



ATENEIO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY  
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

*A Letter from Fr Bobby*  
**A Call to Solidarity & Creative Action**

25<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Dear fellow Ateneans,

Inspired by Pope Francis' call for "a better kind of politics, one truly at the service of the common good (*Fratelli Tutti* #154)," Ateneo de Manila reaffirms its primary responsibility of forming persons for and with others. Jesuit education aims to form effective agents for change and transformation. The vocation to be persons for others is guided by the values of human dignity, the preferential option for the poor, solidarity, the promotion of the common good, and the care for creation, our common home.

Jesuit education is education for justice. It upholds the truth that we are co-responsible in building a society able to include, integrate and lift up those who have fallen or are suffering.

The sense of human solidarity is felt strongly within our university community – students, faculty, professionals, staff, administrators, alumni, and parents. We strive to foster a culture of "listening-to-the-other" and the capacity for collaborative action.

We work from strength. We draw from the experience of the past in times of crisis.

In the late sixties and seventies, we spoke of the need to go "down from the hill," that is, to learn from and struggle with the poor in solidarity. *Operasyon Tulong*, the relief and rehabilitation work after the typhoons of the early 1970s, was a concrete expression. This was expressed anew in *Sarilikba*, the formation of self-reliant communities, and the institutionalization of the Office for Social Concern and Involvement, the Center for Community Services, and the socially-oriented faith-based organizations.

In the eighties, active non-violence was the primary expression of protest and activism. We remember those years in stories about the yearning to express our faith and to work for justice that it entails. The work of organizing and sociopolitical change was propelled by the self-giving witness of Ninoy Aquino and culminated in the people's uprising at EDSA.

The events of the past week manifest a consistency across generations. They call the community to dig deep and learn from the patterns of the past. Discernment within the community amidst the diversity of positions in the crisis of this pandemic and the recent calamities have brought out the need for deeper conversations. The Loyola Schools administration and the student body have begun engaging in dialogue and released a joint statement on this matter. I am heartened in seeing students express grievances as well as call for compassion for those affected by the crisis. I affirm the right of citizens to hold their government accountable in its duty to serve and help those affected by the pandemic and the calamities. In line with our education mission, we recognize differing positions by offering various options consistent with our objective of integral formation for those who wish to engage in protest actions.

The truth sets us free.

We continue to search for meaning. We continue to search for truth. What guides Ateneo is that we search for these through the lens of faith.

The value of sharing our faith that does justice runs deep in Ateneo education. Recent events have brought out the need for our community to dig deeper and draw from our shared value of *cura personalis*. At this point in our nation's history, the value more properly refers to "care for the people" – our community and the communities of which we are part.

This care for people encourages us to reexamine ourselves by listening to the different narratives that have come up, and testing these through deep discernment. It acknowledges the inalienable right to speak and be heard; but so too the responsibility to listen to others.

There are many voices and many modes of expression. We are called upon to grow in the habit of respecting the views of others and to the desire to be bridge-builders who foster productive collaboration.

Learning schools build a learning nation. This is very much part of Ateneo's mission of greater social engagement. It will continue to define the identity of the University and its members. The mission asks us not to give up with what we are doing, but to hold fast to the learning that we are crafting and innovating as a community for and with others. These personal, social, and spiritual encounters remind us of the active presence and action of a loving God in our lives, and in our world.

The time calls us to solidarity. Not of our own light, but that of Christ. May Ateneo continue to be a light in the Lord – *Lux in Domino*.

amdg

  
Roberto C Yap SJ  
President