



Democracy and Duterte¹

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The last time I was here, on October 14, 2017, you asked me to talk [about charter change and the threats to our democracy](#). Today we are still on the same subject, with the added context of (1) the video you have just seen of Department of Interior and Local Governments (DILG) Assistant Secretary Epimaco Densing III advocating a revolutionary government (RevGov) as a political transition to a federal-parliamentary system; and (2) the PDP-Laban draft Federal Constitution briefly mentioned last October 14, in relation to the justification for that shift.

In my previous talk, I argued that there is no need to shift to a federal-parliamentary system in order to fulfill President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's election promises or the vision of a new social order. We discussed the nine reasons why a shift would be fraught with difficulties and complexities. And the recommendation of experts at the [Global Autonomy, Governance, and Federalism \(GAGF\) Forum 2016](#) at Dusit Thani Hotel last year was that governments with functioning systems should first consider reform and refinements rather than an overhaul of the system, because there is no consensus on the supremacy of a federal as against a unitary system, and vice-versa, particularly on long-term outcomes.

Moreover, a "messed-up" reform by legislation can be corrected; a "messed-up" constitutional shift is almost impossible to unravel and may lead to the ruin of our democracy.

The fact is **we have so far failed in human development not because of the Constitution, but because we have not fully implemented it, especially its provisions on social justice and human rights and on local autonomy. The Constitution is not the problem, it is part of the solution.**

¹ The opinions expressed by Atty. Monsod are not necessarily those of JJCICSI.

But how can the Constitution be properly implemented or even debated if there is pervasive ignorance of it? [About 73 percent of our people admit to not knowing anything about the Constitution.](#) The civic education of our people is a responsibility of government. And a government fails in that regard when it tells the people to trust President Duterte with total powers and engages in partisan political propaganda rather than a truthful account of our history and the content of the Constitution.

And we have been forewarned that an ignorant people can never remain a free people because democracy cannot survive for long with civic ignorance. And if we do not do anything about it and prefer to live with our frustrations about who is accountable for things that go wrong, someone will eventually come and say, I will solve all your problems, if you give me total power. And we will give it to him. And that's how democracy dies

We are here today because the possibility of a revolutionary government with total powers as a transition to a federal-parliamentary system is being advocated. And there is the added matter of a [PDP-Laban draft federal constitution](#), which does not contemplate such a transition, but **may be a more serious problem than a RevGov because it changes the central theme of our Constitution from social justice to the agenda of business interests.** And that is a big issue, because a new constitution may last for decades, and it is the vision of our future as a nation. **Social justice is the centerpiece program of the present Constitution for a reason:** finally to correct centuries of injustice to the poor, much of it from the business sector—a task which has yet to be completed. Business and the PDP-Laban appear completely to have forgotten the context of the 1987 Constitution—the historic event of EDSA—in which they both played part, and **in which we promised the poor a new social order.** We forget that promise, and there is hell to pay. As my late colleague in the Commission on Elections, the indomitable Haydee Yorac, used to say: **Let justice be done though the heavens fall.**

Why RevGov? The president and his people are saying that his reform agenda is suffering delays because he underestimated the gravity and complexity of some of the problems, like the drug problem. More important, that the president is being obstructed by corrupt politicians, a lazy or disobedient bureaucracy, an entrenched oligarchy, and the destabilization plots of the Yellows and the Reds. And a revolutionary government with total powers is needed to overcome or get rid of these obstacles.

When we discuss the PDP-Laban draft, it might be clearer to us that the reason its **Transitory Provisions** have not yet been written is that these will spell out how a “strong” president is needed to keep the country together as it undertakes the long process of federalization, through both the inherent difficulties of the shift (like building strong political parties, the allocation of the equalization fund) and the deeply rooted problems of feudalism, an entrenched oligarchy, and endemic corruption.

There are opinions that the RevGov option is being floated by the president because the issues of corruption, extrajudicial killings, and underperformance are beginning to catch up to him, as reflected in declining approval ratings. And a RevGov is the quick way to abort these threats so he can recover his bearings. If that is true, then RevGov will indeed be proclaimed very soon. But I believe that the president is not that reckless, and he can buy time with his still very good ratings. And there is always the Supreme Court that is increasingly deferential to him, with three

questionable decisions—its [decision allowing \[former dictator Ferdinand E.\] Marcos's burial as a hero; its martial law ruling](#) that virtually allows the president to proclaim it anytime, anywhere; and its [dismissal, on the basis of technicalities and not substantive justice, of the petition of Sen. Leila de Lima](#) to be freed from detention.

A revolutionary government may be defined as a government after an overthrow, repudiation, or replacement of an established government or political system to effect some desired result. There is nothing in the Constitution that allows it. It is always described by its proponents as a temporary measure until the purpose is attained and a new government is installed by, of course, the people themselves through, of course, democratic elections. **In practice, a revolutionary government is just another term for a dictatorship. It's about power, either in one person or in a revolutionary council. In practice, its "transition period" can last a long, long time.** In short, a revolutionary government in whatever form or for whatever reason may be the biggest threat to date to our democracy.

Question: If the revolutionary government will fix everything, where is the blueprint for a revolutionary transformation of our society? Is it the PDP-Laban draft federal constitution or is it still in the head of the president?

As a lawyer, surely the president is aware of the legal consequences of going outside the Constitution to address his problems of governance. He can be considered as resigned from (or as abandoning) the presidency and abrogating the Constitution that he swore to uphold and defend, on behalf of a "revolutionary government" of his own making. That would constitute a "culpable violation of the Constitution" or "betrayal of public trust", both impeachable offenses. In any case, the rules on succession would apply: the vice-president would succeed to the presidency and Mr. Duterte would no longer be the commander-in-chief of all the armed forces.

My bet is that the military will choose to uphold the Constitution and will not go along with a RevGov.

Where are we now?

We are told that the best predictor of the behavior of an elected official who aspires to be an autocrat are the statements of the person himself, because those are what connected him to the voters and brought him to power in the first place. So why are we surprised at his statements about RevGov now? Densing is not saying anything new. It is an echo of what Duterte has been saying even before he was a candidate testing the mood of the voters.

As early as 2015, then Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte already mentioned his plan for a revolutionary government. He said that he would padlock Congress and the judiciary through extra-constitutional means and establish a federal-parliamentary type of government that would devolve powers to the regions.

["You have to close everything. It is anti-democratic, but how do you change society?"](#) he said. (My quick answer to that: fully implement the present Constitution, it's all there.)

He played the reluctant candidate very well, but said that if he won, they should not expect him to be like other presidents because ["in six months to one year, I will try to fix \[the\] government. If I cannot get the reforms that I want, I will declare a revolutionary government. Then I will fix the government, I will close the congress. I was once a congressman. Then I'll fix everything."](#)

In his [meeting with the Philippine Daily Inquirer on August 25, 2015](#), he said that his revolutionary government would not be permanent. It would merely be meant **to pave the way for federalism, which he “considers ... the only way to solve corruption, criminality and the Bangsamoro problem.”**

He said: “Why will I be a Marcos? There is a lesson there in history to look at. Why not follow Cory?” “What will I do with power? ... If I become the president, I want to get out with a new bureaucracy, a new government.” Except that Cory’s revolutionary government was the aftermath of bringing down the Marcos dictatorship. Duterte’s revolutionary government is meant to install his own dictatorship by replacing an established government headed by himself. That is really the “theatre of the absurd.”

RevGov, he says, is meant to fix government and the Constitution because “the wellspring of corruption is the Constitution itself,” with its limits on the powers of the executive department. “All money matters and budget appropriation [are limited by the Constitution],” he said, stressing that in Davao City he could easily do a shake-up in an agency “from the head down to the janitor.” “In my second year, I will call a constitutional convention (Con-con) [to draft a Constitution]. I will guarantee you that there will be no compromises,” he added. “Without a revolutionary government, only those moneyed and previously in power, along with their wives, will get the seats.”

On the drug problem: we are all familiar with his utterances about the evil of drugs. The following are statements from a [speech to the people of Tondo on the night of his inauguration as president](#):

“These sons of whores are destroying our children. I warn you, don’t go into that, even if you’re a policeman, because I will really kill you.”

“If you know of any addicts, go ahead and kill them yourself as getting their parents to do it would be too painful.”

“The problems that bedevil our country today which need to be addressed with urgency are corruption, both in the high and low echelons in government, criminality in the streets and the rampant sale of illegal drugs in all strata of Philippine society and the breakdown of law and order.”

The *Guardian* article on the speech reports that “he said he would issue shoot-to-kill orders to the security services and offer them bounties for the bodies of drug dealers. He also urged ordinary Filipinos to kill suspected criminals.”

And because his labelling of drug addicts and pushers as inhuman made it easier for the police to kill them, the question has been raised whether extrajudicial killings (EJKs) are state policy.

How could he have been any clearer about his agenda? And from all accounts, his Filipino audiences, whether here or abroad, reacted positively to his statements, and even to his foul language.

Why that reaction? Was it because they liked being entertained, or was it because they saw in him the authentic representation of the real change they have been waiting for, and he was a refreshing contrast to the other candidates?

In 2016, many voters deserted the mainstream because the other candidates were perceived as standing for so little, or were cut from the same cloth of elitism and entitlement, or could not shake off the stench of corruption.

As someone describes the phenomenon: most voters “hungered for politicians who can make a rousing argument for drastic solutions.”

And if many of us are increasingly frustrated, myself included, about a system that has lost its way from the promise of EDSA over 30 years ago and can't seem to correct itself, can you imagine the frustration of the poor on their continuing struggle for daily subsistence amidst a first world culture of consumerism and of shameless self-promotion by the rich and the powerful to protect their entitlements and domination of national policies?

In other words, Duterte the mayor got it right on the yearnings of the people and was elected by a huge plurality. And the question is: can Duterte the president pull it off, the promise of a new social order? Whether a RevGov was a trial balloon, or shock treatment not meant to be done, is really irrelevant. But we can only ignore the sentiment behind the votes for him at the peril of undertaking the wrong solutions to our problems.

There are three dimensions to the answer of whether he can pull it off—his core values, his managerial capability, and his changing policy framework.

On his core values:

I agree with the farmers I work with that his heart is genuinely for the poor. And that his anger is real against corruption, the drug problem, an unresponsive bureaucracy, and the feudalistic character of our society. *Rappler* reporter Pia Ranada wrote an instructive [article](#) about the themes of his standard speech during the election campaign. A few of them are: (1) he is a socialist at heart—left of center Bayan, but not a communist; (2) he is angry at government for oppressing the people; (3) drugs are proliferating to include even rural folks and this has to stop; (4) he has pro-poor programs, such as better health care services; (5) the root of the Muslim Mindanao crisis is the loss of their land to foreign interests and to mining, banana plantations, and logging, and this must be corrected; (6) he advocates equal treatment of all regions in the face of Manila-centrism². And his track record of twenty-eight years of political power in Davao

² Other themes were: a promise to suppress crime and corruption in three to six months; the police and military will do their job of cracking down on drugs because he will double their salaries; allegations of his human rights violations are yet to be proven, a theme laced with personal attacks against Sen. Leila de Lima (a streak of vindictiveness present in other examples, such as the impeachment of Chief Justice

City without losing in an election is proof positive that he can get the job done.

With these credentials, why the underperformance so far?

On his managerial capability:

He is very good at ground level operations and is clearly a very good politician—not crazy like crazy as some people think, but crazy like a fox. But he did not, and maybe still does not, realize that operations at the Davao City level are very different from operations at the national scale. For example, it was easy enough for him to rid Davao City of undesirable elements by merely telling them to take their business or ideology to parts of the country other than his city. But how does he do that when he is the president of the country? Moreover, to run a country needs more than one team of intelligent and incorruptible managers across many disciplines. Losing six cabinet members and several subcabinet appointees within a year, and the vacancies still existing from the normal turnover to a new administration, say something about his shortcomings in recruiting, managing, and keeping good people on a national scale. What more if he declares vacant 1.3 million government positions under a revolutionary government?

On the changing policy framework:

He is not a strategic thinker. He leaves that to a few trusted lieutenants who may have their own interests to protect, as in the tax reform bill in which the cigarette, mining, and automobile lobbies won over the interests of the poor.

Moreover, the very high approval ratings of the Duterte administration at the beginning drew from the policy directions initiated by [former Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary] Regina Paz La'O Lopez on the environment, such as the [suspension or cancellation of mining permits](#) of erring operations, the [dismantling of the Laguna Bay fishpens](#), the [ban on new open-pit mining](#), the uncompromising protection of watersheds, and the [centralization of the issuance of environmental compliance certificates \(ECCs\)](#) to address corruption at the local level. And from those of [former Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Secretary] Rafael V. Mariano on agrarian reform, such as free irrigation, [free land distribution](#), [suspension of land conversion](#), the investigation of Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) circumventions, etc.. And from the adoption of, and [increased budget for, the Conditional Cash Transfer program](#) initiated under the Aquino administration.

With the rejection by the Commission on Appointments of Lopez and Mariano, which the president apparently did nothing to prevent, several policies have been reversed. For instance, the issuance of ECCs has [reverted to the regions](#), the ban on open-pit mining is in danger of being [overturned](#),³ and lately a Court of Appeals Temporary Restraining Order has [halted further dismantling of the fishpens](#) in Laguna de Bay. At DAR, the acting secretary, a career officer respected for her pro-farmer record, is on a tight leash and may suffer the same fate as [Health](#)

Maria Lourdes Aranal Sereno and the attacks on Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales and Commission on Human Rights Chair Jose Luis Martin C. Gascon.)

³ Since the talk was given, the president has [rejected the recommendation to lift the ban on new open-pit mining operations](#).

[Secretary \[Paulyn Jean Rossell\] Ubial](#), with rumors of her replacement by a Davao nominee with political connections.

In the meantime, the president has not done anything about his promise to create an independent commission to investigate the circumventions of CARP, and instead has said that he is for [terminating CARP](#) because it has only benefitted landowners—a perversion of the evidence-based findings by respected international and local institutions that CARP may have underperformed but it is definitely not a failure. Then, there is the issue of the disposition of the **coconut levy fund** of the farmers that has already been substantially depleted by a flawed Supreme Court decision.

During the recent Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Business Summit, a Filipino organizer⁴ had the gall to suggest that the funding required to jumpstart the program on micro-small-medium enterprises should be secured from the Conditional Cash Transfer program for the poorest of the poor so they would “learn how to fish”. Nothing was said about sourcing the funding from the cancellation of investment incentives for businesses already wallowing in profits, **including mining companies which are in effect being subsidized to exploit and exhaust our irreplaceable natural resources.**

Then there is the undue delay in the passage of a **new mining law with a more equitable fiscal regime and the proper accounting of its negative externalities on the environment and on the poor.** The Department of Finance says that it is still under study. But the issues have been studied extensively since the issuance under the Aquino administration of [DENR Executive Order \(EO\) 79](#) that was the basis for a bill drafted by the Mining Industry Coordinating Council (MICC) two years ago, which died a quiet death in Congress due to the powerful mining lobby.

With regard to the policy on political dynasties, the PDP-Laban proposes a prohibition of two degrees of consanguinity or affinity. My challenge to them: pass the law now, even at two degrees, so it will apply to the 2019 elections.

I apologize for going into some detail about certain policy issues. But as I mentioned last October 14, we are told by experts that the main reason for our laggardness in growth in our part of the world and our failure effectively to address the twin problems of mass poverty and inequality **are flawed policies and weak institutions.** The examples I mentioned may be the start of a retreat along a broad front from the social justice theme of the Constitution in favor of the agenda of business, whose support the president needs at least for charter change, or even for his RevGov. And that is not the worst of it. If the PDP-Laban draft Federal Constitution is any indication of the policy framework of the Duterte administration, even without a RevGov, all the more necessary is it for us to derail charter change for the following reasons:

Firstly, the drafting of Articles XII on the economy and XIII on social justice and human rights was **totally delegated by PDP-Laban to the [Foundation for Economic Freedom \(FEF\)](#), an economic think-tank of business.**⁵ The list of contributors to the draft does not include any

⁴ ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC) Chairman *Joey Concepcion*.

⁵ FEF has the following advisers: former Prime Minister Cesar E.A. Virata, former Socio-Economic Planning Secretary Dr. Gerardo Sicat, former Finance Secretary Ernest Leung, National Scientist Dr. Raul

representatives of people's organizations or nongovernment organizations or individuals identified with the poor. The theme of social justice provided in both the current articles on the economy and the article on social justice and human rights, described by former Supreme Court Justice Cecilia Munoz-Palma, head of the 1986 Constitutional Commission, as the heart of the 1987 Constitution, **has been totally replaced** by the themes of business: globalization, free trade, market-driven solutions, international competitiveness, increased foreign direct investments.

The references in the 1987 Constitution to such principles as distributive justice, the use of property bearing a social function, industrialization based on sound agricultural development and agrarian reform, and other similar provisions are absent (about seven provisions) in the PDP-Laban draft constitution, or have been revised (about eighteen provisions) based on the FEF proposal that land ownership, the use of natural resources, the operation of public utilities, and the rules on media, advertising and even education are better left to ordinary legislation. In other words, issues of Filipino ownership are now subject to transactional legislation, at which the business community is most adept.

The FEF considers the appointments of Lopez and Mariano as disastrous to business, and the suspension of land conversions and the tighter environmental regulations on mining as backward steps for the economy. But the farmers and indigenous peoples think otherwise. **On whose side is the president?**

Article XIII on social justice and human rights has the most provisions deleted in the PDP-Laban constitution (except those affected by the shift to a federal-parliamentary system) because the FEF proposed that labor, agrarian reform (reduced from five to one provision because FEF wants it terminated anyway), urban land reform, and housing are also better left to the discretion (or is it indiscretion?) of parliament. In other words, according to business, social justice should not be a constitutional principle, but one of the means to economic growth, like globalization, free trade, and foreign investments.

Secondly, a reading of the articles on federalization shows that the resulting structure, especially during the transition period up to about 2032, is **more centralized than the structure under the present Constitution:**

- (1) Regional states will not have a distinct sovereignty. In other words, the relationship of agencies with the central government will remain.
- (2) The timeline for implementing federalism starts with the enactment of a new Regional and Local Government Code within **eighteen months** from ratification of a federal constitution (**unless extended by the president** with the concurrence of the parliament), to be applied

Fabella, and former World Bank resident representative Thomas Allen. Its Board of Trustees is composed of former Finance Secretary Roberto de Ocampo, chairman, and former Finance Undersecretary Romeo Bernardo, vice-chairman. Political economist Calixto Chikiamco acts as president together with investment banker Eduardo Gana as treasurer and Atty. Ricardo Balatbat as corporate secretary. Other trustees include Monetary Board Member Dr. Felipe Medalla, former Finance Undersecretary Ma. Cecilia Soriano, corporate lawyer Atty. Perry Pe, investment bankers Simon Paterno, and Vaughn Montes, international trade law adviser Anthony Abad, urban land planning expert Dr. Art Corpuz, and University of the Philippines law professor Joseph Angeles.

gradually and symmetrically (through an organic law for each region) over a **minimum transition period of 10 years**, in which the Regional Government (RG) shall be in the form of a Regional Commission composed of the current governors and mayors of the regions exercising both executive and legislative functions. **Until a new Regional and Local Government Code is enacted, the 1991 LGC shall continue to be used.**

- (3) It is up to the State (i.e., the federal government) to determine the **region's competence, capacity, and resources** to become a federal state, and the nature and scope of decentralization and devolution depends on the State's assessment of each **region's competence, financial and organizational capacity and resources** to sustain and promote a stable and efficient regional government.
- (4) The equalization fund—a block grant plus conditional and matching grants—is to be recommended by a **finance commission appointed by the president** for the approval of parliament, again a centralized process, and allocated by the federal government according to its assessment of the capabilities of each region.
- (5) With regard to powers of government, the **federal government** exercises **national powers and functions**, unless otherwise devolved or transferred, and **all powers given by previous constitutions**, and **all laws of national application and all residual powers** (with exceptions), shall be considered as federal laws.
- (6) The draft constitution repeatedly states that devolution depends on the **competence, capacity, and resources** of the regions as determined by federal institutions in coordination with the RG, and no further powers and functions are granted unless there is **adequate financial and organizational capacity**.
- (7) As for legislation, **regional legislation shall not diminish the federal revenue collection** and no RG can exercise its **exclusive** legislative powers until it has achieved **financial and organization capacity** to implement and administer the legislation, and the federal government has devolved the related functions and powers to the RG. With respect to concurrent powers, federal law shall take precedence, and in the event of a refusal or failure by any RG, the federal government takes over the RG.

Thirdly, despite the sharing of executive powers between the president and the prime minister, the president continues to have extensive powers by being concurrently minister of foreign affairs and of defense, with the right to declare martial law, the right to consolidate all the armed forces when the national security so requires, and the power to appoint the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Commission, the Court of Appeals, Sandiganbayan, the Ombudsman and all other members of the Judiciary, albeit with the approval of the Senate in certain cases.

According to the summary of the PDP-Laban draft, the semi-presidential system will be adopted for the following reasons:

- (1) In the transition to a more decentralized system of governance, we need a popularly elected presidency **to hold and unite the country** together and **ensure that the transition to federalism** and transfer of powers to the regions will be successful. The president can help

as an **arbiter of disputes** between the federal and regional governments and among regional governments.

- (2) We need an effective president **to deal with powerful countries like China and the United States**, as well as to compete effectively in a globalized world economy.
- (3) We need a president who can decisively address the **numerous national security problems and natural disasters**.
- (4) A pure parliamentary system without strong political parties can be unstable. It will take time to build strong political parties. We need a president to **ensure that there is no gridlock in our political system and a president who can remain decisive in cases of national crises**.

In short, a **strong president** is critical in order to deal with the difficult problems of the shift to federalism. Together with a federal government headed by his prime minister, the president has extensive, if not greater powers of a central government than the present, for a minimum period of eleven and a half years (including a year and a half extendable period to enact a new Regional and Local Government Code).

So the question is: if the regions can develop the competence, financial and organizational capacity, and the resources to qualify as a federal state, why the need for federalization in the first place? Besides, federalization without sovereignty is nothing more than an enhanced autonomy anyway, which is already mandated by the 1987 Constitution and only needs reforms through ordinary legislation, such as an “equalization fund”.

The rumor is that the plebiscite for the new constitution will be in 2019 and the shift to federalization will begin in 2022, with the process scheduled to be completed by about 2032. This means that many regions will have to **wait about fifteen years** to become a federal state. The local leaders won't mind this because their terms of office are also extended as members of the transitional Regional Commissions. **But will the people mind the idea of all the current (or 2019 office holders) staying in power until at least 2032?**

Since the Article on Transitory Provisions of the PDP-Laban draft is still to be written, we will not really know the details of the transition until then. But a “strong” president will clearly be a critical factor in the transition up to 2032. What happens if President Duterte dies before his time? He will be 87 by 2032.

All this sounds like a future that is dependent on the roll of a dice. To date there are more questions than answers in the proposals of the Duterte administration.

So, what do we do about it?

First, let's be clear about our assumptions.

- (1) An assumption of this paper is that President Duterte's heart is genuinely for the poor and he is sincere about being the bearer of change. But he is an “enigma” with the contradictions that all of us have, but more intensified because of the stresses of office. He shows some signs of what mental health experts call “Narcissistic Personality Disorder” (NPD), and of paranoia

which exaggerates threats to himself, manifested in streaks of vindictiveness. **But the issue about him is not “mental illness” but “dangerousness”, especially if given total powers.**

- (2) I believe that there is a statesman in every politician, and it is up to us to find that in whatever way we can.
- (3) Democracy is about dialogue and compromise. There is no room for purists in that process. But we all have a right to be heard.
- (4) Bringing the president down with people power is not a good idea, He is a duly elected constitutional president and we should respect this, regardless of the survey ratings, as long as he abides by his oath of allegiance to the constitution. If he does not, we have a fight on our hands for our freedoms. For now, he is still a beacon of hope to many of the poor, and we must also respect that sentiment.

Given these assumptions, we should try with patience to seek a dialogue with him. We will submit names for his consideration, with the following agenda:

- (1) We want to work with him on the goal of a new social order using the lens of social justice, and we want to discuss alternatives for accomplishing this without resorting to a revolutionary government (which may be turbulent and divisive under any circumstances), or a major overhaul of the Constitution, especially not the PDP-Laban draft version which is a shameless betrayal of the EDSA legacy.
- (2) What are the contingencies and consequences if any of the major assumptions of a smooth transition to a federal-parliamentary system do not happen?
- (3) If there is a meeting of the minds on the principles, can we draft a road map on the next steps, if necessary?

With that, I close with these appeals:

- (1) Please think deeply about whether a direct approach to the president is a desirable and feasible alternative to addressing the choices we face in our country today.
- (2) May I say, as I did the last time, that I believe that we cannot fulfill the vision of a new social order until we have both a transformational leader and a transformational people, and we must be willing to share responsibility for the present state of things. We owe that to future generations, and especially the poor.
- (3) In that regard, allow me to quote two short passages I learned at the Ateneo a long time ago:

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded.” Lk 12:48.

“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Mt 25:40.

Thank you and good day.