



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

*On the Occasion of the Turn-over Ceremony in
Bureau of Corrections (BuCor)*

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SPEECH

by

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Magandang hapon sa inyong lahat.

Naririto na naman tayo upang maging saksi sa isang napakahalagang pagbabago sa Bureau of Corrections (BuCor).

Parang kalian lamang ay mainit nating tinanggap ang pagkakatalaga ni Director Franklin Jesus B. Bucayu bilang bagong pinuno ng BuCor.

Maraming kontrobersya ang pinagdaanan ng mga nauna sa kanya, at siya ay naging simbolo ng pag-asa, ng pagbabago at malinis na simula para sa institusyong ito.

Ngayon, naririto tayo upang pasalamat siya sa kanyang serbisyo, kasabay ng pagbati at pagtanggap natin sa kanyang kahaliling si Director General Ricardo Rainier G. Cruz III.

Isa na naming pagbabago, isa na naming bagong simula. Panibagong pag-asa.

Change is not a bad thing, and after the circumstances under which previous changes in leadership happened, these circumstances are better

than most, not the least because we have an opportunity for a real transition, a real turn-over, a process of closure, of welcoming a new beginning, and of, hopefully, transferring knowledge and experience from the outgoing to the incoming.

Before that, however, I would like to share a few thoughts about Director General Bucayu's departure.

Novelist Veronica Roth once wrote that:

"There are so many ways to be brave in this world. Sometimes bravery involves laying down your life for something bigger than yourself, or for someone else. Sometimes it involves giving up everything you have ever known, or everyone you have ever loved, for the sake of something greater."

"But sometimes it doesn't."

"Sometimes it is nothing more than gritting your teeth through pain, and the work of every day, the slow walk toward a better life."

When I think about these words, I think about the daily – no, *moment-to-moment* – challenge of discharging the mandate of the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor), particularly in managing and administering the operations of our penitentiaries and prison facilities and, along with those, the challenge of discharging the all-important responsibility to see to the security, welfare and rehabilitation of tens of thousands of inmates, who are all wards of the State.

It's a job where one-off moments of heroics mean little and nothing and, in fact, is to be avoided at all cost. It is not about winning a battle or even a war. There is no single clash with an enemy to be withstood. It's not about making one momentous decision that will allow everything else to fall into place.

It is about anticipating, guarding against and shooting down every challenge that arises, knowing that you will be facing the same challenge, again and again, perhaps in different ways, tomorrow and the day after, and the day after that. It's about being one step ahead of people who have all the time and motivation in the world to think of the best and multifarious ways to outwit, outplay, outmaneuver, overwhelm and,

basically, overpower the lawful authorities so that they may continue their criminal activities unabated, even while in custody.

It's a job that can overwhelm even the most well-meaning and most dedicated individual, with the highest ideals and grandest ideas.

It's a job that exemplifies the words "easier said than done".

When I think of the words of Veronica Roth, about bravery that means gritting one's teeth through the pain and the work of every day, and of traversing the slow walk toward a better state of affairs, I think of outgoing Director General FRANKLIN B. BUCAYU.

I think of him, and I realize just how brave he has been these last two (2) years.

It is not a job, the worries and weight of which can easily be shed at the end of the day. Thus, when I think of him and what he has accomplished in the last two year – such as:

- the implementation of various security measures to curb escape of inmates, such as by the cancellation of living out privileges among inmates, improvement of facilities, review of classification and reclassification procedures, strict implementation of prison rules and regulations, constant reshuffle of custodial personnel to avoid familiarization with inmates and visitors, installation of additional CCTVs in strategic places, constant dialogue with inmate leaders etc.;
- the conduct of continuous search and confiscation of contrabands, and holding administratively and criminally liable those found culpable;
- the creation of the Inmate Hospitalization Board to screen, process and deliberate on all requests for inmate medical referrals outside prisons to include checking on the authenticity of medical documents; the Inmate Release Board to review all documents pertaining to the release of inmates; the External Relations Division to handle pre-release and post-release programs for inmates; the BuCor Internal Affairs Service to conduct pro-active inspection of BuCor personnel, investigate complaints, handle and try cases of personnel who commit misdemeanor, breaches of discipline, etc.;

- the establishment of the KAAGAPAY Center as one-stop-shop facility for inmates' information, assistance and complaints center; the RECO (Reformation Coordinating Office) to ensure that rehabilitation programs are made available to inmates for their physical, intellectual and spiritual development and develop livelihood programs to enable inmates to hone their skills for livelihood;
- the establishment of "Oplan Kalusugan" at NBPH to enhance a comprehensive multi-disciplinary reformation programs aimed at the total human development of the inmates;
- among other accomplishments

– I cannot but thank him and his family for collectively making a sacrifice, and enduring the demands of his job.

I think of Director General Bucayu, and I also think of another form of bravery: the bravery to arrive at the decision to step down, when personal and other circumstances call for it.

I know it takes a great deal of courage on the part of Director General Bucayu to resign his post because, when I speak to him and I look into his eyes, I know that there is a part of him that still wants to go on; a part of him that thinks that there are still things he can do for the Bureau.

I know this because, first of all, I have known him for several years now, even before he stepped in as chief of the BuCor, and I have come to know him even better since. When I strongly endorsed to the President his application for the post, I had no doubt in my mind that he would bring good things to the institution; that his background as a member of the Philippine National Police and, more importantly, his background in human rights advocacy within public service will stimulate needed changes in the policies, standards and operations of the Bureau. I was sure that he was the right man for the job.

Now, two years hence, I can see the efforts he has exerted, the programs and policies he has launched, the fruits they have so far borne, and the fruits they can still potentially bear in the future. I know he has done his best, and I know that he was, indeed, the right man for the job...

Unfortunately, he – the Bureau as a whole – did not have the logistical support they needed to make his efforts count for more. Nevertheless, he was instrumental in obtaining this support for the benefit of his successor, who has the advantage of starting his post with the BuCor Modernization Act and its Implementing Rules and Regulations in place, and several modernization and rehabilitation projects lined up.

Secondly, I know that there is a part of him that wants to stay, to continue because I am aware that his reasons for leaving are not because he has lost his faith in the full potential of the BuCor, or had wavered in his dedication to public service, but because – quite simply – his health and his family has endured enough.

I know, from personal experience, how thankless this job can sometimes seem. Despite all your sacrifices, there will always be room for criticism – someone out there will tell you that you have not done enough, or have made the wrong judgments, or have trusted the wrong people or, worse, that your integrity is no longer intact.

And there is, of course, the dangers that go with the territory – whether they are real, credible or not, they will weigh on you.

Therefore, I cannot underestimate how deeply his family feels about his continued stay in his post, and so, too, I cannot underestimate the difficult decision he has had to make: to choose between his family and his calling.

I do firmly believe, however, that his decision is not just for the benefit of his family and his own health.

I see it as a veiled blessing, perhaps, for the BuCor – for it opens an opportunity for a fresh perspective to come in and revitalize the institution. As one leader steps down, another steps in. Even for this, I give due credit to Director General Bucayu, for he agreed to stay until his replacement has become appointed. Even in his moment of need, he did not leave the service hanging.

For that, and for everything you have done for the Bureau, I thank you in my capacity as Secretary of Justice, and in my own personal capacity as one human rights and public service advocate to another. Thank you and I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

In the same vein, and perhaps even more fervently, I wish all the best for your successor, Director General Ricardo Rainier G. Cruz III.

Director General Cruz, a warm welcome to the Bureau and to the DOJ family.

I hope that the sentiments I have taken the time to express so far has not dimmed your fervor and readiness to assume your post and discharge your responsibilities.

I only mean to gift you with the best welcoming present I can give to an incoming Director General of Corrections: the complete and honest Truth.

I am sure that you are stepping into these responsibilities with eyes wide open, and I am aware that friends, former colleagues, fellow public servants and other well-wishers have all given their two-cents about what you should expect from the office you will be assuming. I am also sure that a military man as decorated as yourself, entrusted with no less than the Armed Forces' Eastern Mindanao Command (Eastmincom), has the wisdom not to step into any situation blindly.

Nevertheless, from my experience, being told and knowing what to expect is only one half of the equation. The other half is knowing what weapons to arm yourself with, and that is something that a predecessor, or those who have seen and experienced firsthand the challenges facing the Bureau, are in the best position to share with you.

I am sure that you and outgoing Director General Bucayu had found time for a serious talk, but, for my part, I would take this opportunity to share with you some insights which, hopefully, will prepare you for the challenge ahead.

When speaking of a person's various roles in life, people tend to use the "hat" metaphor, and that is very true for the Director General of Corrections.

I have one reflected and realized that the ideal Director General of Corrections is one who has an MBA and background in managing a multinational corporation; a doctorate degree in Psychology and, perhaps, even a background in psychiatry; a theologian; an educator; a nutritionist; a public safety and security expert; a human rights advocate; an information technology-savvy person; a detective; an

analyst; a war strategist; a father and mother of the year awardee, who possesses a crystal ball, among other things.

You might think that I am exaggerating or trying to be humorous, but I am also quite serious. Being Director General of Corrections is very much like being the President of the Republic of the Philippines at a smaller scale. The various penal facilities are like the various islands that compose the Philippine archipelago, they are each a microcosm of Philippine society where you will have to deal with peace and order; health issues; education and rehabilitation; the fight against criminality, not just those contained within, but also those activities that bleed out into free society; dealing with inmate movement is like an immigration issue, in the sense that you will always be thinking of the risk you are allowing in and out of the country; you will be responsible for the life, security, liberty (or lack thereof), of tens of thousands of people – who are of different nationalities, ethnic origins, gender, religious belief, economic status and influence within and without the penitentiary – with the added complication that these are all convicted criminals, who present varying degrees of danger to themselves, their fellow inmates, to BuCor officials and the community at large.

I used to apply the word “Herculean” to the task of running the BuCor but, I realize now, even Hercules might not be skilled enough for the job.

While there are deputies and other officials who are responsible for the various areas of concern within the Bureau, the Director General himself should always wear those “hats” simultaneously – after all, before you can properly delegate, it presupposes that you know what is being delegated and to what extent. Ultimately, you are the highest official in the BuCor and, with that distinction, comes great responsibility.

For too long, inmates – or, at least, inmates, or groups of inmates, of a certain standing within our penal facilities – have had the running of the institution.

It is no secret that some have been living the lives of kings.

It's a reality that we have had to deal with these last five years. Even with the operations and efforts we have undertaken the last several months, I cannot say with 100% certainty that our facilities are fully under control and drug-free. In fact, I will not be surprised to know that

money, power, influence and threats of violence are still viable currencies in certain areas.

It is time to fully take back control of our facilities.

To that end I give Director General Cruz with the free reign to ascertain for himself what courses of action taken by the former leadership to continue, what to discard, what to put on hold, what to intensify, and what other areas to concentrate on. I trust that he will feel free to consult incumbent officials, and even outgoing Director General Bucayu for insights, while deciding for himself what is best. I trust, too, that he will feel free to seek my guidance and policy direction. For his part, I expect him to give his full cooperation to the Department and its other attached and constituent agencies, considering that the BuCor's mandate often requires such close coordination.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once said that "Thinking is easy, acting is difficult, and to put one's thoughts into action is the most difficult thing in the world." That may be true, but the new Director General of Corrections has, to his benefit, not just the BuCor Modernization Law and all the benefits it brings, but also the advantage of the insights of others. Learn from the successes, mistakes and experience of those who came before you.

In case of doubt, I leave with you the words of Theodore Roosevelt, which I also live by: "In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing. The worst thing you can do is nothing."

So, please, together, let us do something. For, as I have said on several other occasions, the manpower of the BuCor is its more important asset. The Director of Corrections is the leader who can polish such asset and reveal them to be the diamonds they have all had the potential of becoming.

Thank you, with all my heart, once again to outgoing Director General Bucayu. I know that, in the beginning, we came into an understanding *na "walang iwanan"*, but I want you to know that I perfectly understand.

To Director General Cruz, welcome and I look forward to seeing what we, all of us together, do to improve the BuCor.

Mabuhay po tayong lahat!