

**Salutations to Fr Joel E Tabora SJ**  
(On the occasion of his investiture as the  
5<sup>th</sup> President of Ateneo de Davao University)

The Honorable Dr Patricia Licuanan, CHED Chairperson, the Honorable Bro Armin Luistro FSC, DepEd Secretary, Chairperson Paul Dominguez and the members of the Ateneo de Davao University Board of Trustees, Very Reverend Fr Jose Cecilio Magadia SJ, Provincial Superior of the Jesuits in the Philippines, Fr Joel Tabora SJ, AdDU President, the Jesuit University Presidents and other Heads and Presidents of the different schools, colleges and universities, the members of the academic community in AdDU, Mr Jose Tabora, father of Fr Joel, and his relatives, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, *maayong hapon kaninyong tanan.*

On behalf of the Jesuit Higher Education Commission represented by Jesuit and lay leaders of eight Jesuit Higher Education Institutions in the Philippines, I congratulate Fr Joel Tabora SJ on the occasion of his investiture as the fifth President of the Ateneo de Davao University.

Fr Joel is now the most senior of all the Jesuit university presidents in the country. This makes him our “Kuya President.” He was president of other Jesuit Higher Educational Institutions such Loyola School of Theology from 1994 to 1999 and Ateneo de Naga University from 1999 until last month. During his watch as AdNU President, the university gained the distinction of being the only Higher Educational Institution in the Bicol region with autonomous status granted by CHED in 2008. He is currently the president of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities in our Asia Pacific Assistancy, a network of 18 Jesuit Higher Education institutions and groups. He presently chairs the Advocacy Commission of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) which is one of the most influential commissions of the same association. Working with him through the CEAP and the national Board of the Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations (COCOPEA), I see him to be a leading figure in education reform. On 09 December last year, he received The Outstanding Filipinos Award (TOFIL) in the area of education. The conferral of such a prestigious award is a telling sign that he is indeed a key national leader in education.

The Ateneo de Davao University is most blessed to have Fr Joel as its new president. His engaging, courageous, passionate, competent, vision-filled

and socially-oriented leadership is what AdDU needs at this crucial moment. We are all aware of the potentials that this university can contribute not only to this Region but also to Mindanao. At the same time, we are cognizant of the complexities and challenges that he faces here in AdDU with a string of intense management-labor disputes. I hope and pray that he will be given a long, long, long period of honeymoon.

As a Mindanawon, I would like to welcome Fr Joel to Mindanao, an arena of intense conflict, poverty and environmental degradation, and yet a couple of years ago two Regions in Mindanao landed in the top three fastest growing economies in the Philippines. As a people, Mindanawons have struggled across the centuries for our self-determination, cultural identity, social justice and development. Last Sunday, I was in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, the southernmost part of the Philippines to do a mission impossible upon the request of CHED Chairperson Patricia Licuanan. Despite their experience of marginalization, neglect and poverty, I was struck by a deep longing for peace buoyed up by a sense of hope and resilience of the people there. The longing for genuine peace and unwavering hope in the midst of adversities are what characterize generally the people of Mindanao. I hope and pray that Fr Joel and the whole Ateneo community here in Davao City will contribute greatly to the promotion of peace founded on justice and development. This will give our people a renewed sense of purpose and meaning in life.

Congratulations to Fr Joel and the Ateneo community in Davao City!

God bless you all!

Antonio F Moreno SJ  
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Ateneo de Davao University  
Jacinto Street, Davao City