

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY**

### **SPEECH OF VICE PRESIDENT AT MASS CALL 2011**

May it please your honour, I speak on behalf of the Law Society to welcome the cohort of 2011 to the Singapore Bar.

To all young lawyers gathered here, I am sure today is an incredibly proud day for you and your parents. I can think of perhaps 2 other occasions in your lives that will rival this day in terms of significance and honour. One would be the day you take your marriage vow and the other, the day you become a parent and hold your baby in your hands for the very first time.

There are however differences between the oath you take today and the vows and promises you make on the other 2 occasions.

The marriage vow is the most serious vow one can ever take in one's life. Nothing else in life comes quite as close to this oath in terms of the commitment required of each party to the marital relationship to make it work.

Getting to hold your own baby for the first time is an unbelievable experience; a cocktail of powerful emotions: first joy, then pride and then, for some of us, terror as the responsibilities displace the initial thrill of parenthood. Like marriage, parenthood is a responsibility that follows you for life. It is not something that you can walk out of without dire consequences for the child or the spouse. The expectations of society and of family demand a decent person to be a loving spouse and a responsible parent.

The vow you take today binds you to discharge your duties faithfully in a honourable profession. Like marriage and parenthood, it binds you to responsibility and accountability. However, unlike marriage and parenthood, it does not bind you to remain in the profession. Unlike marriage or parenthood, you have an option to stay, or to leave. Unlike marriage or parenthood where vows are made and responsibility is owed to people you choose and people to whom you are bound emotionally and aspirationally, the oath you take today binds you to serve people you have not even met and people you might not even like.

And that's not all. The people you are going to serve may not like you very much; sometimes they might not even pay you for your trouble and, if you do wrong, they may even end up suing you. I have to say this; if we are in this profession to work with people we like or to have our clients like us, we can be setting ourselves up for some serious disappointment.

I think the trick lies first in recognizing you are all, from today, part of the legal profession. Despite all the bad jokes told about it and all the stories of unscrupulous and greedy lawyers, this is a honourable profession and still, a highly esteemed one. This is a profession with a very limited membership. Today, we admit just another 260 lawyers, comprising without exaggeration, some of the brightest and most capable of your cohort; a small fraction of the 40,000 students who entered primary one with you. This is a profession that leads you to be involved in the lives, businesses, the hopes and aspirations of people from every level of society; from the weakest to the most powerful among us; because the law is part, and rightly so, of every aspect of our society. This is a profession that allows you to be a teacher, a counselor, a protector, a healer and a friend to people who seek your help and to people you are paid to oppose. This is a profession that calls you to help make deals that build companies and businesses; deals that create jobs and give livelihood to families. This is a profession that entitles you to step into the life, indeed the very position, of a troubled litigant or an aggrieved party and permits you to plead his or her case in every Court in this country. This is a profession where once you don your gown and rise to speak on behalf of your client under the guiding hand of justice and good faith, the Court will yield its time and attention to what you have to say.

You see friends, the vow you take today goes far beyond one to protect your family and the people you love. It binds you to a time honoured profession and to the high ideal of serving the cause of justice as advocates and solicitors of this Honourable Court. It bids you to serve and protect other families and people you do not already know in the way only members of this profession know how; in the only way the members of this profession are entitled to.

May I therefore challenge you all to stay the course in practice, and to make a lasting commitment to the practice of the law; and to aspire to a long, fruitful and successful career as practitioners and teachers of the law.

Finally, my heartiest congratulations to all of you and to your loved ones here today on this proud moment of your admission to the roll of Advocates and Solicitors of the Supreme Court of Singapore. To show that we are serious in our good wishes, the Law Society is pleased to host this year's Mass Call Reception. We invite you to join us outside at the Foyer for a light brunch and let us welcome you as our newest members to the legal profession.

To further show that we are really serious in our good wishes, the Law Society has also set up a photo booth and prepared a gift for each of you to mark this day. The voucher for the photo booth and gift can be collected at the Law Society's booth at the Foyer.

Thank you, Your Honour. It has been my privilege.

Lok Vi Ming, SC  
Vice President  
Law Society of Singapore