

## **Presidential Communications Operations Office**

### **Presidential News Desk**

# **SPEECH OF PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE DURING THE TURNOVER OF THE BALANGIGA BELLS**

[Delivered at Balangiga Auditorium, Balangiga, Eastern Samar | 15  
December 2018]

Kindly sit down.

I was given a choice whether I would give a talk or not. But considering the [emotional?] significance of this event, I would opt to just say a few words coming from the government of the Republic of the Philippines.

His Excellency Gabriele Caccia, Apostolic Nuncio of the Philippines; National Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana and the other members of the Cabinet; Eastern Samar Governor Marcelo Picardal; US Deputy Chief of Mission John Law; Balangiga Mayor Randy Graza; Most Reverend Archbishop Romulo Valles, my personal spiritual guidance counselor; *[applause]* the people of the wonderful town of Balangiga, mabuhay kayong lahat. *[cheers and applause]* I share your happiness and joy today. *[cheers]*

The other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, maupay nga kulop, hiyaong nga katawhan. *[applause]*

I was born here. But on the other side of the islands. I do not know what dialect you have adopted here. I think --- waray kalipay. *[laughter]* Hangtod karon, araa na ang kalipay nato. *[laughter]*

Today's gathering is indeed a time to be truly sentimental as we welcome back our Balangiga Bells. It has been 117 years since these bells were taken away from us. Yet, we never lost hope that someday, these treasures will be returned to where they belong.

We know fully well that several efforts to return the bells have been made by both America and the Philippines. It has been indeed a long and tedious process, to the point that the outcome was disappointing sometimes.

But the long wait is over. The rest of the Filipino nation joins the Diocese of Borongan in celebrating this historic event. Indeed, this victory is the result of the optimism and solidarity and patriotism of those behind the bells' return, just [like] when our forefathers fought for freedom against foreign domination more than a century ago.

But let me be very clear on this. There are some who are the [flaw?] loaders and the pedantic in the government. You know, the bells are returned and it was really because of the fervent prayers of the entire Filipino nation. *[applause]*

Nobody but nobody can claim a singular credit for the generous act of the Americans. The bells are returned. *[applause]* The credit goes to the American people and to the Filipino people, period. *[applause]*

On behalf of a [grateful] nation, I thank all the stakeholders who contributed to ensure the return of the Balangiga Bells to the country.

The homecoming of these artifacts is truly a milestone in the shared and meaningful history of the United States and the Philippines, and heralds a new and more vibrant chapter in our bilateral relations.

More than just a part of the Balangiga Church, these bells are a significant element in our country's religious and historical narrative. They are an enduring symbol of our history and treasure.

I therefore trust that our kababayans in Balangiga and the rest of the country will ensure the protection of these gems and will continue to preserve and promote our culture and history.

I congratulate the Filipino people for forging a history that [we] could all forever be proud of. I am sure that our ancestors are celebrating with us here on this remarkable victory and that does not only bring back the glory of the town of Balangiga, but also contributes in the full restoration of our dignity as a Filipino.

Daghang salamat. Daghang salamat sa America. Daghang salamat kaninyong tanan. Daghang salamat sa Filipino. Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!

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