

THE

YEAR XXVII • VOL 1 • MARCH 2025

# windhover

THE PHILIPPINE JESUIT MAGAZINE

LOYOLA SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
CELEBRATES 25 YEARS





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# THE windhover

THE PHILIPPINE JESUIT MAGAZINE  
YEAR XXVII • VOL 1 • MARCH 2025

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**THE WINDHOVER** is a publication of the Society of Jesus in the Philippines. Our name is taken from the poem by the 19th century English Jesuit, Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ. Hopkins' poems were never published in his lifetime, but were later to be hailed in literary circles for daring innovation and depth of imagery. He was noted with saying that The Windhover, which he dedicated to Christ Our Lord, was the best poem he had ever written. Many of his other works also continue to be sources of prayerful inspiration to Jesuits and to many of our friends and collaborators today.

Views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or official province policies.

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### ABOUT THE COVER

Loyola School of Theology Celebrates 25 Years

We commemorate 25 years of the Loyola School of Theology (LST) as an Ecclesiastical Faculty, we give thanks for the journey that has shaped alumni and alumnae in service of the Church and the world. Ad majorem Dei gloriam!



## A MESSAGE FROM THE LOYOLA SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY PRESIDENT

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF SERVICE TO  
THE CHURCH THROUGH THEOLOGY AS AN  
ECCLESIASTICAL FACULTY

On August 13, 1999, the Loyola School of Theology (LST) was established as an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology by the Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education of the Holy See, after a historic endorsement by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) during its plenary meeting in July of the same year. Twenty-five years later during the current Academic Year 2024-2025, we celebrate our Silver Jubilee with profound gratitude to God and to the many who paved the way for this milestone for the Philippine and Asian Church. Our celebration serves as an opportunity to reaffirm the mission entrusted to us by the Church and the Society of Jesus as we also look toward the future with renewed commitment.

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One of the highlights of our Silver Jubilee celebrations was the visit of His Excellency, Archbishop Giovanni Cesare Pagazzi, DD, Secretary of the Dicastery for Culture and Education. From January 26 to 31, 2025, he graced LST and our friends with his inspiring presence. In his engagements across Metro Manila, Archbishop Pagazzi's visit embodied the essence of brotherly warmth, ecclesial communion, and faith-culture integration that we wish to foster in our theological formation and scholarship.

Archbishop Pagazzi had meaningful encounters that expressed the importance of theological education and its place in the life of the Church. His presence as Presider and Homilist at the Holy Mass with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) at their Plenary Assembly strengthened the bond of communion between the Holy See's theological institutions and the pastoral mission of the Church in the Philippines.

During his visit to the Minor Basilica and National Shrine of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo, Manila and his personal encounters of "mano po" with the many devotees who greeted him gave him an insight into a crucial locus theologicus—the popular devotions of the Filipino people. Meanwhile, his engagements with institutions such as the Institute of Consecrated Life in Asia (ICLA) and the Pontifical and Royal University of Santo Tomas strengthened our respective institutes' common commitment to theological formation not just in the Philippines but also in Asia.

In a milestone dialogue with the administrators

of Ecclesiastical Faculties, Affiliated Institutions, and Seminaries in the Philippines and Asia-Pacific, as well as with the Board of Trustees of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP), Archbishop Pagazzi participated with genuine and sincere attention in the conversations on ecclesiastical and seminary theological formation and Catholic education in our region. He affirmed the great service of CEAP for Catholic education in the Philippines, with a membership of around 1,484 Catholic schools serving over a million students.

The climax of his visit was the Eucharistic Celebration held at the Oratory of St. Ignatius of Loyola with him as Presider and Homilist. In a heart-warming moment during his homily, he said, "Courage is another name for hope. If 25 years ago there had been no courage, but only calculation, analysis, and rationalization, very probably today we would not be celebrating this jubilee of Loyola School of Theology. Establishing a faculty of theology also requires courage, because teaching is like sowing. Here the soil is undoubtedly good and, therefore, it is bearing fruit and will continue to bear fruit."

The following day, the Archbishop led the inauguration of the KAAGAPAY Monument, a colossal representation of the Angono-Binangonan Petroglyphs, the oldest artworks in the Philippines, and also the art exhibit *Ad Spem Per Artem* at the Loyola Retreat House - Spirituality and Art Center. These events manifest LST's commitment to the integration of faith, culture, and the arts in theological formation.

The Archbishop's visit culminated in a Mass at the International Shrine of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage in Antipolo, the first Marian international shrine in Asia, and the sixth in the world. Before the Virgin, we prayed for Archbishop Pagazzi's safe and peaceful journey back to Rome, a fitting conclusion to his time with us after a Spirit-filled visit.

Looking forward to the next twenty-five years, LST takes up the challenge of continuing our mission of theological reflection, formation, and service. Grounded in the experience of the past quarter of a century and encouraged by the words of Archbishop Pagazzi, we continue in our journey, striving faithfully and constantly to fulfill our mandate as an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology, fully committed in our service of the Church and of the world.

Fr. Eric Eusebio, SJ  
President, Loyola School of Theology





# LOOKING BACK AND FORWARD: A BRIEF HISTORY OF LOYOLA SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY



Students and Faculty of LST during one of its celebrations



The Loyola House of Studies and Loyola School of Theology building in the 1960s



Eucharistic celebration before the ground breaking of the new LST Dela Costa Building

BY ERIC EUSEBIO, SJ AND BIEN CRUZ, SJ

Loyola School of Theology (LST) stands as a beacon of academic excellence and spiritual formation in the Philippines. Situated in Quezon City, within the Ateneo de Manila University campus, LST plays a pivotal role in shaping the theological landscape of the country and beyond. As an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology, it not only educates seminarians, priests, and religious, it also forms lay leaders equipped to serve the Church and society at large. Its mission aligns with the vision of a theology that is both deeply rooted in the Catholic tradition and responsive to contemporary challenges, particularly in the Philippine and Asian contexts.

LST's history reflects a journey of resilience, adaptation, and growth. Its roots can be traced to the founding of Colegio de San Jose in 1601, which laid the foundation for priestly formation under Jesuit mentors in the Philippines. This marked the beginning of a legacy that would influence generations of Church leaders. In 1621, Pope Gregory XV issued a brief authorizing the Archbishop of Manila to confer degrees, including degrees in theology, on the candidates presented to him by the Rector of the Jesuit College of Manila, in which

the students of the Colegio de San Jose attended lectures. This marked the beginning of Jesuit theological education in the Philippines. Over the centuries, the institution has undergone significant changes, each contributing to its evolution into a premier center for theological education.

The expulsion of the Jesuits from the Philippines in 1768 disrupted their educational efforts. Despite this setback, the Colegio de San Jose persisted under the administration of the secular clergy and later became part of the University of Santo Tomas in 1875 as a school of medicine and pharmacy. The Jesuits regained administration of the Colegio de San Jose in 1910, renewing their focus on priestly education. This period marked a revitalization of their mission, culminating in the recognition of San Jose Seminary as an interdiocesan seminary for the entire Philippines in 1953 by the First Plenary Council of the Philippines. This milestone underscored its national importance and its role in shaping the clergy of the country.

A significant transformation occurred in 1965 when the Provincial Superior of the Society of Jesus in the Philippines, Fr. Horacio de la Costa, with the

authorization of the Jesuit Superior General Fr. Pedro Arrupe, opened the Loyola House of Studies "School of Theology and Ecclesiastical Studies" (STES). This initiative combined the philosophy faculty of Berchmans College in Cebu City and the theology faculty of San Jose Seminary at Highway 54, creating a unified academic institution dedicated to theological education. Classes commenced at the current site within the Ateneo de Manila University in 1965, and the institution adopted the name "Loyola School of Theology" in 1972. This marked the beginning of a new era for LST, as it expanded its academic offerings and solidified its reputation as a center of excellence.

LST's affiliation and eventual aggregation with the Theological Faculty of Fujen in Taipei in 1984 and 1994, respectively, were other significant milestones. This enabled the school to grant the canonical degrees, further enhancing its academic credentials. On 13 August 1999, LST achieved a historic milestone when it was officially established as an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology, authorized to confer degrees in Sacred Theology, including the Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology (STB), Licentiate in Sacred Theology (STL), and Doctorate in Sacred Theology (STD). This recognition underscored LST's commitment to academic rigor and its role in preparing leaders for the Universal Church.

Today, LST is a vibrant academic and spiritual community. In the First Semester of the Academic Year 2024-2025, LST boasts a diverse student body of 511 individuals. This includes seminarians, priests, religious, and lay students. Of these, 53.4% are Filipino, while 46.6% are international, representing 43 countries, 87 religious congregations, and 42 dioceses. Such diversity underscores LST's transition from primarily serving the local Church to becoming a center for the Universal Church. Its students and graduates contribute to the Church's mission worldwide, serving in various capacities and addressing the needs of their communities.

LST's reach extends beyond its campus through affiliations with two key theological centers. St. John Vianney School of Theology in Cagayan de Oro, Philippines, affiliated with LST in 2017, and its status was renewed in 2023. Similarly, St. Joseph Jesuit Scholasticate Theological Institute in Saigon, Vietnam, affiliated with LST in 2018, and its affiliation was renewed in 2023. These partnerships reflect LST's commitment to theological education and formation across the global Church. By extending its academic and spiritual resources to these institutions, LST contributes to the formation of Church leaders in diverse contexts, enriching the Universal Church's mission.

LST's contributions to Philippine society and beyond are manifold. As a center for theological reflection and pastoral formation, it serves as a vital resource for addressing contemporary challenges. Its graduates, equipped with rigorous academic training and spiritual depth, go on to serve in various regions of the world. Whether ministering in parishes, teaching in seminaries, or engaging in social justice initiatives, LST alumni embody the Jesuit ethos of being men and women for others. This commitment to service reflects the institution's mission to form leaders who can respond to the needs of the Church and society with wisdom, compassion, and faith.

LST is deeply committed to serving the poor and sharing the joy of the Gospel. Inspired by the Jesuit tradition of promoting faith and justice, the institution integrates this mission into its academic and pastoral programs. Students are encouraged to engage in outreach activities, social justice

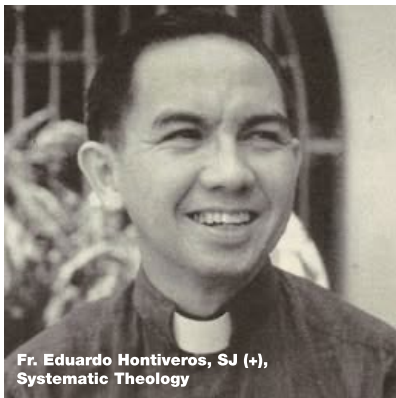
initiatives, and ministries that address the needs of marginalized communities. By fostering a culture of service and solidarity, LST ensures that its graduates are not only knowledgeable in theology but also deeply committed to living out the Gospel message in their lives and ministries.

The institution's impact extends to its academic programs, which are designed to address the needs of the contemporary Church. These programs provide students with a solid foundation in Catholic theology while encouraging them to engage with contemporary issues. By fostering a spirit of inquiry and dialogue, LST prepares its students to navigate the complexities of modern ministry and leadership.

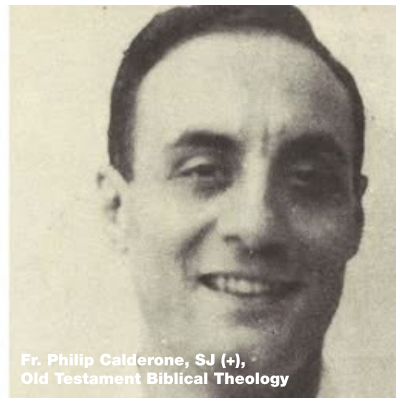
LST's current 73 dedicated faculty members and many others who have taught in

LST are the cornerstone of its success. Composed of theologians, scholars, and practitioners from various fields, the faculty brings a wealth of expertise and experience to the classroom. Their commitment to academic excellence and pastoral formation ensures that students receive a holistic education. Faculty members also contribute to theological scholarship through research and publications, enriching the broader academic community. This dedication to intellectual and spiritual growth reflects LST's commitment to excellence in all aspects of its mission.

The institution's facilities and resources further enhance its academic environment. Located within the Ateneo de Manila University campus, LST benefits from state-of-the-art facilities, including libraries, research centers, and conference spaces. These resources provide students with the tools they need to excel in their studies and contribute to the Church's mission.



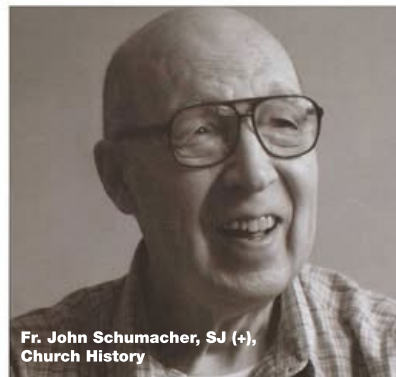
**Fr. Eduardo Montiveros, SJ (+),  
Systematic Theology**



**Fr. Philip Calderone, SJ (+),  
Old Testament Biblical Theology**



**Fr. Joseph Roche, SJ (+),  
Systematic Theology**



**Fr. John Schumacher, SJ (+),  
Church History**





Additionally, the campus's serene environment fosters reflection and spiritual growth, creating a supportive space for theological education and formation.

LST's impact on the Universal Church is evident in the achievements of its graduates. Over the years, LST alumni—some of whom have been appointed by the Holy Father as bishops—have gone on to serve in various capacities, from parish ministry to academic leadership. Their contributions reflect the institution's emphasis on academic excellence, spiritual depth, and a commitment to service. By forming leaders who are prepared to address the challenges of the contemporary Church, LST fulfills its mission to serve the Universal Church with distinction.

The institution's global reach is further exemplified by its international partnerships and affiliations. These collaborations enable LST to share its resources and expertise with theological centers around the world. By fostering dialogue and cooperation, these partnerships enrich the global Church's mission and contribute to the formation of leaders in diverse contexts. This commitment to global engagement underscores LST's vision of a theology that is both deeply rooted in tradition and responsive to contemporary challenges.

LST's history and achievements testify to its enduring commitment to theological education and formation. From its humble beginnings in 1601 to its current status as a premier center for theological education, LST has remained faithful to its mission. Its journey reflects a legacy of resilience, adaptation, and growth, shaped by the challenges and opportunities of each era. As it continues to grow in size and influence, LST remains steadfast in its mission to prepare leaders who will serve the Universal Church with wisdom, compassion, and faith.

In conclusion, the Loyola School of Theology stands as a testament to the Jesuit tradition of academic excellence and spiritual formation. Its rich history, vibrant present, and promising future reflect its unwavering commitment to theological education and formation. By preparing leaders who can address the needs of the Church and society, LST honors its Jesuit heritage while embracing the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Through its mission, LST continues to shape the theological landscape of the Philippines and beyond, contributing to the Universal Church's mission of faith, justice, and service for the greater glory of God and the service of Mother Church and all mankind.



# THE LOYOLA SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND THE ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY

FIND OUT THE HISTORY BEHIND THIS STRONG RELATIONSHIP

BY FR. VICTOR R. SALANGA, SJ



Graduates from the Ministry and Theology Program of the Ateneo de Manila University through Ateneo de Manila University

**T**he Loyola House of Studies “School of Theology and Ecclesiastical Studies” (STES) opened on the campus of the Ateneo de Manila in September 1965. For a whole year before the opening of STES, there were meetings to discuss the new house of studies, and one of the questions discussed was the relationship of the House of Studies to the Ateneo de Manila University. Ever since the opening of the school, the nature of this relationship has come up time

and again at many faculty meetings.

Various proposals were offered regarding the nature of the relationship. Early in the deliberations of the Committee on the House of Studies, Father Francis X. Clark, then Provincial, suggested that the House of Studies be “a corporate college within the University.” Nothing definite was decided. The reason is perhaps best seen in the Minutes of the LHS Faculty Meeting of March 7, 1967 when a majority of the faculty expressed themselves “in favor of a fairly loose relationship between STES

and the university. Most felt that no contract should be drawn up at present, but that we be allowed to operate as we have this past year, experimenting and testing various approaches.” Yet even then, there was a proposal from the university administrators that there should be one University-wide Department of Theology, with the LHS Praeses (Director) as an ex-officio overall chairman of theology and holding ultimate responsibility for the theology program. This last proposal was accepted at the LHS Faculty Meeting



of February 6, 1968 and later confirmed by Father Provincial Horacio de la Costa.

Apparently the proposal never got off the ground because on the 11th of July, 1969, Father de la Costa wrote about it as a goal yet to be accomplished: "I take it that the direction in which we wish to move is for the Loyola House of Studies to be in the truest sense the Divinity School of the Ateneo de Manila, with full charge of and responsibility for the graduate and undergraduate theology programs; and that the financial agreement now reached is a step in this direction.... Every effort should be made to move expeditiously in the same direction."

From 1968 to 1971, however, the actual working relationship between STES and the Theology Department of the Ateneo's School of Arts and Sciences evolved differently. The two remained separate and autonomous entities, developing and being administered according to their proper finalities, while aiming for the fullest cooperation in the running of their respective programs. Various arrangements regarding professors, salaries, tuition fees, etc. reached in meetings and other agreements between the administrators were already being followed in practice. Yet none of these agreements were formalized.

And so the representatives of the Ateneo, the LHS Jesuit Community, and STES met on May 25, 1971 at the STES Conference Room to review and revise the existing relationships between the three entities concerned for a more effective and fruitful collaboration. The representatives formally agreed, among other things, that LHS STES, "an affiliate unit of the AdMU, serves the University by helping staff the Theology Department of the School of Arts and Sciences" and that "STES offers an MA/PhD program in the Science of Theology...a degree obtained through the School of Arts and Sciences, Ateneo de Manila University." The Memorandum of Agreement was signed by Fr. Francisco Araneta, Rector and President of the Ateneo, Fr. Ruben Tanseco, Rector of LHS, and Fr. Pedro Sevilla, Director of STES.

On March 28, 1972, the present name, Loyola School of Theology, was adopted for STES. In 1977, the Jesuit Provincial and Superior General approved the statutes that govern LST. These underwent various revisions for the purpose of aggregating LST to the Jesuit Faculty of Theology of Fugen Catholic University, Taipei through which LST granted ecclesiastical degrees from 1988 to 1999. In August 13, 1999, the Congregation for Catholic Education constituted Loyola School of



**Abp. Giovanni Cesare Pagazzi, Secretary of the Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Vatican receives a token from Fr. Eric Eusebio, SJ**



**LST Graduates for Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology**



**Fr. Rogel Abais, SJ teaching a class in Biblical Exegesis**

Theology as an Ecclesiastical Faculty authorized to grant in its own rights the ecclesiastical degrees of Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology (STB), Licentiate in Sacred Theology (STL), and Doctorate in Sacred Theology (STD).

Meanwhile, the administrative structure of the School of Arts and Sciences of the Ateneo de Manila University became more complex and elaborate as it evolved and branched out into the Loyola Schools comprised of the School of Humanities, John Gokongwei School of Management, School of Science and Engineering, and School of Social Sciences.

As both the Loyola School of Theology and the Loyola Schools of the Ateneo de Manila University expanded, their relationship became more and more complicated and never definitively

defined. The time came, therefore, to clarify their relationship through a new Memorandum of Agreement. The MOA was signed by Fr. Bienvenido F. Nebres, SJ, President of Ateneo de Manila University, and Fr. Victor R. Salanga, SJ, President of Loyola School of Theology on March 17, 2006, effective from SY 2006-2007 to SY 2011-2012. By virtue of a renewed agreement signed on May 25, 2015, LST, while remaining a federated unit in the university as it had been since 1968, was established as the new Theology and Ministry Program of the School of Humanities.

# COLLABORATION FOR SPIRITUALITY AND THEOLOGY

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**CIS (CENTER FOR IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY) DIRECTOR FOR PROGRAMS AND RETREATS SHARES WHAT IT'S LIKE WORKING WITH LST.**

**BY MARIA RIZA V. CARASIG**

**F**or close to 20 years now, the Center for Ignatian Spirituality, Philippines (CIS) and the Loyola School of Theology (LST) have been working closely together through some of the programs that each institution offers to the public. Just last year (2024), a Memorandum of Understanding between the two institutions was renewed, allowing LST to continue accrediting four of CIS's modular courses on Ignatian retreat-giving and spiritual direction, as "subjects that can earn credits for LST's civil and ecclesiastical degree programs requiring units in the field of spirituality."

Through this design, LST students are able to take the following CIS modular courses while earning credits for the corresponding subjects they are enrolled in:

- Foundations of Ignatian Retreat-Giving and Spiritual Direction
- Fundamentals of Ignatian Retreat-Giving and Spiritual Direction
- Supervised Retreat-Giving Experience
- Exploring the Four Weeks of the Spiritual Exercises

What is interesting about this collaboration is that those who are only exploring the ministry of spiritual accompaniment by taking CIS modular courses, may eventually consider a graduate program in LST. An example of this is the Master of Spirituality and Retreat-Directing (MSRD), given the



Fr. Rogel Abais, SJ, LST's VP for Academic Affairs giving a lecture on Exodus for CIS

credits that they could earn with the completion of their participation in these CIS courses plus a few additional requirements from LST, once the subject is officially enrolled. Similarly, new possibilities are opened up to students who are only initially advised to take these modular courses as part of their curriculum. It is not uncommon to hear, for instance, that they are beginning to see spiritual accompaniment as a ministry that they can pursue outside the academic degree that they hope to obtain.

CIS's current Executive Director, Tina Mossesgeld was one of the early takers of a graduate program that was a result of this collaboration. She finished CIS's modular courses prior to assuming her role then as Head of Programs and pursued the master's degree in spirituality from LST during her stint as programs head. She has this to say about her experience: "Taking the degree course MA in Pastoral Ministry: Spirituality and Retreat-Directing (as the course was called at that time) is an excellent way to round off what I learned in the modules offered in CIS. It helped to ground me in the basics of Theology, Ecclesiology, the Sacraments, Christology, and deepened my Christian faith and spirituality."

A recent graduate of the Masters in Spirituality and Retreat-Directing (MSRD), Mike Ramirez from the Campus Ministry of Ateneo De Manila Higher Education, was already an LST student when he took CIS modular courses as part of his master's degree. He shares the valuable learnings he gained from





CIS Module 2 participants of summer 2023, some of whom are MSRSD and DMin students of LST



Fr. Selva Rathinam, SJ, LST guest professor with CIS Associates and Apprentices to whom he gave a snippet of his class on "Theology and Methods of Prayer in the East and in the West"

the courses and how they have impacted on his work as a Campus Minister: "I was glad to acquire the competencies not limited within the walls of LST classrooms. My skills were significantly enhanced and evaluated in an actual environment provided by CIS, which simulated the real-life application of our learnings from person-to-person interaction to person-to-module interplay. This partnership (LST-CIS) surely is working as planned, because in my case, the training experiences prepared me to work in the ministry with greater confidence and competence after graduation."

Sr. Hazel Ladiero from the Handmaids of the Divine Heart was sent by her congregation to LST for her graduate studies and subsequently enrolled in CIS modular courses. Sr. Hazel appreciated the practical part of the learnings coupled with actual practice. She says, "The CIS modules have been such a blessing in my masteral journey, as they helped me bridge the gap between theory and practice, allowing me to put into real-life application what I learned in my LST courses. These modules have been instrumental in deepening my understanding of my calling as a Spiritual Guide, guiding me to grow not only in skill but also in heart as I accompany others on their spiritual journeys. I feel so grateful to be part of the CIS community—a place where we are formed holistically and supported in ways that nurture both our personal growth and our mission to serve with love and compassion." As soon as Sr. Hazel completed the CIS

modular courses, she applied for the Center's Apprenticeship Program that gives her opportunities to be involved in some of CIS's retreats and programs.

The same set of CIS modular courses are likewise accredited for LST's Doctor of Ministry program. The Director of the Campus Ministries Office of Xavier University – Ateneo de Cagayan, Danikka Fabella previously attended the CIS modules that were subsequently accredited when she pursued her doctoral studies. She shares her thoughts on the program and own personal experience: "The CIS modules serve as a vital foundation for anyone seeking to integrate the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola into their ministry. The modules I took from the CIS have profoundly enriched my preparation for my Doctor of Ministry journey. They provided a comprehensive understanding of St. Ignatius' principles and practices, and have equipped me with tools for deep reflection and spiritual guidance. Inspired by this transformative experience, I decided to focus on Ignatian Spirituality for the youth as the topic of my doctoral dissertation. This focus has not only deepened my spiritual life but also enhanced my ability to guide others in their spiritual journeys." Danikka completed her studies and was chosen as the speaker for graduate students at the 2024 Commencement of the five higher education schools of Ateneo De Manila University.

The collaborative partnership further includes making short programs





From Batch 2024, Master in Spirituality and Retreat-Directing (MSRD) graduates Rev. Melvin Ellaga from the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and Mike Ramirez, from Ateneo De Manila University Office of the Campus Ministry enrolled in CIS modules while taking their master's degree

available to CIS. For the first semester of the ongoing academic year, four CIS Associates and Apprentices were given a scholarship grant by LST for its class on "Theology and Methods of Prayer in the East and the West" that was given by Fr. Selva Rathinam, SJ. While the course was not for civil degree enrollment in LST's master's program, the CIS participants were nonetheless admitted as credit students. As such, they were expected to attend all classes, fulfill the course requirements, and receive a final mark. In the end, there was only appreciation on the part of the participants for all the learnings and the scholarship received. For those from CIS who were not able to join the full-semester course, some kind of a teaser was given by Fr. Selva when he covered one of the monthly formation sessions of the CIS Associates and Apprentices.

On the Formation side of CIS, LST's Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Fr. Rogel Abais, SJ is a regular resource person for CIS formation



Fr. Rogel Abais, SJ with CIS Associates and Apprentices



Danikka Fabella, Director of the Campus Ministries Office of Xavier University took the CIS courses

sessions. Once a year, Father Rogel would grace CIS formation with his presence, engaging the associates and apprentices with his presentation on certain books in the Old Testament: Job, Song of Songs, and Wisdom to name some. His sessions have been consistently helpful in the center's work in retreat-giving and spiritual direction, particularly when it comes to suggesting scripture texts that can be considered by the directees or retreatants.

As LST celebrates its 25th anniversary as an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology, CIS is grateful to have partnered with the institution for the last 20 of those 25 years, working together in furthering knowledge and a deep-felt learning experience in spirituality and theology. We look forward to another 25 years of fruitful collaboration between the two institutions, LST and CIS Philippines.



# DOING THEOLOGY IN A SUFFERING WORLD

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF THEOLOGY IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES.

BY KEVIN STEPHON R. CENTENO, SJ



The refugee crisis across the globe is a clear "signs of the times" that the Church must consider in her theologizing

In his article "Catholic Voices on Mute" published in *Commonweal Magazine* and *The New York Times* last September 2024, the Italian theologian Massimo Faggioli laments the current lack of public Catholic theological voices in the general political and societal discourse. He noted that in the American situation, there is the preponderance of conservative and traditionalist voices in mainstream op-ed sections, especially in the *New York Times*, over progressive and more socially-conscious voices. "It's undeniable that there's a problem with the public voice of theologians. The job of theology professors is to produce and keep alive the critical conscience of a people—a vital component of the experience of faith, but also for people of other or of no faiths," wrote Faggioli.

The issue brought to light by Massimo Faggioli is not confined to American society. For theology to be relevant, it must speak to contemporary history and society. An abstract theology devoid of prophetic and liberating force is merely a "desktop theology." In his March 2015 letter to Cardinal Aurelio Poli, the Grand Chancellor of the Catholic University of Argentina, marking the 100th anniversary of the university's founding, Pope Francis powerfully challenges the status quo of doing theology: "At this time, theology must address conflicts: not only those that we experience within the Church, but also those that concern the world as a whole and those which are lived on the streets of Latin America. Do not settle for a desktop theology. Your place for reflection is the frontier. Do not fall into the temptation to embellish, to add fragrance, to adjust them to some degree and domesticate them."

The Jesuit theologian Roger Haight in his book *The Nature of Theology: Challenges, Frameworks, Basic Beliefs* identifies "ontic pessimism" as one of the fundamental problems theology must directly address in the contemporary world. Haight describes ontic pessimism as "a historical worldview, influenced by the statistics of poverty, the current pervasiveness and depths of social hatreds, and the natural way in which death-dealing bias becomes invisible, institutionalized routine." Existentially, as humans face the reality of scandalous evil in its systemic, moral, and natural forms, there is a sense that "evil often seems to have the upper hand and, together with a sense of randomness, it leaves life in this world rudderless." The ethical dimension of theology requires it to deal with massive suffering pervading the world. There is no excuse for theology to mute its voice.

On October 22, 2024, the revolutionary Dominican theologian Gustavo Gutierrez from Peru passed away at the age of 96. Gustavo is highly regarded as the father of liberation theology and stood out as a public prophetic voice of the voiceless—a witness we urgently need today. The publication of his classic *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* ushered a paradigm shift in doing theology. Haight summarizes Gutierrez's theological method as follows: "Theological reflection must pass through immersion in life and praxis, a mixture of thought and participation in faith's active response to the negative situation. Theology is second, critical reflection, after and mediated through engagement with groups in the light of faith's practice." Engaging in actions on behalf of the poor and the oppressed precedes the theological

act. In turn, the theology formulated empowers Christians to heighten their immersion in history and combat dehumanizing sinful social structures in defense of the infinite dignity of the human person.

Gustavo's legacy lies in awakening Christians to the liberating function of theology. We cannot do theology while at the same time turning a blind eye to social and historical ills. In his essay "Theological Language: Fullness of Silence," Gustavo stated that "there is no greater challenge to our language about God than the suffering of the innocent. How can we understand a God of love in a world that bears the stamp of poverty, genocide, terrorist violence, disregard for the most elemental human rights?" The credibility of theology lies in its faithfulness to the God who sides with victims. Otherwise, it risks falling into idolatry—worshipping a distorted and false image of God unmoved by wretchedness. "A theological language that does not reject unjust suffering, that does not speak out loud about the right of all to be happy, betrays the God of whom we speak," said Gustavo.

Unfortunately, Faggioli observes that "despite Pope Francis's efforts and personal popularity, the social-justice component of Catholic theology is receiving far less visibility than it used to (and than it should), which influences the public perception of what Catholicism stands for today." The Indian theologian Felix Wilfred agrees with this problem in his Concilium journal article titled "Struggles for a More Equitable and Inclusive World: The Role of Theology" by disclosing that "much of theology today, including the ones claiming to derive inspiration from Vatican II, are often evasive about the question of poverty, inequality, and exclusion." Furthermore, according to Wilfred, "theology that limits itself to explain and interpret the doctrinal aspects of Christianity and its symbolic system would be doing little good to humanity."

Both teaching and studying theology need "a mysticism with open eyes," borrowing from the German theologian Johann Metz. Without mentioning his name, Pope Francis alluded to his spirituality in his homily during the Mass for the World Day of the Poor 2004: "A twentieth-century theologian said that the Christian faith must generate in us 'a mysticism with open eyes,' not a spirituality that flees from the world but—on the contrary—a faith that opens its eyes to the sufferings of the world and the unhappiness of the poor to show Christ's compassion." What is ultimately at stake is the credibility of



Pope Francis has a theology that is in touch with the lives of the people



Theologizing with the people and for the people of God



Theology must lead us to a life transformed by faith which leads to service.

the theological discipline and its role. As we remember Gustavo Gutierrez and embody his legacy, let us always be mindful of the orientation of theology in the words of Roger Haight: "All Christian theology has to be liberationist to be faithful to the gospel and to be credible as a reflection of the human spirit in the face of cosmic pessimism."

I join Loyola School of Theology's celebration of its 25th as an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology. May it remain faithful to its mission "to form priests, theologians, and pastoral ministers who effectively respond to the ecclesial, spiritual, and social concerns of an increasingly missionary Church in Asia" (LST'S 2015 Vision-Mission). More than ever, Asia needs a Gospel-centered theology to promote the well-being of its people and the entire creation by shaping prophetic voices.



# TEACHING PAUL AT LST



Sr. Dianzon delivering a lecture for LST's Theological Hour



Sr. Dianzon has, for years, taught LST students the Pauline corpus and other biblical subjects

## THE RELEVANCE, CHALLENGES, AND PROSPECTS OF PAULINE STUDIES

BY BERNARDITA DIANZON, FSP

started teaching the course on Paul at the Loyola School of Theology at the turn of the century (second semester of Academic Year 2000-2001). The timing was providential because Pauline scholarship had taken a drastic turn in the last quarter of the twentieth century. From then on, Paul and his message have been viewed from a fresh perspective that takes seriously his Jewishness and his first-century context.

Up to the 1960s, the field of Pauline studies was dominated by European scholars who were deeply rooted in Martin Luther's tradition of interpretation. They held and propagated an unfavorable assessment of Judaism as a religion of "works-righteousness," depicting the Jews as striving to earn divine acceptance through works done in obedience to the law. Sadly, this scholarly view spread beyond Protestant circles, so that even the traditional Roman Catholic understanding and portrayal of Judaism suffered from a similar

caricaturing. All this was a misreading of Paul and a misrepresentation of his first-century concerns.

Since the Apostle Paul was the most persuasive and powerful single influence during the early period of the Church, and his impact has not diminished over the centuries, the shift in Pauline scholarship was a most needed breath of fresh air. It signaled the realization of the aspiration expressed in the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate* to rethink the Catholic Church's relationship to the Jewish people in Pauline terms.

Such was the state of Pauline scholarship when I began teaching at LST – exciting and very promising. There was a superabundance of materials, fresh from the pen of scholars avid to make a contribution to the growing movement within biblical studies called "The New Perspective on Paul."

Let me use the metaphor of art restoration to describe the task of teaching



A gathering of LST 2nd year students with Sr. Dianzon



With some students in 2012 after their class on St. Paul

the course on Paul from the new scholarly perspective described above. The message of Paul may be likened to an ancient painting that, over the centuries, has been retouched by different hands, so that the original strokes and colors have become overlaid, and now barely give us a glimpse of the masterpiece this painting used to be. The work of restoration is daunting but very rewarding. I have been encouraged by the receptiveness of the students and their willingness to shed off old impressions and prejudices from previous learnings.

For me, the primary challenge in developing the teaching materials is the broad scope of the course. The Pauline corpus is made up of thirteen letters. Since not all of them can be covered in one semester without compromising the quality of class interaction, I give priority to the seven letters unanimously

accepted by scholars as authentically written by Paul (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon). I can only hope that what is covered in a one-semester course is sufficient to prepare future ministers of the Word to expound on the Pauline liturgical readings and draw their practical implications. For one of the objectives of the course is to remedy the lacuna observed by priest-scholar Frank Matera (in *Strategies for Preaching Paul*): "It is unfortunate that there is such silence from the pulpit when it comes to preaching from the Pauline texts.... The silencing of Paul's voice... deprives the congregation of an aspect of the gospel that Paul presents in a distinctive manner."

One aspect of Paul's teachings that still needs to be purged of strong Lutheran influence is his focus on community-based and corporate concerns. From the time of the Reformation, the spirituality of Paul has been misinterpreted as individual-centered, dealing primarily with the relationship between God and the individual Christian. However, the gospel, which Paul claims he received by revelation from Jesus Christ (Gal 1:12), envisions to create not only a bunch of pious individuals, but communities of believers who are conscious of their connectedness among themselves and with the rest of creation, and convinced that they are called to participate in bringing to fulfillment God's purposes for the world. The proclamation of this Pauline gospel in the first century awakened in its hearers the sense of sharing a common narrative, not only as a community of the saved but as a community that saves by allowing their lives to become channels of the power that flowed from the cross of Christ. The Pauline mission gave rise to communities that understood themselves as extensions of the Messiah in space and time—the Body of Christ, through which Christ continues to live his costly obedience. Sadly, this awareness has been lost to many Christians in a generation steeped in individualism.

There is an urgent need to recover Paul's community-based and corporate concerns and propose once more his spirituality of communion coupled with an ethic that is conscious of global responsibility. But this recovered interpretation of Paul cannot be confined to the classroom of a theological school. It needs to be propagated and to become part of both our individual and collective consciousness, for it to have a significant impact on our society. Here is where I see the important role of my students as future ministers of the Word. If what I impart to them within the four walls of the classroom will have a multiplier effect and will reach the pulpit, then there is hope for the voice of the Apostle Paul to be heard anew in our time.



# PRAYERS WRAPPED IN SONGS



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# REFLECTIONS ON MY YEARS OF TEACHING IN LST

BY JAKE YAP, PHD



Dr. Yap with his students during the end of his Ecclesiology Class

**THEOLOGY IS NOT ONLY  
“FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING,”  
BUT ALSO “UNDERSTANDING THAT  
MUST NOURISH FAITH.”**

**W**henver I ask my students to write a reflection paper, I remind them that what I expect to get should not be “mere ramblings or random thoughts about something.” Their paper “must be a serious attempt to grapple with the subject matter, probe it with perception and insight, and articulate an analysis or response.” Now I have to take my own medicine.

By now I have been teaching in LST for twenty years. In June 2004 (when academic terms back then still began in mid-year), I began teaching the two subjects that I would be teaching until today: “Revelation and Faith” to first-year STB (The Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology) students,





Fr. Jerome Vallabharaj SDB and I share a common love for teaching and for ministering to youth.

and “God One and Triune” to third-year students. Over the years, the two other courses that I have consistently taught are “Ecclesiology” (understanding “the Church”) and the theology of “Sin and Grace.” Occasionally I taught other courses: “Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium; 20th Century French Catholic Theology;” and one memorable course entitled “A Mary For All Christians.” What have I learned from teaching theology in this particular institution?

First: Theology is not only “faith seeking understanding,” but also “understanding that must nourish faith.” I came to this conviction from personal experience. When I began my MA in Theological Studies in LST in 1990, at that time I was familiar with Scripture (my formation in the consecrated life emphasized biblical studies and biblical theology) but not with dogmatics—I didn’t even know what “dogmatics” meant! Thus, while I could ask good questions in my classes with Fr. Nil Guillemette or Fr. Bill Abbot, I was rather slow to follow the lectures of Fr. Chito Tagle and Fr. Joe Roche. But that meant I studied all the harder, and I discovered that even systematic theology (and not only biblical or spiritual theology) could

inspire and lift up my spirits; that my faith in and love for the living God could grow and intensify as my understanding of God deepened.

Aquinas has desired “theology” to be taken more seriously as a (kind of) science. Western theology concentrated on developing the discipline in more propositional and conceptual lines, to such an extent that the Jesuit Henri de Lubac (made cardinal in 1983) lamented that in his time, it had become a “separated theology.” He wrote, “What a shabby theology it is that ... confines dogma to the extremities of knowledge, in a distant province, out of touch with other provinces.”

I’d like to believe that the practice of theology since De Lubac’s time has ceased to be “separated” from what we today call “real life.” Moreover, I hope that the theology being taught in LST is one that, while offering a high degree of intellectual rigor and academic excellence, also nourishes the faith of its students. This leads me to my next reflection.

Second: Teaching theology and preaching faith are not incompatible. I began studying for my MA in LST at the behest of my superior, who noted

that I was involved in much teaching (or at least “giving talks” to young people) in our ministry to youth. He said that I had better be sure that I was “teaching things correctly.” So in 1995, I completed a masteral degree, then began doctoral studies (also in LST) until my superiors decided that I was to earn my DPhil in Oxford. I then returned to the Philippines and to LST where I have been teaching not university students or lay people, but seminarians, religious, and priests. Before, I was “preaching” to students and young people, now, I “teach” academic theology. In my experience, is there a significant difference? No. Or at least the effect I want to achieve on my audience is similar: that they would “see God more clearly, love God more dearly, and follow God more nearly” as a result of my lectures.

Teaching a course in LST involves a lot of selecting what to teach. Of course there is a baseline of theological matter in every subject. Christology must expound on what the Bible and Christian tradition teach about Jesus Christ; Ecclesiology must be up-to-date and teach what the Second Vatican Council says about “the Church.” But this overlooks the fact that every theological discipline, whether Christian Worship or Fundamental Christian Morality, has an enormous bibliography and wide-ranging topics. And so, professors choose what to focus on; they decide how they would want to deliver the message.

My own style of teaching theology is to preach it. Not that I deliver it like a Sunday homily every time. But I constantly ask myself: What is the good of this particular piece of theological knowledge on the faith of my students? Would it help them to know, love, and follow God more? Thus, for example, when I first taught the course on “Sin and Grace,” I thought that the debates on nature and grace, on nature and supernature, were essential and I taught them to my students who, understandably, looked back at me with blank stares. I soon realized that this controversial detail in the history of the theology of grace, though important in its time, was now passé and not the least bit edifying, let alone relevant to people today.

How do I preach my classes? I ask my students to relate what they are learning to their own faith experiences. I use Scripture stories and passages extensively (when appropriate) to bring out lessons that touch on the spiritual life. Every now and then, I reveal something personal about my own life and faith, hoping that my students would



Graduation Day is always special - and a time to dress up!



In April 2023, I taught an intensive course in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), in another Jesuit scholasticate affiliated with LST.



What a happy coincidence that I share the same birth date as Fr. Roger Abais (Vice President for Academic Affairs) and his Assistant, Mrs. Apple Ting!

resonate with my experiences. Most of all, I speak of Jesus as friend, personal savior, and ever-present Lord of his Church. I mention him familiarly and warmly; he is real and he is present in our lives.

Third: What makes teaching theology in LST special is not just the high standard of Jesuit Catholic education, but also the community of faith that shares in this corporate endeavor? I believe that I'm not the only professor who does what I described above. The teachers of this institution are first of all followers of Christ. (For sure, given the modest salary or stipend we receive, "financial reward" can't be the reason for our staying!) In the 20 years of my teaching in LST, I am continuing the legacy of faith-filled, academically-excellent teaching of the likes of Fr. Tom Green and Sr. Annie Co (to name just two though there are more). The students, too, are earnest disciples who inquire sincerely about the faith, then strive to live it out in liturgy and in life. And there are special events such as community liturgies and social celebrations that reinforce the sense that this is no ordinary school, not even "just a school of theology"—LST is an academic and faith community of disciples.



# THE FRUITS OF MY LST EDUCATION:

## FROM “SARADO KATOLIKO” TO “BALANSYADONG KATOLIKO”

BY ANATOLY ANGELO R. ASENETA, PH.D.



“Sarado Katoliko”—this is the best way to describe myself before I began my studies at the Loyola School of Theology in 2011. Though it makes me flinch with embarrassment, I remember an encounter with someone who knew me as a “sarado Katoliko” during the height of the Reproductive Health (RH) Law debates in 2009/10. He asked me, “Bakit ba ayaw ng Simbahan sa RH Bill? Kawawa naman yung mga mahihirap, lalo na yung mga nanay na ang pinapa-inom sa mga anak ay am.” And I replied with one of the most mortifying things I have said in my entire life, “Di bale na ‘ho makaranas ng impyerno ang katawan dito sa lupa, basta naman mapunta sa langit ang kaluluwa.”

Indeed, I was your typical “conservative Catholic,” bordering “radtrad.” I was an altar server, attended mass, and adored the Blessed Sacrament

daily, very ostentatious with my devotions and Catholic identity, very Levitical when it came to the liturgy, and unquestioningly deferential to the Magisterium. Perhaps, these are what sustained my love for the Church—albeit in a misguided almost disordered way—through my college years that eventually led me to take an MA in Theological Studies, with a specialization in moral theology. I was supposed to take an MA in Liturgical Studies in another school but out of practicality and employability concerns (I wanted to teach after), I took a degree and specialization that I deemed would be most practical for a layperson who wanted to teach and, at the same time, respond to real-life scenarios. Little did I know that this choice would take me on a roller coaster ride.

What ensued was a journey of learning, unlearning, and relearning my love for the Church. With LST’s emphasis on intellectual rigor, I learned to dialogue with the sources of our Christian faith as well as contemporary theologians. With

Jesuit education’s stress on *cura personalis*, social justice, pastoral care, and being global and practical—which shaped LST’s moral theology program—I learned how to be more balanced and compassionate in my approach to doing moral theology.

My encounter with the wider and richer Catholic moral theological tradition as well as real life cases taught me that reality is so complicated—it cannot be merely black or white. We all strive to live our human and Christian vocations, but human weakness and complexity calls for a nuanced and forbearing approach. This is not to say that we excuse or brush off our fallenness. There are things that remain fundamentally incompatible with our vocation to be human and Christian—especially those that egregiously go against our dignity as *imago Dei*. At the same time, we should not fall into an unprincipled rigorism. In the end, we all need to strive to bother to love (James F. Keenan, SJ,



With my students at the Formation Institute for Religion Educators (FIRE) program of the Department of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University



With my dear mentor and friend who has been very influential in my theological formation, Fr. Eric Marcelo "Ritchie" O. Genilo, SJ, STD



With my first face-to-face students after the pandemic at the Ateneo



With my consistent ethic of life and animal ethics class at LST

*Moral Wisdom*, Chapter 3 "Sin")—and not just get it right! As I always tell my students, doing moral theology should not be "either-or" but "both-and." As Fr. Eric Marcelo "Ritchie" O. Genilo, SJ a key figure in my formation, a dear mentor and friend, wrote in one of his class notes: "God judges us on the basis not of our judgment being objectively right or wrong, but of the sincerity of our hearts in seeking to judge rightly (even if we make a mistake in judgment) and of our determination to do as we judge."

Of course, this transformative journey at LST has not always been easy. What I had considered the "foundations" of my faith were shaken most especially during the first few years of studies. Like my growing up years, my theological growing up also had its "rebellious phase." From being "far right," I slid to being "far left," always hypercritical and suspicious of the Magisterium in the name of siding with those who were "oppressed" by Church teaching. In the end, I learned that "tensions" are not always bad. Indeed, the absence of tensions can be a sign that one is either being too lax

or too scrupulous. Not all theological tensions need to be resolved. Tensions in theology help us become nuanced, reasonable, and prudent. After some time, I ultimately came to know how to be "conservative but open-minded" as one of my students commented concerning my way of doing theology.

I can name more fruits of my eight-year education (from MA to PhD) in LST but these are the biggest ones that have shaped and continue to shape my life as a married person, professor, and broadcaster. Whether it is in the classrooms of the Ateneo or LST (or other institutions that I am invited to teach in) or in the radio booth of Radio Veritas 846, I always strive to maintain theological tension in creative fidelity to the Church that we love. As I always tell my students, our approach in class is really Catholic, that is, universal, "both-and." How can we find, strive for, and uphold what is true, good, and beautiful in spite of our confrontation with untruth, evil, and ugliness? How can we be both just and compassionate, loving and fair, and flexible and virtuous as we

confront distressing cases? Ultimately, how can we be prudent as we seek not the best but the most judicious thing to do in our journey as humans and Christians? These are the questions I try to challenge my students and listeners to answer—and the responses can indeed be surprising not just for them but also for me.

As LST celebrates its 25th anniversary as an ecclesiastical ministry and faculty, I am confident it will continue to form men and women with and for others. Although our theological, philosophical, social, and political landscapes continue to shift and be increasingly harder to navigate, I am sure LST will continue to rise to the challenge of integrating faith and reason and social justice and pastoral care in its *fides quarens intellectum*. I am happy to know that the Church, not just in the Philippines and in Asia, but universally, has the gift of LST's ministry and mission of leading and serving through theology. Maraming salamat, LST—you will always be home!



# A THEOLOGY OF PRESENCE

BRINGING LST EDUCATION TO THE PARISH

BY JUNMAR CRIS CAPUTOLAN



San Jose Seminary seminarians enjoying time with the family of their staff and employees

A silent Ateneo campus on a Sunday evening accorded me with a comforting atmosphere, one of solitude, as I jogged around. As I was headed towards the main gate, I took a glance at my left where I saw people crowding inside a bus. The bus was stopped and people inside it were elbow-to-elbow as they positioned themselves in the most comfortable way they could. A sudden thought, reminiscent of a past experience, came to me. I was reminded of the discomfort of a train ride with people swarming and pushing against each other. Beyond the discomfort though was a

hidden message, a message that moved my heart, a message I cherish until now: it was the experience of struggling working individuals embracing the responsibility as breadwinners of their family, the rather common experience of men and women carrying bags over their shoulders excited to get home to see their loved ones, and the daily toil of a father or a mother, a brother or a sister, who gently wipes the sweat on one's brow to make a good and decent living. Beyond their own discomfort were their tired, sleepy eyes, yet I still saw smiles on their faces, showing fulfillment, as they conversed with their companions.

Aren't many of them parishioners? Don't they attend Sunday Masses? Aren't they our own

brothers and sisters who seek the sacraments? Aren't they regular donors of parish projects, dropping a valuable scintilla of their earned hard work inside a donation box? The questions that linger in my head are the same questions that move my heart. The most significant contribution education in the Loyola School of Theology (LST) has instilled in me, a diocesan seminarian, is the ability to be present, to receive other's presence, and experience God's presence in the varied faces of discomfort. This is what I would love to call the Theology of Presence, a parochial theology, a theology that actualizes the response to the demands of pastoral work in a parish, in a diocese. A Theology of Presence is rooted



San Jose Alumni reading the list of donors at the San Jose Seminary Lobby



San Jose Seminary students fondly called "Josefinos" preparing for the Alumni Homecoming

in Incarnation, experienced in Encounter, and expressed in Communication.

Presence as rooted in Incarnation. LST has introduced me to an incarnated theology. More than the ideas that help expound the theology of incarnation itself, it is incarnated theology that makes the academe vibrant. Students can memorize a list of terminologies and enumerate items that they retain in their minds but LST does not settle for memory work. Theology needs to be enlivened. Doing theology is not akin to the mechanics of purchase: a consumer looking for an item in a grocery store where they simply pick, barcode, instantly learn the price, buy it, and enjoy its benefits. Theology, like the One who reveals Himself, is incarnated. Incarnation is

not mechanistic. It is intentional; it is willed. By intentionality, it becomes present. Incarnation concretizes presence. The Word that became flesh is not distant. He is with us and his descent is for us. Many parishioners wish to find in their pastors somebody who is with them, who is on their level, who lives out the "Christ" he is preaching. A theology that is learned as incarnated can contribute to the integral formation of a pastor. People in the parish are able to connect to a theology that is brought by the one who teaches, a presenced theology. An incarnated theology is not limited to doing textual appropriations; it calls to be appropriated in the life of the courier.

Presence as experienced in Encounter. To be present and to receive another's presence are only

comprehensible within the context of an actual encounter. LST does not only teach words and values, nor only train minds or develop intellectual capabilities. It seeks an encounter. People in the parish hunger for the presence of others. They are in need of company and accompaniment. They wish for an encounter that disrupts their loneliness. A lot of parishioners experience distrust which could affect their faith and relationships. A theology of presence experienced as encounter could fill in the gap. In city parishes where lives are seemingly concentrated on work and efficiency, people may never be aware of (and may never have a moment to check on) their interiority until they step on the threshold of adult life feeling empty and wanting. They may be more focused on their own presence. Without them knowing it, their honest selves clamor for an encounter that is worth their while. Presence makes each one feel like they are not alone. Presence can bring back the distant self to where it should be, for an encounter with an "other" shakes up one's consciousness. A parish priest need not give answers to human questions and fill in the emptiness of human desires, but he can always bring that theology of presence to the parishioners who are in most need, with the best of his ability and with the purest of intent.

Presence as expressed in Communication. The theology of presence is more fully understood in the language of communication. Presence communicates. Synodality begins with presence. Walking together with parishioners requires each other's presence. When one's presence communicates, dialogue commences. Our faith is always dialogical because it is an encounter. A monologue in faith is a myth. No one should stay shut to one's own world and own comforts. Journeying is risky. It demands something of the self. It requires an individual's presence, an individual's constancy. Pastoral task is a work of communication. How wonderful it is to imagine a parish priest who actualizes his personal experience of God by being present to others! This does not only birth out communication and dialogue, this births out mutual self-giving and collaboration. It is not an understatement to say that many talented parishioners may have decided to stand apart, may have distanced themselves from the church because the parish priest is non-relatable, beyond their level, beyond their reach. When the priest's figure becomes a wall



**“MANY PARISHIONERS WISH TO FIND IN THEIR PASTORS SOMEBODY WHO IS WITH THEM, WHO IS ON THEIR LEVEL, WHO LIVES OUT THE ‘CHRIST’ HE IS PREACHING. ”**

The seminary after the mass with their benefactors



After the mass of the Holy Spirit, thus the red liturgical color



Josefino Alumni during their annual alumni homecoming



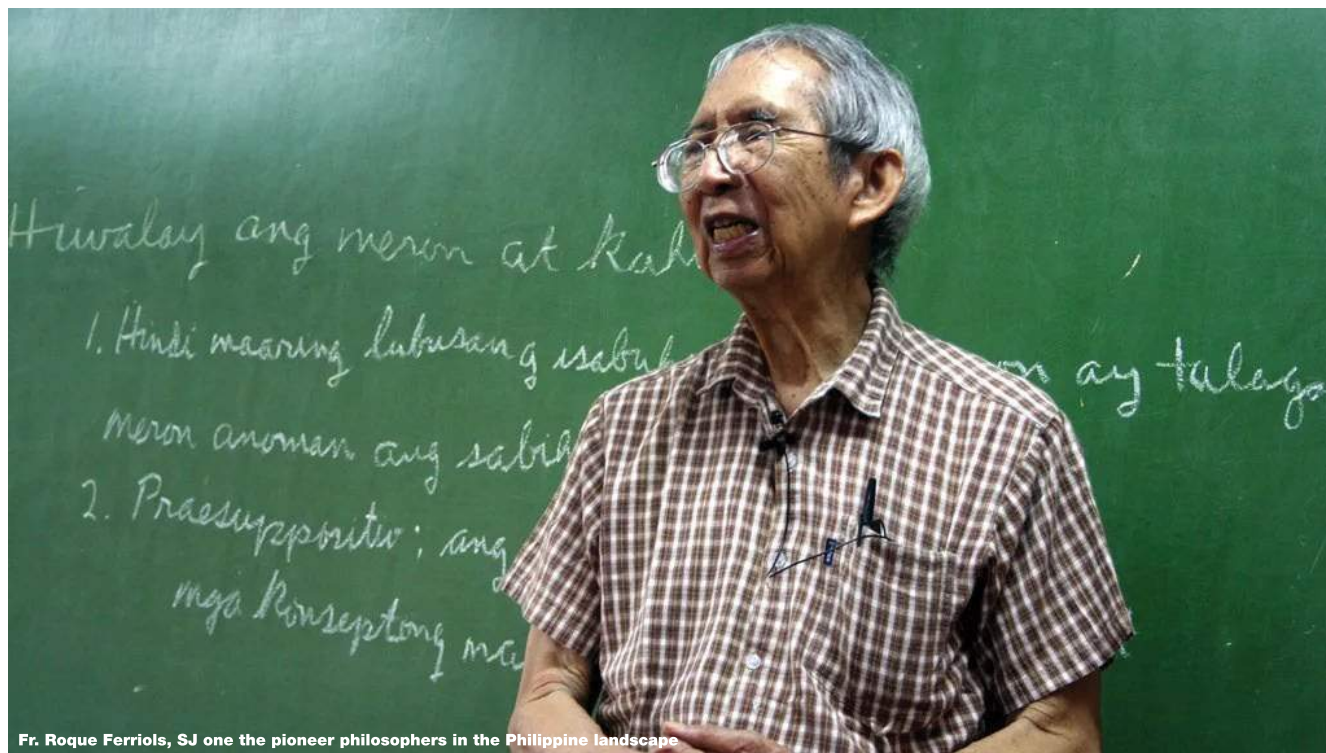
against the parishioners' participation, it cannot be that communicating presence. A presence that communicates God's shepherding compassion and care cannot afford to push the flock to the gutter of unhealthy indifference. Evangelization starts with the presence that communicates God's unquestioned love.

The parochial theology that LST allows me

to immerse myself into is one that couldn't be easily found in the marketplaces of the academe. It's found in the field, a field that does not set itself apart from the reality of the people, from the ordinary lives of men and women who strive to meet ends, who give themselves for their loved ones, who are forced to stand on their feet and endure hours of traffic while commuting,

who fall asleep while working, who hope to make others happy by their work. These are the parishioners of a local church. With their own witness, they proclaim the experience of God's presence, a presence that is felt for it is incarnated, a presence that transforms for it is encountered, and a presence that gives for it is communicated.

# WHY STUDY PHILOSOPHY TODAY?



Fr. Roque Ferriols, SJ one the pioneer philosophers in the Philippine landscape

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## ITS RELEVANCE IN OUR PERSONAL LIVES AND IN HOW WE LIVE AS A SOCIETY

BY JOVINO MIROY, PHD

**T**he first reason we can give for studying philosophy is that it imitates St. Ignatius of Loyola. Coming back to Barcelona in 1524, he returned to school at the University of Alcalá de Henares to study philosophy. Four years later, he moved on to the University of Paris where he studied arts and theology. If studying philosophy was good enough for Ignatius, it should be good enough for us. However, philosophy becomes truly beneficial if the student also lived on alms.

Kidding aside, to find out if philosophy is still relevant today, let us see whether it figures in the *Final Document of the Synod on Synodality*. As of the writing of this article, the document is only available in Italian. Nevertheless, Al

makes it possible for anyone to go through it. While searching the document, I pressed “Control F” on my computer to find out if *filosofia* is included in it. Zilch. I then searched for *esperienza* (experience). To my pleasant surprise, the document mentions the word 27 times.

Just the first sentence mentions the word twice: “Each new step in the life of the Church is a return to the source, a renewed experience of the encounter with the Risen One that the disciples experienced in the Cenacle on Easter evening.” Although an obviously theological statement, understanding this sentence requires knowledge of and training in philosophy.

“Karanasan” was a word Fr. Roque J. Ferriols, SJ beat down our throats in every philosophy class. One cannot understand Meron without diving





Dr. Miroy at the Philippine Academic Consortium for Latin American Studies at DLSU Dasmariñas



Philosophy remains a relevant subject especially in today's changing world

deep into one's experience. During my first oral examination with the Apo, the thesis statement he asked me to explain was: "Bulaga heto ako!" After nervously clearing my throat, I proceeded to discuss that knowledge of one's self commences in that initial realization and affirmation of one's existence. Eventually, we realize that existence is experienced through the senses, and is understood through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and hands. This means it is that which is apprehended through the categories of time and space. Narrative inquiry, however, made empiricists appreciate that reflection on experience and articulating its meaning means comprehending it as a story.

The *Final Document*, conversely, explains *esperienza* simply as what is inseparable from everyday life, which we live in communion with the Church. Synodality means walking together with the Church. This ecclesial life has a source, which is not a text but an experience of encounter.

The student of philosophy becomes acutely aware of the difference and relationship between text, concept, and experience. The Chinese saying captures it succinctly: "Tell the fool to look at the moon and he will look at your finger." The ideas we derived from philosophical text are fingers that tell us where to look, which is experience itself. The study of *Plato's Symposium* invites us to look at our loving and passionate encounters.

On the other hand, hermeneutics discloses that to read any text is impossible without the reader's own experience. We bring our biases and frameworks to interpreting a text. For this reason, the student of philosophy reads in society. When one reads by himself, the result is often a misreading insofar as the interpretation is limited to a single point of view. A good reader begs for accompaniment. Reading is a social enterprise which generates discourse. Philosophy to be done well means reading texts in relation to all its past and

present readers. Scholarship is friendship with many other readers.

Philosophy as experience echoes the phenomenological dictum: "Back to the things themselves." For many, this is literally doing philosophy in relation to tangible objects and spaces. Perhaps it also means: "Back to the streets themselves." Philosophy becomes crucial if it means not being tied to our desks. Our proposition can mean at least two things: firstly, that the goal of studying philosophy is not merely to become professional philosophers. While meaning and fulfillment may be found in academia, it is a life, for better or worse, that is meant for a chosen few.

Recently, the idea of Philosophy as a Way of Life (PWL) has become widespread. A concept found by the French philosopher Pierre Hadot (1922-2010), PWL thinks that the study of philosophy aims for self-transformation through "spiritual exercises." The Ancient Greeks called this *askesis*; Michel Foucault dubbed it as "technologies of the self." According to Eli Kramer and Marta Faustino in "Reconstructing Professional Philosophy," philosophy intends to "reduce existential suffering and promote free, conscious, meaningful, and flourishing lives." Philosophy is relevant only if it reduces one's suffering and that of others and not just learning to write the academic article.

Secondly, philosophy is regaining its peripatetic character. It is an enterprise that is associated with taking walks. Then as now, students have avoided walking, preferring to take their cars from one class to the other. Even worse, they prefer to hold online classes in the comfort of their room. Aside from making the brain breathe, however, walking grounds us in being.

In some universities, philosophy classes conduct "philosophical walks." These walks make students associate philosophical texts with certain spaces or buildings. It is designed not only to experience the city itself but to make students experience their spaces through the lens of philosophy. They then grasp how spaces are determined by social class, gender, as well as differences in access to government and health services. Philosophy becomes a dialogue not only with ancient texts with one's fellow citizens who either live in luxury or squalor, joy or pain, happiness or sorrow. Here, philosophy class is a literal walk with others.



Dr. Miroy after one of the many conference he attended

In the 21st century, philosophy, including the philosophy of religion and ethics, has to respond to the plurality and diversity of beliefs students have in one class. Since the age of scholasticism, philosophy classes have wrongly presupposed that students have similar and uniform beliefs and contexts. Today, young people carry a multiplicity of beliefs and mindsets (not to mention sexual identities), and they automatically put up their defenses at the slightest hint of being told what the truth is. Philosophy class should recognize multiplicity and allow it to flourish, considering it as an opportunity for genuine discourse and mutual enlightenment.

Finally, philosophy class is germane when it teaches students how to care, to turn their hearts of stones to hearts of flesh. Attached to their cellphones, students are disengaged and easily distracted. Their apathy has led not only to substance addictions but also behavioral ones, like video game addiction and binge eating and watching. Philosophy will regain relevance by teaching students to care for the environment and how geo-political tensions impact their lives, especially the poor.

Philosophy must be re-constructed so students may return to experience itself. The *Final Document* guides us: "In the celebration of the sacrament of God's mercy we experience being unconditionally loved: the hardness of our hearts is overcome and we open ourselves to communion." (6). A more affective and heartfelt education could foster connectedness because our hearts have become open to experiencing God's unconditional love.



Dr. Miroy in the classroom with undergraduate students from ADMU



Dela Costa Hall at the Ateneo de Manila is the home of the Philosophy Department.



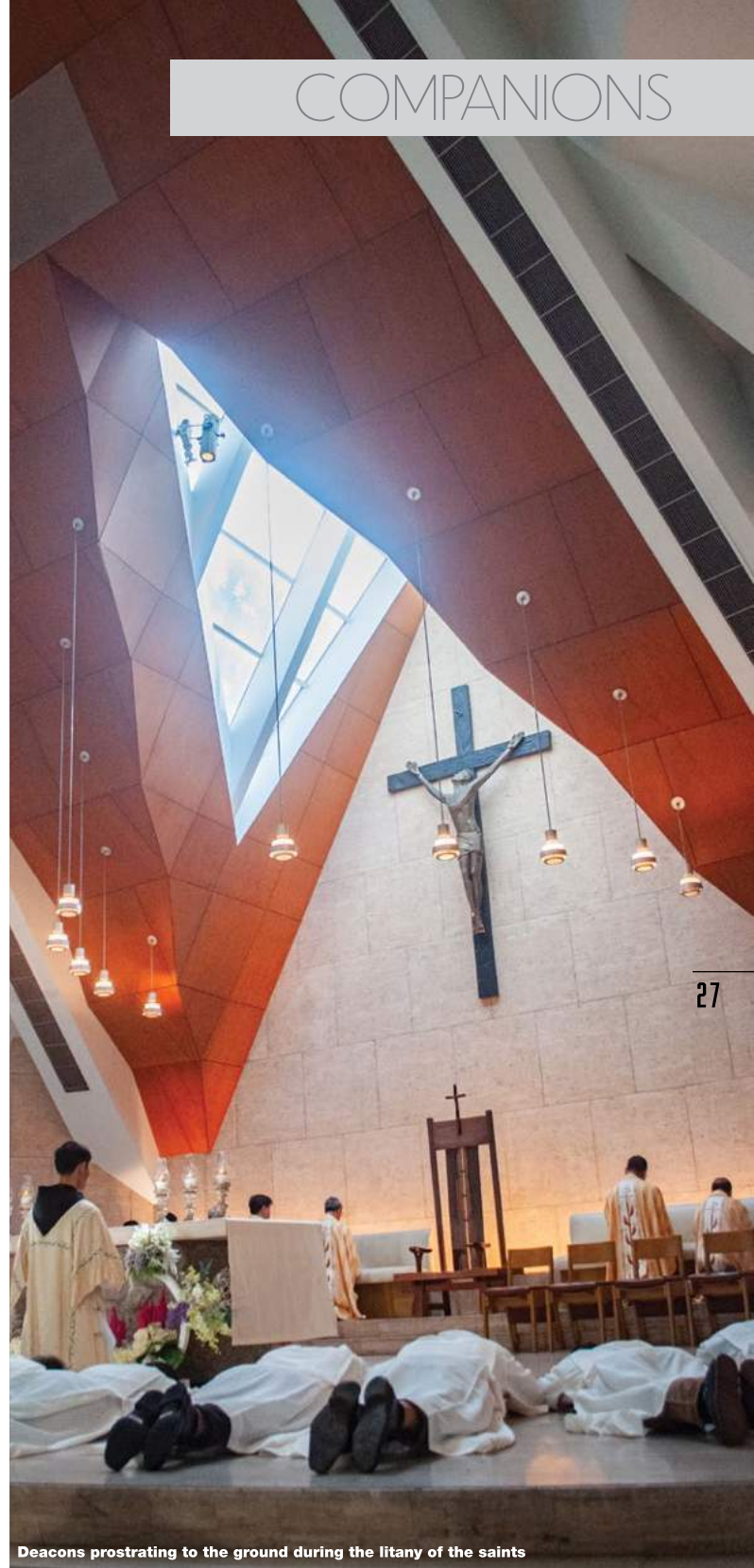
# DIAKONIA: A CALL TO GREATER LOVE AND SERVICE

THE DIACONATE ORDINATION OF 2024

BY REV. ALEJO S. SAN BUENAVENTURA, SJ

**A** Diaconate ordination is truly a gift—one that I can never fully deserve, yet one for which I am profoundly thankful. Simply being considered worthy to receive this grace is cause for endless gratitude. As I reflect on the grace-filled years of my Jesuit formation, I am continually awed by the many ways the Lord has revealed His unconditional love and mercy. The journey was not an easy one, but it was full of challenges, doubts, fears, and even tears. Yet, God's constant assurance, coupled with the overflowing love and support of so many people, made it all the more exciting and unforgettable. As one Jesuit would say, "There is no happier place than in the Company of Jesus." Indeed, my heart is filled with joy and gratitude at this moment as I recognize that, despite my unworthiness, God has called me to a vocation that allows me to love and serve His people more deeply and personally.

Our ordination was a memorable occasion, a testament to how the Lord brought the entire community together in prayer and thanksgiving for this undeserved gift. Personally, it was deeply heartwarming to see Jesuits from various communities, family members of the ordinandi, mission partners, friends, and benefactors sharing in our joy and gratitude. The solemn liturgy, beautiful



Deacons prostrating to the ground during the litany of the saints

music, and simple reception all contributed to the occasion's sacredness and beauty. I could not ask for more. Our heartfelt thanks go out to all who made this event possible. My only prayer now is that I, together with my brother-deacons, may continue to live out the call of the *diakonia*—*in omnibus amare et servire Domino. Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam!*

Bishop Ongtioco lays his hands on the ordinands



The deacons wearing their dalmatic symbolizes their new roles in the liturgy



Rev. Rico Adapon, SJ distributes communion



AS ONE JESUIT WOULD SAY, "THERE IS NO HAPPIER PLACE THAN IN THE COMPANY OF JESUS."



The bishop, priests, and deacons are present during the ordination mass



The Embrace of Peace is a sign of unity between the bishop and deacons



The laying on of hands is an important element in every ordination







Deacons are tasked to proclaim the word and do acts of charity



Bishop Nes Ongtioco, now bishop emeritus of the Diocese of Cubao preaches the homily



The newly ordained deacons of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific 2024



The laying on of hands symbolizes the calling forth of the Holy Spirit



Rev. Septian and Rev. Adi are Jesuits from the Indonesian Province



# FATHER BEN NEBRES:

REACHING OUT, ONE VISIT AT A TIME

BY MA. AGNES B. SUROP

**W**hen one thinks of Fr. Ben Nebres, SJ, one thinks of his extensive and timeless accomplishments and contributions to the Jesuit and Ateneo communities. While this may be the case, we must acknowledge that all of these are rooted deeply in Father Ben's great love for his vocation and for the poor—the same love that fuels him when he travels around the country to visit the people in impoverished communities and to reach out to them.

Father Ben recently visited the Gawad Kalinga (GK) communities in Dinagat, Siargao and in Sulu, where he is very much involved in local initiatives. These initiatives are aimed towards improving the quality of the people's lives and ensuring that the youth are properly educated and fed. One can only marvel at Father Ben's determination, enthusiasm, and energy as he goes out of his way to visit the people in these far-flung areas, not to mention the humility that he exhibits as he talks about the people who serve as movers, leaders as he calls them, and who work on the ground beside him.

In Dinagat, Siargao where he visited last October, there are existing projects that were initiated after the onslaught of typhoon Odette. With assistance from fellow Jesuits like Father Manoling Francisco, SJ, Father Ben was able to help the locals find resources to rebuild and rehabilitate inundated houses and infrastructures, and to provide supplies to the people in flooded areas. This community eventually became close to Father Ben's heart as he later on discovered the heart and potential the locals carried with them to improve their lives and to lead their community. Through the leadership workshops that he facilitated, he discovered the resourcefulness and leadership



Fr. Bienvenido Nebres, SJ arrived in Sulu via Philippine Air Force plane along with Executives from the Jesus V Del Rosario Foundation



that lay dormant in the locals. These were simply waiting for the right opportunity to be awakened through the initiatives that they carried out with assistance from Father Ben. People like Nanay Jen and Tatay Rommel who serve as examples of commitment, creativity, and innovation come to mind when he thinks of these local leaders in Dinagat. Of course, there are more of them in the area.

"You cannot do anything substantial without having someone working on the ground," Father Ben states as he recalls his interactions with the locals of Dinagat who work closely with him in the leadership workshops and feeding programs that he helped establish. For him, it was a culmination of discovering amazing and flourishing leaders in these less privileged communities.

In Sulu, another area that has reached Father Ben's helpful arms, the situation is also starting to improve. "Finally, they're at peace after forty years of war... families are going back." However, "the families are returning, but then the schools are closed."

It was clear that what needed to be attended to were the classrooms that were destroyed during the encounters between the military and the rebels. What was moving, however, was that everyone was ready to step up and to get the work done, and done efficiently. According to Father Ben, "It was moving to see military trucks carrying not weapons but construction materials to rebuild houses..."

Everyone was acutely aware that aside from making sure that people had roofs over their heads and the young students had classrooms to enter, they also had to be fed properly, hence, the feeding programs set up by Gawad Kalinga, also with assistance from Father Ben. He also looks back fondly on the moments he spent with the members of the community.

He emphasizes that it's easier to get the work done through collaboration—working closely with the people on the ground for the greater good of the people in the area. He generously praises these individuals who work very hard and selflessly, all because they believe in the mission of helping the less privileged and troubled. It's amazing and awe-inspiring to listen to Father Ben as he shares his stories of how he works to improve the lives of the people in communities that truly need his help, and how they, too, find comfort and warmth in his presence. However,



Fr. Ben was in Sulu for the turnover of a classroom at Ahajani Elementary School in Brgy Kabbon Takas, Patikul.



Fr. Ben was in Sulu also for the groundbreaking of a reading center at Sapie Elementary School, Barangay Paligue, Indanan.

there were also challenges that needed to be overcome to ensure that the communities are sustainable and self-sufficient.

"We just have to do what we can," he says while recalling the times when the locals showed creativity and innovation in their livelihood while trying to make it sustainable, like the fisherfolk who veered away from using dynamites and fishing lines and opted to plant mangroves for a bigger catch.

All of these, Father Ben mentions, are personally good for him. Reaching out to the people in the communities in Siargao, Sulu, and in other areas of the country is a way for him to understand and to live out his faith. For Father Ben, love of country has taken root in his faith.

"Country has always been very central to me. And then in particular, in terms of my own

understanding of my Catholic Christian faith, I've always turned to Jesus in the last judgment, saying that, 'I was hungry and you gave me [food] to eat, thirsty and you gave me [something] to drink...' that has been very central to me..."

Helping the less privileged, being with them, putting smiles on their faces, knowing that their lives are improving because of action and proactive leadership and volunteerism continue to be Father Ben's motivation. "I've always felt this need to connect on that level," he says.

Working with Gawad Kalinga in establishing and supporting these communities, Father Ben also knows that these endeavors must be long-term and sustainable. "The long-term way forward is to really build these communities on the ground... people helping one another."

When asked about the lessons borne out of





At senior age there is no retirement for Fr. Ben.

**“THE LONG-TERM WAY FORWARD IS TO REALLY BUILD THESE COMMUNITIES ON THE GROUND... PEOPLE HELPING ONE ANOTHER.”  
- FATHER BEN**

these visits that he would like to impart to the Jesuits, especially the young ones with their energy and their blossoming faith and love for their vocation, Father Ben simply says that for our Jesuits to see our society as a bigger picture, they need to go to the peripheries and to connect with those who belong to these places, so that their vista of our country expands and becomes more authentic.

“Find a way to connect on a continuing basis with a poor community—get to know them and get to be friends with them... why? Well, because that’s the majority of the Filipino people. If you don’t do something like that given the dynamics of our work in our schools, you will be caught in the world of the middle upper class, and that’s not the Philippines. There is nothing wrong with this, but that is not the entire Philippines.”

We are called to go beyond our personal bubbles and to reach out to those who have less. To walk with them means to be with them, to take part in the activities that for them are both lifegiving and necessary. For Father Ben, the communities in areas such as Siargao and Sulu remind him that his country and his faith are inseparable. Each visit is a chance to connect both with the people and the Lord.



Fr. Ben is truly a man of passion to help the poor, the disadvantaged, the unreached, isolated and maybe unnoticed and forgotten by our leaders.

# NAVIGATING CHANGE, EMBRACING MISSION

A REFLECTION INSPIRED BY A GATHERING IN CEBU OF SCHOLASTICS AND BROTHERS

BY SHANE LIESEGANG, SJ



A mural in Cebu City depicting the rich religious history of the cradle of Christianity in the Philippines

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**T**he Scholastics and Brothers Circle of JCAP recently held its annual gathering over Christmas, hosted by the Cebu Center for Ignatian Spirituality in the Philippines. Forty-five Jesuits in formation from around the conference gathered for an eight-day gathering of fellowship, prayer, and learning. I was fortunate enough to be welcomed as a man in formation from outside JCAP, as I am presently living in Manila to study theologies of migration at the Loyola School of Theology.

The theme of this year's meeting was "Navigating Change: Migration Dynamics in Asia-Pacific and the Philippine Experience," so most of our speakers shared perspectives on the Society's work with migrants and refugees in the region and around the world. The Jesuit Refugee Service is one important work in the field, but we also learned about JCAP's Migrants & Refugees Network, social ministries, and the various efforts around ecology and reconciliation with creation. One afternoon, scholastics and brothers from different countries shared presentations on their local migration dynamics and how the Society is responding.

Global migration is a persistent and growing phenomenon that will continue to define life in the 21st Century, and seeing how the Jesuits are prepared to engage with this reality to help those in need was both inspirational and consoling. Especially as an outsider at the conference, I was able to see the wide range of works and ways that we accompany this particular group of marginalized people. It helped expand my image of the global Society. As I continue to reflect on ways of being the Church in an increasingly small (and suffering) world, it is edifying to know that the active work of my brothers continues in places



and ways that I have yet to imagine.

As Cebu is an important historical and religious center of the Philippines, we also made sure to visit the Minor Basilica of the Santo Niño de Cebu, near the original cross erected by Magellan which commemorates the arrival of Christianity in the country. We also explored the story of the Society in the city at the Jesuit House Museum, a fascinating intersection of local and Jesuit history; the house, which dates to 1730, was rediscovered as part of a warehouse in the 1960s, and has since been turned into one of the best historical museums in the city. We were welcomed graciously by the proprietor, Jimmy Sy, who takes great pride in his work and has a deep love of the Church and the Society. Just as the overall conference program was connecting me to my present-day Jesuit brothers, stepping into the past through the doors of this well-preserved site connected me to those early brothers who helped establish both the Society and the Church in the Philippines.

The more conference-like aspects of the program were not the only items on the agenda, though, as we still found time to celebrate the festive season of Christmas. We celebrated Christmas Eve mass at the Jesuit-run Sacred Heart Parish, and spent the following day at the Tambuli Seaside Resort, where games, food, and relaxation provided a suitable backdrop for the Solemnity. Post-dinner gatherings in the evening and various social outings provided opportunities for the members to enjoy each other's company as we also welcomed the Incarnation. Every holiday

Rev. Shane doing a selfie with his fellow Jesuits before the Christmas eve mass in Cebu City



Rev. Shane with some kids from the Arnold Janssen Village in Cebu handled by the Society of the Divine Word



The delegates of the Scholastics and Brothers Circle of JCAP in the Minor Basilica of the Sto. Niño de Cebu





season as a Jesuit is an opportunity to reflect on how my experience of the traditions (both secular and religious) has changed over the years. I think more of the Solemnity of the Nativity than Santa and reindeer these days, but I also found the old childlike giddiness surfacing as I enjoyed how thoroughly the Philippines celebrates throughout the entire season. Seeing a thriving mall fully decked with Christmas paraphernalia took me back to my memories of the times when malls in America were still active places of gathering and communion (even if overtly commercialized).

Towards the end of our time together was the 24-hour immersion spent in the Jansenville subdivision of Lapu-Lapu. Here, the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) has built a small village of housing to help give more dignified and secure lives to those residing around the nearby dumpsite. Pairs of SBC (Scholastics and Brothers' Circle) members were matched with local families who became their foster hosts for the period. Before and after the immersion, we were led through reflections on the experience by Fr. Heinz Kulüke (former superior general of the SVDs) and Fr. Rogelio Bag-ao (current provincial superior). There was a deep generosity of spirit at work as our host families welcomed us, whether in the sharing of simple meals or even the invitation to join in family karaoke after the Sunday mass. The SVD fathers helped us to prayerfully reflect on the differences between our own vowed poverty and the unwilling destitution in which much of the world lives, and encouraged us to think of how we engage with such communities. Are we saviors come to fix things, or do we practice solidarity because our own salvation is tied up with the salvation of all? The time of immersion was rich and impactful, and many Jesuits talked about the variety of surprises they would continue to pray over.

As with all good formation experiences, the gathering provided an opportunity to open ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit shaping us into better Jesuits, more ready to serve and accompany wherever the need is greatest. Because I grew up in a bubble of relative stability, coming to the other side of the world shakes me out of the assumptions and blind spots that have accreted over the course of my life. Some things are simple and easily overcome, like differences in food, but others, like the specific form of poverty in Jansenville or the inspiring work of my brother Jesuits in "the burning land" of Myanmar, call me



to a richer vision of the world. There is a wealth of beauty I have yet to encounter, and an equally deep well of pain that I am called to help soothe. Both of those elements exist everywhere, and I can walk the paths through them as long as Christ and my fellow Jesuits are by my side.

This gathering of men in formation spoke to both the global and deeply personal nature of our mission as Jesuits. Leaving Cebu, we carry not only insights about migration and the Society's

response, but the warmth of hospitality and the renewed bonds of friendship in the Lord. Our conversations about those suffering in the world took on new meaning after experiencing, even briefly, the lived reality of those on the margins. In all these respects, the gathering fulfilled the aims of Jesuit formation, combining intellectual exploration, spiritual reflection, and direct encounter with those we seek to serve.



# A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE



The photo shows one of 4 Dean's Hour sessions that we hold at the start of each academic semester. There are four because one assembly is held separately for each of the four year levels. It is an opportunity for me as Dean, to remind the students about important things such as maintaining resolve and purpose. It is where I have the opportunity to reiterate the values that we stand for and the necessity of imbuing them as part of our mission.

## FORMING LAWYERS FOR OTHERS AT THE ATENEO LAW SCHOOL

BY JOSE MARIA G. HOFILENA

It was a Friday the 13th of December, 2024 and our Rockwell campus was suffused with a familiar disquiet. For it was the day when the results of the September 2024 Bar Examinations were to be announced.

The escalating apprehension was ultimately dislodged with enormous relief, however, the moment it was confirmed that in this latest episode, 169 graduates of the Ateneo Law School ("ALS") passed, yielding a passing rate of 96.36% and 96.02%, of our first-time and total bar takers, respectively.

### INFUSION OF ATENEO LAWYERS

The ALS began infusing so-called "Ateneo Lawyers" into the Philippine law profession from its first cohort of law graduates of the inaugural Class of 1939.

Except for the interruptive years of World War 2, the ALS continued each year to supply Ateneo Lawyers into the system in relatively significant numbers so much so that in 2023, the Legal Education Board bestowed upon the ALS the first Educating for Justice Award in recognition of the ALS having contributed the most number of new lawyers among all law schools in the Philippines during the period spanning 2011 to 2020.

The generally consistent levels of Ateneo Lawyer production since 1939 was the intended offshoot of a curriculum of law studies and a method of instruction that were deliberately designed to be exacting. The plain theory being that a rigorous law program should adequately prepare students to pass the bar examinations.

While the ALS is pleased with its relative success in this goal—i.e., preparing our students to conquer the bar exams and supporting our graduates who might need to do a retake—passing the bar exams has never been the be-all and end-all of its mission.

Tests, both legal and moral, far more impactful and agonizing than the bar exams, await every bar passer in the real world they are entering. It is in these challenges of law practice where the aspirations of the ALS and the mettle of its education and formation programs will have its true reckoning.

### THE VISION AND MISSION

The vision of the ALS recites:

We envision graduates who are not only skilled in the science and art of the law but also leaders imbued with a burning passion for justice and the

desire to serve the nation for the greater glory of God.

ALS Students are introduced to the vision of the institution from the very moment they begin their law studies in their first year, emphasizing that by consenting to pursue their law studies at the ALS, they have become an essential part of the vocation for which our community exists.

The vision views each of our students and graduates as a *homo viator* on a pilgrimage in fulfillment of a mission for the greater good and its essence, including the aim to form them to become “lawyers for others,” is reiterated throughout their matriculation at the ALS by administrators and faculty, whether in individual classes or school-wide congregations.

In the world of actual law practice, we pray that from the years our graduates spent under our watch, endeavoring to touch upon not only their minds but their hearts, they will perpetually carry with them the suite of values of the Ateneo Lawyer brand: to be principled and skilled in law and to become leaders, in whatever form, infecting and affecting others with their passion for justice and service, with the conviction that all that they do as Ateneo Lawyers, is *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*.

Guided by its vision, the ALS avowed mission involves forming our students to be academically excellent and competent, spiritually developed, socially involved, and globally connected.

## ACADEMICALLY EXCELLENT

The curriculum of the ALS is an intentionally rigorous one, having around 40 academic units more than the minimum required by the Legal Education Board. This is partly because it includes unique ALS identity subjects such as Theology and the Law as well as Human Rights. Students are also obligated to enroll in at least 14 units of elective subjects in line with their interests, wherein they are offered opportunities to encounter the law in action in various fields in the world beyond law school.

Moreover, although not a regulatory requirement, the ALS maintains its Thesis Program under which all students must research, write, and defend a thesis of at least 13,000 words.



Interns of the Ateneo Human Rights Center undertaking certain activities under the AHRC's internship program, providing among others, legal knowledge/information clinics and activities to communities.

## SPIRITUALLY DEVELOPED AND SOCIALLY INVOLVED

As a Catholic and Jesuit law school, there are opportunities for furthering spiritual development and social involvement among members of the ALS community.

Apart from the classic vestiges of our Catholic faith such as the centrally located chapel, regular Mass, a prayer before each class, meeting and assembly and the prominent sword-offering St. Ignatius statue—all students must attend an annual recollection as we urge them to pause and listen to the stirrings of their spirits.

Similarly, there are opportunities for engagement with the larger society, particularly for those who are indigent and in need, through programs involving Clinical Legal Education, Free Legal Aid and the Ateneo Human Rights Center, providing exposure experiences essential to the formation of our students.

## GLOBALLY CONNECTED

In addition to the teaching of International Law, institutional efforts to establish linkages with international law schools have accelerated, developing programs that may allow students and faculty to broaden their perspectives on law by a variety of knowledge and mobility exchange arrangements.

The vision and the mission of the ALS ultimately seek to produce Ateneo Lawyers identifiable by their excellence, their sense of justice and purpose, and who innately serve and care for others with integrity and in the most principled way.

## HUMAN BEINGS IN THE SERVICE OF OTHERS

In the graduation ceremonies of the ALS's Class of 2020, the commencement speaker, Fr. Jose T. Villarin, SJ, posed this question:

“You have a lawsuit. You have a choice of lawyers. Would any lawyer do? Of course, you'd go for the competent one, the one who knows their way in the legal jungle. Would you choose an Ateneo lawyer? Would an Ateneo lawyer have a particular way of dealing with your case? Should there be a difference?”



Ateneo Law alumni volunteer lawyers advising persons deprived of liberty at the Women's Correctional Institute. This is in connection with the “Jail Decongestion Program” of the Ateneo Law Alumni Association, Inc., aimed at rendering assistance in the processing of paperwork of inmates and detained persons who may be eligible for release but are unaware or uninformed about their status and the required documentation.



“The difference lies in this truth which we try to teach, a liberating conviction which we hope you will take to heart all your lives. The truth is this: You are greater than your job or legal profession. You are more than just a lawyer. You are a human being first before you are a lawyer.”

That each of our students and each Ateneo Lawyer is a human being with unique hopes and needs which must be cared for in the spirit of *cura personalis* are beliefs held resolutely by the ALS.

Thus for instance, some members of the faculty serve as advisers to each block of students from their first to their fourth year, making themselves available, as persons who care, to each and all of the students on their miscellaneous concerns.

It is in engaging with our students, face to face, where we can be present, alive and meaningful to them. It allows us not only to affirm to them that for us, each one of them is and will always be a human being foremost, but also to remind them in their eventual life undertaking as lawyers, they will need to likewise recognize that the persons they serve, represent, counsel, and affect are themselves human beings and not mere statistics, sources of income, or trophies. And that this consciousness be yet another distinguishing mark of the Ateneo Lawyer.

## THE KING'S GOOD SERVANT

“I die the King's good servant, and God's first,” was the phrase uttered famously by St. Thomas More moments before his public beheading. In some

way, we dream that it is what each Ateneo Lawyer will themselves be able to say at the point of their death.

But not just in that they have placed God above all else, but that in their life of lawyerly service to their various Kings—their employers, their clients, their constituents, the parties litigating before them, even to the causes they advocate—the Ateneo Lawyer is able to say that they were not simply servants, definitely not bad ones, but that they were good servants.

Being a good servant, however, is not achieved by merely acceding and implementing what the King wants. On the contrary, a good servant is one who is also able to tell the King (or emperor, if you will) that he has no clothes.

We thus envision Ateneo Lawyers to be those who will assiduously champion your cause unless your cause is unjust or wrong in which case, they will responsibly advise you what is right, just, and proper. That Ateneo Lawyers will painstakingly negotiate your contracts knowing that it is good faith, and not one-upmanship for its own sake, that is and will be to the best interests of your client and his or her counterparty. That Ateneo Lawyers will render meaningful justice through their thoughtful rulings regardless of your tempting worldly enticements.

This, because the Ateneo Lawyer is the King's good servant.

But always, God's first.



Of the current membership of the Supreme Court (there are 15 justices), six of them are graduates of Ateneo Law (there is actually one other who graduated from Ateneo de Davao College of Law). Ateneo Law has the biggest number of alumni among the current Supreme Court. This includes the Chief Justice.

The photo shows the 6 Ateneo Law Justices (from left to right: Associate Justice Midas Marquez, Associate Justice Ricardo Rosarion, Associate Justice Rodil Zalameda, Chief Justice Alexander Gesmundo, Associate Justice Alfredo Benjamin Caguioa and Associate Justice MariaFilomena Singh. Standing behind the Ateneo Law Justices are all Ateneans, all but two of whom (which two includes me), were Ateneo Law alumni who were bar examiners in the 2023 bar exams.



The faculty flashing the #1 sign referring to Ateneo Law's number 1 ranking (4-peat) in terms of passing rate among all law schools with more than 100 bar takers.



The photo shows Ateneo Law alumni volunteer lawyers advising persons deprived of liberty at the Women's Correctional Institute. This is in connection with the "Jail Decongestion Program" of the Ateneo Law Alumni Association, Inc., aimed at rendering assistance in the processing of paperwork of inmates and detained persons who may be eligible for release but are unaware or uninformed about their status and the required documentation.





## Welcome to LST!

Loyola School of Theology (LST) is once again accepting applications for admission to its **Professional Degree Programs:**

- 🎓 Master in Family Ministry and Counseling
- 🎓 Master in Spirituality (Two Tracks: Ignatian Spirituality and Retreat-Directing & Global Spirituality)
- 🎓 Master in Pastoral Leadership and Management
- 🎓 Master in Pastoral Ministry

**July 17** Application Deadlines:

- ♦ International Students: March 15, 2025
- ♦ Filipino Students: May 15, 2025

For inquiries, email **avpaa@lst.edu**

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*Formula of the Institute of the Society of Jesus written  
by Ignatius of Loyola and Companions  
Approved 1540 by Pope Paul III*



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