

**CLOSING REMARKS:  
THE 2010 ATENEO SPECIAL AWARDS  
19 November 2010, MPCC, Ateneo de Zamboanga University  
Antonio F Moreno SJ**

Most Reverend Romulo G Valles, Archbishop of Zamboanga; members of the AdZU Board of Trustees led by our Chair, Engr Efren Wee; Mr Richard Dee and Mr Benjamin Abadiano, Trustee and President of the Assisi Development Foundation respectively; Ms Carolyn Arguillas and Mr Marcus Mordeno, Editors and Board of Directors of MindaNews; Mr Sheron Dayoc, Cinemalaya 2010 Best Director; members of the Clergy and Religious of the Archdiocese of Zamboanga; the AdZU community, the Ateneo Alumni Association led by Mr Pocholo Soliven, friends, ladies and gentlemen, buenas tardes, assalamu alaikum, good afternoon.

I thank you for coming to the 2010 Ateneo Special Awards. Some years ago, a high student from Cagayan de Oro City said something to this effect: “When I grow up, I will leave this country and migrate somewhere and live in another country. There is no hope in this country.” Young that he was and yet already growing in despair. This is a sad fact of our life – many feel a sense of hopelessness.

Our people hunger for stories that bring life and hope to our people. Our people thirst for narratives of individuals, communities, institutions and organizations that tell of commitment, competence and courage. Today we rejoice that as we celebrate the stories of our awardees, there is reason to hope and the future looks bright with them leading the way. Amid the feeling of hopelessness and despair, we celebrate the living legacies of our awardees. Our awardees this afternoon are the Archdiocese of Zamboanga for the Abp Luis del Rosario SJ DD award, Assisi Development Foundation for the Pro Deo et Patria award, MindaNews for the Peace award and Mr Sheron Dayoc, the Cinemalaya 2010 Best Director. They have all demonstrated that difficult missions are not necessarily mission impossible.

These days there is fatigue everywhere. Many are tired of dreaming and imagining. Many are more at home with their comfort zones. There is a sense of resignation – nothing will work, nothing will happen. We need therefore to draw some energy and inspiration so that we can still make sense of our lives and fulfill our mission. We need models and outstanding examples to help us realize that something very difficult to achieve need not

always be impossible to attain. We need people of imagination who can transform the lives of those at the fringes of society. Our awardees are God-sent. They energize us. They are like stars that give us light and courage to pursue our own journeys and dreams.

The Archdiocese of Zamboanga for 100 years now has provided pastoral care, spiritual nourishment, religious education and sense of hope amid adversities for Catholics and even for those who do not share the Catholic faith. It can be rightly called the mother of all local churches in Mindanao and Sulu having given birth to twelve ecclesiastical jurisdictions therein. The works of its parishes, schools, church-based centers, institutes and organizations, seminary, and other extensions of the Archdiocese are just too many to describe here. The conferral of this award may seem like a self-serving gesture, after all AdZU is part of the Archdiocese of Zamboanga. At the risk of being accused as such, the AdZU Board felt that conferring such an award would be most fitting.

The Assisi Development Foundation (ADF) is a faith-based social development actor with strong commitment and resolve to transform the lives of people especially the indigenous peoples and all those who have less in life. They partner with other civil society organizations and government units and agencies to bring about total human welfare and development. Although their interventions span from north to south of the country, they have strategically located their interventions mostly in Mindanao which continually is plagued with poverty, conflict and environmental degradation.

MindaNews has been at the service of peace and development in Mindanao for a decade now. This peace award is a very timely occasion to give since we are celebrating our Mindanao Week of Peace at this time. What makes it so special is its brand of journalism which addresses the issues that afflict Mindanao. Its media advocacy is anchored on integrity, relentless search for the truth, cultural and religious sensitivity, peace building, care for the environment and empowerment of peoples. This makes MindaNews outstanding and different from conventional media. Its commitment to peace is unparalleled. We hope other media networks and practitioners would likewise pursue the same orientation.

Mr Sheron Dayoc's film "Halaw" earned him the awards "Best Director" and "Best Film" among others in the 2010 Cinemalaya Awards. His alma mater is proud to produce a young graduate who has left a mark in the film

industry. We want to showcase his expertise in film production and direction – how he weaves into the complex human trafficking issues of our time and makes a movie worth our attention and reflection.

I thank you all then for coming to this 2010 Ateneo Special Awards Convocation. I thank our awardees for taking time out and receiving our simple tokens of appreciation for what they have done and what they have been for us. I would like to give my special thanks to the Grade School community for organizing this convocation, the Physical Plant Office and Mr Mario Rodriguez for the physical arrangements, and Mr Roberto Valerio my assistant.

Muchas gracias, many thanks to all and congratulations to the awardees!