

Message for the 8:00 a.m. Flag Raising Ceremony, Land Bank of the Philippines  
LBP Plaza, Malate, 03 December 2007

by

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Amenities... Good Morning!

When Atty Vicky's invitation for this morning's activity was relayed to me last week, I felt how it is to be torn between two lovers...PAGC and LBP. For at this very moment, PAGC is also holding its first Monday special flag raising ceremony which is actually the last for the year – and I really found it hard to decide. But, because, Land Bank has a special place in my heart, here I am with you today.

My assignment for this morning's activity is to talk about good governance or any topic that is relevant in addressing graft and corruption in government. And I decided to link my talk on good governance to the challenges that each Catholic is faced with during this Season - as we began the Year of the Lord 2008 – the onset of Advent – where all Catholics are reminded of the need to prepare – not just for Christmas – but beyond – beyond the mall settings, the Christmas decorations everywhere, beyond the Christmas parties – but Christmas as such happens in the heart – of cleansing one's heart – to make it a perfect place for Christ to reside.

And I see this as a starting point for each of us, public servants, to do our respective share to make good governance a reality.

And I am of the belief that at Land Bank, this is not really an issue – for, among the 120 plus offices nationwide that we oversee as regards implementation of the Integrity Development Action Plan – we, at the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission, consider Land Bank – as one of the very few models - which other agencies can look up to – in terms of professionalism, existence of systems and procedures that talk about control mechanisms that deter the occurrence of irregularities, concern for the welfare of your best assets – your people, and many other practices that makes one understand what good governance means.

Hindi po kayo kaparis ng ibang ahensya ng pamahalaan na napakaraming problema – na hindi natutugunan. Kaya, for this morning, I see it fit to discuss each public servant's role as mandated by no less than the 1987 Philippine Constitution's provision on public accountability – in

accordance with the challenges - that the time honored principle of public office being a public trust – offers. And further, in accordance, with how, each of us, as GOD’s creation, is expected to live our respective earthly journeys.

At sa pagpili po ninyo ng topic ng good governance para sa umagang ito, this to me is a telling sign of your desire to assess your respective roles or contribution in ensuring integrity development as a component of good governance in your respective areas or places of work.

To me, this is more of an expression of your desire to become more responsive, efficient and conscientious in providing objective and timely response to the current needs of the times – to the kind of challenges that our nation is asking each of us to address – which for this gathering, our focus would be on the fight against graft and corruption as a means to achieve good governance.

I am sure that almost everyone in this hall this morning is very much aware of how the country is being described in the tri-media – locally and at times, even by international measuring agencies. They present the entire country’s systems and citizens as generally corrupt – and that what would come to one’s thought would be the “perceived” government’s inaction to the situation.

Nais ko pong ipabatid sa inyong lahat, na hindi totoong hindi inaaksyunan ng pamahalaan ang problema ng graft and corruption. Hindi po totoo, na hindi mahalaga sa pamahalaan ang issue ng good governance. Masyado lang pong malaki ang problema at malalim ang pinanggagalingan kaya hindi medaling malutas.

Ito po ang isang area ng krimen na hindi lamang sa ating bansa nangyayari. For in reality, no nation – rich or poor – is spared from the sting of corruption.

And in our country, it is important for every Filipino to understand the trigger points – kung saan nagmula ang problemang ito . At mas importante po para sa mga public servants – para sa atin – na maunawaan ang pinagmulan ng problema ng graft and corruption.

Corruption is an affliction that started as early as the time of the great fight of the angels, further seen at the temptation at the Garden of Eden . And as an evidence of the long years of our sufferings from this malaise, even Dante, as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century, had revealed in his *Inferno*, that the fifth circle of hell is reserved for those who have betrayed the public trust – although, corruption in those days consisted of the buying and selling of appointments for public office.

For the Philippines, the trigger points include 508 years of historical experiences from the hands of our colonizers (from 1522 to 1945, that is, 457 years under the Spanish Empire; 47 years under the Americans; and, 4 years of Japanese rule) and continued with the onset of post colonial years beginning in 1946 marked by the 20 years from a dictatorial ruler. Each of those years likewise left marked practices that have been institutionalized in the country's systems and processes and some imbibed by the citizenry.. turning the country into a weak state

At nakita po natin ang paglala ng situation sa ating kapaligiran – nandyan po ang EDSA 1 at EDSA 11-

Ang mga pangyayari pong ito ay importanteng maunawaan natin upang mabigyang puwang sa ating isipan at puso ang pagbibigay ng chance sa pamahalaan at pakikipagtulungan upang mapagbago ang situation sa problemang ito.

For indeed, corruption has become the most serious governance challenge of the Macapagal Arroyo administration – and this required the employment of an intensified campaign that makes use of a holistic approach – to be able to succeed in this fight.

From 2001, there have been a number of initiatives that have been undertaken and are still being done to counter corruption...

For the administrative measures, we have various issuances: Executive Orders, Administrative Orders, new Laws and the like

We also have the lifestyle checks, procedural reforms aimed at cutting red tape in government transactions, aggressive prosecution against officials suspected of having enriched themselves through illegal means, and tying up with stakeholders...

Subalit sa kabila po ng lahat ng initiatives na ito, alam po naman natin na ang laki pa rin ng problema. Mahirap po kasi talaga itong tugunan. This is one fight that has never been and will never be and easy task.

As what the President Macapagal Arroyo once said: Fighting corruption takes time. We cannot fight it overnight... it is not like Saint Michael slaying the dragon with one swish of the sword... Fighting corruption is like healing an infected wound that must be constantly cleansed and disinfected

To do that, a number of needs have been identified to succeed in this battle.

The need to change the orientation of the people is necessary to have capable and credible public servants

The need to consider best practices of other countries is important to guide us in assessing our performance and re-designing or re-engineering our processes

And to employ each individual's role is of particular importance because this task can never ever be won by just one group alone -

When we said consider best practices of the other countries, we meant what we said – and we actually did it.

We used Hong Kong as an example and used the experiences of ICAC as our guide.

The three pronged approach here refers to Investigation, Prevention and Education

Thus, when it was time to craft the 2004 to 2010 Medium Term Philippine Development Plan or MTPDP of the Macapagal – Arroyo administration, a full chapter on anti corruption was included – Chapter 21 – and it highlights the key areas of reforms – on investigation, prevention, and education

Another chapter, Chapter 22, is on Bureaucratic Reforms – which looks at the improvement of the quality and efficiency of public service, through the adoption of institutional improvements in the bureaucracy....

To do all these, the President created PAGC, to be her arm in ensuring that these thrusts are translated into plans that are actually implemented and producing positive results.

From 2001 to date, PAGC has undergone a number of re-organization and paradigm shifts – to enable it to better address the pressing issues and thus make an impact through measurable deliverables. So that, in 2004, PAGC – finally veered away from its traditional role of just being an investigative body – as it started to expand its role – that has since then covered addressing corruption through systems reforms and greater focus on the role of integrity in spirituality, professionalism of people who makes up the entire bureaucracy and people empowerment -

I want to stress though that before doing all these, we first started with our own organization – we crafted our own vision, mission and goals and captured all these in our first ever Medium Term Development Plan for 2005 to 2009. These I would like to share with you...

For the vision, we say..

“A graft and corrupt-free Philippines characterized by transparency and accountability in governance, honesty and integrity in the bureaucracy in a corruption-intolerant society.”

For the mission,

“To be the President’s arm in eradicating graft and corruption through effective deterrence, prevention and education in partnership with all stakeholders”

And for the goals covering each of the three pronged approaches –

**For DETERRENCE (investigation and enforcement):**

To make graft and corruption a high risk, low-reward activity.

**For PREVENTION:**

To minimize the opportunities for graft and corruption and ensure that systems are corruption resistant.

**For EDUCATION:**

To promote corruption-intolerant society by raising awareness that mobilizes citizenry and by disseminating good citizenship values and institutionalizing the code of ethics in agencies.

And, to ensure that we will accomplish what we targeted, we needed to first look at PAGC as an Institution and do the cleansing from within to enable us to WALK the TALK

We went through a painful process as we decided on the fate of the majority of PAGC employees – many contract of services were pre-terminated and the others were not renewed if the evaluation result showed absence of direct contribution to the attainment of PAGC's set goals

We also embarked on a lot of capacity and capability – building processes

We came up with systems improvement and database build up

The Complaints and case Management Manual of Operations is a quick and ready reference for technical and support staff responsible for tracking and monitoring of cases as well as on the investigation and enforcement of laws.

Here, we use an EXCEL programmed case monitoring and document tracking system

Thus, incoming documents are acted upon immediately and gives us a comfortable level of assurance that the cases are actually moving

I will discuss the shame campaign later

The PAGC website is under construction, but we have an SMS – where anyone can get connected to PAGC by just texting their concerns to 0917 TXT PAGC

Another policy that PAGC holds on to is for everyone not to be contented with just planning

At PAGC, everyone needs to WORK and DELIVER results

At this point, I will share with you what we have done so far...starting on the prevention and education strategies

+ We spearheaded the conduct of the unprecedented Presidential Anti Corruption Workshop

- Participated in by over a hundred top officials from more than 40 government agencies
- Showcase of multi-donor activity for the USAID, EU, the World Bank, UNDP, British Council and the Asian Development Bank
- The output of which is the Integrity Development Action Plan or IDAP composed of 22 very specific and doable anti corruption measures which have been further clustered in accordance with how each would contribute to the areas of prevention, education, investigation and strategic partnership –
- On the IDAP, we have...  
7 for Prevention; 4 for Education; another 7 for Investigation; and 4 for Strategic Partnership

From the December 2004 crafting of the IDAP to the January 2005 implementation in 39 offices, and the monthly monitoring of compliance and validation of reports, the bi-monthly follow up sessions, we are now in 120 offices nationwide. The mentoring and monitoring processes picked out the following best practices -



From the 39 offices in 2005, IDAP is now in 120 offices nationwide.

The thrust is to sustain registered gains through ...

1. **continuous monitoring and mentoring** through consultations, regular submission of plans and accomplishment reports, issuance of needed circulars or other written order.
2. Touching base with the **Regional Development Councils (RDCs)** which can be our allies in ensuring that IDAP implementation and sustainability is made part of the RDCs regular projects
3. **application of a rating scale where indicators and grades have been identified and agreed upon among the IDAP implementers.**
4. **IDAP's success has been noticed by donor communities and they have been continuously matching our efforts by giving us assistance in all forms.**

On the area of Investigation, PAGC has done the following...

From 2001 to 28 November 2007, PAGC processed a total of 2,232 cases

Of these numbers, 874 have been resolved; 1,095 were endorsed to the Office of the Ombudsman for lack of jurisdiction and these referred to complaints received from 2003 to 2007

We also have 228 cases as of 28 November 2007

Of those ordered dismissed from office, suspended or given stern warning, we have the following... (c/o slides)

People might wonder how we managed to register such kind of accomplishments. And this, I will tell you... We are anchored on our strong relationship with our partners,,,

From 2004 to date, we were able to forge partnerships with the following... (slides)

On the 10 select agencies, these are: BOC, BIR, DAR, DEPED, DENR, DILG, DOH, DOJ, DPWH and NLRC. Of these agencies, the DOH has been submitting the most number of referrals and likewise getting the most number of resolved cases with punitive recommendations

And how could PAGC forget the case that was resolved based on a similar undertaking...

At natutuwa po ako at nagpapasalamat na ang Land Bank ay hindi kabilang sa mga problematic agencies na kinakailangan naming bantayan. And we look forward to seeing your agency unseat DSWD from its number one position taking over from DOH.

We, at PAGC, are confident that you will reach this level. You have almost everything that the other agencies have been dreaming of and passionately working for to have in terms of internationally accepted standards on internal controls, political will of your top management to institute more reforms, and other requirements.

What you need to focus on would be the sustainability of the gains you have already been registering for years. And this one, will definitely need everyone's commitment to do their respective shares in achieving your set organization's goals – there is a need to focus on what else needs to be done – by not reinventing the wheel – but by taking off from what is available in one's internal and external environments.

To do this, everyone needs to deliver in accordance with how public servants are expected to work – at all times, that is, providing service to the clients with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty and efficiency; act with patriotism and justice and lead modest lives.

And as an earlier link on Advent's call to prepare for the coming of the Christ is done, there is a need to look at what you need to prepare for as an organization – for here, the preparation should cover an understanding of the needs, patterns and tools for public management or governance with emphasis on the roles and responsibilities and the attendant accountabilities for such.

The preparation should touch on ethics as a basic component of the day to day living not just during working hours but this goes beyond working hours as this shall cover even one's personal life.

The preparation should look into relevant ethics and accountability issues –

- the ones that could lead one to failure because of mismanagement, graft and corruption,

- those that could lead one to success, making an impact as regards steering respective jurisdiction into progress because of leadership attitudes and work culture that talk about the basic requirements expected of public service...

To be able to address these requirements, the study and application of ethics at all times is therefore of paramount interest.

WHY is this so?

It is simply because, anyone in the public service must have full awareness on the importance of ethics, social responsibility and accountability in one's way of life - a means that will ensure unique participation of every individual in giving respective share in helping shape a strong republic through a strengthened "family which serves as the foundation of the nation"(Art XV Sec 1) and a basic autonomous social institution (Art II Sec 12)

To do these would necessitate exhibition of one's love for country. Probably not the kind of love for country that our forefathers hundreds of years ago exhibited – nor the kind of love for country that our heroes have shown us – that is by dying for the country. This time though, the challenge could be for us to experience death –not physical death but death to one's desires that do not contribute to the welfare of the greater majority – desires that don't contribute to shaping a strong republic through a strengthened family which serves as the foundation of the nation and a basic autonomous social institution.

Examples could be death of relationships – kinship and friendship – something that is given so much premium by us – Filipinos.

But we are aware also that these can both be an advantage or a liability in good governance.

Interpersonal relationships are ideal if they result in greater cooperation between the government and the general public. But the same strengths of relationships may serve as the seeds of corruption if abused for self aggrandizement.

We are called upon to die - not physically, but emotionally - if what is involved is death of relationships as we experience fighting it out with those closest to our hearts in the name of justice, freedom, truth and in ensuring that good triumphs over evil - every time - wherever we are and whenever the situation calls for us to do so.

This could mean self sacrifice as we set aside our vested interests over and above our desires to give way for the good of the majority.

Love for country, during these days, can be manifested on one's level of sharing in the task of good government.

A task that is not easy to carry out. A task where the weak of heart, the uncommitted, the fence-sitters, and those who sleep on their rights cannot be counted in the struggle.

A special kind of task where only the stout-hearted, the brave, the committed, the vigilant can make a change, can make a difference, and build the nation, preserve our democracy, save the Philippines.

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And chances are, these might not be concluded during our working years or probably not even in our lifetime.

But just the same, we must go on – we must not be disheartened – for the fruits of our efforts can be cascaded into our children and our children's children. They will be the ones to carry the torch long after we are gone –

Hence, we must ensure, that it is going to be a torch with good flames, one that represents the very ideals handed down from one generation to the next. Ideals that are immutable yet capable of imitation, adamant yet flexible and adaptable.

We do not even have to do much to deter corruption. Just be incorruptible, lead by example, and almost everybody at the office will think twice first before engaging in corrupt practices. Report

to office 1 hour or 30 minutes before 8 in the morning and pretty soon few will be coming in late.

Please remember: all changes or reforms will have to start from ourselves. That is the main and only strategy.

This is the reason why it is important to be ethical – to be responsible – to be accountable. For no one can ever effect changes if there is no admission as regards limitations. If one will not set aside pride and personal interest – the welfare of the greater majority will not be addressed.

We have to be very firm in saying NO to anything that will not be in conformity with the standards for public service as explicitly stated in our Constitution. We have to say a big NO to graft and corruption –

There are many trigger points on how a public servant can be exposed to temptations and finally yield to temptations... When this happens, we can expect mismanagement resulting to poor governance and loss of trust and confidence of the people we all vowed to serve.

But if the public servant is aware of what is supposed to be the roles and responsibilities and of course accountabilities of everyone in the public service, specially the ones leading – a bigger percentage of success in achieving good governance is assured.

And with GOD's grace, with the resolve to work with passion and do r respective mission in the task of building a graft and corruption -free Philippines, I am sure that we will all succeed. We need to believe that we will succeed. We all need to believe. We need to hope.

In closing, please allow me to share with you some guidance on how you could do a personal reflection as public officials to maintain and sustain integrity in governance.

This guide has been provided by Fr Albert E. Alejo – a Jesuit priest who was once a local official and now an active participant in the government's pursuit of quality governance which his group

advocates through their Ehem Aha advocacy to finally put an end to the much delayed reforms in public service

The guide questions are:

- + How have I changed as a person since I took public post? What do people who really know me tell me about myself? (“Iba ka na talaga!” or “Ikaw na Ikaw pa rin”)
- + Corruption in the country has been very much documented, and is still being exposed. To what extent am I part of this problem?
- + What are my fears in my public office? What are my joys? To whom do I share my fears and consolation?
- + What is my attitude toward words? To public oaths? To documents and contracts? To numbers? (“Sa taong may hiya, ang salita’y panunumpa” – Kartilya ng Katipunan 1896)
- + What groups of people feel comfortable talking or working with me? What groups of people find me unapproachable?
- + Do I pray? How? How important is religious faith in my personal life? In my public service?
- + How do I improve myself? Do I read books? What new skills have I learned the past year? What new ideas am I developing? What do I do to help me make good analysis?
- + I look at my house. What does my house say about me? What does my car say about me? My library? My recreation? My office? My guns?
- + How do I feel about my body? My health? What is my form of relaxation? How is this related to my job as public servant?
- + How do I feel about my lifestyle? How do I develop this? What does my lifestyle say about my principles? My priorities? How does it affect my performance as a public servant?
- + How do I feel about the lifestyle of my family? My spouse? My kids? My relatives? How does their lifestyle affect my decisions as a public servant?
- + How do I look at gifts? How do I classify them? How am I affected by them? To whom do I owe “utang na loob”?
- + How do I know what occasions or moments of life that are really important to my people? What events do I normally attend? What invitations do I tend to refuse?
- + Do I believe that the Filipino way of life and thinking can support a scientific culture? How does this relate to the need for better governance?
- + How did I come to power or position of influence? Does my view and practice of power essentially include the “common good”?
- + Does my office promote a culture of efficiency, transparency and service? Or does it tolerate a culture of mediocrity, ambiguity, and exclusion in its design, formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of programs – specially for the poor?
- + Am I better public leader because of my membership in a political party? How loyal am I to my party? How sincere is my party to serving the common good?
- + What is my stand on the proposal to abolish the so-called “pork barrel”? On the standard “commission” on government projects?
- + Do I have unexplained wealth? How do I explain it to myself? Is there anything in what I have done or in what I am doing right now that could be a source of scandal in the future? Can I imagine its impact on my family and constituency?

- + Do I know some corrupt officials in the offices/agencies within the sphere of my influence or responsibility? What have I done or what keeps me from doing something to correct the situation?
- + How am I employing the new developments in information technology for more effective governance? Do I do benchmarking based on award-winning practices?
- + Do I have enemies? How do I treat them? Have I directly or indirectly killed anyone? How do I feel about this?
- + Do I have a personal vision for my people? Is this vision aligned with their expressed needs and interests?
- + Do I think of death? How do I feel about death? What if death becomes part of my work as public servant?
- + Who is my model in public leadership? What do I really want to leave as my legacy? What would really give meaning and inner joy to my life as a public servant?

These are some of the most important questions that need to be visited and honestly responded to every now and then. And may be, as one does the personal reflection – then Senator Jose Diokno’s position on honesty can be another reflection guide as he posed the question: “Why be Honest” (Garcia 1993:83).

He said:

*“Why be honest, when it pays to be dishonest? We fight for others, when they won’t fight for you?...or even for themselves?...the answer I think lies in what life means to you. If life means having a good time, money, fame, power, security...then you don’t need principles, all you need are techniques. On the other hand, if happiness counts more than a good time, respect more than fame, right more than power, and peace of soul more than security; if death doesn’t end life but transforms it, then you must be true to yourself and God and to love the truth and justice and freedom that are God’s other names”*

Another food for thought could be the one from then Senator Jovito R Salonga (2003. The Intangibles that Make a Nation Great). It says...

*“In all areas of national endeavour, there is a need for imagination, careful planning, thoroughness, hard work, sweat, integrity, dedication, self-discipline and the willingness to*

sacrifice all for the common good...All the funds in the world will be to no avail if we suffer from lack of these intangible forces that make a nation great.”

And finally, on Dr Jose P. Laurel’s statements in his inaugural speech which could serve as another inspiration for all of us, as he said:

“Every drop, every trickle of individual effort shall be grooved into a single channel for common endeavor until they grow into a flowing stream...a raging flood, hurdling all difficulties”.

In these difficult times for the world and our country, these words must stir and move us to unite and consecrate ourselves for our country and our people.

May our Creator, through HIS Blessed Mother, continuously bless all your undertakings – our undertakings - as we do all these for the greater glory of HIS name.

Let us not fail HIM.