



## PROFESSIONAL HONOR IN LAWYERS\*

JUSTICE JESUS BARRERA

My friends and fellow barristers:

Now that you have taken your oath and have become full-fledged members of the Bar, we welcome you into the fold of the legal profession. As we do so, we first congratulate you for your successful attainment of the goal you have so patiently and strenuously striven and worked for and rejoice with you and your parents who have for years sacrificed and spent of themselves and their often meager resources to enable you to go through your studies.

But this occasion is not purely for rejoicing however justified this may be. Hand in hand with your attaining the honored title of a lawyer, you have at the same time assumed the responsibilities that go with it. You have to-day not merely acquired a *modus vivendi*, a trade or occupation for your livelihood. You have primarily joined a noble profession dedicated to the service of Truth and Justice.

While in college, you have been taught in your course in Legal and Judicial Ethics, what the duties of the lawyer are towards his client, the Bar, the courts and the public. Your knowledge of these duties has also been tested in the last bar examinations which you have successfully passed. Likewise, you have just taken an Oath in which you have made specific pledges in the discharge of your duties. All these, I assume you have taken to heart.

But the real test of how much you have profited by these precepts of professional ethics will come when you go forth to the field in the practice of your chosen profession, and where you will be on your own without the ready advice and guidance of your professors.

The struggle will be hard; the competition will be keen; the chances of immediate success are slim. Nonetheless, crowded as the legal profession seems to be, there is always room for good lawyers, lawyers that are hard-working, studious, dedicated, honest and honorable. Obviously, you can not all be brilliant lawyers. Great minds are the special gifts of God. You can only rise in legal pro-

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\* Speech delivered during the oath-taking of the 1960 successful bar candidates at the Supreme Court.



iciency to the extent of the talents with which you have been endowed. It will, therefore, not be your fault if you can go only so far. But, on the other hand, you can all be good lawyers, of conscience, of integrity, of honor. For it is within your power, within your own hands, to so mould your character and your conduct so as to reflect honor on yourself and on the noble profession you have embraced. This, you can do, and no excuse is admissible for your failure so to do. It is your own responsibility for which you alone are accountable.

The legal profession is of great opportunities. In any orderly society ruled by law, the lawyer is a natural leader because of his knowledge of the law. There is no activity in the life of the community that is not affected or influenced by legislation. Thus, it is that the advice of the lawyer is always sought after. Because of the complexity and the almost unlimited field of human endeavors that require legal counselling, the possibility, if not the temptation, to forget the hand-bounding and restraining ethical precepts and considerations, is indeed great. Thus, there is the tendency nowadays among smart and clever lawyers to look for loopholes in the law for the purpose of going around it. Instead of conforming and abiding by the provisions of the law, the preoccupation of present would-be successful lawyers is to adroitly circumvent the law. You must guard against this sharp practice. You must remember that you are building a life career and you must build from the start, on the permanent foundation of honesty, truthfulness, and integrity that will gain you the respect and confidence of those around you. You must not forget that you serve Justice which, in the words of Daniel Webster, is the great interest of man on earth—the foundation of peace, social security, and the general happiness of the people