



ATENEUM DE MANILA UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

11 May 2022

My fellow Ateneans,

Kamusta?

As the nation reels from a divisive election, we all have questions in our heads. What happened? Why did it happen? How did we allow our nation to simply forget history? And what happens now? All of us are searching for answers – in our leaders, our fellow citizens, and ourselves. But I know that it will take us some time to fully understand and process the events of the past few years. It is clear, though, that we have all let our guard down and failed in guarding our democratic values and ideals. And that is the most painful part – knowing that we all could have done better, and that we could have steered our nation towards a different path.

While all this is happening, I am heartened that countless members of our community – especially our students – have stepped up and actively participated in this political exercise in many ways. I am especially proud of our first-time voters who have contributed their voice to the growing chorus for change. Channel the passion and creativity you've discovered these past months into an energy that will fuel our drive to rebuild and remember.

Right now, I am reminded of the Japanese art of *kintsugi* – the painstaking task of repairing broken pottery with lacquer and precious metal, usually gold or silver. Our nation is broken and fragmented, shattered by greed and deceit. Our task now is to repair and put back those fragments together. This will take time to repair, and even the most meticulous of repair work will leave the cracks obvious. But those glued-together cracks are reminders of our shared history, of how our nation was formed and made whole, or how perfectly imperfect we as a democratic society are.

Fellow Ateneans, let us take this opportunity to rebuild our heavily fractured society. Use this moment as an opportunity to begin the arduous task of making whole again our heavily damaged democracy.

First, let us allow ourselves to feel the pain and sorrow. Have a good cry, rant with a friend, debrief with your fellow Ateneans. However, do not allow the pain and anger to take over and lead you into toxicity and negativity. Let us reach out to others, especially beyond our normal circles. Search for common ground and meet with our fellow Filipinos eye to eye, heart to heart. If you try to listen closely, engage with them, and

understand where they are coming from, you will find more things that you have in common than you think. Listen especially to the poor and the powerless, iyong mga *nasa laylayan ng lipunan*.

We all know it will be tough, painful, and exhausting; but always remember that nation-building is a never-ending exercise we all must take part in. The task of alleviating poverty is a marathon, not a sprint. Working with and for the last, the least, and the lost is a demanding but joyful journey. Defending democracy is a constant struggle. Caring for creation, our common home requires persistence and perseverance. Despite the hardship, continue fighting. Stay vigilant; let us keep our guard up. Fight for the truth, and do not let lies whitewash the sins of the past. Have faith, not just in God, but also in ourselves. Do not ever lose hope.

Lastly, always, choose the more loving option. In fact, loving our country and our fellow Filipinos is the bravest thing we can do, especially at this chapter in our history. This is not the time to give up on our country. Our country deserves better – and love should be what drives us in our mission to bridge the disconnects and make our nation finally be whole.

Always in Christ,


Fr Bobby