

**ADZU HIGHER EDUCATION BACCALAUREATE MASS 2015  
HOMILY  
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**Fully given, fully received, fully shared**

The great German composer and pianist, Ludwig van Beethoven, once said that music, yes music, is the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life. By this, Beethoven might have meant that listening to music enhances both your spirituality and sensuality. Or more deeply than this, Beethoven might have meant that music can make you see the connection between spirituality and sensuality, the spirit and the physical; that music charges, enlivens the soul within us, the soul that is deep inside us, the soul that is at the core of our being. The soul that gives us passion and meaning.

This past year, there was one hit song that captivated many, and which I think captures what Beethoven meant. This is John Legend's *All of Me*, and I am sure you, graduating college students, ever updated in pop culture, know this. Do you remember how it goes? It goes like this --

*'Cause all of me  
Loves all of you  
Love your curves and all your edges  
All your perfect imperfections  
Give your all to me  
I'll give my all to you  
You're my end and my beginning  
Even when I lose I'm winning  
Cause I give you all of me  
And you give me all of you*

This song is a hit because it speaks of passion, passionate love, the totality of giving one's self to a loved one, and the totality of receiving another self from a loved one. That love is full acceptance of and total surrender to the other, the good things and the bad in one's self, the "perfect imperfections," a full exchange of giving our everything, our very all to another, and of receiving everything, all, from the other.

But does this ever happen? Who among us have fallen in love? And for those who have fallen in love, who have experienced this fair exchange of giving all and receiving all? I think the song is immensely popular because it describes an ideal, a perfect love, something that we desire, something that we long for, a perfect, powerful love, where lovers get lost in each other, where there is a perfect exchange of the totality of one's self, where love is all about fullness of giving and receiving. But, I ask, does such perfect love exist, or is it just at the realm of desire, always to be aspired, and never to be met, really, honestly, truthfully. That in reality, human loving almost always falls short of this giving and receiving. That in reality, human loving is imperfect, and thus, we constantly search and search for more. A search that can make us frustrated.

This is where I think the genius of Beethoven comes in. This music, this song, very sensual as it is, can lead us to the Spirit. It can remind us about God. It can make us see the totality of God's giving of Himself to us. It can make us remember that there is a love so perfect it is given to us absolutely, waiting for us to receive it absolutely as well. And what can we say about this love, this love of God? Just two points.

First, this love is light amid darkness. In the First Reading, St Paul exhorts us to be children of light. And yes, we can be children of light, because we have been given light from God, light in the Lord, *lux in Domino*. The world can be very dark. And we know how it can be such, especially here in Zamboanga and Mindanao, and not just because we experience a lot of brownouts these days. The world is darkened by violence, by death, by evil intentions, by corruption, by systems and structures that cause suffering to the weak and the poor. The world is darkened by matters that weigh us down as persons: loneliness, lack of love and friendship, poverty of resources, inability to comprehend what is happening in our lives, the sheer lack of energy and drive, our moments of depression, and the dwindling hope to move on. But God gives Himself, generously, and abundantly, and lights up our world. This light of God is seen in what we have learned in the Ateneo: the truth, the exploration, the discovery. This light of God is given through the

friendships we have formed in the Ateneo: the joy, the journey of togetherness.

This light of God is given through the depth of meaning we have obtained in the Ateneo: the call to serve, the goal of excellence, the need for spirituality.

We hope that in the Ateneo, you were able to receive and experience this light of God, shining in the darkness of our hearts and minds, and shining in the world. This is how we see education in the Ateneo. This is how we organize life in the Ateneo. To facilitate this light from God.

Secondly, the light and love of God, fully given and fully received, is meant to be given to others. Recall the times when you were so excited and full of life. You may have been in love, with a person, or with life itself, and the good things in life like friends, family, achievements, meaningful work, the experience of peace, simplicity, and contentment. Remember how joyful you were, and how in your joy, you simply spread and scattered the same joy and goodness to others. Love longs desperately to be shared. True love is contagious; it is infectious like a virus. It spreads around quickly like a wildfire in a dry forest. It runs wild like floodwaters on a rampage.

What we are saying here is this. God's perfect love is such that, when received by us, its nature is to spread itself toward others. Its nature is to overflow and scatter. Its nature is to have a surplus. God's love and God's light is extravagant and excessive in a wonderful way. It does not stay or get stuck with the receiver, it restlessly longs to reach out to and touch others. In the Gospel reading today, Jesus simply reminds us that we are the light of the world – and as such, this light is not to be hidden under a bushel basket, but it has to be exposed to shine toward others. St Ignatius calls us to go, and set the world on fire with this love.

In the Ateneo, we hope that we have lit up the flames of your hearts with this light and love of God – through what you learned in the classroom and outside, through the people who mattered in your education, through prayer, through service. We hope that this light and love of God you have learned to share with others – with your family and friends, your classmates, and more importantly, with others outside your natural circles and boundaries, outside the comforts of this

campus, those who are lonely and isolated, those who are marginalized and forgotten, those who suffer from poverty and violence, those who long desperately for peace and for justice, those who languish in the darkness of this world. We hope that this light and love, you have started to share to others, through competent work, through compassionate service.

And may your graduation this afternoon, be a real commencement, a new beginning, a rebooting of sorts, of continuing to share this perfect light from God, God saying "I give you all of me," fully given, fully received, fully shared, in all its splendor, its power, its hope; shining, glowing in you and through you, our dear graduating students, you as light in the world, in love and service, for God's greater glory. Amen.