

**Message to the College Graduates of 2010:
Antonio F Moreno SJ
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MPCC, Ateneo de Zamboanga University
Zamboanga City**

My dear graduates, the members of the AdZU BOT chaired by Dr Efren Wee, our Honoris Causa recipient and Guest Speaker Dr Arsenio Gonzalez Jr, former AdZU President Fr William Kreutz SJ, the Jesuit and AdZU academic communities, our friends and benefactors, parents and relatives of the graduates, Vice President of the Ateneo Alumni Association Engr Eduardo Catis, ladies and gentlemen, good evening, *buenas noches a todos, assalamu alaikum wara matulahi wabarakatu.*

This afternoon in Ipil, Teacher Robelyn Cielo Suan was laid to rest. She was like you, my dear graduates, a graduate of AdZU in 2001 and hired as a Grade One Teacher that same year. Teacher Robelyn was killed brutally 10 days ago and until now we await justice. She was considered by many as an excellent, caring, generous, and loving teacher – values that we cherish here in AdZU. Many faculty and staff, parents, students, alumni, friends and relatives of Teacher Robelyn in grief paid their respects when she was waked in La Merced and here in the Ateneo – a telling sign that people had great affection for her. To me, she was an icon of competent service, dedication, and commitment to educate our students. She symbolized our faculty and staff today who labored so much so that you, my dear graduates, can get your diploma today. I salute Teacher Robelyn, even as I salute and congratulate all our faculty and staff for the same competent service, dedication and commitment to the teaching profession. Without them, you, my dear graduates, would be elsewhere this evening.

At this point too, I salute and congratulate, my dear graduates, your parents and guardians who have been your constant guide, protection and provider. Yesterday during the High School graduation, a very moving incident happened which brought some tears and laughter. The Class Salutorian after receiving his medal from his parents immediately removed it and gave it back to his father to express his deepest gratitude to his father and mother. The joy of your parents cannot be described. I am not a parent, and nor do I wish to become one, but the glow in their faces shows contentment, joy and pride.

I would also like to express my congratulations and deepest thanks to Dr Arsenio Gonzalez Jr, the first Zamboangueño (at heart) to receive the honorary doctorate from AdZU, for all his work for AdZU and for our region, and for inspiring our graduates to become not simply good or concerned citizens, but above all engaged citizens. When I told him about the honorary doctorate, he protested and refused the award. He expressed that he be given more time to achieve some more to deserve the award. Such is his humility. To me, he indeed is the living icon of what we mean by excellence – your theme today. He continues to be a light of Zamboangueños, when darkness seems to be the order of the day, a beacon of hope when things don't turn well. He is a living example of what Jesuit education is all about: man of God, man for others, man engaged with others.

A word of special thanks to my predecessor, Fr William Kreutz, who preached at the graduation Mass and is our special guest today. Much of what you see here is due to his leadership. My dear graduates, Fr Kreutz received and welcomed you to the Ateneo four years ago – I guess right in this very same place. He spent 18 years as President of AdZU. I hope I don't last that long.

I look back at my own graduation – I don't recall receiving any award. During the HS graduation, I remember going up the stage

for being given “The Loyalty Award.” But take pride in your alma mater for you are now sons and daughters of AdZU with nearly 100 years of excellence, spirituality and citizenship – the oldest provincial Jesuit school in the country.

You have aptly chosen the theme: “On the Frontier of Excellence.” Excellence is becoming the best that you can possibly be so that others may experience hope. Where there is so much despair, cynicism, and feeling of helplessness in Western Mindanao, you, my dear graduates, can be envoys of hope. When many people have jumped ship and left Western Mindanao, stay here or if you need to go out, do not forget your region.

Excellence is bringing out one’s best in any human activity – whether in sports, arts, music or academic achievement – that serves the interests of our people. Excellence is never intended for oneself, it is always in the service of other people. It is not putting oneself on top as the smartest, the greatest, while looking down on others or making others feel inferior.

In reference to excellence, the more important question to ask is, am I becoming a better person, a better worker and a better citizen? The search to become better is a never-ending pursuit. No mas tu abla “ansina lang el vida.” Let us not despair when reality looks bleak. Excellence is the other name of hope. Strive for excellence and hope will follow. God bless you all!

Congratulations!