



SEPARATING THE GRAIN FROM THE CHAFF

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas
B.S. Medical Technology

What sets apart really honest politicians from their more selfish counterparts is the kind of ethical service that those honest ones are willing to provide. Where the innately corrupt ones aim to get the highest popularity ratings with the kind of rhetoric they deliver, the really honest ones work quietly without looking for fame and glory along the way. For the dastardly government officials, it's the quality and number of photo ops that they can get a hold of. But for the genuinely honest ones, it's the quality of service and the greater good they can do at all times.

The really power-hungry ones drop the names of more powerful people left and right to get their message across, for they believe that being associated with such people imbues them with greater influence and better portraits. However, the genuinely honest politicians challenge popular opinion when they see fit, relying only on the strength of their arguments and the support of the few who believe in them.

The power grabbers propose projects as often as possible, because more accomplishments mean more pay-outs for them and their minions. The honest ones are willing to do feasibility studies first and do not needlessly pursue projects that endanger people and property along the way.

The openly selfish politician winks at you or whomever while shaking your hand, with his other hand inside his pocket to signify, "What's in this for me?" But the honest one puts his hand on your shoulder, tells you he'll study your proposition and says, "What's in this for my constituents?"

It's quite difficult to point out the really honest ones from the crooked ones during elections. But as my favorite columnist once pointed out: be wary of those who earnestly want to be in position by promising to deliver the impossible. It is those who do not want to be in position in the first place who merit a second look; it is they who can't fathom what they would ultimately do when in position because they do not want the post. This reminds me of a great comedian who was once asked if he would ever run for public office if given the chance. He replied to this effect, "What would I do in public office, make people laugh?" These are the wisest and most intelligent words I have ever heard uttered, and from a non-politician yet.

During these uncertain but relatively darker times, let us ask ourselves: how many of those we have installed in power deserve getting voted for a second, third, fourth, and so on, time? How many of those in power have stayed uncorrupted and ethically-forward? Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Ethics or no ethics, the crooked, unfortunately, seem to prevail.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What do you think of politics? Share your thoughts on the subject.
2. Is there a particular politician you find most abhorrent? Why is this so?
3. Is there a particular politician you find ethically exemplary? Why is this so?
4. If you could be a powerful politician for a year, how would you go about your position?
5. Why are ethics seemingly easily forgotten by those in government?