

ADZU Centennial Closing Mass
30 July 2013
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Moving into the new century

I was not around during the year-long celebration of the centenary of Ateneo de Zamboanga, but I heard stories and I saw pictures especially from Facebook. I saw and felt the high energy and excitement of the ADZU community in this jubilee celebration. The colors, the several events and festivities, inviting so many visitors and guests from all over the country. ADZU was blessed with special and significant events like the following: Forum of University Presidents in Mindanao with President Aquino; the JBEC Congress; the Meeting of Treasurers of Jesuit universities; Buklod Atenista; the construction of the University Church; Nepomuceno Court; Saura's Hall; JMR Building; the publication of the La Parroquia book; and participation in the Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly of Zamboanga. I felt the joy and pride of the ADZU community in this 4-year celebration. With deep humility and gratitude we thanked God for all His abundant blessings. 100 years is 100 years. You do not underestimate that. 100 years is a long-time of tradition, of excellence, of citizenship, of spirituality, of service to Zamboanga, Western Mindanao, the Philippines and beyond. 100 years of hard work and sacrifice, love and commitment, of joy and struggle, of consolation and desolation. The proud products of ADZU are now all over the country and the world, scattering the spirit of the Ateneo spirit, spreading the fire, in several fields of life and endeavor, flying high, soaring to greater heights, stretching itself out, for the greater glory of God, *ad majorem Dei gloriam, pro Deo et Patria*, ever in service for God and country.

In the same spirit of stretching out, of pursuing the greater, the more, the *magis* of the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola, whose feast we celebrate also today – in this same spirit, as we close the Centennial celebration, we are called to go beyond, to go beyond the 100 years, to continue what we have started, but to continue doing more. In its last General Congregation in Rome, Jesuits all over the world were challenged to go toward the frontier. The frontier or the edge, the boundaries, where the challenges still lie. The frontier or the newness of things to do, new possibilities for mission, new desires, new aspirations,

new relationships to forge, new ways of doing things, being better, aiming for higher levels of excellence and service. Isn't this exciting? We are ending a year-long celebration, and yet we remain excited, and energized, and focused on our vision and mission.

The frontier may mean something physical, a new space to occupy, a new locus of our mission. This afternoon, we will be groundbreaking the new campus for the Grade School department in the Fr. Kreutz campus in Tumaga. That is a new frontier for our work. Also within the year, we inaugurated other buildings on campus including the new University Church of the Sacred Heart.

But this spirit of newness of frontier could also mean something that comes from within, not just external, not just physical, but something internal, something within us. It may mean going beyond and moving us towards something. Let me suggest some challenges of going beyond and moving toward something, inspired by the readings of our Mass today.

First, we are challenged to go beyond our fears, and move toward courage and confidence. In the First Reading, we see the prophet Jeremiah being tempted and taunted by his persecutors. He has spoken out against violence, against evil, and it has not been easy. He is tempted to give up, to hold back, and just be quiet. Yet he could not stand it. He says that there is a "fire burning" in his heart, "imprisoned" in his bones, and he grows "weary holding" it back. He could not but act. He could not remain passive and laid back. The fire in his heart is simply so strong, so intense, he finds it simply irresistible. He has to give in, and act on this fire. He has to continue being a prophet, and renew his confidence in God, as he says: "but the Lord is with me, like a mighty champion: my persecutors will stumble, they will not prevail. In their failure they will be put to shame." Jeremiah knew that he will be protected and he need not fear. He continues his mission to be a prophet and speak out against evil and violence.

The first challenge for us is to go beyond our fears and continue moving toward courage and confidence in God, who is our strength. In the past year, the ADZU remained steadfast to this challenge, especially in fighting and condemning the violence in the city. Armed with the

strength of its faith, the ADZU community proclaimed its desires for peace and healing, calling on all parties to cooperate in forging a city that honors peace and order, a city that respects duly constituted authority, a city that protects and secures its citizens. And ADZU continues this prophetic mission.

The second challenge for us is to go beyond our self-interest and continue moving toward love of neighbor. In the Second Reading, St. Paul writes to the Galatians, one of the first Christian communities he established. St. Paul gives them advice on how to live well together. Living together can be difficult, isn't it? Relationships can be difficult, as we know. It is not easy to live and work together. Everyone encounters this difficulty: married people, single people, priests and religious like us Jesuits. There are always very human temptations like those which St. Paul mentions: hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions. We are challenged to go beyond all these, to transcend our natural impulse toward self-interest. We are challenged to move toward genuine care and love for the other, for our neighbor. St. Paul encourages us toward love, joy, patience, kindness, generosity, gentleness, self-control. By doing so, we will live in harmony with the Spirit, the Spirit of God. We will be better colleagues, better co-workers in the university.

This year, 2013, is the 40th anniversary of something very important in the life and spirit of the Atenean. Forty years ago, in 1973, the former Jesuit Superior General Pedro Arrupe, often called as the second Ignatius, or the Second Founder of the Society of Jesus, gave a talk to a conference of alumni of European Jesuit schools in Valencia, Spain, and he talked about "men for others." This was the origin of our Ateneo education mission of forming men and women for others. Jesuit education is about forming students to be of service of others, not to be men and women for oneself, but men and women for others, loving others, which also means working for justice for others. Arrupe further said that "only the one who loves fully realizes himself as a person. To the extent that any of us shuts ourselves off from others we do not become more a person, we become less." We become less of a person if we do not love the other, if we do not serve the other, if we do not become a man or woman for others, we become less of a person. We do not fulfill our being human. Very basic isn't it, but it defined, it shaped

what Jesuit education all over the world should be. To form men and women for others.

Last Friday, the ADZU community commemorated the Camino Nuevo Fire and how the Ateneo opened its gates to welcome and care for the victims of this tragedy. Men and women for others, institutionalized as a community. Last week also, many donated blood. In numerous other events, students, faculty, and staff of the Ateneo have extended help to victims of natural and man-made calamities, living out this identity, that to be part of the Ateneo, one has to be part of the lives of others, especially the poor and the suffering.

Also this past year, the Ateneo de Zamboanga formulated a new vision and mission that will be its inspiration as it moves toward its 101st year and beyond as a university. Its community vision is a spiritual vision of a new Mindanao – composed of diverse communities enjoying peace based on healing and justice, sustaining a development that nurtures faith, culture, and the environment. It envisions 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. Its vision is a new Mindanao at the heart of a new Philippines.

In this feast of St. Ignatius, I am reminded of the very simple instruction that St. Ignatius gave his dear friend St. Francis Xavier as he sent him off to a mission to go to the East, the new world beyond Europe. Ignatius said, “*ite inflamate omnia*” or “go, set the world on fire.” The new vision of Ateneo de Zamboanga carries this same spirit of taking up the challenge to go beyond borders and go toward the rest of the world, beyond Western Mindanao, toward the whole of Mindanao, and the country as a whole. The spirit of the Ignatian *magis*, of doing more, of loving more, of sharing more the spirit of God, the spirit that burns with the fire of God’s love. In one of his speeches to students in Europe, Pope Francis challenged them to have a spirit of magnanimity, which is to have a heart and a spirit so big, so expansive, so stretchable, as to have the capacity to care for more and more people. To be magnanimous, according to Pope Francis, is to be open, ever open to possibilities of greater loving and greater service of God and others. In the just concluded World Youth Day in Rio, Brazil, Pope Francis called on all the

youth to be missionaries, to go and make disciples, more and more disciples in more and more places. Pope Francis tells us: go, do not be afraid, serve.

In this spirit of magnanimity, Ateneo de Zamboanga sees its continuing challenges. The challenges of attaining greater excellence in our academics and formation continues; the challenges of spirituality, culture, identity, and dialogue deepens; the challenges of citizenship, leadership, the environment, and nation building intensifies in complexity. All these challenges continue to stir and captivate our hearts and spirits. We become restless, and like Jeremiah, we cannot but respond. And we shall continue to respond. The restless spirit is the Ignatian spirit. The generous spirit is the Ateneo spirit.

With faith and hope, Ateneo takes on this new vision and mission as it begins its new century, its 101st year and beyond. Shall you be part of this new frontier of vision and mission? Shall we continue going beyond our fears and continue moving toward courage and confidence? Shall we continue going beyond our self-interests and move toward greater loving and service of our neighbor, as men and women for others? Shall we continue moving together as community, energized, excited, joyful? *In omnibus amare et servir*. In everything, and in all things, we shall continue to love and serve, *pro Deo et patria*, for God and country. Amen.