

**Salutations on the occasion of the Investiture of
Fr Roberto C Yap SJ as XU President
15 August 2011
Xavier University – Ateneo de Cagayan
Cagayan de Oro City**

The Honorable Dr Patricia Licuanan, CHED Chair; Most Reverend Antonio Ledesma SJ, Archbishop of Cagayan de Oro City, Very Reverend Fr Jose Cecilio Magadia SJ, Provincial Superior of the Society of Jesus, Philippine Province; Very Reverend Fr Daniel Patrick Huang SJ, General Counselor and Regional Assistant for Asia Pacific; Xavier University BOT Chair Engr Elpidio Paras and the other XU Trustees; Fr Roberto Yap SJ, newly installed XU President; Atty Casimiro Juarez Jr, Capitol University President; Presidents of Jesuit institutions of learning and other institutions, Mrs Eufemia Yap and her family; the XU community, friends, guests, ladies and gentlemen, *maayong hapon kaninyong tanan*.

In the name of the Jesuit Higher Education Commission or simply JHEC, composed of Presidents and top administrators of the 8 Jesuit higher educational institutions in the country, it is with great honor and pleasure that I congratulate Fr Bobby on the occasion of his investiture as the 10th President of Xavier University – Ateneo de Cagayan.

This year is a period of leadership transition for four Jesuit universities. On 25 February this year, JHEC paid tribute to three former university presidents who served our institutions for a total of 64 years. The three are former XU Presidents: Fr Ben Nebres SJ and Fr Ting Samson SJ, and my predecessor Fr Bill Kreutz SJ – the three are with us here today. With the partnership of lay people, these Jesuits are indeed giants in Jesuit Higher Education. The era of the giants has come to pass. Now comes the era of the hobbits.

One source says that hobbits are generally short and skilled listeners. They have good eyesight. They like to be together and enjoy each other's company. They like farming, food, parties, the giving and receiving of gifts. They are usually friendly and happy-go-lucky. They are often peaceful and quiet. Their mission is to save middle-earth. Fr Bobby is one of the hobbits.

I first met Fr Bobby in the summer of 1980 when two of us student leaders from XU were sent to observe socially-oriented organizations at the Ateneo de Manila University and hopefully begin setting up our localized version of the Office of Social Concern and Involvement here in XU. He was then the President (or outgoing President) of Christian Life Community (CLC) in AdMU. In 1982, he entered the Society of Jesus. When I entered the Society the following year, he received me as one of his souls, and he was my angel. This angel-soul relationship simply meant that the angel would look after his soul and initiate him into the life of a Jesuit novice. That also meant teaching us how to clean the toilets and wash the dishes efficiently and without breaking them. That role did not just end there. Practically in transition moments of our formative years, he was an angel to us. When we studied in the UK, again he was an angel to us who were adjusting to British culture, and making sense of the British weather, food and humor. Currently as our Province Treasurer, again, he is an angel to us all by making sure our Province will not be pushed to the brink of bankruptcy in the future. When I texted and greeted him after it was made official that he will assume presidency here – he texted me back something to this effect: so which is more difficult to handle financial bankruptcy of the Philippine Province or the sex scandals hounding XU?

I have known Fr Bobby for 28 years now. I've also known Xavier University for 21 years now to combine my years of study here and work as a Jesuit including as a Trustee. The gifts he will bring to XU and what XU needs and aspires to become are just a perfect match. We have a beautiful expression for this: *pachada gyud kaayo*. Not only that, he is the first Cebuano-speaking (aka *Bisdak*) President of XU.

XU is most blessed to have as its leader a first rate environmental economist with a string of international publications and postgraduate degrees from top universities in the US and UK. He has always been a leader for the most part of his life. He is arguably one of the clearest thinkers of our Province. He has a strong social conscience with an eye for development issues and the common good. His analysis on social, economic and financial issues is clear, deep and sharp. His ministries are varied: pastoral care, teaching, writing, research, financial stewardship and administration – all founded on solid Christian faith and spirituality. All these are done with great resolve and excellence. I don't recall him doing things to attract attention.

Let me also assure Fr Bobby that the XU community is a most fitting home and mission for him. XU is a leading institution of learning in Mindanao and beyond. It is one of the most stable Jesuit institutions we have in the country. Unlike in AdZU, XU doesn't have a signage at the main gate of the campus that reads: "Please deposit your firearms here." And nobody pays attention to this signage. It has its own share of complexities, but, by and large, things are manageable. Its influence extends beyond Northern Mindanao. And would you believe this: it even has a College of Law branch hosted by Ateneo de Zamboanga University? Yes indeed. We launched this XU College of Law – Zamboanga branch on 25 June this schoolyear, our gift to Fr Bobby in less than a month when he assumed the presidency. And just in case we are unable to pay our loan, XU can begin its takeover of AdZU. XU has a great pool of conscientious, committed and competent lay people. *Cagay-anons* take pride in the branding our place as the City of Golden Friendship. The people here are generally friendly, light-hearted and easy. The negative side, I will leave this for Fr Bobby to discover.

Congratulations Fr Bobby and Xavier University community. *Kanunay unta mag-uban kaninyo ang grasya ug gugma sa atong Ginoong Hesukristo uban sa pagpangaliya sa atong Mahal ng Inahan nga mikayab sa langit.*

Antonio F Moreno SJ