

Ateneo de Zamboanga University President Father Karel San Juan, the Graduating Class of 2015 and their Beloved Parents, the Chairman and Members of Board of Trustees, Dean Rosendo Castillo, Jr. of the College of Law, Members of the Faculty, University Officials, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am deeply honored to be here this afternoon to address you on this momentous occasion. Today is the day of the Graduates of 2015 and their beloved parents. Let us give the graduates and their parents a round of applause!!! Let me extend my heartfelt congratulations to each graduate and their parents, of the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Education, the School of Management and Accountancy, the College of Nursing, College of Law and the Graduate School. My special felicitations go to the Valedictorian and Salutatorian of the graduating class, to the Honor Graduates: Magna Cum Laudes, Cum Laudes, and other Special Awardees and to the first graduates of the College of Law. You brought honor to yourselves, your parents, your family and your school. You should be hailed for earning your college degree, not just from any school, but at the

Ateneo de Zamboanga University, a venerated 100-year old, Jesuit educational institution that has greatly influenced life, culture and development in Zamboanga and in Mindanao. You should be proud to be part of the ADZU tradition of excellence and of its two-fold mission of (1) advancing leadership education and (2) advocating social transformation, always drawing from the best of Filipino, Catholic and Jesuit tradition, in order to realize its spiritual vision of a new Mindanao --- diverse communities enjoying peace based on healing and justice, and sustaining a development that nurtures faith, culture and environment, a Mindanao fully integrated in a country that is governed with integrity, providing total human security especially to the poor and the hungry, as it engages in local and global solidarity: a new Mindanao at the heart of a new Philippines.

Today we equally honor our parents as we remember the sacrifices they made to send their children to college, to ensure them of a better life. This is a most treasured moment for them.

We also remember and honor our teachers who have instilled in the graduates love of learning

and the virtues of hard work and perseverance. May I ask all of you to join me in giving our members of the faculty a big round of applause.

My own graduation from law school was fifty-two years ago. I cannot remember who was our graduation speaker nor what he said. What I cannot forget was the look of happiness on my mother's face as we went up the stage, together with my father, to receive my diploma. She hugged me and said: "May anak na akong abogado", although I have not yet taken the bar examination. But mothers are always right, the next year, I became a lawyer. After we all finished college she said: "We will not worry anymore about you when we are gone, because you all have a college degree."

I am sure your parents feel pure joy in their hearts today, that through your perseverance and their sacrifices, you earned your university degrees from a premier educational institution. You must always love, honor and respect your parents. You must never forget that no amount of success in your job, in business, in your profession, or in politics can ever compensate for failure at home.

Why is a college education so important that it is every parents' dream for their children to have a college degree? No one has so clearly stated in elegant prose the importance of having a college education than John Henry Cardinal Newman in his book *The Idea of a University* published in 1852. Cardinal Newman was born an Anglican, a member of the Church of England which is the episcopal and liturgical national church of England. He was ordained an Anglican minister but he converted to Roman Catholicism and was ordained a priest. He later became a Cardinal. *The Idea of a University* is regarded together with Aristotle's *Ethics* as among the most valuable of all works on the aim of Education. Cardinal Newman said:

“xxx I have confined myself to saying that training of the intellect, which is best for the individual himself, best enables him to discharge his duties to society. xxx If then a practical end must be assigned to a University course, I say it is that of training good members of society. Its art is the art of social life, and its end is fitness for the world. xxx (A) University training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end; it aims

at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life. It is the education which gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them. It teaches him to see things as they are, to go right to the point, to disentangle a skein of thought, to detect what is sophistical, and to discard what is irrelevant. It prepares him to fill any post with credit, and to master any subject with facility. It shows him how to accommodate himself to others, how to throw himself into their state of mind, how to bring before them his own, how to influence them, how to come to an understanding with them, how to bear with them. He is at home in any society, he has common ground with every class; he knows when to speak and when to be silent; he is able to converse, he is able to listen; he can ask a question pertinently, and gain a lesson seasonably, when he has nothing to impart

himself; he is ever ready, yet never in the way. xxx
The art which tends to make a man all this, is in
the object which it pursues as useful as the art of
wealth or the art of health xxx.”

The aim of Education is to train good members
of society; its art is the art of social life, and its end
is fitness for the world.

The world today has been described as a
“broken world”, pervaded according to Pope
Francis by consumerism, feverish pursuit of
frivolous pleasures; a world that has no place for
the poor, where God’s voice is no longer heard
and the quiet joy of His love is no longer felt, and
the desire to do good fades. It is a world mired in
corruption and grinding poverty, besieged by most
heinous crimes, murder, beheading, kidnapping,
torture, rape, human trafficking and slavery, child
abuse and the most blatant violations of human
rights. It is a world threatened by ethnic wars,
climate change, global warming, destructive
typhoons, catastrophic earthquakes, horrifying
tsunamis, terrifying storm surges and incurable
diseases. It is a world on the brink of despair; a
difficult, troubled world.

In the Philippines, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority, some 25 million Filipinos live in poverty. This is the world you will face tomorrow. Are you ready for it?

I have no doubt that you are and that you will succeed.

As Ateneans, you are trained in the Jesuit tradition of finding God in all things. Your faith will be your impenetrable armor against evil. Saint Pope John Paul II exhorted us: “Do not be afraid.” President Roosevelt said: “We have nothing to fear but fear itself.” Accept the challenge to go beyond your fears.

Our world maybe a “broken world” but it is also a beautiful world where there is so much opportunity to do good. Strive for excellence in your chosen profession. Strive for excellence in whatever you do, in the service of our people. In Ateneo you were taught to be “men and women for others”. Indeed, if we work only for our own interests, we will be condemned to a listless, boring, and wasted life. Only when we serve God and our fellowmen will we find meaning and satisfaction in our life.

Why do we have graduation exercises at this time of the year? It is to celebrate a milestone in your life. Today you will go out of the portals of your beloved alma mater and embark on a long journey to realize your dreams. It will not be an easy journey. Nothing worthy comes easily to anyone. You must work hard. You must be patient. You must persevere. You must be courageous. You must be brave.

Legend has it that when British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill who saved the world from Nazi Germany was invited to speak at the commencement exercises of Oxford University, he arrived at the event with his usual cigar, cane and top hat. As he approached the podium, the crowd rose in appreciative applause.

With great dignity, Churchill stood confidently before his admirers, removed his cigar from his teeth and carefully placed his top hat on the lectern. Looking directly at the eager audience, with authority ringing in his voice, he said: “NEVER GIVE UP.” Several hushed seconds passed. He rose to his toes and shouted again: “NEVER GIVE UP.”

His words thundered across the audience. A profound silence enveloped the crowd as Churchill reached for his cigar, steadied himself with his cane, and descended the platform. His oration was finished. His six-word commencement speech was the shortest address ever given at Oxford. But his message was one every person present remembered for the rest of their lives.

Perseverance is the key to success. You will succeed if you work hard enough and long enough to achieve your goals. You must persevere. Never Give Up. Never Give Up.

After graduation, you will look for a job. Those who can afford and have the entrepreneurial spirit can start a business. You can practice your profession. You can work in government where you will have the satisfaction of serving the underprivileged and the poor.

In a report entitled Enhancing Competitiveness in an Uncertain World, the World Bank listed the social skills employers are looking for in prospective employees. Three categories of skills were named: cognitive skills which include verbal ability, the ability to think and express oneself in

quantitative terms; technical skills which refer to skills in specific occupations as in the ability to handle machines, and social or behavioral skills which include openness to experiences, conscientiousness, extroversion or interest in others or in one's environment, agreeability, emotional stability, self-discipline, perseverance, decision-making and interpersonal skills. Emphasis is given to a person's ability to work with a group and with each other. This includes such traits as courage, curiosity, and humility. Being avoided are narcissistic behavior or excessive love or admiration for oneself and belligerent behavior. In order to get a job you must have these skills but more important than cognitive and technical skills are the social or behavioral skills. I am confident that with your Jesuit education you will in due time find the job you are looking for and be on your way to the realization of your goals in life.

You will join ADZU graduates who excelled in several fields of endeavor in Mindanao, all over the country and the world. ADZU doctors of medicine are now walking the corridors of hospitals tending to the sick, as practicing physicians, private medical practitioners, resident

physicians or government doctors. Soon ADZU Lawyers will be appearing in the courts of law rendering justice to the oppressed, underprivileged and the poor. All in the service of God and Country. PRO DEO ET PATRIA.

After I passed the Bar Examination and I took my oath as a lawyer in 1964, I packed my books and went to Cotabato to practice law. When I arrived after a difficult travel by boat, I traveled for more than 12 hours by land over unpaved, dusty and pot-holed roads to the other end of Cotabato which is in General Santos City then only known as Dadiangas. I saw a beautiful, peaceful land, truly a land of promise, inhabited by people of different faiths leaving peacefully as neighbors. Since then or for more than half century Mindanao has been my home. Cotabato then was a vast province now divided into four provinces of North Cotabato, South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, and Maguindanao. I have gone to most of the towns in Cotabato. In the early 70's the peaceful coexistence was shattered and lost because of war. Mindanao is no longer a land of promise because it is no longer a land of peace.

Your well-chosen graduation theme Truth, Justice, Peace, and Development is timely and fitting because of current events. Truth means fidelity to fact or reality. Peace means tranquility, the state of being quiet, freedom from war or civil disorder. Justice means the attainment of that which is just, fair and equitable. There can be no peace where there is deception. There is no justice unless it is based on truth or reality. There can be no development without truth, justice and peace.

I entreat you Dear Graduates to be instruments of peace in Mindanao.

Muchas Gracias!

Vaya Con Dios!

