, very lucky... You should ask yourself: Do I want this situation to continue?"

"You should have the strength to look into yourself and say, do I want to be part of the 10 percent of the Filipinos who can go to university and do nothing about that? Do I want to leave 90 percent of the population without an education? I'm sure you don't."



'Horrible place'

Andrea also described going to Payatas: "Deadly waste mountain. Horrible place that I've ever been to."

At this point, many of the Ateneo students laughed, prompting the prince to remark: "I don't understand why you're laughing; it's very serious."

He urged the students to reach out to the poorest communities. "Next time I come, I want to see that people will go to the shanty towns. Lucky people like you, who have education, who (belong to the elite) of the nation."

"I've seen amazing things in the Philippines. I've seen things



"I'VE SEEN amazing things in the Philippines. But I've seen extreme poverty, too."