



Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines

In Defense of Honesty and Integrity

Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.
Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.

Deuteronomy 16:19-20

As technology continues to make information highly available and accessible, the problem of plagiarism within the academic community and beyond has become even more menacing. Virtually all academic institutions view it not only as a serious offense but also as a threat to intellectual creativity and advancement. The use of another person's work without proper attribution is dealt with severely after due process, by imposing sanctions on erring members of the academe found guilty of intellectual dishonesty.

The long entrenched value of intellectual honesty in the academic sphere has been put to test with the advent of the Supreme Court decision entitled IN THE MATTER OF THE CHARGES OF PLAGIARISM, ETC., AGAINST ASSOCIATE JUSTICE MARIANO C. DEL CASTILLO. The highest tribunal of the land, by positing that there was an absence of malicious intent, refused to acknowledge the act of lifting passages from various foreign publications without proper referencing as an act of PLAGIARISM. What is worse is that it used the same to support an entirely different theory from what the authors actually espouse.

The highest tribunal has set a higher threshold for plagiarism to be made punishable, and so may in fact abet plagiarism. What is the rationale for this? While it may seem reasonable to require "malicious intent" for an act of plagiarism, there can be no argument that plagiarism is still intellectual dishonesty and as such, one must be held accountable for such deplorable act. If a student quotes verbatim from another's text "inadvertently," or "carelessly," or "without knowing this was another's text", is there is no plagiarism here since there was no "malicious intent"? If a ghostwriter or a student in one's study group has plagiarized texts for which another person is to take credit, is that person not co-responsible for his/her plagiarism?

How could our schools effectively teach the values of intellectual integrity and responsibility if in the light of the Supreme Court's ruling, it could not take punitive action against such forms of plagiarism? In this sense, the Supreme Court's decision abets a culture of intellectual sloth and dishonesty. **For plagiarism is not only a legal issue but more importantly, a moral one.** As institutions of learning, it is incumbent upon schools to develop in students the discipline of research and inculcate in them the values of excellence, responsibility, accountability, respect, honesty and integrity.

It is in this light that the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP), the largest association of Catholic schools, colleges and universities in the country with 1,290 members, lends its voice to this issue plaguing not only the legal community but Philippine academia as well. CEAP calls on all its member-schools to bring to light this threat to **academic integrity and Christian formation** by holding forums and other discussions on this issue – highlighting its effect and impact on our mission as Catholic educators.

We call on the rest of Philippine academia and the entire citizenry to **unite and speak with one voice** and act collectively in **defense of honesty and integrity**.

We appeal to the Supreme Court to **withdraw its threat of sanction against the 37 UP Law Professors** who exercised their academic freedom in the service of honesty and integrity.

We support Justice Lourdes Aranal-Sereno's call for the issuance of a corrected version of the ruling to reverse the "unimaginable problems" it has caused Philippine academia and restore the ability of the court to **positively educate and influence the future of intellectual and academic discourse**.

We invite every citizen to be vigilant in monitoring the development of this case so that our Supreme Court will truly **uphold the rule of law, maintain integrity and trustworthiness** so that our people in turn will **restore the moral confidence** that this democratic institution deserves.

In the midst of these trying times, we pray for **enlightenment and moral strength**. May the Holy Spirit guide us all to seek and discern the truth and be stewards of honesty and integrity.

9 November 2010

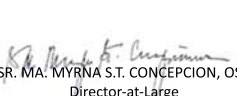

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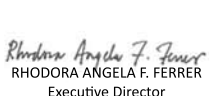

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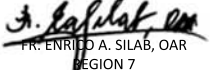

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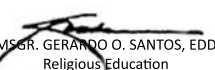

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