

PROFILES OF A NURSING LUMINARIES

From Humble Beginnings to Nursing Luminary: A Life of Grace and Purpose



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***“Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.”** Matthew 13:31–32*

Like that mustard seed, my own journey in nursing began small and uncertain, yet it was nurtured by faith, purpose, and service until it grew into a life rooted in leadership, resilience, and legacy. What follows is a recounting of milestones and a reflection on how a calling, when lived with conviction, can shape a profession and inspire future generations.

Abstract

Nursing leadership and scholarship in the Philippines have evolved alongside the country's shifting socio-political and educational landscape. This feature article presents a first-person narrative of a nurse leader's journey from humble beginnings in Santiago, Isabela, to national and global leadership roles in education, regulation, and advocacy. This article aimed to illustrate how personal vocation, grounded in service and faith, can transform into professional leadership and scholarship that shape institutions, influence policy, and nurture future generations of Filipino nurses. Using autobiographical lens, I recounted formative experiences across clinical practice, education, administration, and regulation. These reflections are interwoven with leadership theories and scholarly evidence from global nursing literature that demonstrate how enduring principles such as servant leadership, integrity, resilience, compassion, and mentorship can guide professional practice. This narrative highlighted milestones such as pioneering collegiate nursing education at UERMMC, spearheading faculty and curricular reforms as Dean, championing ethical practice during the nursing licensure examination scandal, and advancing professional regulation through initiatives like the Career Progression and Specialization Program. It also underscored the role of resilience in overcoming personal affliction, the importance of mentorship in sustaining legacy, and the impact of integrity in safeguarding nursing's credibility. From the parable of the mustard seed to the reality of nation-building through nursing, this life story affirmed that leadership and scholarship are not individual achievements but collective legacies. By embracing lifelong learning, ethical practice and a commitment to national service, Filipino nurses can continue to grow as competent practitioners, compassionate caregivers, and visionary leaders who contribute to equitable and sustainable health systems. In telling this story, I also sought to situate my journey within the broader context of nursing leadership in the Philippines, where enduring challenges and emerging opportunities continue to call for vision, resilience, and integrity.

Keywords: *Nursing leadership, scholarship, resilience, regulation, mentorship, integrity, faith, nursing education, national service, Philippines*

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Introduction: Nursing Leadership in Context

I have long believed nursing leadership is at the heart of advancing healthcare, shaping policies, and nurturing the next generation of professionals. I see it carrying even greater weight in the Philippines, as nurses stand at the crossroads of local health system gaps, global migration pressures, and the unrelenting demand for compassionate, competent care. However, I have also witnessed how nursing leaders often confront systemic barriers—uneven education quality, limited regulation resources, and the persistent undervaluation of nursing in our national health priorities.

Writing about nursing leadership is both a professional obligation and a personal conviction. I have come to understand that leadership in nursing is not confined to titles or positions; it is lived out in the daily choices to serve with integrity, to advocate for equity, and to transform challenges into opportunities for growth. As global and local literature affirm, effective leadership requires resilience, collaboration, and a vision rooted in social accountability (Cummings et al., 2018; ICN, 2021).

In sharing this narrative, I do not merely recount milestones in my professional journey; I see my story as both deeply personal and profoundly emblematic of what it means to lead as a Filipino nurse. From my humble beginnings in rural Isabela to my roles as educator, regulator, and advocate, my path illuminates how nursing leadership is cultivated, challenged, and sustained. By tracing my journey, we can better understand how leadership becomes a powerful force for professional transformation and nation-building when grounded in vocation, faith, and integrity. Like the parable of the mustard seed, my story begins with small acts of service which, over time, grew into branches of influence, providing shelter, strength, and inspiration for generations of Filipino nurses.

Beginnings in Santiago: The Seed of a Calling

In the summer of 1957, I left my quiet hometown of Santiago, Isabela, for the first time, in order to travel to Manila with my father and sister. I had just graduated from high school, and though uncertain of the future, I was sure of one thing: I was called to serve. Even at that young age, I understood the importance of being intentional or of knowing what I truly wanted before setting out on a life path. Nursing was not a fallback option or a matter of chance. It was a deliberate choice born out of reflection, a deep-seated desire to care for the weak, the sick, and the distressed.

In a world where many still struggle to find their direction, it is a blessing that clarity came early. Nursing was not just a

profession—it was a vocation, a calling rooted in compassion and the noblest of human callings. That certainty became my compass that guided every decision I made from that point forward.

Foundational Years at the University of the East, Ramon Magsaysay Medical Center: The Value of Quality Education

The calling to become a nurse had led me to the University of the East Ramon Magsaysay Medical Center, Inc. (UERMMCI), one of the few institutions in the 1950s offering nursing as a collegiate course. This was established by the visionary Dr. Francisco Dalupan, who welcomed me as part of their pioneering Memorial Medineer batch of students. In choosing UERMMC, I had made a deliberate and critical decision which underscored the importance of aligning educational choices with one's aspirations and values.

Even then, I believed that where you choose to learn profoundly shapes who you become as a professional. In today's world, where some institutions prioritize profit over pedagogy, this principle is even more vital. Quality education forms the bedrock of professional integrity and competence, and nursing demands no less as a science and as an art.

In becoming part of the college's first batch of nursing students and in being under the guidance of exemplary mentors like Dr. Purita F. Asperilla and Dr. Evangelina M. Dumlao, I was able to immerse myself in the theoretical and practical foundations of nursing, while balancing theory with rigorous hands-on training at the bedside of UERM hospital. These formative years blended rigor and revelation, shaping the core values and principles that guided my journey: discipline, compassion, academic excellence, and a strong sense of purpose.

From Bedside to Beyond: Clinical Practice and Partnership

After my graduation in 1962, I began my career as a staff nurse at UERM hospital. In the hospital's bustling wards and quiet corridors, I was confronted with the real world of nursing that was far removed from the sanitized clarity of textbooks. The demands were relentless, the shifts long, and the emotional toll real. I witnessed life's fragility and resilience. I quickly realized that while our training prepares us for procedures and protocols, nothing can fully prepare a young nurse for the pain of losing a patient, observing discipline, and showing compassion without fatigue. However, despite these challenges, I vowed never to let life's inevitable losses erode my

compassion or dull my sense of purpose. These early years cemented my belief that nursing is not simply a job but a sacred trust.

My marriage to Dr. Romeo Divinagracia, a fellow UERM alumnus and physician, enriched this journey further. Together, we pursued professional growth while raising three children, each step grounded in our shared values and commitment to serve.

In 1967, I was promoted to Head Nurse. Soon after, I accompanied my husband to La Jolla, California, where he pursued a fellowship at the Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation. There, I expanded my clinical work, expanded my horizons, and met well-known figures in cardiology, such as Dr. E. Grey Dimond and Dr. Frank J. Dixon, and other distinguished nursing practitioners from different nationalities. This international exposure could have easily opened a path to long-term work abroad, which many Filipino nurses eagerly pursued in pursuit of the so-called “greener pastures.” However, for me, my calling helped me preserve my roots in the Philippines. Hence, I chose to return, not because the opportunities abroad were insufficient, but because the need to go back home was far greater. I believed then, as I do now, that our country deserves the best of its people, and I was determined to be a part of that mission in building a stronger nursing profession on our own soil.

Embracing the Call to Educate: A Journey of Lifelong Learning

Upon my return to the Philippines, I resumed my position as Head Nurse, yet a new calling stirred within me. I felt a strong pull toward academia—a space where I could shape future nurses and expand my service beyond the bedside. In 1969, I transitioned into teaching as an Assistant Instructor at UERM's College of Nursing. I received mentoring from senior faculty members and gradually advanced to the higher levels of academic ranking.

Teaching became not just a role, but a vocation that deepened my commitment to the profession. I quickly realized that one must also become and remain a learner in order to educate others well. This philosophy guided me as I pursued my Master of Nursing degree at the University of the Philippines, which I completed in 1975, balancing my role as a wife, mother, and educator.

I embraced the belief that nursing leadership must evolve through continuous learning, reflection, and adaptation to principles that are emphasized in global nursing literature. The International Council of Nurses (ICN) underscores that lifelong

learning is essential for maintaining competency, improving patient care, and responding to the evolving health landscape (ICN, 2023). Similarly, the American Nurses Association (ANA) encourages a commitment to professional development as part of ethical nursing practice while also recognizing that education is a career-long endeavor (ANA, 2021).

This openness to new avenues of service, whether in clinical practice, education, research, or health leadership, has been a cornerstone of my professional journey. Whether at the bedside or the lectern, in a conference hall or a quiet mentoring session, I welcomed every opportunity to grow and to give back while firmly believing that a nurse's capacity to serve is only as strong as her willingness to learn.

Leadership Through Transition: The Deanship

Assuming the Deanship of the College in the early 1980s was both a privilege and a challenge. The landscape of nursing education was fraught with obstacles, limited faculty, insufficient resources, and diminished morale. However, I believed in transformative leadership. Literature emphasizes that transformational leadership fosters faculty empowerment, collaborative practice, and student engagement (Cummings et al., 2018; Fisher, 2016).

I initiated faculty development programs, instituted specialization in various nursing disciplines, and restructured the hierarchy to establish clinical and managerial career tracks. This allowed nurses to grow within their expertise while maintaining excellence in teaching and practice. Despite initial resistance, these reforms catalyzed a cultural shift in the college and hospital. Conferences with global thought leaders, collaborative faculty efforts, and enhanced institutional pride began to bear fruit. By the 1990s, the UERMMCI College of Nursing had become a model of excellence and innovation, grounded in collegiality, compassion, and competence (Manojlovich, 2005).

Core Principles that Shaped My Leadership

Throughout my life, I have drawn on enduring principles that anchored my leadership, service, and advocacy in nursing. These values—tested by experience and validated by evolving evidence—reflect best practices in nursing leadership today.

Servant Leadership

In my work, I have long embraced the idea that leadership must be grounded in service. Contemporary nursing literature emphasizes that servant leadership enhances team trust, morale, and

patient-centered care outcomes (Neville et al., 2021; Kisorio & Langley, 2016). As a leader, I prioritized the growth of others, fostered participatory decision-making, and created spaces where staff, students, and colleagues felt empowered to lead and innovate. This approach aligned with my values and the growing recognition of servant leadership as a transformative model in healthcare systems.

Faith and Resilience

Faith has been a constant source of strength, especially during transitions, losses, or institutional changes. Spirituality and personal belief systems are now acknowledged as integral to resilience-building among nurses and nurse leaders (Cleary et al., 2018; Wei et al., 2019). My faith guided my decisions, enabled me to remain grounded in crises, and gave me hope beyond what was immediately visible. Resilience, rooted in spiritual strength, sustained me in advocating for ethical nursing despite adversity.

Integrity

Integrity, in nursing leadership, demands congruence between values and actions. Studies affirm that integrity fosters credibility, staff retention, and professional trust in nursing environments (Curtis et al., 2020; Haddad & Geiger, 2023). For me, integrity meant speaking the truth, protecting the dignity of patients and professionals, and upholding justice, even when the easier choice was to remain silent. It also meant transparency in decision-making and consistency in clinical and academic settings.

Excellence with Compassion

While excellence is often associated with outcomes and performance metrics, it must be paired with compassion. Recent research confirms that compassion remains central to patient satisfaction, nurse well-being, and ethical care delivery (Perez-Bret et al., 2016; Sinclair et al., 2018). In my leadership, I strove to cultivate environments where technical proficiency was balanced with empathy and patience so that colleagues felt genuinely cared for.

Mentorship and Legacy

Mentorship has been one of my most intentional contributions to nursing. Evidence suggests that structured mentorship enhances leadership succession, clinical competence, and nurse retention (Hultquist et al., 2020; Nowell et al., 2017). I mentored

not to replicate myself, but to support others in finding their voice and vision. Leadership, for me, is legacy work, an act of shaping the future through people. Every mentee I supported became a multiplier of our shared mission to uplift Filipino nursing.

A home once owned by a distinguished nurse educator in Quezon City became a meaningful place in my journey. During my term as the National President of ADPCN, it was here that I helped transform the property into a Center for Training and Development for my fellow deans and faculty members, all in pursuit of our shared vision of excellence in nursing education. In my early years with ADPCN, I deeply valued the guiding wisdom and nurturing heart of my great mentor, Dean Lydia Palaypay.

Trial by Affliction: A Personal Health Crisis

In 1999, I faced one of the most severe trials of my life: I was diagnosed with Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS), a rare condition causing paralysis from the abdomen down compounded by Bell's palsy. For seven months, I was bedridden, unable to walk, speak, write, or even care for myself. I became the one being cared for. Determined to recover fully, I diligently went through the rigors of therapy. I painstakingly regained my ability to speak clearly and write legibly. I am deeply grateful to the students and graduate nurses, doctors, and physical therapists who extended their loving care while I was in the hospital bed. Likewise, I thank the unconditional love and support of my husband, children, siblings, and friends, especially our almighty God, who gave me another lease of life. These trying times reminded me of the immense value of our faith, nursing profession, and collaborative care.

This experience reaffirmed a core belief in resilience that it is not the absence of hardship but the strength to rise through it. Nursing literature affirms that cultivating psychological resilience in adversity enhances personal growth and leadership effectiveness (Stephens, 2020). Moreover, a positive outlook amidst crises enables individuals to adapt constructively, maintain hope, and reframe difficulties as opportunities for transformation (Hart et al., 2016).

In 2001, I completely achieved not only physical recovery but also academic triumph. I earned my Ph.D. in Nursing at the University of the Philippines with the inspiring motivation of my adviser Dr. Letty Kuan. This milestone was not just an academic achievement. It was a testament to the spirit of not giving up, a living reminder that setbacks can be springboards for purpose-driven progress.

Advocacy for Integrity and National Service

As the new millennium unfolded, I became increasingly concerned about the commercialization of nursing education and the exodus of Filipino nurses in pursuit of better pay abroad. The year 2000 brought a nursing boom in the Philippines, with schools mushrooming nationwide. I lamented the rise of diploma mills and the erosion of the profession's foundational values. These trends compromised the quality and credibility of Filipino nursing, which was once regarded with high esteem across the globe.

Guided by my principles as a nurse leader, I took a stand and had resigned together with the committed team of the Technical Committee for nursing education of the Commission of Higher Education (TCNE-CHED). We called for transparency, accountability, and a full investigation (Lorenzo et al., 2007). This decision, while painful, reflected my unwavering belief that the integrity of nursing education must never be compromised for convenience or political gain.

My fears as a national President of the Association of Philippine Colleges of Nursing (ADPCN) took place in 2006 when the Nursing Licensure Examination leakage scandal tarnished the reputation of the Filipino nurses locally and abroad. The scandal brought a big "blow" to academia and nursing practice. The scandal was a painful reckoning, but it triggered a renewed commitment to excellence and a return to a more collaborative ethical practice in nursing education and patient-centered care.

Another pressing concern that affected nursing education during my chairmanship of the CHED Technical Committee on Nursing Education (TCNE) was the issue of concurrency among Philippine nursing graduates applying for eligibility to take the NCLEX in California, USA. Then CHED Chairperson, Secretary Patricia B. Licuanan, did not take this matter lightly. She organized a team composed of Dr. Fely Marilyn E. Lorenzo, myself, and the good Secretary herself to address the concern. A meeting with the California Board of Nursing was arranged through the assistance of the Philippine Nurses Association of America (PNAA), whose representatives provided vital information regarding the newly enacted California Nursing Law. This law requires both local and foreign-educated nursing graduates to comply with the concurrent implementation of theory and clinical practicum across all levels of the nursing curriculum.

As an outcome of this engagement, CHED conducted a public orientation and reorientation for all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) offering nursing programs to ensure strict compliance with the said law. Additionally, HEIs were instructed to reformat the transcripts of records of their graduates to

clearly reflect the concurrency of theoretical instruction and related learning experiences (RLE) at all levels of the BSN curriculum.

Scholars affirm that moral courage, the willingness to act ethically despite personal risk, is vital in nursing leadership (Murray, 2020). Upholding professional integrity requires confronting unethical practices even when it entails personal sacrifice. In LaSala and Bjarnason (2010), integrity is foundational to individual credibility and the collective trust society places in nursing.

In the following years, I dedicated myself to championing reforms and advocating for excellence in local nursing practice. I continuously urged young nurses to rediscover the nobility of serving their country, especially in underserved communities. National service is not a lesser path but is the soul of nursing leadership. The World Health Organization (2020) affirms that investing in ethical, well-supported nurse leaders is key to achieving equitable and sustainable health systems.

Recognition and Reflections

I have been blessed with opportunities to serve, to lead, and to advocate throughout my career. I am humbled to have received numerous recognitions, including:

- The Outstanding Professional in Nursing Award from the Professional Regulation Commission
- Anastacia Giron-Tupas Award from the Philippine Nurses Association
- Academic Excellence Award in Leadership and Nursing Education
- Instrumental in achieving the First Level IV accreditation status by PAASCU in a private HEI.
- Member, Board of Nursing of the Professional Regulatory Commission, and
- Honorary positions in regional and national nursing organizations

These honors are not solely mine. These reflect the collective work of colleagues, students, mentors, and the communities that nurtured my growth. Accurate recognition in nursing is not pursued, but earned through dedication to service, integrity, and excellence. In Day and Halpin (2021), meaningful recognition arises when individuals align their work with values, purpose, and authentic leadership, not personal ambition. I have always believed that recognition should be a by-product of purposeful labor, not the driving force behind it. The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN, 2020) also highlights that meaningful recognition sustains professional fulfillment, especially when acknowledging one's impact on

others rather than just achievements. In my journey, the real reward has been in seeing nurses I mentored rise to lead, in watching communities become healthier, and in contributing to a stronger, more ethical nursing profession in the Philippines.

2000 and Beyond: Experiencing Challenges and Opportunities in Regulation

The dawn of the new millennium opened unparalleled opportunities for personal and professional growth in nursing regulation. My appointment to the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) in 2014 became a pivotal moment, allowing me to connect diverse experiences from academia, clinical practice, and leadership in nursing organizations. Within the PRC, I saw the power of interprofessional collaboration as commissioners and board members from various professions worked toward a common mission: producing quality-assured professionals who could meet national and global demands (Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2016).

As a member of the Board of Nursing (PR-BON), I fully grasped the breadth of regulatory responsibilities mandated by the Philippine Nursing Act of 2002 (RA 9173). The said act included administering the Nurse Licensure Examination (NLE), setting standards for nursing practice while enforcing regulatory policies. Among these, I considered the administration of the NLE to be a professional and moral responsibility, not only as a gatekeeping mechanism but as a mirror of the quality of nursing education in the country.

The alignment of the NLE with contemporary standards required close collaboration with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). The adoption of a competency-based BSN curriculum through CMO No. 15, s. In 2017 and the CHED affirm that licensure examinations must be part of a broader quality assurance system designed to produce competent and ethical nurses (CHED, 2017).

My work extended beyond licensure into strategic initiatives aimed at advancing the profession. I chaired the Career Progression and Specialization Program and the Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CPSP-CATS) to help establish the Philippine Professional Nursing Roadmap by serving as the first president of its coalition. These initiatives underscored the regulatory body's commitment to leadership development, good governance, and long-term advancement of the profession.

Equally transformative was the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) institutionalization through Executive Order No. 83 in 2012. The PQF created a unified national system of

qualifications that aligned education and professional outcomes with international standards (Official Gazette, 2012). My role as PRC's nursing representative to the PQF's Quality Assurance Sub-Committee and as part of the Technical Working Group for comparability with New Zealand broadened my perspective. I saw regulation not merely as enforcement but as a way of sustaining public trust, advancing professional mobility, and positioning Filipino nurses globally.

These experiences resonated with international developments. Within ASEAN, the Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) for nursing services which as signed in 2006 had facilitated cross-border mobility by harmonizing competencies (ASEAN Secretariat, 2006). Similarly, the International Council of Nurses (ICN, 2021) and the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) also emphasized that effective regulation is crucial for accountability while ensuring that nurses can meet evolving health system needs.

For me, these national reforms and international commitments converged into a clear realization: regulation in the 21st century must be both a protective mechanism for public safety and a strategic enabler of professional growth, leadership, and global recognition.

Critical Reflections and Future Directions

Despite the notable reforms in Philippine nursing regulation, I continue to witness persistent challenges that reveal deep structural and systemic gaps. I have seen firsthand how implementing and enforcing existing laws and policies often fall short. While the Nursing Act of 2002 (RA 9173) and the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) provide comprehensive frameworks, I had observed that uneven enforcement across institutions creates glaring disparities in quality. I am particularly concerned that smaller and resource-limited nursing schools struggle to meet standards, thereby raising serious equity issues about whether our regulation ensures uniform quality across diverse educational settings.

Another challenge is rooted in the political economy of regulation. I have observed how licensure, accreditation, and policy implementation are not insulated from political pressures. Appointments to regulatory bodies, budgetary allocations, and legislative lobbying sometimes compromise the independence of professional regulation. I worry that decisions can prioritize political expediency over public safety and professional integrity, which convinces me even more of the urgent need for stronger governance structures that shield regulatory institutions from undue influence (ICN, 2021).

I also recognize how the global migration of Filipino nurses complicates regulatory priorities. While the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) facilitates professional mobility, I cannot ignore how it exposes vulnerabilities in domestic workforce retention. I have witnessed the mass exodus of nurses to high-income countries and how this exacerbates local health system inequities, particularly in rural and underserved areas. As the World Health Organization (2020) points out, regulation has not fully reconciled the tension between pursuing global opportunities and fulfilling our ethical responsibility to sustain an adequate local workforce.

The technological gaps that persist in our regulatory processes are equally troubling to me. I have seen how the shift to digital platforms for licensure applications, examination administration, and continuing professional development monitoring remains uneven and, at times, exclusionary. Nurses in geographically isolated or disadvantaged communities face barriers to access that threaten to reinforce inequities in professional mobility and advancement. While I welcome digitalization for its promise of efficiency, it must be accompanied by safeguards that ensure inclusivity, transparency, and accountability (ASEAN Secretariat, 2006).

Finally, there is a pressing need to embed equity, diversity, and social accountability more deeply into our regulatory frameworks. For me, nursing regulation must safeguard technical competence and serve as a force for social justice. We must ensure that education, licensure, and career progression opportunities remain accessible across gender, class, and geographic divides. Without this broader commitment, I fear regulation risks reinforcing inequities instead of dismantling them.

Looking ahead, I firmly believe that the future of nursing regulation in the Philippines depends on our collective resolve to address these systemic issues. For my part, the path forward is strengthening the independence of regulatory institutions, embracing inclusive digital transformation, and balancing global mobility with local workforce needs. More importantly, I envision regulation evolving into a tool for public protection and shaping a profession that is equitable, socially accountable, and responsive to the dynamic health challenges of the 21st century.

As I perceive it, nursing regulation in the Philippines has entered a new era where the demands of globalization, technological change, and persistent inequities converge. Our challenge as regulators, educators, and policymakers is to preserve the integrity of licensure and professional standards and reimagine regulation as a vehicle for equity, accountability, and innovation. By strengthening governance, embracing inclusive digital

transformation, and aligning with national and global frameworks, I am convinced that the nursing profession can ensure Filipino nurses remain trusted guardians of public safety and vital contributors to health systems worldwide.

On the Role of Detractors in Growth

In a lifetime of service and leadership, I have learned that not all challenges come from circumstance; some come from people who question one's convictions or contest one's decisions. Yet, in retrospect, I recognize that detractors, too, have their purpose. Their criticisms compelled me to examine my principles more closely, to refine my voice, and to anchor my leadership in humility and grace. In many ways, they served as mirrors, revealing blind spots and sharpening moral clarity.

In leadership, opposition can be a quiet teacher, reminding us that conviction matures through testing. As I faced such tensions, I came to appreciate that grace and integrity are not best measured in moments of praise, but in how one responds to doubt and dissent. Indeed, even resistance can nurture the growth of one's purpose, just as the mustard seed grows stronger when pressed by the wind.

The Mustard: Looking Forward

Today, I remain a steadfast advocate for Filipino nurses, especially those who choose to serve in our homeland. My commitment is to nurture future generations of nurses who embody competence, compassion, critical thinking, and visionary leadership. I call upon our nursing specialty associations to actively pursue the advancement of nursing practice in alignment with the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF), ensuring that we remain at par with ASEAN neighbors and the global community.

From a small-town girl carrying only a seed of service in my heart, I have grown into a sheltering tree whose branches have supported and inspired generations of nurses I have had the privilege to teach and mentor. My journey affirms that greatness in nursing does not begin with grand gestures but with small, intentional acts of service—like the mustard seed that grows into a tree strong enough to give refuge and life. In the same way, Filipino nurses must continually embed our unique brand of caring wherever we may find ourselves in the global healthcare landscape.

I share this story not as a personal accolade but as a testimony to the transformative power of grace, resilience, and purpose. May it inspire others to lead with conviction, integrity, and compassion—the same principles that have guided me throughout my professional journey. For all that I have

accomplished and endured, I will always revere the title “Dean Divine”—a name that embodies both the privilege of leadership and the enduring call to serve.

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