

## REMEMBERING DOREEN

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Kritika Kultura, <http://www.ateneo.edu/kritikakultura/>

Last Saturday on coming back from a workshop in Davao with our Graduate School of Business, I was jolted somewhat on finding on top of my incoming correspondence a letter from Doreen. An intimation of her continuing presence among us. It was dated May 28, but only got to me on that day. In the letter she told me she was leaving for the US the next day and would be back June 26, in time for her classes. “I signed up for the Boston College seminar on Jesuit Art and Culture,” she said. And she had promised the conference organizers a report on Jesuit Music and Theater in the Philippines for a future conference. The main reason for her letter, however, was to give me a progress report on a project we have been discussing for a couple of years: A history of the Ateneo de Manila in time for our sesquicentennial, our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in 2009. She attached an outline and preliminary table of contents for the history. “The Ateneo: 1859-2009, Ang Ateneo: Kahapon, Ngayon at Bukas”. We started discussing these topics in detail after her previous long illness and confinement and we will treasure her notes as an inspiration for us to carry on her commitment and dream.

Doreen is an important person in that history. She started teaching at the Ateneo in 1972, a legacy of 30 years of teaching, mentoring and leadership. I was Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences in her early years and we went together through the transitions of martial law, Filipinization (including sitting together in Filipino classes), and social conscientization at the Ateneo. We kept in touch through the years when I was away as Jesuit Provincial and President of Xavier University. She was one of the professors I saw most often upon my return as President in 1993. How can we capture these years at the Ateneo in a few words? Let me sketch them in terms of gifts that are among her legacy to us.

First, her gift of writing and the word. Generations of Ateneans, from freshmen in her creative writing classes, to the staff of the *Guidon* where she was moderator, to graduate students and faculty and staff who had her as mentor in writing workshops, are heirs of her gift and legacy of the word. In evoking from each one the power of the word, she also helped us find ourselves and all testify to the beauty and wonder she helped them discover in people, in the world around them, in their own inner selves, in God. I thank her in a very special way for her teaching and mentoring of our Jesuit scholastics through the years, she was much loved by them and she will live on in their own ministry of the Word.

Second, her gift of our culture and people. Doreen's research and writing interests have been about us as a people: the Iloilo Zarzuela, essays on Philippine food and culture, essays on Philippine history. She has been on the editorial board of *Philippine Studies* and was recently appointed Editor-in-Chief. She would bring students, among them our Jesuit scholastics, to Angono to meet musicians and artists and be introduced to traditional foods—re-introducing us to ourselves. In our Mass for her last week—the first to be celebrated at the Church of the Gesu—I spoke about Doreen and her essays on food and culture. I was reminded of a research project of Catholic Universities some years past on “Food and Love”, in French “Nourriture et Amour”. When we come to think of it, we first learn love and bonding and trust at our mothers' breasts. Even in her 90s when her memory grows dim and confused, the first greeting to me of my mother is, “Have you eaten?” And, of course, how often Jesus is portrayed in the Gospels at a meal and when he wanted us to remember Him, He gave Himself to us as our Food. The Mass was especially to thank the workers who have been building the Church. In the salo-salo afterwards, they said the food was especially good and asked if it was from Miss Doreen. I think Doreen would have loved that. Thank you, Doreen, for revealing us to ourselves as a people in our food and culture.

Finally, I would like to thank Doreen for her gift of wisdom and centering. Doreen was Chair of the Departments of Communication, English and Interdisciplinary Studies, a member of the University Board of Trustees, a key leader in numerous University committees through the years. As Dean in the 1970s and President in the 1990s I could always depend on her as a colleague for wise counsel, for a view to the common and the greater good, for

equanimity and calmness in turmoil. In the life of an administrator, this is a priceless gift from a colleague.

When I was interviewed for a forthcoming issue of the *Ateneo Guidon*, for a tribute to Doreen who was their moderator, and was asked what would be my most lasting memory of her, I said that I was reminded of a passage from Anne Morrow Lindbergh's "Gifts from the Sea". There, she speaks of her multiple roles, as a career woman, writer and journalist, wife to a national icon, mother. In reflecting on the pulls and demands in her life she chooses the image of wheel – the many spokes are these multiple roles and demands of those around her and she herself, her most central role, to be the steady and unmoving center that holds these spokes together and allows the wheel to carry on its task. Amidst the multiple gifts and roles that Doreen has played at the Ateneo, I will remember her most for being a strong steady center in our life and our work: teaching us and mentoring us, reminding us of our legacy and values, always there for us in our need, in our work, and in our life.

Thank you Doreen for everything.