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1965-2006: LOYOLA SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT FORTY

Address given at the LST Commencement Exercises

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The year San Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila was canonized, Fr. James Reuter presented a pageant that summed up Christianity's 400-year history in the Philippines, and it was supposed to go for some forty minutes only. My assignment this morning is to sum up forty years of Loyola School of Theology (LST) in about twenty minutes, and so that comes down to two years per minute. In doing so, I will try to do three things.

First, I will go through some names, mainly of the pioneers who have given much to LST, and give a word or two on their labors. Due to time constraints, I can mention only a few, both living and dead, while passing over the present generation with much regret. Second, I will attempt to cite a few events and accomplishments which are like landmarks, milestones in the history of the first thirty years. These are my personal choices, and so my selection will be inadequate. Third, I would like to pay tribute to a person I believe made a contribution of enduring value to all of us gathered here.

Pioneers of LST

Many of you by now know that the school year 1965-66 was our first here at what is now the Loyola School of Theology (LST). Our

students in that first year were the Jesuits, the seminarians from San Jose Major Seminary *(Josefinos)*, and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The Oblates have been studying with the *Josefinos* even before the Japanese War years at the seminary in Balintawak. The Jesuits were the newcomers in 1965. We functioned then under government accreditation for San Jose Seminary until 1968, when we became a *sui juris* school federated with the Ateneo de Manila University. We started what is now LST with the formation of priests as our only objective.

For nearly thirty years, there was a short and rather constant list of LST professors. Almost all were Jesuits, and practically everyone was a graduate of the Gregorian or the Biblicum in Rome. There were one or two exceptions until quite recently, when we welcomed young blood and many new faces.

This morning, we can be led by titles of recognition given by other entities to our faculty. Honorary doctorates have been given for their labors as theologians in the service of the Church.

Fr. Pedro de Achutegui received his honorary PhD from the Ateneo de Manila University for his multivolume work on Aglipayanism and Aguinaldo, but above all for his wide-ranging activity for the CBCP, which culminated in the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines in 1991 and the Synod of Manila which preceded it. For many years, his Cardinal Bea Institute was CBCP Secretariat for ecumenism. LST was involved in highly ecumenical activities at that time – dialogues, conferences, national and Asian-wide signing of joint agreements, etc.

Fr. Pedro Sevilla was also involved in these ecumenical activities. He attended meetings here and abroad, for instance, with the World Council of Churches and other Protestant organizations. He served longest as LST administrator – as Dean twice, as President twice, and as delegate to congresses and conferences.

Fr. Joseph Smith is the voluminous author of erudite sets of notes which people have treasured over the years. He has served LST with steady coursework, mentored twenty-one theses including five doctoral dissertations. He works at the library study room where his solid

scholarship progresses unabated up to now.

Fr. Joseph Roche received his honorary doctorate from the Ateneo de Naga University. His authentic magnum opus is the Catechism for Filipino Catholics, and his influence in religious education will resound even when his voice will no longer be heard enough.

Fr. John Schumacher, honored by the Ateneo de Manila University with the *Tanglaw ng Lahi* award as a church historian of really significant achievement, is widely recognized for his lasting scholarly work on early church history.

Fr. Gerry Healy, who combined in his classroom the confessional, the counselling room, the court, and other pastoral fields, gave LST a noted eminence in moral theology, which we trust is being kept up at this time.

Fr. Eduardo Hontiveros received an honorary PhD from Xavier University, the *Tanglaw ng Lahi* award from Ateneo de Manila University, the *Ecclesia et Pontifice* medal from Pope John Paul II, and the *Magnificat* award from the Archdiocese of Manila. Several concerts have been presented in his honor as the Father of Filipino liturgical music. He has composed and/or written the lyrics to more than 450 liturgical songs, and his hymns are literally sung all over the world – from St. Peter's Basilica in Rome to Beijing, from Reykjavik, Iceland to the smallest barrios in our country. In a 2001 nationwide survey ranking the outstanding Filipino Catholic writers of this century, he was voted second only to Fr. Horacio dela Costa.

To be safe, I have only cited some of our elders. The later generation of teachers in LST are still in their full power, glory, and flower. It will be another time when we will sing their praise. However, I would like to mention two from this younger generation who give eminence to the work of LST.

Bishop Luis Antonio Tagle, an LST graduate, is a member of the International Theological Commission and the Inner Council for Bishops' Roman Synods. At the age of forty, he received an honorary PhD from Far Eastern University and was ordained bishop ordinary of Imus, Cavite.

Fr. Daniel Patrick Huang, who happens to be my Provincial, is a man of distinction and he is already looked upon as a luminary in our ecclesiastical firmament.

Milestones in the History of LST

Perhaps beyond the classroom and university campus, LST's service to the hierarchy can be recorded as a special achievement. When Archbishop Giuseppe Pittau of the Congregation for Catholic Education came here to inaugurate LST as a pontifical institute with the right to grant ecclesiastical degrees, he called me aside and told me that it was LST's service to the hierarchy – first to the CBCP for many years, and in some measure to the FABC and to some Roman decasteries – which was the one main ground for ready conferral of LST's accreditation. He encouraged us to be constant in that service. Fr. Pedro Arrupe more than once told us that if St. Ignatius were living, this work would be on the top level of his priorities.

For some of us at LST, that service to the hierarchy has taken up much of our time and energies. What has this service meant in practice?

Above all, there is the schooling of priests. When we started LST, this was the one and only objective. You can read that in the early documents, in our inaugural program. The messages of Cardinal Rufino Santos, Fr. Pedro Arrupe and Fr. Horacio dela Costa speak of one thing: their one wish and prayer was that this school of philosophy and theology (with Fr. Frank Reilly as Dean of Philosophy) might become as good as any school of priestly formation in the entire Catholic world. When Pope Paul VI received me in a brief audience in Rome in 1966, he looked into my eyes and told me to make that the project of my own life. The formation of good and holy priests, he said, was the noblest task anyone could be given in the Church.

As such, the first twenty-five or so years of this school had priestly formation as its primary objective. It was a service to the dioceses, the religious congregations, to the hierarchy, and to the religious men who came here to prepare for ordination.

LST has also been serving the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). For instance, CBCP has over the years asked us to handle several seminars for the general assemblies of bishops. During the turmoil of the martial law years, we handled seminars on ideologies and the Church's stance toward them. Frs. Romeo Intengan, Jose Blanco and Antonio Lambino took part in such.

Previous to this, LST held a quick run through of theological currents in the years immediately following Vatican II. If I may have a personal note, that was the first and only time I was formally delated to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for repeating Bernard Lonergan's view that 19th and 20th century scholasticism has had its day and that we must go beyond it. Now a sentence like that is very conservative.

Not too long ago, the bishops asked us to update them on contemporary Christology. Fr. Huang was already part of that. We were told it was the best attended CBCP seminar up to that time. Today, Fr. Miguel Lambino, who is in charge of the annual Christological workshop for the renewal program of priests, keeps that up.

One friendly bishop publicly said: we look to LST for balance and reliability in doctrine. Others, as critics, use other adjectives and not in quite so friendly a fashion.

LST was closely associated with the first 20 years of FABC conferences. From the organizational meeting in 1970 in Manila under Paul VI, and up to the 20th year celebrations at San Carlos seminary with John Paul II, LST was there. The hands-on FABC workhorse, the Maryknoller Fr. Ed Malone, almost invariably asked LST people into the FABC general assemblies and into many of its sectoral seminars.

Preparations for the first International Congress in Manila in 1979 were done in LST, and the FABC has a desk for LST in practically every bishops' synod in Rome. It was usually Fr. Pedro de Achutegui who was present; today, Fr. Jim Kroeger, a Maryknoll priest who is very much a part of LST, is the person involved in a major way with the FABC.

When Loyola House of Studies (LHS) celebrated its 25th anniversary, one of the salient features emerging from that span of

years was that there was no major event in the life of the Church in our country, at least those events which took place in Metro Manila but, for good or ill, without LHS there. The same can be said of LST. From that afternoon in 1968 when we, in front of the legislative building and in our white cassocks, were with the student crowds which rocked the Marcos limousine as it waited, and up until the 100 hours of EDSA Uno, LST was there in good numbers. But one might say this has nothing to do with theological academic life. True, but LST's theological life has never been isolated from the life of the church and the general life of our people. We have been there too much, perhaps – in fact, that has been the complaint. This has been both a plus factor and a liability, a blessing and a curse. The Chinese have a curse: May you live in interesting times. LST has lived under that curse for its past 30 or 40 years. I do not know if one would want that curse lifted, or if it is better to endure or even enjoy it.

For publications, LST produced the LOGOS volumes, the Cardinal Bea publication series, Fr. Sevilla's pioneering Filipino textbooks now largely forgotten, and the LANDAS journal. Loyola Papers itself had some 20 issues published. Not all numbers were bestsellers, but those which during the Marcos years dealt with the issues of the time – ideologies, Marxism and Maoism in the Philippine context, Church social teaching applied locally – reached reprint numbers of 3000 and more. These were phenomenal numbers during that time. Xerox was not readily available, and so beyond print, much copying and mimeographing went on. Copies were used in classrooms of all sorts – seminaries, Catholic colleges, sisters' communities, and even government workshops.

For not a few pastoral letters and other statements, our bishops made use of LST's theological services, either individually or collectively. Perhaps that time has passed now, but we were happy to be of service then.

Numbers wise and multiplier wise, it is of course the students who make up the school's wider and more productive sector. Students who extend the school's service would make up its longer and wider history. A few years back, Fr. Victor Salanga lined up an impressive list of LST's graduates, indicating tasks undertaken in dioceses and

congregations, and responsibilities assumed. For instance, we have Teodoro Bacani as our first graduate to be named bishop. Later years would see graduates named bishops of Cubao, Parañaque, Imus, San Fernando, and Cagayan de Oro.

Tribute to Fr. Ralph Gehring

If I were asked to nominate the most valuable person LST has had since its first day on this campus until our time, someone whose influence has greatly helped a lot of us academically and otherwise, I would choose Fr. Ralph Gehring, whose name graces the library and who our present students unfortunately never met. I cannot think of any other person whom we can honor as having given all of himself so unselfishly, so competently and so outstandingly to LST. He was there from the conception, birth, and growing years of our library. Dr. Kosuke Koyama, perhaps the best known Asian Protestant theologian of the last century, said, "I never fail to visit the LST library every time I come to Manila. In my judgment it is the best theological library – Protestant, Catholic or ecumenical – in our part of the world."

When Fr. Gehring had to leave this work behind due to severe illness, he left us a legacy which I do not think we have fully appreciated. I hope we will even halfway keep up to the standards he set for himself, standards which he successfully met for some thirty years with constant, unsparing, and top quality professional dedication and labor.

As a last word, none of the good work in service of the church which LST has been able to do for the last 40 years could have been done without the Lord. I think of what the Lord has done for LST, for us, very often in spite of us. I think of the genuine dedication and faithful labor of so many good people involved, and only because they want to keep serving the Lord and his holy Church.

We should end on a note of gratitude to the Lord and to all who have given time, talent, and treasures of mind and heart to Him and to the cause to which LST is perpetually bound. In the work we have been entrusted with, the future is certainly in his hands, and so there is hope that cannot fail in his power and in his love.