



*On the Occasion of the Induction of Officers IBP Pampanga Chapter*

June 26, 2015

## **KEYNOTE SPEECH**

by

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*Secretary*

Friends, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me begin by thanking Atty. Jovy Ann for that beautiful opening prayer. The simplicity and spirituality reflected in that prayer is touching ... and speaks well of the Christian upbringing your alma mater, the Holy Family Academy, has gifted you with.

Thank you, Atty. Jovy Ann.

I do not wish to begin my short message on a sad note. However, when Atty. Gener stood up to deliver his welcome remarks, I remembered that his law partner and town-mate from Mexico, Pampanga – Atty. Ryann Rueda - has just been involved in an unfortunate incident.

Belated though it might be, please extend my wishes to your partner and his family for Atty. Ryann's fast recovery ... for his safety and that of his family... and for the reign of justice in the situation he is currently in.

Please do that for me, Atty. Gener.

Now, I shall proceed to the order of the day.

Let me begin by scolding your incoming president.

I have been told by some of my former students that Atty. Darwin posted a picture in his Facebook profile. It turns out that the picture is that of him and me posing together. In the caption of that picture, he referred to me as ... his favorite professor.

Here's the point, Atty. Darwin. Didn't I tell you back in school never to tell half-truths?

That I am your favorite professor is only fifty percent of the story. The other fifty percent is that ... you were my favorite student.

*Papano namang hindi mangyayari 'yun.* First of all, I really do admire ... your choice of fraternity. Let me assure you : that was such a good choice.

Secondly, I am your guest here and you are the host – that obliges me to say something nice, right?

In his letter-invitation to me, Atty. Darwin – my favorite student – said I should say something to inspire the legal community here to practice our profession, I quote, “with utmost dignity and integrity”.

Well, it looks like the roles have been switched. It is now my student's turn to give me an assignment.

Now, let me tell you this, Atty. Darwin. Unlike some of my students, I have come tonight ... prepared.

Tonight, I invite my colleagues in the profession here in Pampanga and Angeles City to a moment of reflection. Let's you and I reexamine tonight our commitment to the oath we took when we were sworn in as members of the Bar.

In that solemn oath, we said, and I quote: “I shall conduct myself as a lawyer ... according to the best of my knowledge and discretion ... with all good fidelity as well ... to the courts as to my clients”. End of quote.

Those words are what some might call “perfect for framing”.  
*Masarap ilagay sa kuwadro.*

*Sa pananaw ko, mas maganda kung ang mga salitang 'yun ... ay naka-kuwadro ... sa puso nating mga abogado.*

Let me ask you this question tonight.

The question for reflection is, how has the legal profession... here and elsewhere in our country ... conducted itself?

Sa pananaw ko, tatlong bagay ang meron ang Batas.

Ang Batas ay may bangis.

Ang Batas ay may bisa.

At ang Batas... ay laging ... may butas.

Kahit wala nga itong butas, mayroon at mayroon pa ring mga tusong naririyang na pipilitin at piliting gawan ito ng butas.

There will, in fact, be those who will have the temerity – with the right motivation and enough self-interest at stake – who will twist and manipulate the Law until it becomes virtually unrecognizable.

Some who are desperate enough will even support a version of the Law that does not honor the very basic, Constitutionally enshrined principle on accountability of public officials; or one that favors public officials' act of obscuring the Truth and resisting Transparency in public office, through evasive manoeuvres and hiding potential witnesses.

*Mayroon pa nga diyang mga tao na kayang gamitin ang batas upang harangin ang Katarungan, at ang paggawa ng mga natatakhang opisyal ng Bayan ng kanilang tungkulin na protektahan ang kaban ng bayan at ipagtanggol ang interes at kapakanan ng taumbayan.*

*Ang nakalulungkot pa nga, ang ilan sa mga nangunguna sa pagsasamantala sa batas, o paggawa ng batas ng batas, o pagmamanihala dito ay iyon pang mga nabigyan ng tungkuling itaguyod at ipatupad ito.*

*Kung sino pa silang mga ilan sa pinakamataas na opisyal ng bayan, ay sila pang humaharang sa pag-iimbestiga sa mga alegasyon ng korapsyon.*

*At silang mga naatasang magpatupad ng batas ay nagpapagamit sa mga kriminal na elemento upang mapaikot ang pamahalaan at huwag nitong magampanan ang tungkulin nito.*

*Bangis ng batas. Bisa ng batas. Butas ... ng batas.*

My friends, where have our respective law practices focused? What have been the value which our clients and our communities found in the legal profession?

Has it been on the preventive value of the “*bangis ng Batas*”?

Has it been on the transformative value of the “*bisa ng Batas*”?

Or, has it been on the corruptive, but lucrative practice, of helping scoundrels and unscrupulous parties look for and take advantage of the many “*butas ng Batas*”.

*Tulad na lamang ng paggamit sa polisiya ng pamahalaan na huwag muna i-deport ang isang dayuhan kung may kaso ito dito sa Pilipinas, sa pamamagitan ng pakikipagsabwatan sa pag-iimbento ng mga halata namang pekeng kaso para lamang mapigilan ang pag-usad ng batas.*

This, now, is the question that I ask you. What role do each of you see yourself playing in promoting and defending the Law?

Will you be the lawyer that applies himself enthusiastically and shamelessly to the gross manipulation of the law that it becomes unrecognizable, that wrong becomes right, right becomes wrong, and violations of our Social Contract go unpunished?

Or will you stand as the lawyer that this Filipino nation needs and deserves? The lawyer who will defend the Rule of Law, as it serves its function within the Social Contract, above all?

For myself, I have the deepest and most abiding respect for those who promote Law as it serves the purpose for which it was

established – the protection of the public interest, the triumph of Right over Wrong, of Justice over Impunity, Good over Evil; for the legal professionals who take into account the Spirit as much, if not more so, than strict Letter thereof – especially where the Letter not only does not serve the purpose for which it was laid down, but, in fact, is being using counter to such purpose. After all, the “Rule of Law” is part of the Social Contract – it does not exist so that it can be manipulated to ensure that corruption and criminality goes unpunished. It exists to defend and protect what is legal and just, and not what is illegal and unjust.

Atty. Darwin has made sure that I appreciate the mission statement of your chapter.

It is, as you profess, “caring ... educating ... innovating”.

Let me say, for the record, that I admire ... and am proud of ... your three-fold mission.

Let me focus on the second: educating. My view is that when the legal profession takes upon itself the mission of educating our communities, that in itself is ... innovative ... and definitely ... caring.

I stand behind you and lend my moral support to this cause.

Now, the question is, which aspects of the Law must our communities be educated on?

*Sa tingin ko, mas madalas pag-aralan ng tao ... ang butas ng batas.*

*Ang problema dito, ang tingin sa atin ng iba ... kailangan nila ang abogado para makalusot sa pamamagitan ng butas ng batas.*

I do hope that not one lawyer in this hall is a party to that misdirected mentality.

Let us focus on the two: “bangis ng Batas” or the fear of the majesty and power of the Law; and “bisa ng Batas” or the transformative effects of the respect for and adherence to the Law.

The fear of the majesty and power of the Law puts criminality on a downward spiral.

The appreciation of the transformative effects of the law help our communities understand that our laws not just protect our rights – but also call on us to exercise our duties under the law. The exercise of such duties and responsibilities, in turn, create a better community and uplift our lives.

I need not look for the perfect example.

The perfect example of the transformative power of our adherence to our duties and responsibilities under the law ... is IBP Pampanga Chapter itself.

One reason I came over tonight is to congratulate all of you and, in particular, your outgoing president, Atty. Peter Paul Maglalang.

Atty. Peter Paul, under your stewardship and leadership, the IBP Pampanga Chapter took the lead in supporting the tax drive of the government. I am aware that your chapter has inspired and encouraged our fellow lawyers here to be among the first to undergo tax mapping.

In any language, that initiative is both caring and innovative.

Congratulations, Atty. Peter Paul.

The law obliges us to fulfill our part in revenue generation. You showed us in very visual and clear terms that the fulfillment of that obligation under the law has important transformative effects.

You did not only help our government earn more and to use that money to transform peoples and communities; you also cemented the respect that the Pampanga and Angeles communities have for the IBP Chapter and for the legal profession in general.

For that, ladies and gentlemen, I must say ... thank you and congratulations.

When Atty. Willie went to the microphone to introduce me, I told myself, here is a man who represents what the law should mean to us.

*Katulad ng batas ... sa unang tingin ... parang nakakatakot si Atty. Willie.*

Here is a man who I feel can knock down a bigger, taller opponent with one quick martial arts blow.

Yet, as Atty. Willie spoke, I sensed the kindness and the friendliness hidden behind the face and stand of one who is well-trained in the martial arts.

That was when I told myself that such is the other face of the law – transformative, because it cares.

I wish your chapter all the best as you help our *cabalens* here become more acquainted with the two faces of the Law. I pray for your unqualified success in the pursuit of your mission of caring, educating ... innovating.

And to my favorite student, I say:

The many choices you have made in the past have shown that you are well-prepared for the job and the mission that will now be placed on your shoulders.

Animo, Atty. Darwin!

And to all of you, *dakal a salamat*.

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