

Facts:

1. On July 31, 1998, Dolores Imbang filed a sworn Letter-Complaint against Judge Deogracias K. del Rosario, charging him with failing to decide Civil Case No. 318 for collection of sum of money.
2. The administrative complaint was docketed as OCA IPI No. 98-591-MTJ.
3. On February 9, 1999, the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) referred the complaint to Judge Del Rosario and required him to comment within ten (10) days.
4. On February 3, 2000, the OCA issued a 1st Tracer reiterating its request for Judge Del Rosario's comment, which remained unheeded.
5. A further reminder and a warning that contempt would be recommended was sent in a letter dated August 10, 2001.
6. On September 6, 2001, Judge Del Rosario requested an extension of ten (10) days to file his comment; the OCA granted this with no further extension.
7. Judge Del Rosario failed to submit his comment.

Procedural Posture:

1. Judge Del Rosario's non-compliance led to a Supreme Court decision on February 3, 2004. The court fined him Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000) and directed him to show cause within ten (10) days why he should not be dismissed for his refusal to file a comment.
2. He paid the fine on April 30, 2004, and filed a Manifestation explaining his failure as due to poor health and mismanagement of time, attaching medical certificates as evidence.
3. The OCA evaluated the explanation and deemed it unsatisfactory, recommending to fine him an additional Eleven Thousand Pesos (P11,000).

Issues:

1. Whether Judge Del Rosario's health issues and time management failures were valid reasons for non-compliance with the Supreme Court directives.
2. Whether his repeated failure to comply constituted gross misconduct and insubordination.

Court's Decision:

1. The Supreme Court found Judge Del Rosario liable for failure to comment on the complaint despite repeated directives, viewing it as gross misconduct and a blatant disregard for the judicial hierarchy.
2. Judge Del Rosario's failure to comply with directives for over five (5) years indicated

A.M. No. 03-1515-MTJ (formerly A.M. OCA IPI No. 98-591-MTJ).

insubordination and a disrespectful attitude towards judicial processes. November 19, 2004 (Case Brief / Digest)

3. The court considered his serious health conditions as mitigating factors and therefore imposed a fine rather than the maximum penalties available.

4. Consequently, Judge Del Rosario was fined Twenty-One Thousand Pesos (P21,000) for violations under the Code of Judicial Conduct and the Code of Professional Responsibility.

Doctrine:

- The diligence required of judges includes responding promptly to administrative complaints, upholding judicial integrity, and complying fully with judicial directives. The Supreme Court's resolutions and orders are not merely requests, and judges are obligated to follow them promptly and completely.

Class Notes:

- Gross Misconduct and Insubordination: Non-compliance with lawful directives from a superior judicial authority can constitute gross misconduct.
- Judicial Responsibility: Judges must abide by the Code of Judicial Conduct (Rule 1.01 of Canon 1) and the Code of Professional Responsibility (Canon 11), maintaining respect towards the judiciary and not ignoring responsibilities.
- Mitigating Factors: Health issues may be considered in lessening disciplinary penalties, yet they do not absolve one from administrative responsibilities.

Historical Background:

- This case highlights the procedural expectations and accountability mechanisms within the Philippine judiciary. It underscores the precedent that health-related excuses, while noted, do not eliminate judicial obligations. Judge Del Rosario's long-standing defiance was ultimately admonished amid a complex administrative landscape, signifying a strict adherence policy to judicial orders. The case serves as a historical anchor in judicial professional conduct and integrity enforcement within the Philippine courts.