



6 February 2010 - The Philippine Embassy in Rome reported that Ambassador Philippe J. Lhuillier was awarded the Ordine della Stella della Solidarieta Italiana (Order of the Star of Italian Solidarity) with the rank of Grand Officer, at a ceremonial luncheon hosted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on January 27.

He is the first Philippine ambassador to Italy to receive this prestigious award.

Italian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Stefania Craxi, who hosted the luncheon on behalf of Minister Franco Frattini, presented the award to Ambassador Lhuillier.

She cited his untiring and selfless efforts in promoting the goodwill and welfare of the Filipino people, particularly the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in Italy.

She emphasized that the award was given by the Italian government in appreciation of the contributions made by Ambassador Lhuillier to the bilateral cooperation between Italy and the Philippines as he went beyond the normal call of duty in the promotion of friendship and solidarity between the two countries.

"I share this award with the Filipino community in Italy whom I have the highest respects. Without their cooperation in strengthening Philippine-Italian relations, I would not have been recognized by the Italian Government," Ambassador Lhuillier said in his acceptance speech.

He further expressed his gratitude to the Italian people for their kindness and warmth in dealing with the OFWs in Italy and ascribed this to the common Christian culture and values shared by the two countries.

The award was originally instituted in 1947 to recognize those expatriates and foreigners who made an outstanding contribution to the reconstruction of Italy after World War II. It has since been awarded to diplomats and foreigners who have made significant achievements in fostering goodwill for the host country and the country represented by the diplomat. This is the highest Italian award given to foreigners as well as Italians living abroad.

The badge bears the inscription *Solidarietà Italiana* encircling a depiction of the Good Samaritan.

The order is bestowed in three ranks by decree of the President of the Republic, head of the order, on the recommendation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. These are first class (grand officer), second class (commander), and third class (knight). END