

ALS Conferment Ceremony 2020

Opening Remarks

Class of 2020, I am honored to be the first to congratulate you this afternoon. I wish I could shake all of your hands, but times are different nowadays.

Actually I was just thinking that for those of you who took your college degree in Ateneo, you graduated in 2016, and that was my last year as VP for the Loyola Schools, which means I already had a chance to shake your hand during graduation practice. You know, that also means that you are the batch that gave birth to the weird hashtag that bears my name and would go viral on twitter just so I would suspend classes when it rains hard.

You are graduating from law school during very interesting times. (I actually said something similar to this year's Atenean bar-passers). Think 10-15 years from now—you are talking to your kid or to someone from a next generation about when you completed law school. When you tell your story, there will be a side story that you couldn't omit. You will say "During my last year in law school, that was when the Covid crisis started,"; you'll say "when I graduated, that was when the world changed." I graduated in 1986—we were called the EDSA batch; you will probably be known as the Covid batch.

Indeed, the world has changed. Not only that, inequalities have been revealed in ways we haven't seen before. Policies and bureaucracies have been challenged. Our leaders have been put to task, and many are struggling. In other words, it is now when the world also needs help—help from people like you, who, after you pass the bar of course, can help enable mechanisms to deal with crises like the one we are in today. I hope that now, as you move on to the next phase of your career, it will renew a kind of hope and idealism towards a mission to serve and help our country in your own way—to help change the world in your own little way.

Congratulations once again and it is my wish that 10-15 years from now, when you do have that conversation with your kid or with someone from the next generation, you will not just say that "when I graduated, that was when the world changed," but perhaps you will also say, "that's when I thought, maybe I could help change the world."