

Liberty and Prosperity: In Doctrine, In Practice

(Acceptance Speech at the Foundation for Liberty and Prosperity Award Ceremony,
Ateneo de Manila Law School)

Raphael Lorenzo A. Pangalangan

Chief Justice Panganiban, Professor Leny Panganiban, Justice Carpio, Executive Director Susan Gavino, the Foundation for Liberty and Prosperity, and respected members of the field, good afternoon.

My colleagues would agree with me when I say: The Philippines does not lack in legal doctrine. The Filipino lacks indoctrination – a fundamental understanding of the law.

Not only knowledge of what the law is, but a grasp and acceptance of what the law ought to be.

Its nature. Its telos.

Indeed, in a society which puts the bar examination on a pedestal, and teachers often (but not always) teach to the test, it is all too easy to fail to see the forest for the trees.

It is for this reason that it is my honor to receive this year's dissertation prize from the Foundation of Liberty and Prosperity. In a sea of black letter law, the Foundation stands as our North Star – a guiding light, if you will – which shows that there is more to this game than rote memory and legal niceties. The Foundation sends the message to pinoy lawyers, law professors and law students alike, that deep thinking and writing remain

a valued skill. At a time where political whim has permeated every sphere of human undertaking, whether it be in national politics or collegiate administration, the Foundation reminds us that merit still counts for something.

It is the challenge to all of us, the lawyers and the lawyers to be, to keep it that way. But to do this, knowledge of the legal text will not suffice. Indeed, the biggest names in jurisprudence—Holmes, Cardozo, Brennan, Blackmun—and in the Philippine, Recto, JBL Reyes, and, now, Chief Justice Panganiban—they were moved by wholistic vision.

That vision is embodied in Magsaysay's oft cited passage: That those who have less in life should have more in law. But with the Foundation for Liberty and Prosperity, we take that even further. We say: "They who have less in life, should have more in life, and not simply in law."

Once again, and on behalf of my fellow awardees, I thank you for the opportunity to let our voices be heard. Moreover, for the honor of your recognition.