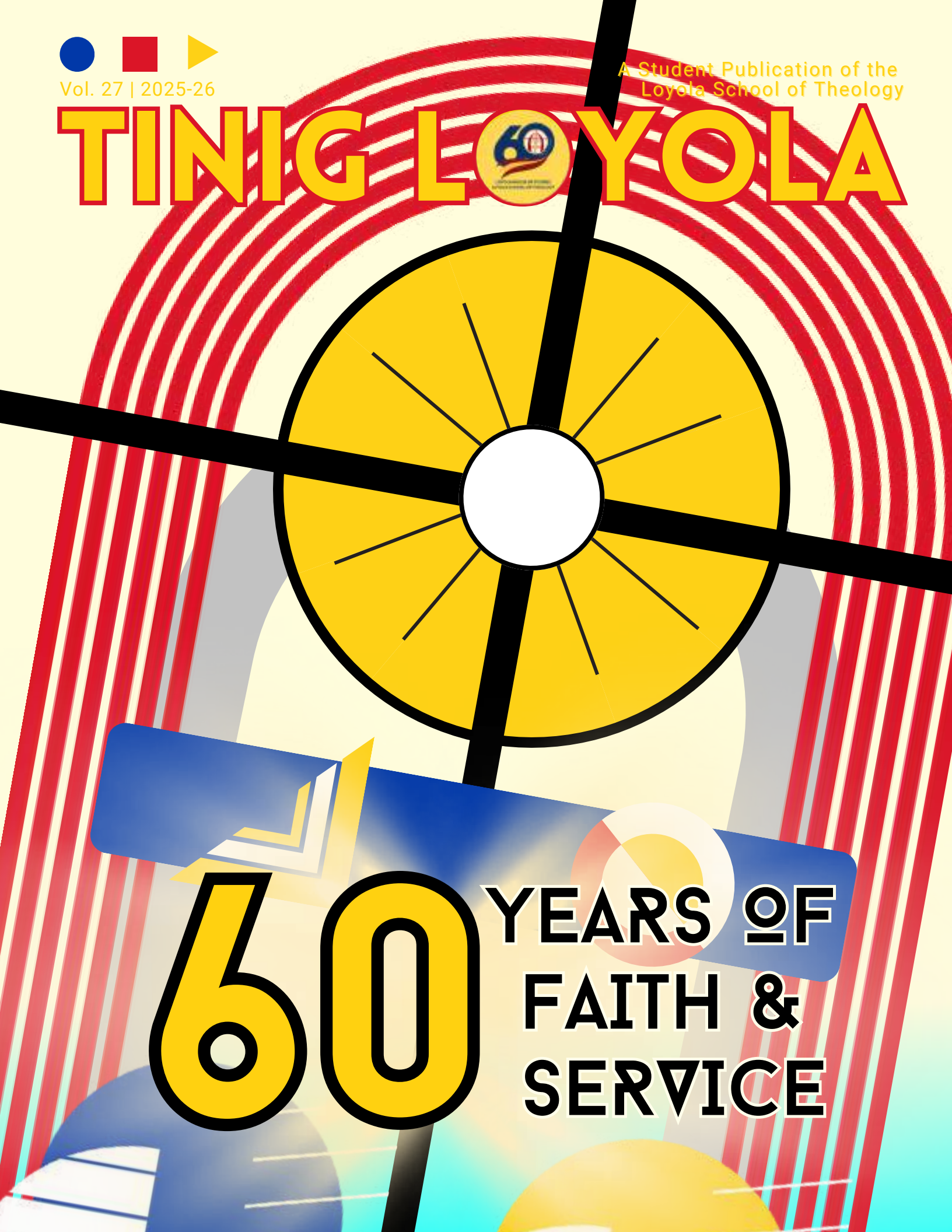
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A Student Publication of the
Loyola School of Theology

TINIG LOYOLA



60 YEARS OF FAITH & SERVICE

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TINIG LOYOLA 2025-2026

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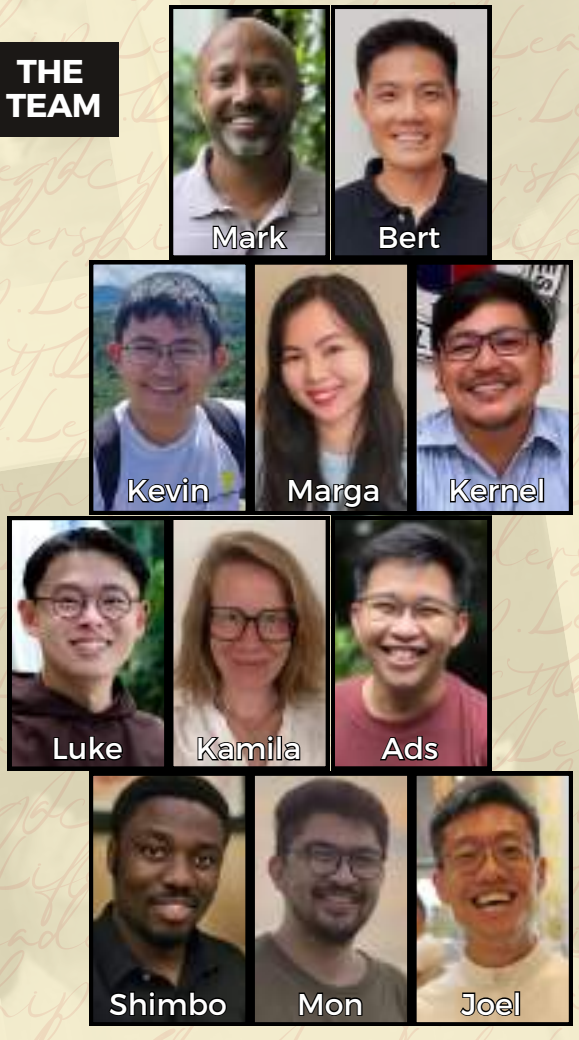


Inspired by Bauhaus design principles of clarity, form, and movement, this cover reimagines the iconic façade of the Loyola School of Theology. It adopts the main colours of the Philippine flag expressed through bold geometric shapes. The round disc representing a sun signify illumination and mission, while the radiating arcs suggest journey, dialogue, and a common direction. In sum, this design reflects Life as dynamic growth, Leadership as a synodal path walked together, and Legacy as a living tradition onwards–celebrating six decades of formation, faith, and service!

CONTRIBUTORS

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Fr. Joel Tabora, S.J.
Fr. Manoling Francisco, S.J.
Fr. Rogel Abais, S.J.
Rev. Bien Cruz, S.J.

THE TEAM



ABOUT THE ISSUE

In his article "Educated by Hope, sent for Others", Sch. Mon Lopez, S.J., wrote that the jadedness that Filipinos experience is an inevitable and unfortunate consequence of political instability, economic underdevelopment, and moral corruption. One that has led the Philippines to be given the unflattering reputation of being "the basket case of Asia," according to former LST President Fr. Jose Mario C. Francisco, S.J., in his inaugural address in 2006.

But it is in this locus of being in a Catholic country and in "the basket case of Asia", that LHS-LST finds itself in a perennial dialectic tension between Christian faith and the social context—trying to uphold Christian values in a society that falls short of its Christian ideals. Over the last 60 years, this culture has shaped our very soul as an institution and the way we live our ecclesial life as Church here in the Philippines.

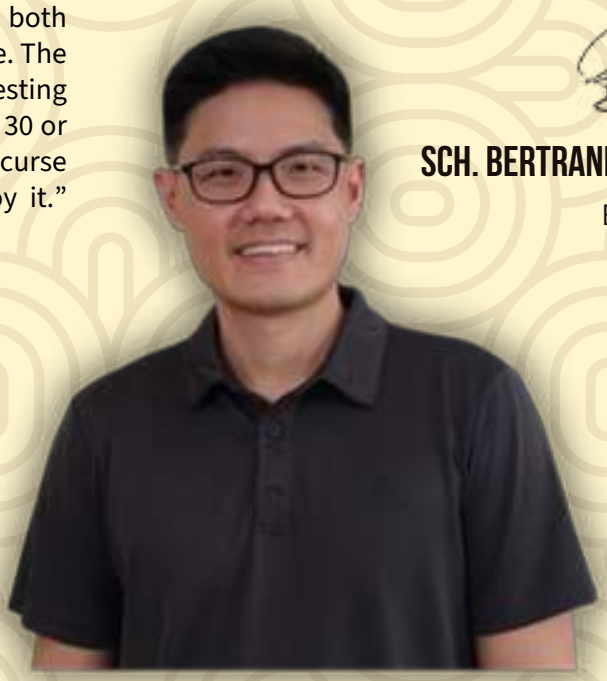
The late Fr. Catalino Arevalo, S.J. noted in a commencement exercise at LST's 40th anniversary that "From its early days in the 1960s through the years of activism and martial law, LHS-LST have played leadership roles in the response of the Church to injustice and played significant roles in our deliverance from martial law in the snap elections of 1986 and EDSA 1." He says, "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 the 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."

From the protest of massive corruption in the government on September 21, 2025 to the Trillion Peso March Movement at EDSA People Power Monument on November 30, 2025, to raising money for typhoon victims, and blood donation drives, it seems that there is never a shortage of opportunities to exercise our faith for the authentic worship of God and the full development of people and persons. This is why we decided on the threefold theme of Life, Leadership, and Legacy.

In Life, read about what it means to share in Christ's love and liberation of the poor in *Dilexi Te*, and a special feature on LST's unsung heroes. In Leadership, we introduce the author of *Dilexi Te* himself, Pope Leo XIV, for the first time since his inauguration as Pope on May 18, 2025, together with a speech by former LHS Rector Fr. Ben Nebres, S.J., and a reflection by LST Student Council President, Ms Marga Samson Tongo. Finally, in Legacy, Fr. Manoling Francisco, S.J., and Fr. Joel Tabora, S.J. share their reflections on LHS-LST, while Fr. Eric Eusebio, S.J. and Rev. Bien Cruz, S.J. take us on a journey through its storied past from 1965 to 2026.

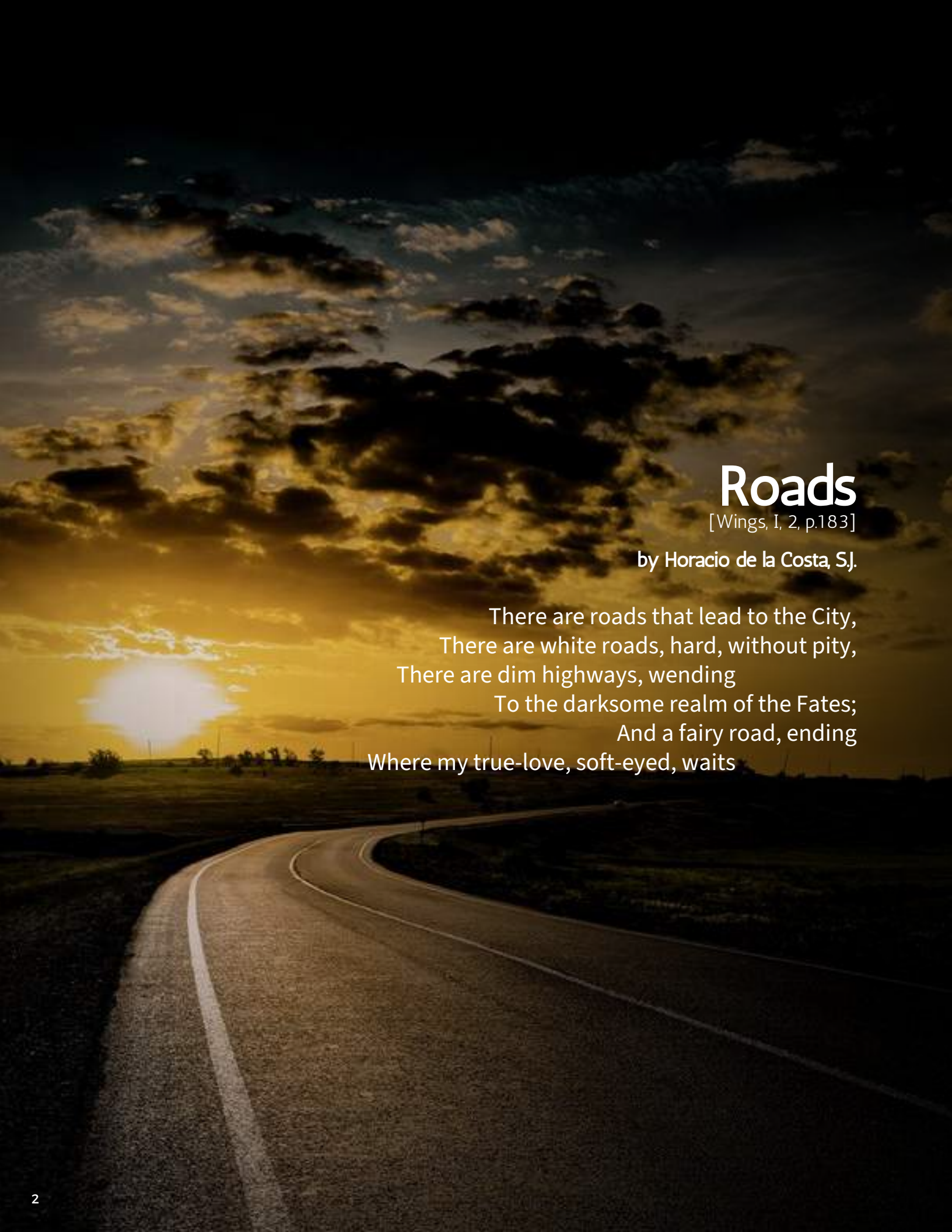
We hope that these articles will help you, our readers, appreciate how far LHS-LST has come, but also fan into flames our continuing advocacy for life, the least, and the lost .

Happy 60th Anniversary!



SCH. BERTRAND LEONG, S.J.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Roads

[Wings, I, 2, p.183]

by Horacio de la Costa, S.J.

There are roads that lead to the City,
There are white roads, hard, without pity,
There are dim highways, wending
To the darksome realm of the Fates;
And a fairy road, ending
Where my true-love, soft-eyed, waits

ACADEMIC UPDATES



Fr. Rogel Anecito Abais, S.J., ends his term as the Vice President for Academic Affairs after nine years of service. Thank you, Fr. Rogel, for your dedication and hard work to the Loyola School of Theology (LST) Community for the past nine years.



Fr. Oliver Dy, S.J. is the incoming Vice President for Academic Affairs. He will assume his new role on June 1, 2026. Welcome, Fr. Ody!



Fr. Gil Donayre, S.J., was elected as the new Executive Secretary. His term begins AY 2026-2027, which will last for three years. Welcome, Fr. Gil!



The Vatican's Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (AVEPRO) visited LST on November 28, 2025. It is an institution of the Holy See dedicated to fostering a culture of quality in ecclesiastical academic institutions around the world. Fr. Rogel Abais, S.J., LST Vice President for Academic Affairs, together with Ms. Marga Tongo, President of the LST Student Council, presented LST's mission, program, and initiatives.

The first batch of three-year Ecclesiastical Baccalaureate in Theology (ThB) began this academic year 2025-2026. Around 70 students begin their studies under the updated curriculum.



EVENTS



AUG 20 2025 Mass of the Holy Spirit, Solemn Investiture of Fr. Renato Repole S.J. and Reception



SEP 03 2025 Spiritual Conversations on the Philippine Province Apostolic Plan



SEP 17 2025 Java with the Jesuits Collaboration (Part 1)



SEP 21 2025 Trillion Peso March



SEP 24 2025 Launch of LHS-LST 60th Anniversary



OCT 01 2025 Season of Creation: Peace with Creation

OCT 29 2025

- Give Blood, Spread Love: LST-PGH Blood Donation Drive
- Launch of LHS-LST 60th Anniversary Merchandise
- African Students' Mass and Fellowship
- Vietnamese Students' Mass and Fellowship



NOV 1 2025 Paying Tribute to Deceased Jesuits at Sacred Heart Novitiate Cemetery



NOV 28 2025 End of Semester Christmas Party



DEC 19 2025 LST Employees Christmas Party



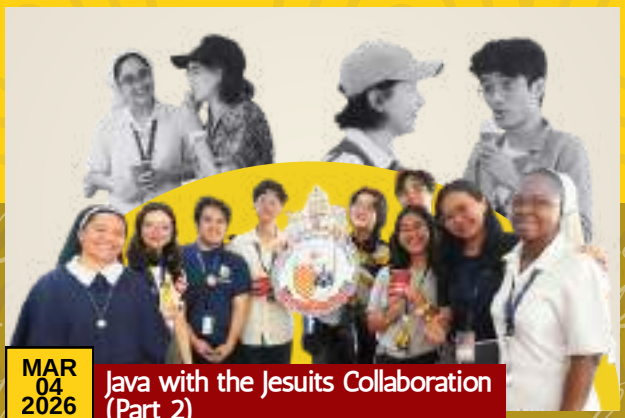
JAN 17 2026 Misa-Kainan: Thanksgiving for Benefactors



FEB 18 2026 Ash Wednesday Mass



JAN 31 2026 Forming Ministers of the Word: A Prayer Concert



MAR 04 2026 Java with the Jesuits Collaboration (Part 2)



FEB 09 2026 African Students' Mass



MAR 25 2026 Marian Tea Party



FEB 16 2026 LST-PGH Blood Donation Drive



APR 8 2026 Tree planting at *Laudato Si'* Garden

THEOLOGICAL HOUR

OCT 25 2025

The Scandal of the Cross Today: Standing with the Crucified Poor

Fr. Flaviano Antonio Lopez Villanueva, S.V.D., Ramon Magsaysay Award recipient for his unwavering mission to uphold the dignity of the poor and the oppressed, reminded the audience to see the face of God in their brothers and sisters — to be scandalized enough to help, to listen, and to know not only their names but also God's call to truly understand what poverty means. Drawing from his first-hand experience of standing with the persecuted during the previous administration's war on drugs and his founding of the Arnold Janssen Kalinga Center for the homeless, Fr. Flavie challenged the audience to confront the urgent question of what it means to stand with the crucified poor in our time.





In the Service of the Word and the World:

The Contributions of the Loyola School of Theology to Theology in the Philippines, in Asia, and in the Universal Church

NOV 12 2025

As part of the commemoration of the 60th founding anniversary of Loyola School of Theology (LST) and Loyola House of Studies (LHS), the event highlighted six decades of LST's engagement in theological reflection, academic formation, and service to the Church and society. It featured distinguished speakers who have significantly contributed to theological discourse and ministry: Fr. Joel E. Tabora, S.J.; Fr. Jose Mario C. Francisco, S.J.; Sr. Ma. Anicia B. Co, R.V.M.; and Fr. Salvador G. Agualada Jr., C.M.F.

JAN 28 2026 Hope Amidst Brokenness: Stories on the Journey of the People of Myanmar



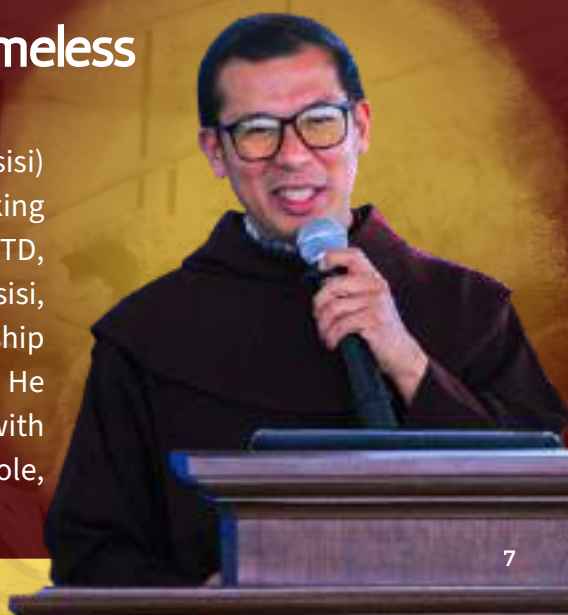
This Conversation on Asian Theologies and Cultures featured a special sharing by the Myanmar Desk, which delved into the lived experiences of the people of Myanmar. These were stories marked by struggle, resilience, and hope. Through these narratives, attendees were invited to discern how hope continues to emerge amid brokenness, both personally and communally, reflecting on these realities in dialogue with theology, culture, and faith in the Asian context. This gathering is part of LST's ongoing efforts to engage Asian contexts, allowing the voices of people at the margins to shape our theological reflection and response.

People Power as Sacred Memory: A Filipino Theological Reflection of EDSA at 40 FEB 11 2026



It was a profound moment of "Sacred Memory" for the LST community in anticipation of the 40th anniversary of the People Power Revolution. Dr. Cristina J. Montiel and Fr. Manoling Francisco, S.J. challenged attendees to move beyond history and look into the living realities of our nation today. From the psychological conditions of 1986 to the theological questions of poverty and corruption in 2026, the conversation was a powerful reminder that "*Tayo ang People Power. Noon. Ngayon. Bukas.*"

MAR 18 2026 The Centuries-Old Canticle: The Timeless Relevance of the Poor Man of Assisi



"In a world torn by hatred, violence, and wars, he (St. Francis of Assisi) found inner peace." As part of the Year of St. Francis of Assisi and marking the 800th anniversary of the Saint's death, Fr. Cristino R. Pine, O.F.M., STD, explored the meaning and spirituality of the life of St. Francis of Assisi, inviting participants to reflect on his simplicity and deep sense of kinship with all creation, which continues to inspire many people even today. He emphasized an interior faith that is shared with everyone—even with other creatures, whom he called brothers and sisters. Fr. Renato Repole, S.J., also blessed the newly renovated *Laudato Si'* Garden.

ABOUT THE LOGO

The 60th Anniversary logo of the Loyola House of Studies (LHS) and the Loyola School of Theology (LST) draws its inspiration from the richness of our identity and mission.



The colors of the Philippine flag are at the heart of the design: **blue** and **red**, with **gold** accents, symbolizing our rootedness in the nation we serve.



The **red** evokes both theology, the deep study of God, and the fire of the Holy Spirit, which animates and inspires our mission.





Flowing through the design are **three dynamic lines**, representing the three Ls that have shaped our institutions: Life, Leadership, and Legacy. These signify not only our past and present but also the enduring mission we carry into the future.



At the core is the iconic **LST–LHS cross**, proclaiming that Christ remains at the center of all we are and do. Its design reflects a distinctly Eucharistic sense, grounding our formation, study, and mission in the sacrament of Christ's love.

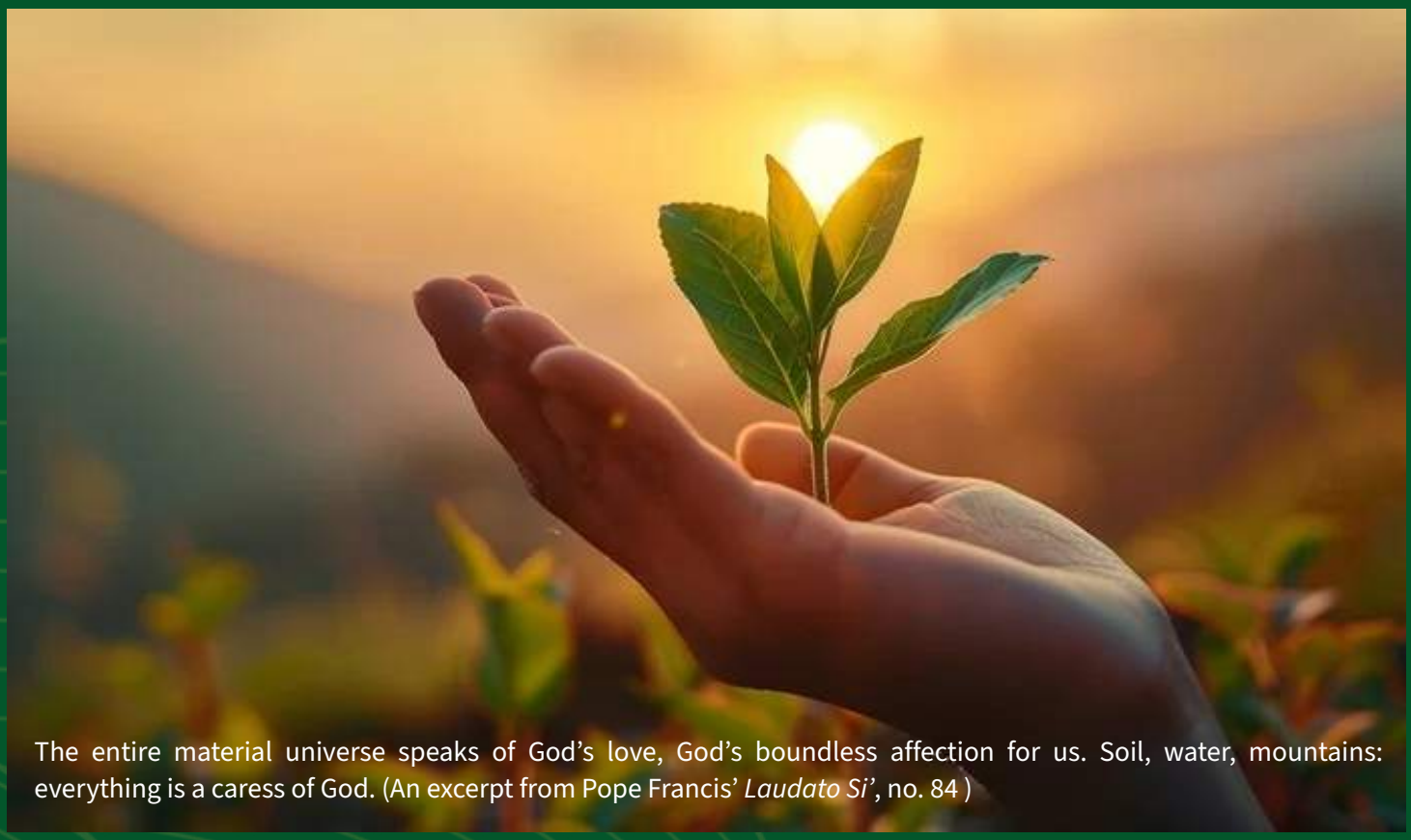


The **yellow** recalls the color of the Pope, a sign of our identity as an ecclesiastical faculty in service of the universal Church.



Finally, encircled by the number **60** (1965–2025), the logo celebrates six decades of faith, formation, and service—all for the greater glory of God, *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* (AMDG).


LIFE.



The entire material universe speaks of God's love, God's boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is a caress of God. (An excerpt from Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*, no. 84)

Laudato Si' and the Principle and Foundation

by Sch. Adrian Pobre, S.J.

First Principle and Foundation

As I was reflecting on how much Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* has informed and inspired the way I live my life, my thoughts kept wandering back to the First Principle and Foundation (SpEx#23) of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. The Spiritual Exercises begin with a thoughtful and prayerful consideration of the First Principle and Foundation, a meditation that lays the groundwork for all the prayer periods and meditations that would follow. It basically chronicles the movement of the Exercises, particularly man's journey toward interior freedom, one that leads him/her to freely choose to enter into a loving relationship with his/her Creator.

In thinking about *Laudato Si'* in the framework of the Principle and Foundation, three things stood out to me: (1) the purpose of man's existence (2) how all things on the face of the earth are created to help man realize his/her purpose and that (3) man should only use these things in so far as (*tantum quantum*) it helps him/her achieve his/her purpose. The last two points are further expounded by the text of the Spiritual Exercises into what we commonly refer to as "Ignatian Indifference" or "Detachment" but this particular understanding of the exercise of human freedom in the Ignatian tradition only makes sense in the context of the first point which the Principle and Foundation clearly expresses as: "To praise, reverence, and serve God."

While this purpose can be read simply as a "to-do list" for the salvation of one's soul, I feel that such an interpretation is narrow and limited at best and could be

seriously problematic at worst. For one, it might evoke an image of a needy deity, one who demands and requires a lot of praising, reverencing, and serving from everything that he has ever created. It might also conjure the picture of an egotistical and self-serving god who only creates "stuff" out of his own need to be worshipped. And thus, I feel that such a reading and understanding goes against the very spirit and intent of the meditation itself. As St. Anselm posits in his Proslogion, only God has Necessary Real Existence, which means that everything else is contingent and dependent on him. But the fact is, we exist. We are not out of necessity but from the divine desire of a God who is Love and who wants to be in relationship with us. We are then not only loved into being but also called into a loving relationship with Love Himself. And so, I feel that as a created being, man can better understand the purpose of his/her existence proposed by the Principle and Foundation through the context of a relationship – a loving relationship between the Creator and created being, which informs the relationship among all created beings in existence. *Laudato Si'* refers to this as interconnectedness. You cannot have a relationship with yourself alone.

Interconnectedness

As a man of the Spiritual Exercises, one of the questions that I consider in my Daily Examen is

> *"How much have I allowed my experience of Christ in the Spiritual Exercises to shape my life today?"*

And almost always, the honest answer is not much, at least not as much as I desire. In the same vein, I began asking myself, "How much have I allowed the teachings of *Laudato Si'* to inform, influence, and inspire my life?" Unsurprisingly, not much either. And I say this not because of my lack of availability for environmental movements or advocacies, nor because I do not feel I champion causes for social justice and integral ecology enough. A decade after Pope Francis released his landmark encyclical, I was surprised to still find myself lacking the openness in allowing its tenets to naturally take root in me. My heart hasn't been converted deep enough, not as much as I desire.

My experience in trying to live out the lessons of *Laudato Si'* faithfully is a mixed bag, really. For one, there are moments when I still feel distant from the threat of the global environmental crisis. Ridiculous right? Especially with record-high floods and massive earthquakes of unprecedented scale and damage within the country but around the world.

And here I find that the distance I feel is not about proximity, but more akin to a sense of powerlessness in the face of such catastrophes. I can recount moments when I just felt utterly defeated by an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and futility upon hearing news of disasters with an ever-growing frequency. It feels so frustratingly pointless to tirelessly segregate my trash when a massive oil spill is waiting to happen somewhere else in the world.



Aftermath of Typhoon Uwan (International name: Fung-wong) in Navotas, Metro Manila (Al Jazeera News [Aaron Favila/AP Photo)

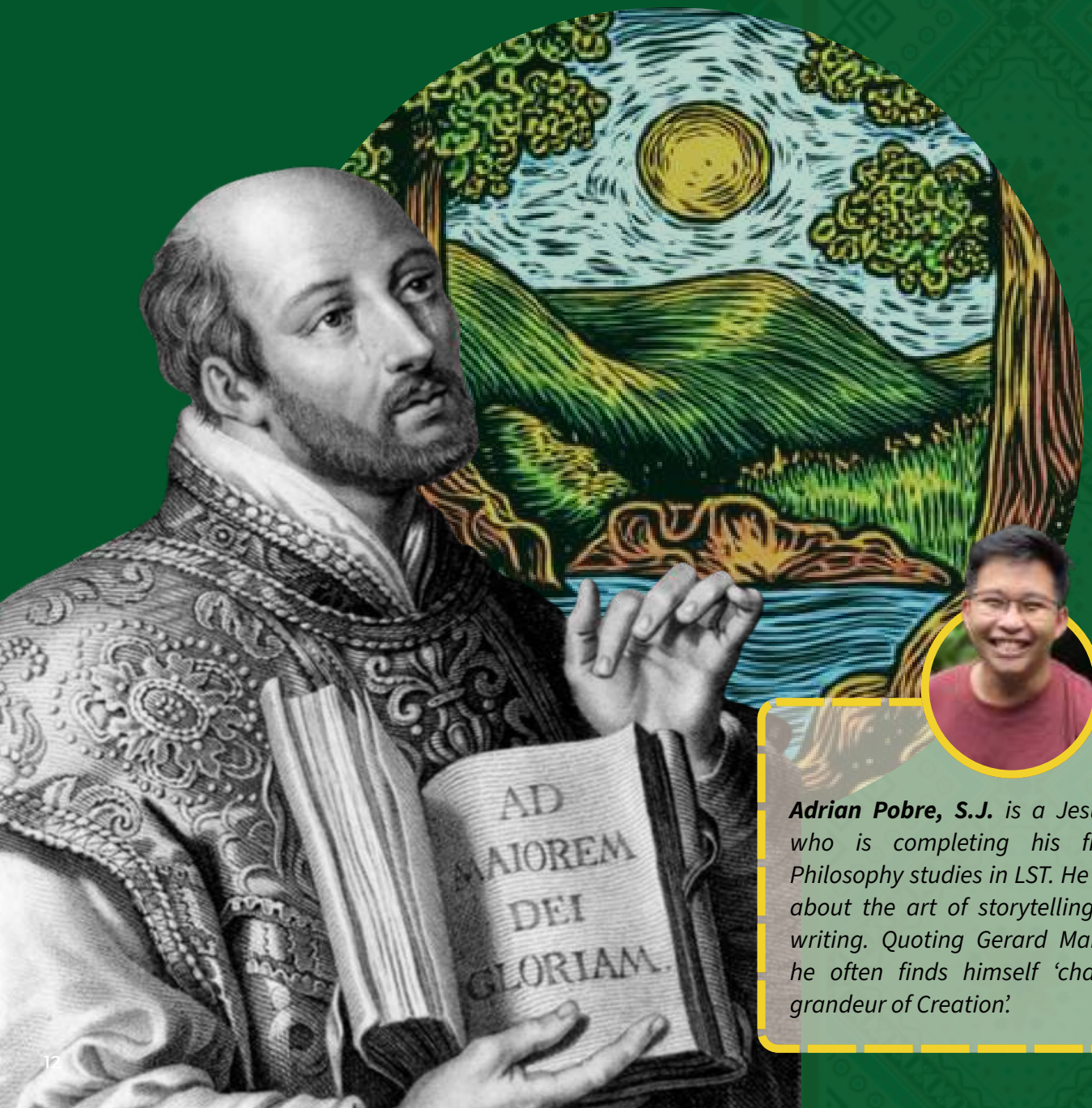
But there are also moments when I felt that I was exactly where the rubber met the road. Unsurprisingly, these are the moments when I felt most connected – in communion not only with nature but also with the people who suffer the effects of its slow death the most. These moments of interconnectedness with Creation were only possible through the relationships I have been blessed to have with the people who lived with these realities everyday: the corn farmers of Cabanglasan, the Indigenous People of Bendum, my adoptive families and friends in the slums of Kalookan, the long line of PGH patients sleeping in the side streets and back-alleys of Manila at night, my fellow dishwashers in Pasig. They gave nature a personal face to me. Faces that I cared about. Faces with whom I shared a 'Common Home'. These were the moments when I felt

closest not only to living out the lessons of *Laudato Si'*, but the closest to glorifying my Creator by honoring the dignity due to everyone and everything He has made.

A Genuine Conversion of the Heart

The purpose of the Principle and Foundation is to situate our human existence vis-à-vis our Creator and by doing so effectively set not only the tone but more importantly the motion of the rest of the Spiritual Exercises – a movement toward a genuine conversion of heart, a movement back to our Creator who is Lord to a world far larger and greater than our own little kingdoms and belly-buttons. A Creator whose heart is bigger than the world and has space for everyone, everything.

I feel that this conversion of the heart includes what both Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis refer to as ecological conversion. A shift in interior disposition that inevitably manifests and expresses itself in deeds more than words but one that first begins with a personal change of heart – a heart that remembers how it was first loved into being by the Creator, an experience which in turn allows for it be informed, reformed, and shaped by relationships it fosters and enters through daily encounters and experiences of that very same love reflected in others. A love that charges all of Creation. At the end of the day, I feel that man can only truly praise, revere, and serve God if he/she is open to learning from Him how to love as He does.



Adrian Pobre, S.J. *is a Jesuit scholastic who is completing his first year of Philosophy studies in LST. He is passionate about the art of storytelling and poetry-writing. Quoting Gerard Manley-Hopkins, he often finds himself 'charged by the grandeur of Creation'.*



Icon from the Mégalo Metéoron Monastery in Greece, representing the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, with the condemned Arius in the bottom of the icon. (Vatican News)

God Became Human: Nicene Creed and Incarnation

By Sch. Kevin Stephon R. Centeno, S.J.

In celebration of the 1,700th anniversary of the monumental first ecumenical council of Nicaea, which solemnly defined the divinity of Jesus Christ, Christians across denominations are invited to revisit and ponder deeply the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. This important symbol of faith contains the essential tenets of what Christians profess and believe to be divinely revealed. But believers must keep in mind that the creed is not an abstract treatise devoid of spiritual, pastoral, and social significance.

Pope Leo XIV explains in his apostolic letter *In Unitate Fidei* on the anniversary of Nicaea that the "Nicene Creed does not formulate a philosophical theory. It professes faith in the God who redeemed us through Jesus Christ." Central to the Nicene Creed is the doctrine of incarnation: God becoming human. The Gospel of John marvelously captures God's incarnation: "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) God, by paradoxically revealing himself in smallness and vulnerability in Jesus Christ, "revolutionizes pagan and philosophical conceptions of God."

The Nicene Creed states, "for us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man." Leo takes note of the creed's addition of the word "man" after "incarnate," which clarifies that God

really assumed and, in the process, saved the whole human being, body and soul. The Nicene Creed is also an antidote against the heretical doctrine called Docetism that considers Jesus Christ's humanity as an illusion.

Jesus Christ was born in a particular time and location. He was both male and Jewish. The particularity of the incarnation, as recorded with early Christian embellishments in the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke, sheds light on God's historical entrance to the world through his authentic humanity.

Reading closely the phrase "became man," feminist theologians raised the question of the relationship between incarnation and Jesus' maleness. Is Jesus' maleness constitutive of God's nature? In philosophical terms, since God became man, can we attribute a specific gender to God's ontology? Is God only male? The German theologian and expert on liturgical studies Teresa Berger expresses her nuanced perspective on the phrase "became man." In Latin, the phrase is translated as "*et homo factus est.*" The Latin word homo means human to distinguish it from vir, which means male. In a similar vein, the original Greek in the Nicene Creed for "became man" is *enanthrōpēsanta* that is rooted in the word *anthrōpos* which means human being. Therefore, Berger opts for the more inclusive translation "and became human" because God "took human form in the incarnation, rather than maleness only. The maleness of the Incarnate Word seems to be of no interest to the Nicene Creed."

Jesus' maleness is secondary to the theological truth of God's incarnation.

> *"The chromosomal particularity of the incarnation is a contingent reality, as was Jesus' height, or the color of his eyes, or the size of his feet,"*

explains Berger. This is not to deny that Jesus walked on earth as a man, but to emphasize the all-inclusiveness of God's salvific embrace of humanity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that "God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God." (Ironically, the pronoun "he" is still standard use for God.) The danger of androcentric interpretation of the incarnation is the exclusion of women from the divine nature all humans share in God. The axiom of the Saint Gregory of Nazianzen applies in this case: "For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved."



Icon of the Nativity of Christ, Artist Unknown

One might ask what's really the point of critically evaluating the statement "God became man"? Isn't it already understood that God saves everyone? Well, theological language is not innocent. Despite the symbolic and poetic characteristics of theological and credal statements, such statements are not immune from distortion and abuse. According to the feminist theologian Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J., "Of all the doctrines of the church, Christology is the one most used to oppress women." Specifically, the maleness of Jesus Christ can be weaponized to promote the superiority of men over women. Moreover, the crucified Christ can be misinterpreted as a call to be passive—allowing oneself to be a victim.

The question of whether God could have become a human being as a woman is haughtily dismissed. Pushing the radicality of God's incarnation forward, the answer is definitely yes. "If women are genuinely human and if God is the deep mystery of holy love, then what is to prevent such an incarnation?" responds Johnson. Unfortunately, "Jesus' maleness has been so interpreted that he has become the male revealer of a male God whose full representative can only be male. As a package, this Christology relegates women to the margins of significance," further observes Johnson. The absurd claim that God favors men since God chose to be incarnated in a male body doesn't hold water.

On December 4, 2025, the Vatican released the much-awaited report of the study commission on the female diaconate. The report states that "the purely historical perspective does not allow us to arrive at any definitive certainty" and "in the final analysis, the question must be decided on the doctrinal level," to the disappointment of supporters of admitting women into the diaconate. For now, the Vatican is saying no to the possibility of women deacons regardless of the historical evidence and sound theological arguments.

Interestingly, the report mentions a particular session wherein there was an even split in the vote for (five in favor, five against) this thesis: "The masculinity of Christ, and therefore the masculinity of those who receive Holy Orders, is not accidental, but is an integral part of sacramental identity, preserving the divine order of salvation in Christ. To alter this reality would not be a simple adjustment of the ministry but a rupture of the nuptial meaning of salvation."

Amid the barriers women experience in both the Church and society for their full flourishing, the event of God's incarnation brings the glad tidings that "inequality between men and women is not part of God's design," as stated in the final document of the Synod on Synodality. Echoing Pope Leo XIV, our God incarnate revolutionizes our narrow conception of a patriarchal God. Every time we recite the Nicene Creed in the liturgy, we proclaim an inclusive God who sanctified humanity. Out of sheer love, our Creator God did not remain inaccessible, distant, and abstract; God became human, embracing its complexity and fragility. Limiting this to men alone is a gross distortion of our God with a human face.



Kevin Stephon R. Centeno, S.J. *is a Filipino Jesuit scholastic. Born in Oriental Mindoro, he obtained his bachelor's degree in philosophy and spent five years of seminary formation at Saint Augustine Seminary prior to entering the Society of Jesus.*



Educated by Hope, Sent for Others

By Sch. Ramon Angelo Lopez, S.J.

> *Consider the office of consoler which Christ our Lord carries out, and compare it with the way friends console one another (Spiritual Exercises no. 224)*

Hope, nowadays, seems like a luxury that can be availed by those who can afford to hope. It is not uncommon to hear the common Filipino breathe out exasperated protestations on the situation, not just here in the Philippines but also in the world. Barbers, shopkeepers, even office workers, under their breaths would utter: "*pare-parehas lang naman ang mga iyan… wala nang magbabago sa ating bansa… sariling sikap nalang…*"[1] The jadedness that Filipinos experience is an inevitable and unfortunate consequence of this reality–this is an experience that we all share in varying degrees insofar as we are citizens of the world. Thus, the question arises: Is it still worth hoping? As members of the Church and of the global society, do we still have it in us to hope?

In the *Ratio Studiorum*–the foundation of Jesuit education and curriculum–states in its first few pages that "...the aim of our educational program is to lead men to the knowledge and love of our Creator and Redeemer.."[2] This knowledge and love of Christ Our Lord is not only in the realm of the intellect, but also of a growing familiarity with Christ and of his ways. This is echoed in the words of the late Fr. General Pedro Arrupe in his address to the 10th International Congress of Jesuit Alumni of Europe, "Today our prime educational objective must be to form men-for-others; men who will live not for themselves but for God and his Christ—for the God-man who lived and died for all the world."[3]

Indeed, if Christ was engaged in his time kindling hope to the hopeless, in consoling the bereaved, and proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom of God, then this mission is also shared with us: students, professors, alumni.

Life, then, here in Loyola School of Theology (LST) is simultaneously a deepening of intellectual knowledge and the deepening of a relationship with Christ in every endeavor, whether in the realm of deep questioning in philosophy, in grappling with the intricacies of language, or in grasping the mystery of God in theology.



The THB 1 students strike a joyful pose during their batch gathering. (Facebook: Loyola School of Theology Student Council)

Every classroom is a wellspring of this knowledge and, at the same time, of drawing hope from the source of this wellspring–the author of hope Himself. This life moves the person not just to keep it to oneself. No; it is to be shared, and in some cases, it is expressed in positions of leadership.

[1] Translated as "They're all the same... nothing will change in our country... only our own efforts will do..."
[2] The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum of 1599, translated by Allan Farrell, SJ, Washington:1970, 1.
[3] Pedro Arrupe, Men for Others, 1973

It is interesting to note that LST is located along a fault line. Furthermore, nestled between two areas: going down which leads to Barangka and going up leading to the Katipunan area. It is *nasa pagitan ng* or in-between two places, of two realities. This might sound like a romanticization of a trivial fact, such as the location of a building. But it seems as though it is pointing to a deeper value, a much deeper call. It echoes the kind of leader that one ought to be. This kind of leadership that any Jesuit institution imparts has an incarnational quality to it: to be where the people are and to meet them where they are. It is the call to be at the peripheries of society.

This leadership is not the domineering kind, nor is it a display of power. It is modeled after Christ, who came to serve, not to be served. It is he who brings hope to every man. Likewise, it is also a leadership that extends its call to all: to the clergy, to those consecrated, and to the lay faithful.

And what legacy will LST leave to its community of learners, to society, and to the world? It is hope. Men and women set ablaze by the consoling hope that can only come from the Lord and, being emboldened by it, dare to set the world ablaze with this hope.

Surely, this hope will come at a great cost and even more so when endeavoring to spread such hope in a seemingly hopeless world. It is that hope that allows one to step out of the classroom, to go down from the hill, to climb the highest inclines, and to cross the rapid current of our changing times.

The legacy it will leave will no longer bear its own image, but the image of Christ as the consoling hope of the world, impressed upon those who have once roamed the halls of LST. It will be the prophetic message of the harmony of brothers and sisters coming from different countries, cultures, and charisms. It will be the deep love for Christ that will make them share in this mission of consolation, of being beacons of hope wherever the road may lead them.



Ramon Angelo Lopez, S.J. *is a Filipino Jesuit scholastic currently in his first year of philosophical studies from Dapitan City, Zamboanga de Norte. He finished a degree in psychology at Silliman University before entering the Society of Jesus in 2022.*



Learning Theology in Asia: The Filipino Culture and Life Experience as a Crucial Context

By Shimbo Pastory, C.S.Sp.

In understanding human experiences, which is functionally indispensable in learning, context is crucial. In his exposé of "knowledge," Bernard Lonergan, S.J., considers experience as an important precedent to the knowledge production continuum comprising:



In my case, studying theology in the Philippines and particularly at the Loyola School of Theology (LST) is a providential choice I will ever be grateful for. Not necessarily for the excitement of studying abroad, but for an enriching context that studies theology by beautifully blending experiences of faith from historical, local, and global currents of faith, and which is open to more.

While our theology is a deeper dive into what we pray and believe, it is also like casting a net in the sea with a multitude and variety of fish. The excitement for the new, the unusual, and the unspoken about is constant; nothing falls off the table unattended. Moreover, learning theology (or theologizing) with the pastoral contexts in mind helps to prepare ministers who freely, yet courageously and creatively, locate themselves within the actual mission dynamics, embrace the present and all that it has to offer, and most importantly, discern prayerfully as it is the work of God, the *Missio Dei*.

Does pastoral engagement at the Correctional Institute for Women (CIW) help? Yes! I have been engaged in the ministry to Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) for over a year, at CIW in Mandaluyong. I find it a context to return to in my journey of theological studies. I have learned so much from my interaction with the Catholic community among the PDLs. I regard my journey not as performative, but a practice of going deeper; not to master, but to nurture my weak, frail, free person; and not to judge, but to recount and treasure the experiences of love and forgiveness, without which theology resides secluded in the papers and in the brain, and soars like wispy tendrils of smoke off the airs without touching the heart.

Asia as a whole is also significant in this discourse from the lens of its diversity in the cultural and religious spectra. The values of the people of Asia and the Filipino people in particular open my eyes to read theology in lines and between the lines. From the politeness of the Koreans to the strong resilience, faith, and devotion of the long-persecuted Vietnamese, Chinese, Myanmarese, Indonesian, and Indian Churches, those dynamics shape the learning of theology at LST as intercultural encounters allow pouring from the abundance of everyone's home experiences, thanks to the outstanding diversity comprising students from 48 countries so far.

I particularly look and notice, in LST and beyond, the Filipino values. I think of how Filipinos value the sense of shared personhood: '*kapwa*', and the



equality of all persons: '*pakikipagkapwa-tao*'. I think of the sense of communal solidarity: '*Bayanihan*', especially in times of disasters that most of the world sees only on TV: '*pagmamalasakit*', when empathy is expressed through concrete acts, and the social norm of restraint, not exposing people to shame: '*hiya*.' Filipinos can go a long way to do what they don't want, to not offend you. Here, it takes some sense to notice the unexpressed inconvenience.

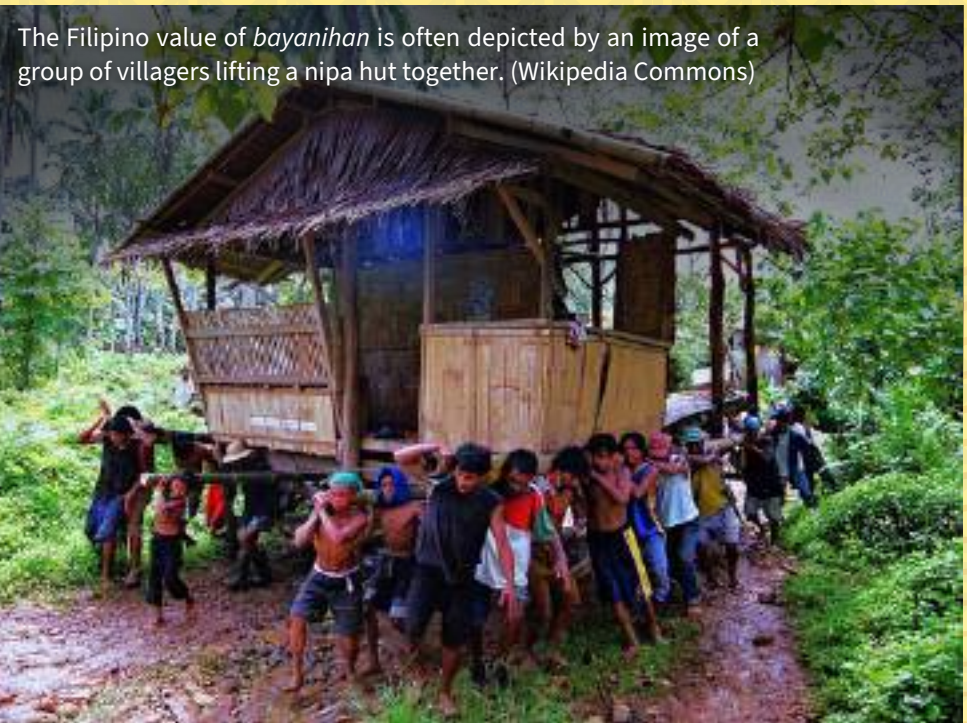
I can think of the inherited desire/value to not bear grudges but preserve the existing togetherness: '*pakikisama*', and the inner obligation for enduring gratitude when treated with kindness: '*utang na loob*', such that love shared becomes love multiplied.

These values are not merely ideological; they punctuate the daily life of the people, and most importantly, they did not just happen to be. Experiencing these values personally and among the people makes the learning experience richer. Undeniably, there are cultural beliefs that I have had to let go over time, as a comparative context triggers in some cases more judicious, candid, and humane inner deliberations.

As a corpus, the Philippines thus becomes a cultural richness, as grassroots spiritualities of the ordinary people, which reflect a deeper awareness of God, in whose image human persons are made, become springboards for theology. Political problems are systemic and global, and cannot override the efficiency of the faith and reverence for God that has already taken root in the Filipino society, and which has by far, constitutively, warped and wefted through the colorful cultural fabric.

In practice, studying theology should not be divorced from the local, or rather actual experiences, both historical and contemporary, and should not be solely dominated by traditional thoughts from the Church perspective, devoid of current paradoxes and paradigms.

The faithful, and the society in most parts of the world, long for the discerning voice of the Church amidst their volatile socio-political crises, widespread systemic corruption, extremes of poverty and lack, authoritarianism and cruel wars, societal rejection, division, and religious conflicts, pandemics, the waves of modernism, and many other issues in our 'here and now'. We cannot be meaningful players in the discerning Church if we do not, together with the people, touch grounds of those situations as our theological base within the framework of actual longings for the different faces of the love and mercy of God.



The Filipino value of *bayanihan* is often depicted by an image of a group of villagers lifting a nipa hut together. (Wikipedia Commons)



Shimbo Pastory, C.S.Sp. *is a Tanzanian, a religious of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans), and a theology student at LST. He is also journalist and a weekly social development columnist for The Citizen Newspaper, published in Tanzania.*

Love and Labor: *Dilexi Te* as A Call to Share in Christ's Work of Liberation

By Sr. Kamila Josefína Trojanová, C.J.

On 4th October 2025, Pope Leo XIV released his first apostolic exhortation *Dilexi Te* to all Christians on the love for the poor.[1] It is an explicit continuation to the *Dilexit Nos*, an encyclical letter on the Human and Divine Love of the Heart of Jesus Christ published in October 2024 by Pope Francis.[2] *Dilexi Te* itself relies on the drafts of the late Pope, further revisited by Pope Leo. It has five chapters and 121 articles.

The title "*Dilexi Te*" is explained in its closing words: "Through your work (…) the poor will come to realize that Jesus' words are addressed personally to each of them: 'I have loved you'"[3] Closing with the invitation to labour, *Dilexi Te* starts in contemplation. The contemplation of Christ's love, which links *Dilexit Nos* and *Dilexi Te*, inspires us to be attentive to the sufferings and needs of others, and confirms our efforts to share in Christ's work of liberation to spread his love.[4] In other words, a genuine, pure, and humble love for the poor cannot but be rooted in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

There are many faces of the poor and poverty,[5] and the exhortation is a multifaceted text; this short contribution will offer one limited angle: reading *Dilexi Te* as a call to share in Christ's work of liberation.

Dilexi Te is about love, about the poor, but, remarkably,



Filipino Jesuit missionary Fr. Henry Ponce S.J. who serves in St Joseph Church in Beirut, and its Arrupe Migrant Center, Jesuit Refugee Service. pictured here with volunteers preparing food for the refugees. (Facebook: Fr. Xavier Olin, S.J.)

[1] Pope Leo XIV. "Apostolic Exhortation Dilexi Te of the Holy Father Leo XIV on Love for the Poor (4 October 2025)." Vatican.va, 2025. *https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20251004-dilexi-te.html*.

[2] Pope Francis. "Dilexit Nos of the Holy Father Francis on the human and divine love of the Heart of Jesus Christ (24 October 2024)" Vatican.va, October 4, 2024. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/20241024-enciclica-dilexit-nos.html.

[3] Rev 3:9; Dilexi te 121.

[4] Dilexi te 2, Dilexit nos 171.

[5] Dilexi te 9. (Hereafter cited in-text as *DT*)

also about work. “Work” or “works” appears 53 times, with an additional 10 references to labour. We are reminded that Jesus earned his living by manual labour and that “human work is a participation in God’s work of creation that continues every day, also thanks to the hands, mind, and heart of workers”. (*DT, 115*) “By working we become a fuller person, our humanity flourishes.”(*DT, 115*) However, we see there are people who might have been working from dawn to dusk for generations, but remain poor. (*DT, 14*)



Volunteers of the Busog Puso feeding program hand out food to the children in the community. (Photo credits to Fr. Willy Samson, S.J.)

The poor are not there by chance or by blind and cruel fate; poverty is not a choice. (*DT, 14*) And *Dilexi Te* is a letter urging a response. Frequent and practical works of charity shall not remain in the realm of ideas and theories, (*DT, 119*) since faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. (*DT, 29*)[6] Consequently, Chapter 3 ‘A church for the poor’ presents men and women who turned their love into works of mercy, reminding us of the central role of the poor, the sick, the migrants, and the least in the Church and, concretely, at the foundations of religious congregations: a reminder as well as an invitation to an *aggiornamento*, a signpost to the future.

The choice of parables in *Dilexi Te* teaches us more about the nature of the work of liberation: generosity of the woman with the costly perfume (Mt 26:6-13) and promptness of the Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37), who both act in union of their hands, mind, and heart, (*DT, 115*) rather than “on the basis of preliminary studies or advance planning”. (DT, 29)

The exhortation closes with the almsgiving, which receives a prominent place and space. Often seen as unsystematic and not looked upon favourably, even among believers, the Pope urges us that almsgiving “remains, for the time being, a necessary means of contact, encounter and empathy with those less fortunate”. *(DT, 29)*

Likely, it is the best school of keeping our eyes open to the people in front of us, the school of closeness, reminding us, we are all beggars.[7]

Pope Leo XIV urges us to defend human dignity, justice, and labour even through the choice of his name. John Paul II wrote that “human work is a key, probably the essential key, to the whole social question.” (DT, 87)

Many are forgotten, let down by the labour market, pushed to precarious jobs, exploited, without proper contracts or social security, discarded, and judged to be unproductive and useless. There are also many captives in jobs which ceased to be meaningful to them, many prisoners of well-paying and meaningless careers, as well as many who are happy with their jobs, but deep in their hearts long for more (*magis*).

Dilexi Te might help us rethink how we understand human work. Jesus has revealed Himself as “the One who (…) comes to bring about God’s loving closeness, which is above all a work of liberation for those who are prisoners of evil, and for the weak and the poor”. (DT, 87)



A chaplain from the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) chaplaincy give out free sandwiches to the patients and their watchers. (Photo credits to Fr. Willy Samson, S.J.)

[6] James 2:17

[7] Dicastery for Communication - Libreria Editrice Vaticana. “Address of Pope Leo XIV to Labor Consultants (18 December 2025).” Vatican.va, 2025. https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/speeches/2025/december/documents/20251218-consulenti-lavoro.html.

[8] Vatican News. “Leo XIII’s Times and Our Own.” Vaticannews.va. Vatican News, May 14, 2025. https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2025-05/leo-xiii-s-times-and-our-own.html.

Work of liberation is not a job description; often invisible to the labour market, work of liberation means bringing about God's loving closeness, whether through efforts to change unjust social structures or through simple, heartfelt gestures of closeness and support. (DT, 121)

In the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius of Loyola invites us to ask under the Cross: (*Spiritual Exercises, 53*) What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I do for Christ, the poor Messiah, and the Messiah of and from the poor. (DT, 121) This question is, not exclusively, but essentially, about human work.

The following might help in discernment: When engaged in work, when do I feel a union of hands, mind, and heart, (DT, 121) as a fuller person, (DT, 121) bringing God's loving closeness to the world? (DT, 121) If in doubt, let us remember that it is "in the poor that Christ continues to suffer and rise again. It is in them that the Church rediscovers her call to show her most authentic self" (DT, 121); and what applies to the body applies to each member.





Kamila Josefína Trojanová, C.J., *is a religious sister of the Congregation of Jesus (C.J.), founded in 1609 by Mary Ward, a female religious congregation with the Ignatian spirituality and the Jesuit Constitutions. She completes her second year of pre-theology studies (PTS) this semester and comes from Prague, Czech Republic.*

> *What have I done for Christ?*
> *What am I doing for Christ?*
> *What ought I do for Christ?*
> *(Spiritual Exercises. no. 53)*

Behind the Scenes: Heroes without Headlines

By Sr. Kamila Josefína Trojanová, C.J.



Many people work behind the scenes to make learning possible at the Loyola School of Theology (LST). Before students meet their professors, they contact the LST Secretariat. Before students arrive for the first class, the Facilities Management and IT team ensure everything is prepared and ready. Before students start working on their first assignment, the library team ensures that all books and resources are available and easily accessible.

Some have been at the LST for decades, while others have joined recently. They witness students' journeys, accompany students with advice and prayers, and rejoice in their success. These are our unsung heroes.

Tinig Loyola speaks to 15 LST staff to hear about their roles, memories, and wishes for LHS-LST on their joint 60th Anniversary.



April Abigail "Apple" Ibay Ting
Assistant to the Vice President for Academic Affair
10 years of service

I assist the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) in the administrative affairs of the Academics Office.

My most endearing memory of LST happened within the first few weeks of my employment. I had to go on emergency leave just a few days after joining LST in January of 2016 to tend to my sick husband, who turned out to be already suffering from stage 4 lung cancer. Fr. Eric Eusebio, S.J., who was my direct supervisor back then, apparently sent an email to the whole LST community asking for prayers for my husband. I will never forget those acts of kindness —the call to prayer and the collective intentions— towards me, who was a mere week-old employee at the time.

I wish LHS and LST continued success, sustained growth, and stability as they mark their joint 60th Anniversary. amDg!

AcadEMics

I help students with their inquiries and enrollment, and attend to the inquiries of teachers.

My wish for LST is to leverage a greater use of technology, go paperless, and have more staff-student-teacher interactions through get-togethers or sporting events to foster camaraderie, confidence, and teamwork.



Jane C. Deseo (Jean/Janey)
LST Secretariat
13 years of service

David L. Garcia (Dave)
Office Assistant
27 years of service - Retired



As an IT technician, I fix computers, ensuring that computer servers, LAN, and Internet connections are up and running. I assist professors with online classes and print students, faculty, and staff IDs.

Over the past 25 years, I have witnessed how LST's classroom facilities have evolved. We have transitioned from traditional chalkboards to the latest hybrid setups. Today, LST effectively enables the global classroom.

Jerry A. Orio
IT Technician
31 years of service

IT helpdesk

As an IT Technician, I press buttons all day to make other people's buttons work! HAHA! I first became connected with the LST Family in 2008, when I worked on my college thesis here. That experience gave me a glimpse of the environment and people that make LST special.

Later on, I applied for my OJT (On-the-Job Training) and was blessed in 2011 with the opportunity to officially join the team as an employee. So in total, I have been with LST for over a decade, and it has been a fulfilling journey of growth, learning, and service.

I wish LHS and LST continuous growth in faith and service. May our shared mission to form minds and hearts rooted in God's Word continue to guide us forward. Here's to more years of learning, unity, and purpose—all for God's greater glory.

An office assistant is like a house helper. I ensure a house runs smoothly by helping people organize, find the things they need, and accomplish tasks so they can focus on their jobs and get things done. I always look forward to our yearly staff retreat, where we have time to pause, reflect, and disconnect from daily stressors, which helps us reduce burnout, gain a fresh perspective, and connect with God. My wish for LST is to continue focusing on its social justice advocacy pursuits by identifying and addressing systemic issues through community action and internal labor issues.

Juvel E. Borrel
IT Technician
17 years of service

I oversee the organization's financial activities and manage the accounting personnel. I also provide financial advice, detailed computations, and comprehensive reports to the management.
The first formal board meeting of LST was particularly memorable for me. I remember having to leave the office just before midnight on a Friday to ensure all the necessary materials were ready for the following day. Despite the stressful preparation, the meeting turned out very well.

I imagine LST will be self-sustaining, driven by a higher enrollment of both local and international students, and I wish both LHS and LST continued collaboration and improvement in accomplishing their mission.

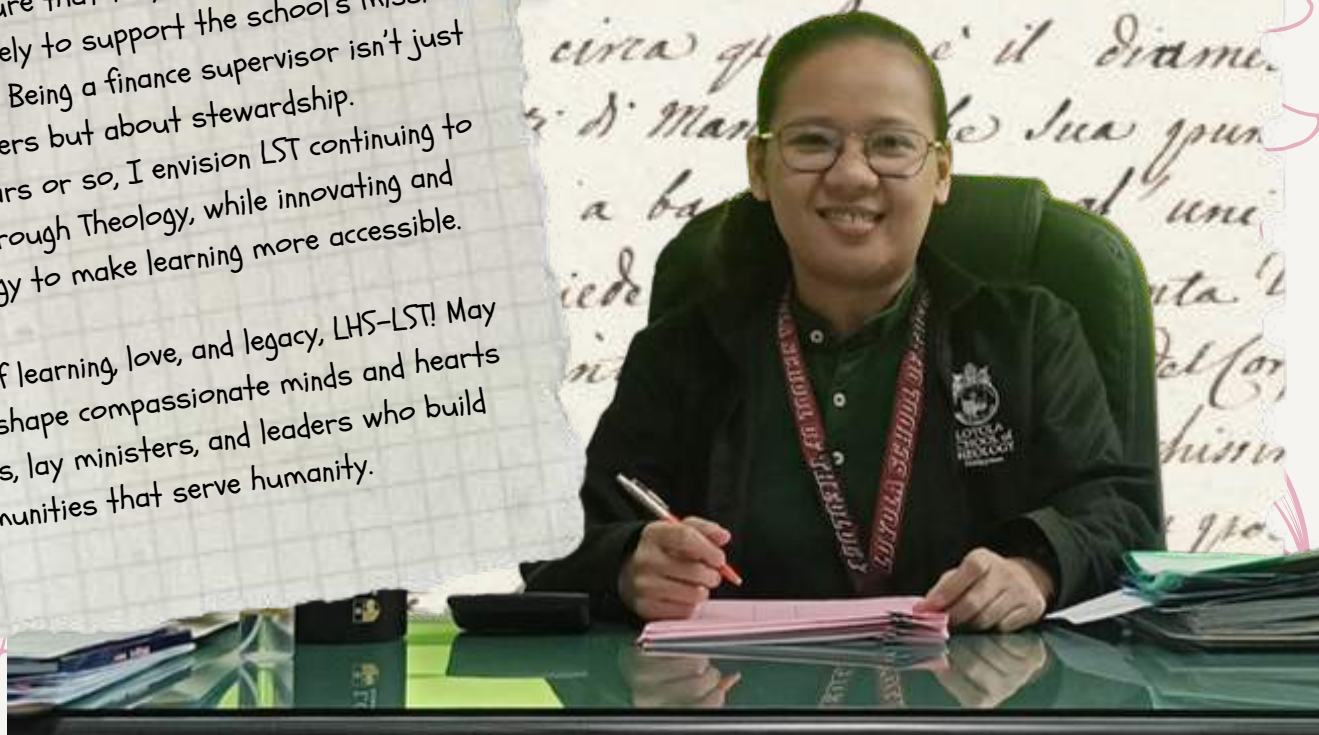


Roselyn M. Taray (Roselyn)
Chief Finance Officer
19 years of service

Jennah Moyco (Jen),
Finance Supervisor
2 years of service

As a finance supervisor, I take care of the school's resources and ensure that they are used properly, efficiently, and effectively to support the school's mission and achieve its vision. Being a finance supervisor isn't just about numbers but about stewardship.
Over the next 15 years or so, I envision LST continuing to lead and serve through Theology, while innovating and adapting technology to make learning more accessible.

Happy 60 years of learning, love, and legacy, LHS-LST! May you continue to shape compassionate minds and hearts to form priests, lay ministers, and leaders who build communities that serve humanity.



I am the one who helps keep track of LST's money—I count it, write it down, and make sure we don't lose any. If someone gives money to the school, I record it. If we spend money, I write it down too. That way, everyone knows where the money goes.

A moment which resonated with me was when His Most Excellency Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle, DD., delivered the homily at Fr. Jose Quilongquilong's investiture as the 9th President of LST on 5 July 2013 at the Oratory of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Many prominent personalities attended the event, to which Cardinal Tagle said in his homily: "With all this extravaganza, remember Jesus Christ"!

I wish LHS-LST continued growth in faith, wisdom, and service. May this celebration remind everyone of the many people whose lives have been touched and transformed over the years. I hope LST continues to be a place where faith, reason, and love meet—forming people who not only think deeply but also care deeply, especially for the people behind LST's stability and success.



Jerlyn Jacinto-Mendoza (Je)
Bookkeeper
16 years of service

FiNaNCe



As a cashier with LST, I help people with their school fee payments, books, and other materials. I check the emails and the proof of payment and issue school invoices. I even get to give out smiles with high-fives!

Happy 60th anniversary to LHS-LST! I wish you continued success, growth, excellence, and many more years of inspiring formation and education!

Marylou Lazaro Ordoñez (Juday)
Cashier
18 years of service

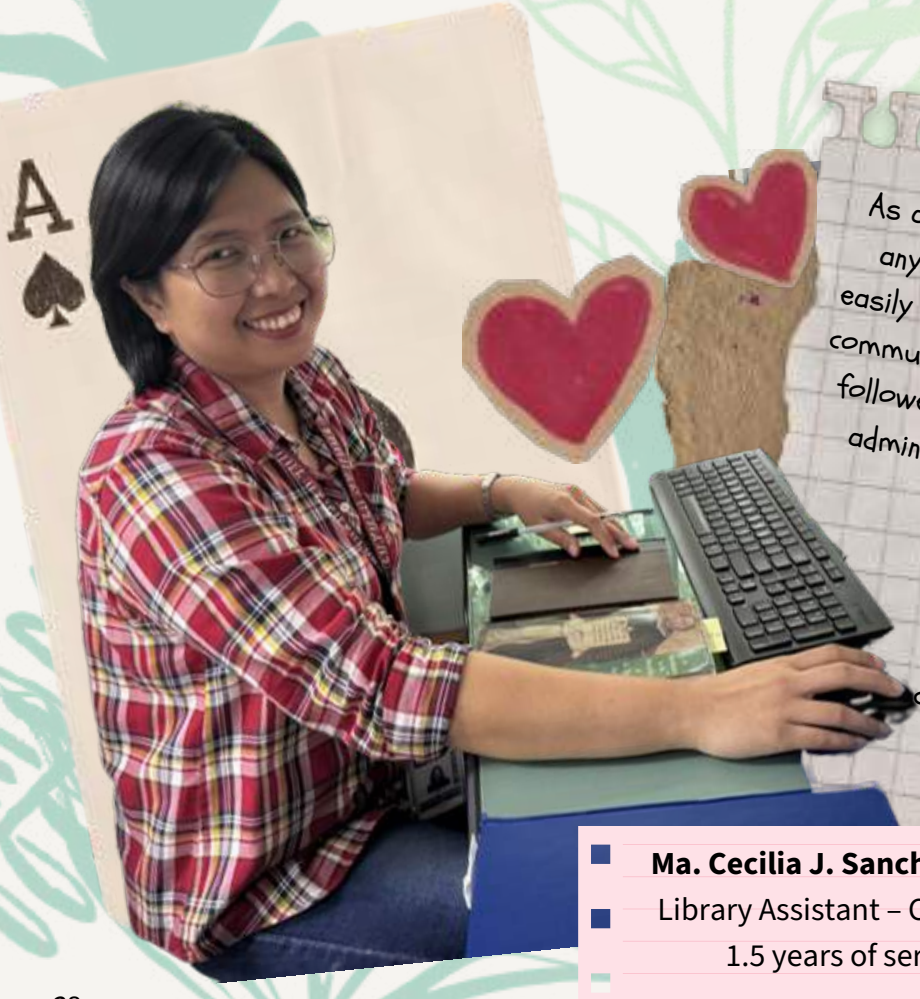


As a library supervisor, I ensure that the library is well organized and in good working order to support students' learning. Every event at LST is memorable, but the most memorable for me was when we celebrated the 50th Jubilee Anniversary of LHS-LST's contribution to religious education and ecclesiastical ministry. It was a privilege to experience such an event and be part of a prestigious school and institution in the Philippines.

My wish for LHS-LST is that they will continue staying committed to their vision and goals to inspire others, as well as to keep collaborating and welcoming new ideas for growth and improvement.

Ma. Angela Lacanienta Dayandante (Angie/Anj)
Library Supervisor
32 years of service

LibRaRy



As a cataloger, I assign codes to books so anyone looking for a particular book can easily find it in the library. In LST, I enjoy our community gatherings that start with a Mass followed by an agape meal – it really brings administrators, employees, and students together.

I wish LHS-LST continued blessings, growth, and a vibrant community in the years ahead to continue to inspire and transform lives.

Ma. Cecilia J. Sanchez (Cezs)
Library Assistant – Cataloger
1.5 years of service



Jervin Andrew S.J. Feria (Jervin)
Library Clerk
9 years of service

As a librarian, I help students find books, answer questions, and fix damaged books so that everyone can enjoy them. My most memorable LST event is its graduation. Over the years, I have gotten to witness the academic journey of students as they navigate challenges from their first year until their graduation, and work hard to reach that milestone.

I imagine LST becoming the top theology school in Asia, and an institution of choice for studying Theology. Happy 60th Anniversary LHS-LST! May you continue to inspire formands and students and grow as a community.

As a librarian, I help people find and check out books and ensure all the books are in the right spot so nothing gets lost. I take care of the magazines that come every week as well. Basically, I help the library stay nice and tidy and make it a fun place for everyone to find books and learn new things! I recall attending a Mass followed by a small salo-salo at LST's 60th Anniversary celebration, where I had the chance to meet many students. It was a simple celebration, but it made me feel truly part of the community.

I wish LHS and LST a very happy 60th Anniversary! May they continue to grow, thrive, and inspire students for many more years to come.

Kateleen C. Achacoso (Kate)
Library Assistant - Circulation & Periodicals
1 year of service





Glenn Dimaala Gonzales (Tom)
Facilities Management Supervisor
11 years of service

I mostly appreciate LST's multiculturality and internationality, and the friendships I have been able to forge. In my capacity, I help create an environment that's welcoming and conducive to student learning, a place where they can study, work, and enjoy being part of the community while participating in school-wide activities.

My wish for LHS-LST is to continue forming men and women for Christ in the service of others. May the community always strive for excellence and continue to produce more Church leaders with a heart for the poor and the needy.

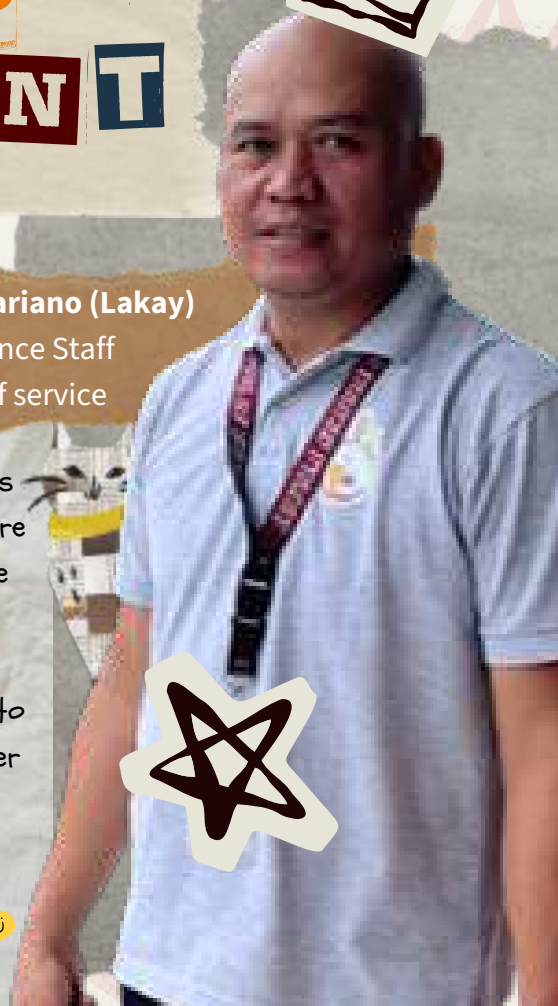
FACILITIES MANAGEMENT



Kamila Josefína Trojanová, C.J., *is a religious sister of the Congregation of Jesus (C.J.), founded in 1609 by Mary Ward, a female religious congregation with the Ignatian spirituality and the Jesuit Constitutions. She completes her second year of pre-theology studies (PTS) this semester and comes from Prague, Czech Republic.*

Bonifacio C. Mariano (Lakay)
Maintenance Staff
2 years of service

I ensure that the surroundings are clean and the classrooms are in good condition and conducive for students, so they can feel comfortable while studying. My wish is for LST to continue to grow, expand, and become better known worldwide with the excellence of its professors and students.




LEADER
SHIP.

Portrait of a Pope

By Fra' Luke Yeo, O.C.D.

On the flight back to Rome from Lebanon in early December 2025, Pope Leo XIV did something that caught journalists off guard. Responding to a question about "who Robert Prevost is," the pontiff didn't reach for Augustine or Thomas Aquinas. Instead, he cited a little-known book called *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Blessed Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, a 17th-century Carmelite lay brother who spent most of his life hidden within the cloister as a cook. A book which Pope Leo explained, "describes the prayer and spirituality where one simply gives his life to the Lord and allows the Lord to lead."

This was the kind of answer that has come to define the 267th Pope: simple and direct, yet unassuming and measured. Yet despite this, from the beginning of his Papacy, Pope Leo has proved rather difficult to pin down by many Vatican watchers. As the successor to Pope Francis, whose dynamic style and novel ways of leadership have undoubtedly left their mark on the papacy, many continue to scrutinize the words, actions, and even dressing of Pope Leo, hoping to glean some sense of the direction and style his papacy will take—hopefully getting an idea of which way he intends to lead the Church.

The former head of the Augustinians, who did his PhD with the Dominicans, now cites a little-known Carmelite friar. A missionary Bishop from South America who has spoken up for the rights of migrants and the oppressed, yet has also recovered ome of the more traditional elements of the papacy, such as the summer retreat at Castel Gandolfo and the silk red mozzetta traditionally worn by popes. The first American to occupy the throne of St. Peter, who is simultaneously the first Augustinian to do so. An expert in canon law who has shown an interest in AI and the social doctrine of the Church,



Pope Leo XIV receives a painting from Joseph Farchakh, a reporter for the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation, during his flight from Lebanon to Rome on 2 December. An artist did the painting live on air during the pope's trip, including images of the places the pope visited. (CNS/Vatican Media)

choosing to pay homage to Pope Leo XIII, known for his championing of the rights of workers during the Industrial Revolution.

All these vignettes, seemingly dichotomous at times, clearly congruous at others, seem to paint a broad portrait of who Pope Leo XIV really is: a man rooted in the ecclesial richness of the Church, and yet, is one whom traditional dichotomous (liberal-conservative) labels cannot pin down. However, this is not to say that painting a portrait of Pope Leo is an insurmountable task, nor should we, as his faithful flock, looking to him as our Chief Shepherd, be denied the opportunity to craft some idea of his personality and gain a better sense of where he intends to lead us.

n this regard, three key aspects of Robert Prevost stand out amidst the myriad of qualities and analyses: (1) His religious vocation as an Augustinian Friar, (2) his formation in the evangelical counsels of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, and (3) his identity as a missionary bishop in South America.

An Augustinian at Heart

Pope Leo is no stranger to high office. Before he became the 266th successor of Peter, he was the 96th prior general



Saint Augustine in His Study (1480, Sandro Botticelli.)



Pope Leo XIV makes his first appearance from the central balcony of the Vatican's St. Peter's Basilica on May 8. (Tiziana Fabi/AFP/Getty Images)

of the Augustinian Order, an order which traces its history to the 13th century while claiming spiritual patrimony from St. Augustine himself. St. Augustine did not found a monastic order in the way St. Benedict would later do. Instead, writing a *Rule* for the community of clerics and lay brothers living with him in North Africa, he emphasized something meaningfully different from the harsh asceticism emphasized in other monastic traditions. Believing that the deepest spiritual transformation came not through extreme mortification but through learning to live well with others in pursuit of God, Augustine's *Rule* emphasized fraternity and unity through common life and the cultivation of the virtue of Charity.

For nearly 17 centuries, communities claiming Augustine as their spiritual father have thus understood their charism in this way: not as isolated individuals, but as brothers and sisters seeking holiness through a common life—a microcosm of the reality of the Church as we know today.

Having spent half a century in such a tradition, Pope Leo has indeed shown his ability to not only listen to the various, sometimes disparate ideological camps within the Church, but also to navigate them without necessarily stepping on toes or hurting feelings, even making inroads to build bridges among them—as a Roman Pontiff is ostensibly expected to do. This was clearly illustrated at the very beginning of Pope Leo's papacy. In his first words to the faithful upon the loggia

of St. Peter's, Pope Leo quoted St. Augustine: "With you I am a Christian, for you a bishop"—making it clear that he desires to be a leader *for*—not of—the flock of Christ, a shepherd who journeys with and alongside his sheep.

This explains why, in his first weeks as pope, when the cardinals expected speeches and directives, Pope Leo instead made a concerted effort to listen, availing himself to the broad range of views the increasingly diverse College of Cardinals had to offer. Moreover, this explains why, in a break from tradition, Pope Leo has decided to hold yearly extraordinary consistories; opportunities for consultation and collaboration amongst the College of Cardinals, whose opinion Pope Leo seems to place a premium on.

…A Religious in Being

More importantly, Pope Leo's Augustinian vocation cannot be understood without the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience he professed. As a religious, the evangelical counsels are not simply words uttered en route to the priesthood, but constitute a lived theology of love, sacrifice, and abandonment. Having professed such vows for almost 40 years before he was appointed bishop, Pope Leo would have not only understood them well but strove to live them out in his daily life. The vow of obedience is not simply a rule of blind submission, but a counsel encouraging one to listen for God's voice in others. The vow of poverty frees one from material and spiritual attachments to love God and others more fully. And the vow of chastity enables one to give his entire being, without reservation, to the evangelical needs of the Church.

It is no surprise, therefore, that when Robert Prevost was appointed as the Prefect for the Congregation for Bishops—one of the Vatican's most pivotal appointments—and made a cardinal, he nevertheless chose to live in an Augustinian community at the Augustinianum instead of the residence set aside for him. Not only that, but it was known that even as a cardinal, he would make it a habit to ask the superior of his community for permissions and make his absences known to the community, as is the custom among religious houses.

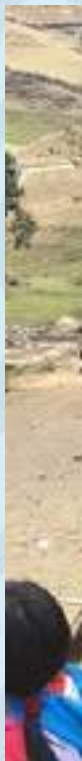
These actions, though often overlooked by Vatican watchers, speak volumes about how Pope Leo understands authority and responsibility. Instead of viewing his episcopal consecration and elevation to the College of Cardinals as a liberation from the vows he has professed, or a step up the clerical career ladder, Pope Leo accepts them as responsibilities to be humbly assumed and dutifully discharged.

As pope, we see that this mentality continues. Pope Leo appears comfortable with the trappings of his office -the papal palace, the red mozzetta, the ecclesial fineries- precisely because he does not view them as the glorification of Robert Prevost the man, but as signs of the sovereign pontiff, he is called to embody in service of the Church. Returning to his plane interview last December 2025, it was fitting that he told reporters how he "profoundly" believes that "everything is in the hands of God… one simply gives his life to the Lord and allows the Lord to lead."

A Missionary in a Synodal Church

Aside from his Augustinian and religious identity, another key aspect of Pope Leo's history is his time as a missionary bishop in Peru. When Fra' Robert Prevost arrived in Peru in 1985, he was assigned to the remote mountain Prelature of Chulucanas, where communities were scattered across difficult terrain. This was no brief missionary expedition, but 14 years of his life. Travelling by difficult roads to reach isolated villages, conducting disaster relief after devastating floods, standing alongside indigenous and poor communities through economic crisis and political instability, Fra' Prevost was truly among the sheep, furthering the Church's evangelical work in the peripheries. As Father John J. Lydon, an Augustinian who worked alongside Fra'Prevost in those years, recalled: "Our parish in southern Trujillo was in a very poor area. He was very attentive to making sure the poor were treated with dignity, which in those days wasn't the norm. The poor were always mistreated by the authorities. He gave them a different experience, one of human dignity."

Later, from 2014 to 2023, as Bishop of Chiclayo, Bishop Prevost spent another eight years in those same challenging circumstances, this time with the added responsibility of episcopal authority within a territory



ravaged by gang violence and corruption. Undaunted by the task and dutiful to his responsibilities, Bishop Prevost served his diocese not only with episcopal distinction but with humanitarian care, donning boots and wading into flooded streets to survey communities devastated by floods in 2023. Yet his humanitarian inclinations did not blunt his pastoral steadfastness. When a group of religious separatists occupied a church in his diocese and refused to allow the appointed parish priest entry, Bishop Prevost confronted them with his trademark composure, calmly yet firmly explaining his position and insisting on his authority as bishop.

These decades in Peru reveal that Pope Leo XIV understands synodality not as a novel management technique or repackaged ecclesial jargon, but as a spiritual necessity grounded in the Church's missionary identity. Pope Francis envisioned a synodal Church which listens and discerns together; as his successor, Pope Leo, having lived this reality in his own missionary and episcopal life, knows all too well that a missionary church must inherently be synodal—a church which exists not to dominate but to serve, not to dictate but to accompany, attentively listening and faithfully journeying.

This is perhaps why, approaching his first year in office, Pope Leo has yet to promulgate an encyclical, contrary to his predecessors. Pope Francis promulgated *Lumen Fidei* four months into his papacy; Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* in his eighth month; and John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, roughly five months after his election. It is clear from this, and the large amount of consultations Pope Leo has undertaken, that he desires to get a feel for the ground as pope—careful not to rush things while holding firm to his ideals.



Fra' Robert Prevost in Chiclayo Diocese, (Ernesto Benavides/AFP/Getty Images)

Impatient and spoiling for clues on what may lie on the horizon, many have sloppily tried to characterize Pope Leo's pontificate as "Francis 2.0." However, it is clear from the onset that Leo, whilst honouring the colossal legacy of Pope Francis, seems determined to forge a path of his own which he intends to lead the Church in; a path not of his own making but one directed to him by the Holy Spirit. Speaking to the Roman Curia at the traditional Christmas address, Pope Leo, in what has become somewhat of his hallmark style, exhorted them to be missionary, telling them that in order to do so, they must bear witness to communion in a divided world. This speech came not only from the heart but, given Pope Leo's own religious-Augustinian experience of communion and his missionary work in the peripheries, it was spoken from personal experience.

As was customary, Pope Leo presented Curia members with a book—the very book he had spoken about on that airplane as key to understanding who he is: *The Practice of the Presence of God.* While time will paint the remainder of Pope Leo's portrait, one thing is clear: that beyond the papacy, episcopacy, priesthood, missionary work, or even his Augustinian identity, Pope Leo is a man deeply desirous of God's company and presence, which continues to guide him in all his affairs.



Fra' Luke Yeo, O.C.D., *is a Discalced Carmelite Friar from Singapore, currently completing his theological studies in LST.*



Saint Augustine holding a book inscribed with the opening line of his *Rule*: "*Ante omnia, fratres carissimi, diligatur Deus...*" which translates to "Before all else, dearest brothers, God is to be loved...", a reference to Mt. 22: 37-40.

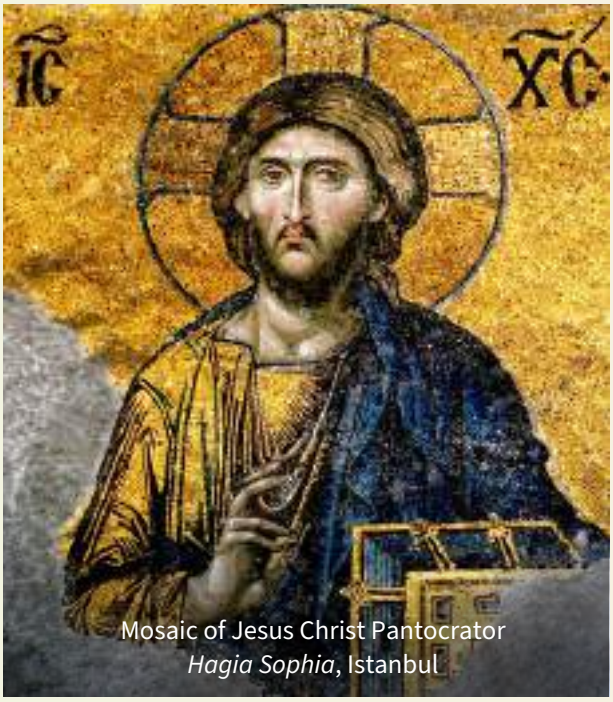
Pope Leo XIV and Augustine's *Rule* for Monks

By Fr. Mark Aloysius, S.J.

I.

In the Augustinian convent in Intramuros, there is a painting by Reynaldo Punelas (2014) which shows St. Augustine at the of a table with ten other friars seated surrounding him at supper. Through the inclusion of an icon of Christ the Pantocrator hanging right above St. Augustine, the painting makes explicit the connection of the monks at their daily meal with the Last Supper. In this painting, Punelas recreates a painting which used to hang in the Convent of San Agustin in Intramuros that was destroyed during the Battle of Manila, 1945. In the 1911 inventory of the convent, it is stated that the following sentence was inscribed in Spanish on the painting: 'Who loves to speak badly of those absent cannot be seated at this table'. That very sentence is reported in the *Vita Augustini* by Augustine's friend, Possidius, to have been written by Augustine himself on the wall of the refectory of the monastery he founded in Thagaste. Later in Hippo, Augustine composed a rule, the *Praeceptum*, for his community of monks, which has become the rule not only of the Augustinian order, to which Pope Leo XIV belongs, but of several other congregations, including the Dominicans. In what follows, I hope to illuminate several salient aspects of the *Praeceptum*, which I think would be

close to Pope Leo's heart and might inform his papal ministry.



Mosaic of Jesus Christ Pantocrator
Hagia Sophia, Istanbul

II.

Scholars suggest that Augustine composed the *Praeceptum* for the community of monks in the garden monastery of the cathedral in Hippo sometime after he was appointed bishop in Hippo in 395 CE.[1] Augustine's vision of the ideal community for his monastery is the primitive Christian community at Jerusalem described in Acts 4:32-35. Thus, the ideal community which shapes Augustine's own desires for a community is a community whose everyday life is structured around the proclamation of the Resurrection, possessing everything in common and providing to each according to their need.[2]

Renunciation of claims to private possession is the prerequisite for forming the sort of community Augustine had in mind. Thus, elsewhere, Augustine will tell Alypius, his close friend and collaborator, not to admit an individual to the 'society of brothers' until they had given up their property and possessions.[3] Similarly, Augustine will insist that his clergy sell what they own and give to the poor or hand it over to a local church for the care of the poor.[4] Augustine himself gave up the little he possessed for the poor.[5]

It is in the context of radical renunciation of private possession of property in favour of common ownership that Augustine notes the disparity that still exists in the monastery between those who owned something in the world—and, therefore could contribute to the common funds of the monastery—and those who had nothing prior to entering the monastery, contributing very little or nothing to the common fund. Augustine counsels these two classes of men in the first few lines of the rule. To those who had possessions prior to joining, Augustine counsels them to 'freely consent to possess everything in common'.[6] To those who had nothing, Augustine counsels them to 'not seek in the monastery possessions which were beyond their reach outside' though the community is charged to take into consideration their frailty (*infirmitati*) and to provide for their needs which could not be met because of their poverty prior to joining the monastery.[7] In both instances, Augustine is insistent on a pedagogy of desires that moves the individual away from possessiveness towards a concern for the common good, with particular emphasis on the care of those who are frail.

Against those who have become proud since they have assumed a higher standard of living since

[1]Adolar Zumkeller, *Augustine's Ideal of the Religious Life* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 285.
[2]*reg.* 1.3. *Praeceptum*. L.Verheijen, *La Règle de saint Augustin*, Paris, Etudes augustiniennes, 1967. English translation: G. Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and his Monastic Rule*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987).
[3]*Ep.* 83.3 (CSEL 34.389). I am indebted to Lawless for this and the following two citations. See: George. Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 51.
[4]*Serm.* 355.2, *Serm.* 356.6.
[5]*Serm.* 355.2.
[6]*reg.* 1.4.
[7]*reg*. 1.5.

joining the monastery, though they have come from poor backgrounds, Augustine suggests that instead of 'put[ting] their nose in the air' they 'lift up their heart (*sursum cor*)'.[8] In his later work, the *City of God*, Augustine states that 'there is [in humility] something that lifts up the heart, and there is in exaltation something that brings down the heart'.[9] The phrase *sursum cor* is drawn from the Eucharistic prayer. Thus, Augustine is drawing a link between humility and praise of God, between liturgy and praxis. Right love of God and love of neighbour is intimately linked with humility. With this evocative image of the raising of one's heart in humility, Augustine is illuminating two trajectories of desire.

First trajectory. In contrast to the raising of one's heart in humility, Augustine explicates the effect of those who give in to pride. To those who were previously successful prior to joining the monastery, Augustine insists that they not 'belittle' (*fastidio*) those who have joined from poorer backgrounds. Though they have given up their wealth for common life, they ought not to succumb to greater pride. Augustine states:

> *What benefit is there in giving generously to the poor and becoming poor oneself, if the pitiful soul is more inclined to pride by rejecting riches than by possessing them.*[10]

Augustine continues to explicate the disastrous consequence of pride to the life of the community. While every vice engenders evil deeds, 'pride sets a trap for good deeds as well with a view to destroying them'.[11] Pride unravels the good accomplished for the sake of the community. Motivated by pride, the desires of the monk take on a descending trajectory towards the enclosed self. The monk who is motivated by pride is still marked by possessive desire. Thus, the monk cares only for possession of things in opposition to the needs of the community. Formed by pride, the monk seeks regard in the community over and above others. Instead of forming a community through the dispossession of goods, pride destroys the very attempt to foster the ideal monastic community.

Second trajectory. In contrast to this descending trajectory of desires in pride, Augustine illuminates the ascending trajectory of desires within the crucible of humility. Humility, it seems, is the virtue Augustine considers most important for everyone in the community. And, the striving for humility among the members of the community—though of course always recognising that humility is grace—suggests that the monastic community is progressing in becoming the ideal community. Perhaps Augustine was thinking of the etymological connection between humility (*humilitas*) and the soil (*humus*) from which God fashioned Adam, thus intimating the common humanity (*humanitas*) of each person in reference to the creator God. For in the very next line, Augustine reminds the community of their common origin in God:

> *Live then, all of you, in harmony and concord; honour God mutually in each other; you have become his temples.*[12]

Within the crucible of humility, Augustine suggests that the monk will experience a different trajectory of desires. Having given up possessions or enjoying a better standard of living, the monk is weaned from possessiveness if

[9] *civ. Dei* 14.13
[10] *reg.* 1.7.
[11] *reg.* 1.7.
[12] *reg.* 1.8.

the monk is concerned about pursuing humility. In humility, the monk does not desire to think himself better than the other but thinks of their common origin in God. Humility unveils a theophany in the other.

III.

How might Augustine's Praeceptum inform Pope Leo's papal ministry? Already in Pope Leo's *Dilexi Te,* he embodies Augustine's concern for addressing the economic disparity between various classes of persons and for the need for forming the entire church to care for the common good with particular attention to those who are poor. What I think we will soon see in Pope Leo's papal ministry is the emphasis on the cultivation of humility as a necessary antidote to pride, which fuels much of our contemporary logic in politics and economics. And, Pope Leo will attend to how humility is formed in the Church that comes together in prayer at the Eucharist, learning to lift her heart in prayer to the Lord who descended in humility to become one like us. Already, in his address to the Society of Jesus, Pope Leo has signaled the significance of the formation of inferiority as an Augustinian insight that is so crucial for the common good. Through his faithfulness to the Augustinian *Rule*, we can hope to see how he makes explicit the formation of lives committed to the common good flowing from the cultivation of a life of prayer in the Church. ✣





Fr. Mark Aloysius, S.J., *obtained his MTh and STL in Theology from Heythrop College, London in 2017 and his D.Phil. in Modern Theology at the University of Oxford in 2022. He completed a dissertation entitled "A Pedagogy of Desiring and Thinking in Hannah Arendt's Reading of Augustine". In 2024, he published his book, "Arendt and Augustine: A Pedagogy of Desiring and Thinking for Politics," with Routledge. He currently teaches Christology to STB-MA students and Introduction to Political Theology to Licentiate and Doctorate students in LST.*

Pope Leo XIV and the Church in the Modern World

By Sch. Kevin Stephon R. Centeno, S.J.



White smoke billows from the chimney of the Vatican's Sistine Chapel May 8, 2025, indicating a new pope has been elected. OSV News photo/Dylan Martinez/Reuters

It was about 12 midnight, and I didn't plan on waiting for the next smoke. It could take more days, I thought. When I was supposed to lie down and sleep, a fellow Jesuit sent a photo in our group chat. Surprisingly, white smoke! Yes, we have a Pope! After seeing the photo, I felt awake.

The bell in the Loyola House was rung, signalling the election of the new Pope. (Usually, when the bell is rung, it means a Jesuit has passed away. That's what one of my brothers in the community had in mind on May 8!) I felt excited and nervous at the same time. I was hoping that the next Pope would be in line with the pastoral vision of Pope Francis and continue his ecclesial reform. My conviction is that there must be no turning back.

A number of us in Loyola House stayed awake waiting for the announcement "*Habemus Papam!*" We didn't mind the time. I couldn't resist missing a historical moment in the life of the Church. Lo and behold, an American cardinal was chosen by the college of the cardinals! An American cardinal becoming pope was deemed far from reality. But since the unimaginable election of a "Jesuit" pope (Ideally, Jesuits must not assume higher office unless necessary) during the last conclave, I think our pre-conceived notions of the identity of the pope was shaken. The Holy Spirit is full of surprises.

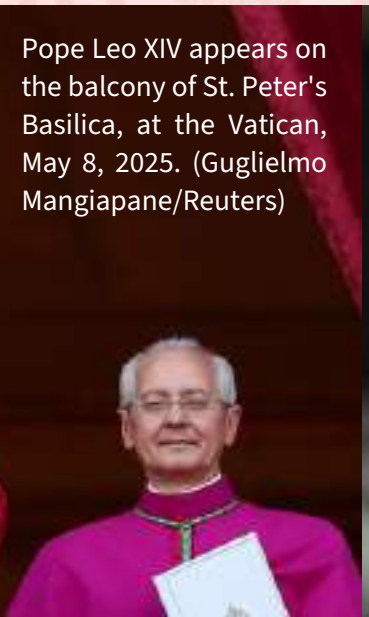
On April 30, more than a week before Cardinal Robert Prevost's election, Christopher White included him in the "*papabili*" list. "It is typically absurd to think of an American as pope. But in this conclave, a Chicago-born Augustinian friar who has spent much of his life outside of the United States (US) is worthy of serious consideration," he reported. Spending more than two decades as a missionary and bishop in Peru, the Global South, he was perceived as the "least American" among the US cardinals. He brings with himself the dual identity of the North and the South—strengthening his capacity to be a bridge builder.



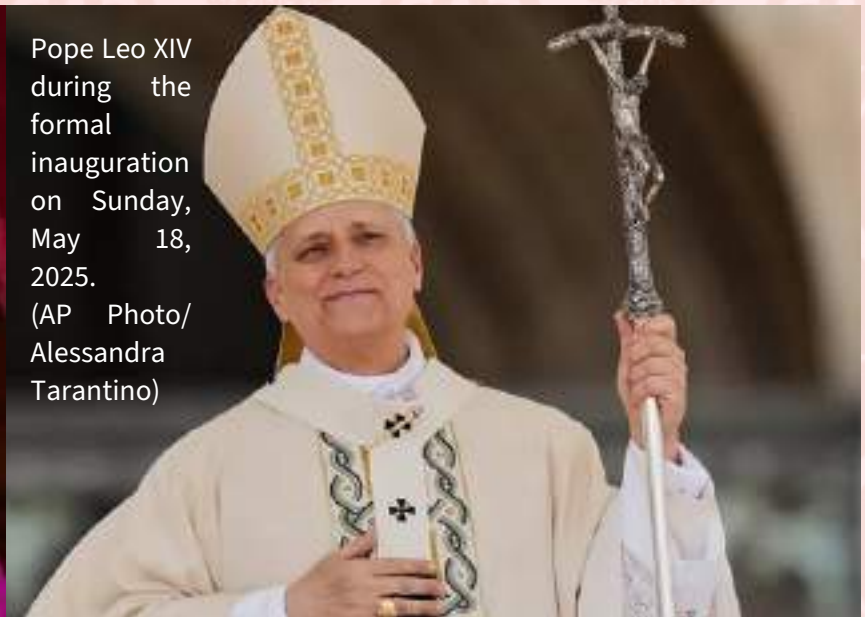
Remarkably, Pope Leo XIV in his first blessing "*Urbi et Orbi*" cited a highly significant line from St. Augustine: "I am an Augustinian, a son of Saint Augustine, who once said, 'With you I am a Christian, and for you I am a bishop.' In this sense, all of us can journey together toward the homeland that God has prepared for us. This comes from St. Augustine's famous sermon on the anniversary of his ordination as a bishop. The longer version says as follows: "Although I am terrified by what I am for you, I am consoled by what I am with you. For you, I am a bishop; with you, I am a Christian. The former is a title of an office which has been undertaken, the latter is a title of grace. The first is a danger, the second salvation." By virtue of sharing one baptism in Christ, the priest and bishop are not above the People of God. The grace of baptism makes us servants of one another—Christian not only in name, but also in actions.

In his inauguration Mass homily on May 18, Pope Leo XIV called himself as a servant: "I was chosen, without any merit of my own, and now, with fear and trembling, I come to you as a brother, who desires to be the servant of your faith and your joy, walking with you on the path of God's love, for he wants us all to be united in one family." In a world facing the resurgence of autocratic rulers and dictators, the successor of Peter stands as a sign of both contradiction and hope. "Moreover, if the rock is Christ, Peter must shepherd the flock without ever yielding to the temptation to be an autocrat, lording it over those entrusted to him," said Pope Leo XIV. His recently republished doctoral dissertation on canon law in Angelicum, titled "The Office and Authority of the Local Prior in the Order of Saint Augustine" offers a glimpse into both his intellectual and pastoral outlook. "There is no room in Augustine's concept of authority for one who is self-seeking and in search of power over others," the future Pope wrote. Also, "The exercise of authority in any Christian community requires the setting aside of all self-interest and a total dedication to the good of the community."

His choice of name is highly symbolic of the orientation of his papacy. He chose the name Leo because Pope Leo XIII, in his historic Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, addressed the social question in the context of the first great industrial revolution," he explained in his first address to the college of cardinals on May 10. Moral theologian Stephen Pope highlights the significant contribution of Pope Leo XIII which sheds light on the newly elected pope's namesake: "All commentators regard *Rerum Novarum* as critically important for moving the papacy away from the ecclesial entrenchment and social detachment and negligence that had extended from the French Revolution (1789) until the death of Pius IX (1878). Leo was the first pope to communicate a genuine recognition of the suffering poor on the part of the official church and to register a sense of the urgency of the 'social question.'"



Pope Leo XIV appears on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, at the Vatican, May 8, 2025. (Guglielmo Mangiapane/Reuters)



Pope Leo XIV during the formal inauguration on Sunday, May 18, 2025. (AP Photo/ Alessandra Tarantino)

Pope Leo XIV proclaims the ongoing relevance of the Church's inexhaustible social tradition in the midst of contemporary issues: "In our own day, the Church offers to everyone the treasury of her social teaching in response to another industrial revolution and to developments in the field of artificial intelligence that pose new challenges for the defence of human dignity, justice and labour." His first apostolic exhortation titled *Dilexi Te* published on October 4 powerfully reinforced the Church's preferential option for the poor as "a source of extraordinary renewal both for the Church and for society." "By her very nature the Church is in solidarity with the poor, the excluded, the marginalized and all those considered the outcasts of society. The poor are at the heart of the Church because 'our faith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of society's most neglected members,'" writes Leo in the letter.

Coincidentally, the year 2025 marks the 60th anniversary of the promulgation of the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World titled *Gaudium et Spes*. On December 7, 1965, nearing the conclusion of the monumental Second Vatican Council, this document was finally promulgated with these opening lines: "*The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.*" *Gaudium et Spes* revolutionized our understanding of the Church-world relationship.

Dominican theologian Maureen Sullivan explains that "*Gaudium et Spes* represents what many think is the most profound change from being a church in conflict with the world to being a church seeking to contribute to the world. It demonstrated a new consciousness in the church." The election of Pope Leo XIV marks a new phase of the reception of this document's pastoral thrust. In fact, in his address to the members of the *Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice* Foundation on May 17, he cited a paragraph from *Gaudium et Spes*: "In every age, the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if she is to carry out her task. In language intelligible to every generation, she should be able to answer the ever-recurring questions which people ask about the meaning of this present life and of the life to come, and how one is related to the other" (GS n. 4).

Catholics are tempted to compare Pope Leo XIV with Pope Francis. I feel that's a human thing. As someone truly fascinated with Pope Francis and holding my bias as a Jesuit, I couldn't avoid making comparisons. But we should keep in mind these words of the Superior General of the Society of Jesus Fr. Arturo Sosa, S.J.: "The conclave meets to elect Peter's successor, not Francis' successor." Pope Leo XIV will shepherd the Church in his own unique way, hopefully continuing and deepening *Gaudium et Spes*' ecclesial vision of a servant Church ever attentive to the signs of the times and responsive to the cry of the poor and the oppressed. His inauguration homily as *Pontifex* (bridge-builder) already set the tone: "This is the missionary spirit that must animate us; not closing ourselves off in our small groups, nor feeling superior to the world. We are called to offer God's love to everyone, in order to achieve that unity which does not cancel out differences but values the personal history of each person and the social and religious culture of every people.



Kevin Stephon R. Centeno, S.J. *is a Filipino Jesuit scholastic. Born in Oriental Mindoro, he obtained his bachelor's degree in philosophy and spent five years of seminary formation at Saint Augustine Seminary prior to entering the Society of Jesus.*

LHS-LST 60th Anniversary Mass Homily (September 24, 2025)

By Fr. Bienvenido Nebres, S.J.

My warmest congratulations to Fr. Rector, Christopher (Chris) Dumadag, and Fr. President, Renato Repole, and to all of Loyola House of Studies-Loyola School of Theology (LHS-LST) as we celebrate and give thanks for your 60 years of mission and service for the Church and people. I was in my regency years at the Ateneo de Manila High School when LHS was being built, and I often visited the construction. But I left for graduate studies before the opening and inauguration.

In his letter of invitation for me to give this homily, Fr. Rector, Chris Dumadag asked if I could situate the journey of LHS-LST in a wider perspective and help you reflect on your theme of **LIFE, LEADERSHIP, LEGACY.**

The wider perspective for me is the mission of LHS-LST within the mission of the Church and the needs of our people. I realize that you also have a regional and international role, but that is outside my knowledge and experience.

On September 19 to 21, 2025, I gave the Triduum to our seven Jesuits preparing for ordination to the diaconate. We reflected on the diaconate as a call to servant leadership, as deacons were initially chosen to serve widows and the needy in the Christian community. We prayed over the essentials for a leader according to St. Ignatius in our Jesuit Constitutions.

The mission of a leader is to help his institution and people to grow and flourish. This requires protecting them from evil, but even more it requires providing the environment, the



Filipino Jesuits during the People Power Revolution (Facebook: Philippine Jesuits)



Filipino Jesuits at the Trillion Peso March on September 21, 2025, EDSA People Power Monument (Facebook: Philippine Jesuits)

resources and the assistance so they can grow.

That is, we are called to be good shepherds. A good shepherd protects his flock from wolves and robbers. A good shepherd pastures and feeds his sheep.

In part IX of the Jesuit constitutions, St. Ignatius gives what he considers essential for a leader. The first is that a leader should have a deep love for the institution and the people he leads. We do not usually talk about love in leadership formation. But in my long experience of leadership, St. Ignatius is right. A leader will often face many difficulties with his institution and his people. It is his love for them that will give him the drive and energy to face and solve these difficulties.

In my experience, we learn leadership not so much from books, but more from other leaders and from experience and reflection on experience.

Since a homily should not be long and abstract, I thought we could reflect on two recent calls to leadership: the call to fight corruption and the call to care for our malnourished and poorly educated children.

From its early days in the 1960s through the years of activism and martial law, LHS-LST have played leadership roles in the response of the Church to injustice and played significant roles in our deliverance from martial law in the snap elections of 1986 and EDSA 1.

On September 21, 2025, together with many Church and religious groups, civic organizations were part of the leadership to protest massive corruption in government. We responded with so much energy and passion to the call of our bishops, of the Church and of our people to end corruption, to make perpetrators accountable.

I invite LHS-LST then to lead in a reflection on this call and our response and learn from them. What was our end goal in these rallies and protests? To

punish and imprison the corrupt? To find better contractors? To actually control and end flooding? How far have we gone in these goals? Shall we participate in next steps to achieve them? If so, how?

Our victory in EDSA 1 was not purely a miracle. Groups prepared hard, especially in the last three years, when a concrete end-goal to end the dictatorship emerged, a forthcoming election. Groups worked hard to have a chance to win this election: selecting our candidate and involving a large investment of money, logistics, and organization.

Can we help define the end goal of our protests against corruption, and can we contribute to achieving it?

Leaders who Pasture and Nourish the Sheep

To paraphrase Isaiah Berlin, we do not build our country and Church only by fighting evils, we also build by positive goals.

The CBCP Pastoral letter of August 11, signed by Cardinal Ambo David, entitled "Responding to the Crisis in Nutrition and Early Childhood Development," is an urgent call to Catholic organizations and institutions to engage in solutions to child malnutrition and poor early education, problems which condemn up to a third of our children to a less than human future.

In contrast to our resounding roar in response to the call to protest corruption, our response to our bishops' call to feed our hungry children has been barely a whimper. Perhaps this is because the energy for rallies and protests comes from anger. And anger seems to ignite other anger.

But the energy to work to feed and tutor hungry children comes from love and caring, and love and caring only come from encounter.

When the Marawi siege started in May 2017, the Secretary of Education of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) asked Gawad Kalinga to open a kitchen for evacuees in the nearest evacuation center to Marawi, Saguiaran. But we found that the kitchen was so near the battlefront that the floor would shake with exploding bombs and gunfire. Our leaders worried about the safety of the kitchen staff and debated whether we should leave. But the answer of Gabie Tomboc, our kitchen head, we can never forget:

> We can see and hear the bombs. But we can also see and hear the children. I think we should listen to the children.

So we listened to the children and braved the war to feed them for the next five years.

Can our formation programs include encounters that will lead to a concern and caring for these children in need?

Sometimes virtual encounters work.

A friend saw the YouTube video narrative "Boat to School" of Howie Severino. It is the story of an amazing woman, Nanay Jen, who lives in Sitio Liaonan, a very poor *sitio* in Siargao. She only finished first-year high school, but she took it upon herself to tutor 40 children in addition to her own five, feed them from the meager earnings of her fisherman husband, and bring them by *banca* to their school in a nearby island. My friend worried about their safety, offered to provide them with life vests. She then went on



Heroes of DepEd: Nanay Jen tutoring students (Jeneveb Abanzado/DepEd Philippines)

to provide monthly funds for the feeding of the children. More importantly, she keeps in touch with them and has seen how the children are now well fed and healthy, and several graduated with honors. Nanay Jen also graduated from high school and is now in college. This is such a life-giving gift from an encounter with a video narrative.

The pastoral letter has a specific call to all Catholic organizations to contribute to this urgent task: parish feeding programs, early childhood programs, and active partnerships with local governments and community leaders. It is a call to be part of a community of caring for our children. We can only address this challenge by being part of a community of caring.

I invite LHS-LST to include in your formation being part of a program and community addressing malnutrition and early learning, and then from there develop the leadership skills to lead such programs in the parishes or institutions where they will minister. We are called to give life, and this ministry gives our children a chance at life.

A Closing Reflection/Invitation

In my last years as President of Ateneo de Manila University, I asked Dr. Bopeep Saloma, now Dean of the Ateneo School of Social Sciences to study our various initiatives in social development to help us understand "What Works". She did a wonderful study, which has guided us. Now she is challenging the School of Social Sciences to be in a problem-solving mode. Not just to complain about or analyze our problems, but to find solutions for them.

I hope that our leadership formation at LHS-LST may help our future graduates share this problem-solving mode and contribute to solving corruption, malnutrition, and poor learning, and help build a country where our children and people will truly grow and flourish.

We will then leave a legacy of leadership that has given life to our children and our people.



Fr. Bienvenido Nebres, S.J. *was Dean of Ateneo de Manila University's College of Arts and Sciences (1973-1980), Rector of the Loyola House of Studies (1980-1982), Provincial Superior of the Jesuits in the Philippines (1983-1989), President of Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan (1990-1993), and President of Ateneo de Manila University (1993-2011). Today, he serves as a trustee of Gawad Kalinga and continues to invite us to engage with communities and encounter the poor.*

Formed by God in Leadership

Reflections of the Student Council President AY 2025-2026

By Anne Margarette Samson Tongo

The day I knew I was elected as president is memorable because it was also the day that Cardinal Robert Prevost became Pope Leo XIV. But when I first learned that I won as the Student Council (SC) President, I was more afraid than happy! Now things have changed, as the "Marga" now has learned to accept the challenge of leadership along the way, as the Lord continually forms me to be the servant he calls me to be, but please allow me to tell the story of how it began.

I was persuaded to run by some people from COMELEC and the former Executive Board. One very persistent person would not take "no" for an answer, despite my many reasons why not. Seeing that persistence and my existing desire to serve the community in my own little capacity since my first semester here, I decided to place the decision in God's hands. I thought I would most likely not win anyway.

As a first-year MA student whose theology classes were only one semester and whose specialization courses were taken in RMT-CEFAM during the second semester, at least that was what I thought. Then, after knowing the results, I felt doubtful whether I really could, and confused as to why God would allow this to happen. It was not easy to balance being a leader and formator in our consecrated lay community while serving in the LST student government body as its head. During this time, I was helping in my parents' business, enrolled in three other courses (two of which are bridging courses for my future doctorate degree), doing my thesis, serving in the parish, and continuing my apostolate work for the poor and those who need counseling and guidance. Enumerating all this may seem to be a task in itself. Consequently, I thought the task as SC President was impossible.



A year-end dinner with LST Student Council Members, Committee Heads, and Batch Representatives

The first thing I did before formally accepting the role was to ask God to take over all my tasks, concerns, and worries while I focus on Him and obey Him. I will only do what He has asked me to do, and leave the rest to Him. Sure, nothing is perfect. There are occasional hurdles and obstacles, but I discovered that my faith is enough, and even more, to get through the challenges. I have consecrated my presidency to the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom I have asked for prayers every day as I pass by the Della Strada Garden.

Faith, hope, and love do not disappoint. Faith because I believed in God, whose help never fails. Hope, because I have always looked to God's providence every step of the way, even when the circumstances may not seem favorable. Love, because I love the students and the whole LST community, and believe that our tight-knit community is worthy of all our efforts to be served, despite the many leadership challenges I had to face. It has become my own joy seeing the students happy and growing, thriving in and outside the classroom.

"With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility"

As president, I was in charge of forming the student government body, which started by inviting students to serve as committee heads and encouraging them to commit their time and efforts to the LST community. I lead the Executive Board, and guide and oversee the Committee Heads: 10 regular committees, one new, four special and ad hoc committees, all of which are more than the previous years' because of necessity. Also included in the team are the seven Batch Representatives, and not to mention the whole school!

The position exposes us (especially me) to criticisms that need to be met with mercy, humility, and careful discernment, whether they be good or bad, right or wrong. The challenge, despite it all, is to remain compassionately confident, with persistently open hearts to learn: open to God who is continually forming me and us - the student leaders, through our experiences. Compassion, because a prayerful understanding must be there despite the different perspectives and feedback. And confident, knowing that as leaders, we remain not only prayerful, but also discerning and doing what we can despite the challenges. When we were introduced during 2024's year-end party, my predecessor, Rev. James Santos, S.J., handed each of us a cross. I did not know the depths of its meaning then, but this past year, I realized it has become my source of strength, as I always reflect on the cross of every hardship I encounter. It is true. Leadership is carrying the Cross. It demands not only time, effort, and resources, but the strength of your mind and spirit, and faith of the heart to lead when there are difficulties, misunderstandings, and conflicts.

I am glad to look back and share that God, the Blessed Mother, and the Saints, especially St. Therese of the Child Jesus, St. Ignatius of Loyola, all the Jesuit saints and martyrs especially Br. Richie Fernando, S.J., have always been here, despite all the struggles, doubts, fears, confusions, and mistakes. It has been for me a huge responsibility to be a laywoman leader of the student body of an ecclesiastical faculty. I am grateful to God for this chance to learn, to serve, and be formed along the way, and to be both a recipient and witness to God's abundant graces and reliable providence to those who ask and believe, because He loves us all infinitely.

Leadership has its costs! It demands you to step up to become more than who you think you are, and to do more than what you think you can. It demands your will, energy, effort, and the heart and mind for the good of all. It demands almost everything. But it also allows you to grow and let yourself be expanded by the Lord to become more (*Magis*). It helps the person grow in faith by

relying on Christ for all the uncontrollable things if the person allows God to work through him. In the end, experiencing the fruits and joys amidst sufferings, the company of dedicated fellow leaders, the laughter, the lessons, and seeing the LST community, makes it all worthwhile. It is a faint mirror of the Cross, that no matter what the costs, no matter our sins or faults, Christ has always viewed us worthy to be given His life to, so He could be with us in eternal life.

God is generous beyond words. I learned not to simply look at the crosses but also the joys, graces, learnings, and nuggets of wisdom I had received, especially God's presence and how He is forming me and us all. I would like to share with you some of these learnings as the academic year comes to an end. I will always look fondly at this experience with gratitude and love to God and the whole LST Community, to my fellow student leaders, to the LST Faculty and Staff, people who support and pray for us unceasingly, and especially our LST President, Rev. Fr. Renato Repole, S.J., and our moderator, Dr. Joaquin Yap, Jr., SW, for their formative guidance to us in this grace-filled journey. +



Marga Samson Tongo, *is a writer for Sancte Michael Catholic Defense, Camillian Vocations PH, and Diocesan Shrine and Parish of Our Lady of the Abandoned, among others. She is a spiritual co-journeyer and pastoral counselor to lay, religious, and young priests. A laywoman who professed her private vows solemnly in 2017, she dedicates most of her time to praying and serving the Church. She is involved in property management and sales occasionally and is currently taking up an MA in Theological Studies specializing in Pastoral Psychology and Counseling.*

My Learnings and Key Takeaways as Student Council President



Taking responsibility and owning the decision is key when accepting the call.

Responsibilities can seem scary at first, especially when there are many uncertainties. However, bravely owning responsibilities and tasks gave me the strength to go on and made me open to God's grace. Instead of denying the difficulty of the task, I recognized it and surrendered it all to God. I came to recognize that if I am committed, God is all the more committed to help me. Seeing God's goodness like this invites me to trust Him more, against all odds.



There is strength in believing in oneself.

Not every event, task, relationship, or endeavor is perfect. Hearing criticisms, judgments, and different perspectives is all part of leadership. Prayer, discernment, and the right balance of openness and firmness help us focus on the objectives while recognizing that the good intentions of others do not always lead to expected outcomes. Most of all, leadership is not about pleasing others, but knowing that you have decided on the best course of action with a clear conscience after consulting all the student leaders.



Cooperation is a blessing and an avenue for growth.

It is the collaboration of willing, dedicated, and hardworking people that makes every event a success. A true leader is unafraid of rejection and does not take rejection personally. He is not afraid to ask others for help. He invites (despite his own fear and hesitations) those willing to collaborate. He encourages people to discover their potential despite their doubts. A true leader, like Christ, accepts what we have to offer and invites us to be more when we have discovered who we truly are. We can continue to grow because God is here. He is forming and helping us every step of the way.

With the many graces I received from God, I cannot help but sing of His goodness, majesty, and love. Sharing my love for music with our community is my expression of thanksgiving and a response to the love I first received from God. By honing our talents and singing together, theology finds its voice in every song we sing, moving from concepts to an experience of God who continues to create, call, and dwell within us.

Head of LST Choir
San Jose Seminary. Diocese of Legazpi
Second Year Baccalaureate of Sacred Theology &
Masters in Theological Studies (Biblical)



Prince Samson Sabater

Here's what other student leaders have to say:



Maria Clariza Matute

I knew that it would not be easy when I was invited to lead the Development and Fundraising committee, as I had to balance this with my academic load. However, the role had sparked something within me. Integrating what I had learned in my classes, I knew this would be an opportunity for our team members to showcase their talent and creativity in designing this year's merchandise. More importantly, our efforts contribute to the scholarship fund for our brothers and sisters desiring to study at LST. We are deeply grateful to the LST community, alumni, and friends who support this mission by purchasing our merchandise.

Head of Development and Fundraising Committee
Doctor of Ministry in Spirituality and Retreat Directing

I like to think of the Community Engagement and Socials Committee as an extension of the classroom, where we put into practice what we learn and believe in the way we interact with one another and in the conversations we have over shared meals. Seeing how integral social events are to bringing the entire community together makes us less like strangers and more like friends, brothers, and sisters, following after Our Lord's main mode of gathering people—around the dinner table!

Head of Community and Engagement and Socials Committee
Second Year Baccalaureate of Sacred Theology
& Master in Pastoral Leadership and Management (Youth Ministry)



Jeff Ryan Miraflor, SJ

From the VPAA's Desk: Seasons of Planting and Harvesting



By Fr. Rogel Anecito Abais, S.J.

Qoheleth's famously quoted verses begin with "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."(Eccl 3:1) Indeed, the Loyola School of Theology (LST) has enjoyed many great seasons as it marks 60 years of existence as a center for theological formation. We can only be grateful for all that has been, and we look forward with hopeful anticipation of what will be.

The old pictures on display at the Loyola House of Studies (LHS) lobby to celebrate this significant milestone allow us to reminisce about how this place was at the start. We are reminded of the people who were there when the school opened to its first students and its first professors. The aerial shots of the complex show the beautiful and then pristine white buildings with the arch and cross towering in the middle of everything, declaring what this place was and is about—a Christ-centered haven. A certain emptiness awaiting to be filled emanates from these images. Today, the buildings have visibly aged, but they stand strong and witness to countless individuals who have gone through their hallowed halls and who have left richer in wisdom and spirit. The empty feel of the pictures from 60 years ago has been replaced with the vibrant images of smiling faces and activities that now fill those structures.

…a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

The Pre-Theology Studies (PTS) program was opened in 2017 to provide a two-year philosophical preparation prior to theological studies. Thirty-six students comprised the first cohort of this program, and 32 finished the program in 2018. Of the 32, 17 have since finished their theological formation, and 11 have been ordained priests, while five are nearing ordination and one is a religious sister. Seven are still in various stages of theological studies and, hopefully, will also be ordained to the priesthood. This year, the ninth cohort is composed of 16 men and women who will complete the program. What a blessing indeed of a bountiful harvest.

These past nine years have indeed been busy on the academic front. The PTS is just one among a good number of programs established to respond to growing needs in the Church and in society. Ecology, the youth, community development and leadership, safeguarding and vocational accompaniment programs have taken shape and have become important aspects of our mission. Continuous efforts are being made in updating and strengthening our ecclesiastical



Tinig Loyola would like to thank Fr. Rogel Abais, S.J. for his years of faithful and dedicated service to LST.

and civil degree programs, with initial thrusts in quality assurance exercises, such as accreditation underway.

…a time to break down, and a time to build up;

The whole world was caught unprepared when the global pandemic struck in 2022. Our school was challenged by the demands that this situation presented. Overnight, we were forced to shift our operations into virtual mode. Learning and living in this new reality was a struggle for many of us. However, we were able to adapt to our new circumstances. During the lockdown, we worked hard not only to provide what was needed at the time. We were also preparing to enter a post-pandemic world with the assumption that we will no longer be able to go back to how things were before it. We fitted our classrooms with the necessary equipment to accommodate hybrid classes. We also made a lot of changes to our facilities to add more spaces for formal and informal interactions within our learning community.

The expansion of facilities was spurred by the increasing number of students. When the school opened, there were 34 students: seven Jesuits, two Benedictine monks, 13 Oblates (OMI), and 12 Diocesan seminarians. All were Filipinos. By 2015, we were already over 300 students. Today, we have a population of more than 500 students. Half of these students are Filipinos, while the other half are internationals representing around 45 countries.

Growth in numbers and rapid internationalization has also inspired us to strengthen our ties and networks with other theological centers around the world. Partnerships, exchanges, joint-programs are ongoing. Within the Jesuit network, collaboration among the English-speaking theological centers of the Society

has been formally established. We are a member of this global network, which has already been in place for the last five years. The goal is capacity-building, sharing of resources, and more innovative approaches to theological formation.

…a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

Time flies! The great men who founded LST have passed on. In 2023, Fr. Catalino Arevalo, S.J., first dean of LST and famed Filipino Theologian, died at the age of 98 years old. With his passing, we close an era of LST's "giants" remembering also among others, Fr. Eduardo Hontiveros, S.J., Fr. Joseph Smith, S.J., Fr. John Schumacher, S.J., and Fr. Joseph Roche, S.J. Their names clearly remain in our institution's memory and in the memories of the countless students they have taught and formed.

As we honor these forefathers of LST, we are gladdened to look toward a bright future as we recognize the rise of a new wave of dedicated mentors who have join the ranks of LST's faculty. Just as our student body has become international, our professors have also become increasingly international. At present, we count among the regular teaching staff Americans, Indians, Malaysians, Indonesians, Vietnamese, and visiting professors from other countries.

There is much to celebrate! We recently turned 25 years as an Ecclesiastical Faculty recognized by the Vatican and authorized to grant the baccalaureate, licentiate, and doctoral degrees in theology. As an affiliate of the Ateneo de Manila University, we contribute significantly to its recognition as a leading center in Theology, Divinity, and Religious Education.

God has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him. (Eccl. 3:11.14)



Allow me to close on a more personal note. As I end my nine-year term as the Vice-President of Academic Affairs (VPAA), I render my thanksgiving to our Almighty God who gave me this opportunity to serve him through the LST community. If there is one grace I will bring with me as I look forward to my next chapter, it is the friendships that I have gained in my interaction with the administration, staff, faculty, and students. This friendship with all of you has deepened my own friendship with our Lord. All of you have taught me the virtues of patience, perseverance, and holiness. I thank all of you for the wonderful collaboration during these past nine years. *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam!* ✠

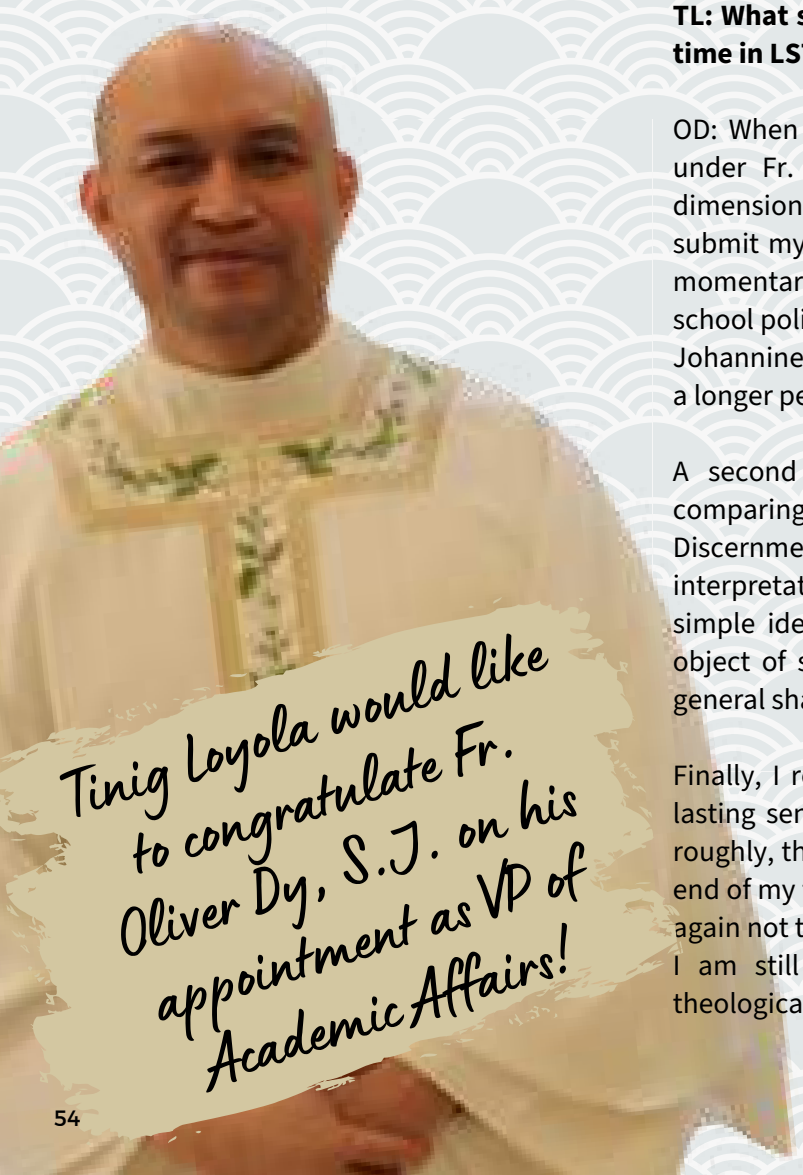


Fr. Rogel Abais, S.J. *completed his Bachelor's and Licentiate in Sacred Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and his Doctorate in Sacred Theology in LST. He had served for nine years as LST's Vice President of Academic Affairs while teaching Sacred Scripture and Italian.*

Welcoming LST's New VP for Academic Affairs: Fr. Oliver Dy, S.J.

Fr. Oliver Dy, S.J. entered the Society in 1998, pronounced his First Vows in 2000, and was ordained a priest in 2009. In 2011, he was sent to the Catholic University of Louvain where he earned his Master of Arts Degree in Theology and Religious Studies (2012), Licentiate in Sacred Theology Degree (2013), Doctor in Sacred Theology Degree (2017), and Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Theology and Religious Studies (2017).

*Upon his return, Fr. Ody was sent to the Loyola House of Studies (LHS), where he served as a community minister and consultor, formator, and prefect of studies for the Theologians subcommunity. He also teaches theology at the Loyola School of Theology (LST). Tinig Loyola (**TL**) speaks to Fr. Ody (**OD**) as he shares his sentiments about his new appointment and his hopes for LST.*



TL: What significant memories or milestones did you have in your time in LST?

OD: When I enrolled in a fully online course on the Gospel of John under Fr. Herb Schneider, I was soon absorbed by the mystical dimension of the text. Toward the end of the course, I decided to submit my remaining weekly assignments in the following semester, momentarily receiving a grade of INC. This extension permitted by school policy thankfully allowed me to relish and remain—to use a key Johannine word I learned—with the letter and spirit of this gospel for a longer period of time.

A second memory relates to my MA thesis, which was about comparing two different English translations of Ignatius' Rules of Discernment in his Spiritual Exercises. I soon learned about an interpretative key that would later also flow into my dissertation. The simple idea goes like this: a seemingly insignificant detail in some object of study can actually be reflective and representative of the general shape of the broader reality of which it is part.

Finally, I remember my STB synthesis paper. I recall that quiet and lasting sense of satisfaction at how it came to express, even if only roughly, the state and shape my personal faith had taken towards the end of my theological studies. Having unearthed a copy and reading it again not too long ago, I am struck by the fact that, after several years, I am still entangled with, and attracted to, basically the same theological lines of inquiry as before. I guess I am stuck with myself!

TL: How did you feel upon receiving news of your new appointment as the new VP of academic affairs?

OD: I am taking this mission the same way as I have received earlier ones in the Society: as a matter-of-fact, going with the flow, grounding myself in *wu-wei*, trusting in the leading of the Spirit, believing that I have been placed here at this moment in history by Divine Providence. Nevertheless, I cannot but increasingly feel the weight of the office as the date of my assumption of office draws nearer. I recently heard a Christian pastor preach that the place of one's assignment is the place of one's refinement. I pray that when my hour comes, I will be a man of "the hour" as Jesus was in the Gospel of John.

TL: What immediate tasks await you as you prepare yourself for your new role?

OD: I can identify at least two: First, with the increase in enrollees, faculty, and academic programs, there is a need to improve systems so that the school can operate more effectively at scale. Second: artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly redefining how academic formation is being provided and experienced. At this point, I neither demonize nor canonize AI, but appeal to the Ignatian principle of *tantum quantum*: embrace forms and uses of AI insofar as they support true learning, and abstain from them insofar as they short-circuit this process.

Disruptive as it may be, AI cannot however develop beyond a certain point. The growth in AI's computational power is naturally constrained by material limitations inherent in latest AI microchips. Now is therefore the time to begin adjusting, exploring, experimenting, and engaging with AI while it is still in its primitive state. Adopting it today with some critical reflectiveness would also prepare and equip us for the next wave of revolutionary changes driven by more advanced AI hardware.

I believe that it would be profitable for LST to have a synodal space of learning where students and faculty alike can exchange experiences in sample uses of AI and co-discern its appropriate role and place in our academic-ecclesiastical setting. How do we organically and comfortably adapt the tradition of learning in LST to this emergent technological landscape?

The fundamental goal here, now as in every human age, is to establish and cultivate a healthy and ethical culture of technology.

TL: How do you see LST evolving in an AI-driven era?

OD: The school may have to redesign its spaces and redefine its pedagogical activities as it incorporates a critical and judicious use of AI on an experimental basis. I see AI as a nonhuman "actant" (Bruno Latour's actor-network theory) that needs to be subjected to constant reflection and apostolic discernment. How does it affect our patterns of thinking and acting as it becomes an ordinary part of the everyday world we inhabit? Thus, becoming more aware, we can also become more intentional as to the frequency, intensity, and duration of our interactions with different types of AI.

Let me apply this to our educational context by borrowing vocabulary from trigonometry: In the face of AI, faculty can become **acute** in policing students, while students can become **obtuse** by simply outsourcing their thinking to AI. The challenge is to find that **right** angle of approach whereby AI enhances and augments the formative process of human learning.

On the one hand, we have to recognize that AI, given its easy accessibility and dominance outside the classroom, can no longer be absolutely avoided or banned in all classroom settings at all times. On the other hand, we must also resist the temptation of turning "stone into bread" - of using AI in such a way that diminishes or subverts the human labors of contemplation, study, and pondering upon the realities and words of the faith (*Dei Verbum* 8). Our guiding principle here returns to the mystery of the Incarnation: how to be in the world (of AI), but not of the world (of AI).

I am also a user of AI. In my own process of writing, for example, I go through multiple drafts during which I occasionally consult AI-generated suggestions as I rework selected portions or aspects of my text. I have to stop at some point in time, resisting the temptation to further rewrite things to more fully and concisely express what I really want to say. What is new is the human-AI interaction that now factors into my writing and thinking process, and the overall extent and level

of this interaction would depend on how often, how much, and how long I continue revising the text.

As an administrator, I also deploy AI as a kind of technological executive assistant that helps me reconceptualize and redesign existing operations. I can offload some repetitive administrative details, for example, by constructing and implementing a digital system that runs on an AI-generated algorithm. As a result, I save time and energy, which I can now rededicate for activities requiring a more human touch, such as networking with key partners, doing sapiential reading of theological literature, and engaging in pastoral care for others in the LST community.

All told, my accumulated personal experiences with AI give me a general sense of and familiarity with the risks and benefits of AI in a given situation.

I would like to add here that works of science fiction are an advantageous resource for reimagining the shape and dynamics of education in an AI world. They have predictive value because tech companies often strive to bring to reality certain pieces of technology first imagined and encountered in the world of science fiction. I see this genre as pointing and painting a way forward into the future of education.

TL: What do you think the future has in store for the academic programs of LST and its students?

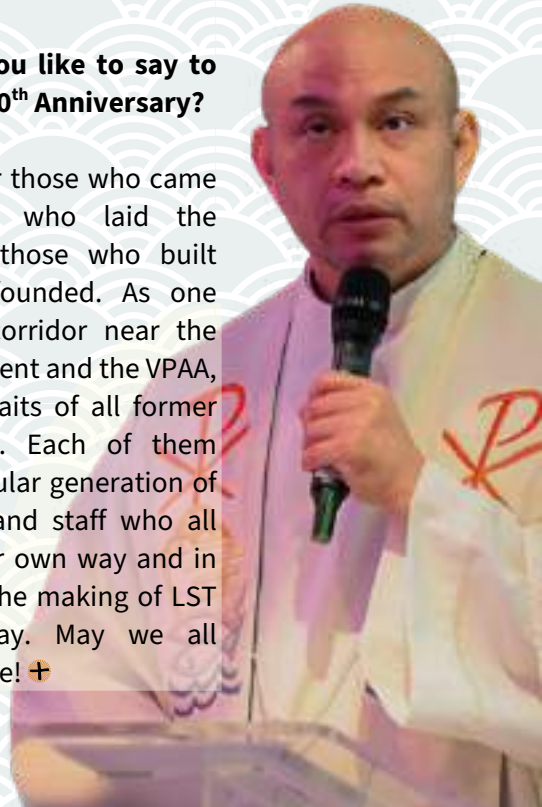
OD: LST is guided by *Veritatis Gaudium*, the 2017 Vatican document concerning ecclesiastical universities and faculties. Here I would like to highlight two of the four criteria mentioned in item no. 4 of this document: the call for "inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches," and "the urgent need for 'networking' between those institutions worldwide…to set up suitable channels of cooperation also with academic institutions in the different countries and with those inspired by different cultural and religious traditions." From here, I envision LST as a nexus where theology and philosophy intersect with the social and natural sciences and other fields of knowledge. Likewise, LST can also be seen as a node or hub within a network of similar schools across the globe. There has been some progress with regard to the latter. In the coming intersession period, a few students of LST will travel to Nairobi to participate in an international course on Ignatian spirituality. I hope that in the years to come, the network of LST grows to the point where exposure—whether online or onsite—to diverse traditions of education across the globe becomes a natural part of academic life at LST.

TL: What aspirations and hopes do you have for LST?

OD: LST can grow stronger in carrying out its vision-mission through quality assurance and accreditation by competent external bodies, such as the Vatican's Agency for the Evaluation and Promotion of Quality in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (AVEPRO), the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU), and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Gaining recognition in the global rankings as a result would be a welcome bonus. Still, the best contributions of LST in an information age cannot be simply captured by the metrics of performance. There are things in the arena of learning that are essentially immeasurable: the dawning of insight after lovingly wrestling with the text, the delight of finding with fellow learners and walking alongside them in the journey of faith, the sense of illumination at discovering an articulation of truth that deeply resonates with one's life experiences. All these leave a deeper imprint on the self. It is this "ministry of consolation" envisioned and embodied by Ignatius and his first companions that LST continues to engage in today.

TL: What would you like to say to LHS-LST on their 60th Anniversary?

OD: I wish to honor those who came before us, those who laid the foundations, and those who built upon what was founded. As one walks down the corridor near the offices of the President and the VPAA, one sees the portraits of all former presidents of LST. Each of them represents a particular generation of faculty, students, and staff who all contributed in their own way and in their own time to the making of LST as it stands today. May we all likewise do the same! ✝



LEGACY.



Special Theological Hour: In Celebration of the 60th Founding Anniversary of LST (November 12, 2025)

By Fr. Joel Tabora, S.J.

The question that was posed to me: What are the most significant contributions of LST to Theology in the Church in the Philippines, during my time as LST President from 1995-2000? This was after my stints as Rector of San Jose Seminary (SJS) from 1989-1995, and before that, as Priest-in-Charge of the *Sambayanang Kristyano ng Kristong Hari*, in Commonwealth, QC, from 1986-89. Actually, my involvement with and for the urban poor began earlier when I was priest-in-charge of San Pedro Resettlement Area in Laguna (under SCAPS) from 1976-79 and did not stop when I served as SJS rector and LST president but continued parallel to these assignments, and so my views and projects were constantly influenced by this immersion with the urban poor. Just as they were influenced by the privilege that was given to me to participate in the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1995), which re-formulated the mission of the Society of Jesus as a fourfold dynamic:



"the propagation of the faith, the promotion of justice that that faith demands, sensitivity to cultures, and inter-religious dialogue."

Parallel to this was the theological and philosophical formation I had received at *Jesuitenkolleg* in Innsbruck and in the *Hochschule für Philosophie* in Munich, which ended in a doctorate on the concept of the "future" in the writings of Karl Marx.

My immersion in Kristong Hari, which led to my leadership in LST took place at a historical inflection point in the Philippines. The effect of the long years of the Presidency of Ferdinand Marcos was the widespread suffering of the Filipino people and their cry for liberation. This climaxed in the EDSA People Power Revolution, with the full participation of the urban poor from Kristong Hari but also that of the faculty, students, seminarians, religious and staff of LST. Some of the most iconic images of that uprising involve personalities belonging to the LST community.

So what were some of the ways that LST tried to contribute to the Church in the Philippines during my time? I suggest the following: The image of theology as the encounter of God's Resurrected Light, Life, and Joy with a world of real people shrouded in the pain of injustice, suffering, and death. The image of the *Salubong* by Jose Blanco from Angono displayed now here in this Sin Center illustrates this view of theology and its mission in the world. It is a view which sees the faces of the people in resurrection light.

In this context, theology is understood not as a conversation wrapped in on itself, but as LST reaching out to the world, hungry for that encounter. That was the idea behind LST's Theological Hour, which was initiated in my time and which I am delighted continues to be practiced to this very day in its "special edition" of the Theological Hour. It was LST's need to engage the world yearning for the light of truth. With the Theological Hour, LST was all of a sudden wrestling not only with challenging biblical and theological texts but conversing with controversial people from government, private business, and the professions, allowing itself to be challenged and confused in its mission to spread Gospel light in the world.

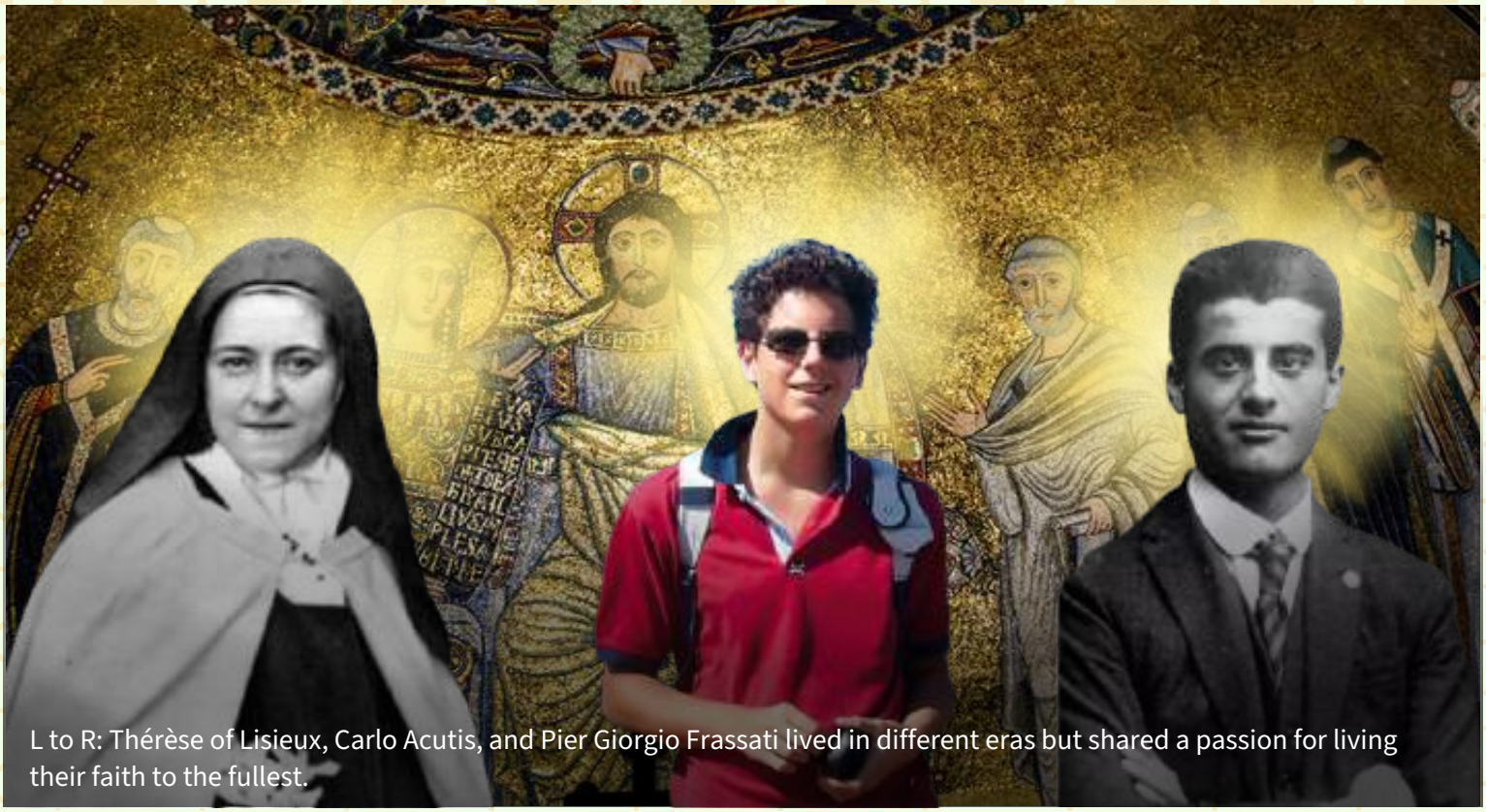
Then, the work to give LST the right to grant theological degrees in its own right. At that time, we were merely aggregated with the theological faculty of Fujen University in Taiwan. Interestingly enough, the person who seemed to be most disturbed about this was the Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Cardinal Sin. He could not accept that the larger and eminently influential faculty of LST (including then Frs. Catalino Arevalo, Joe Smith, Joseph Roche, Ismael Zuloaga, John Schuhmacher, and Sr Annie Co) had to depend on Fujen to confer its ecclesiastical degrees. At that time, the proposition that an ecclesiastical faculty other than that of the royal and pontifical University of Sto. Tomas was hugely controversial. But Cardinal Sin stayed the course. In 2000, this privilege was granted LST, allowing it to serve the Church with its own brand of theology. Just a historical aside: As the conferral of ecclesiastical status was in the last stages of deliberation, I had already been transferred to Ateneo de Naga University (AdNU) as a replacement for its president, Fr. Rolly Bonoan, S.J., who had suddenly succumbed to a heart attack; with that, the former Rector Magnificus of the Royal and Pontifical University of Sto. Tomas was now my Ordinary in the Archdiocese of Caceres. I was called from Naga to return to Manila to defend our LST bid before the assembled CBCP. Abp. Legaspi journeyed from Naga to Manila to oppose it. In the end, I think we can say the Holy Spirit won.

Finally, this LST building was raised and dedicated to theology in the Philippines. With Fr. General's permission, it was largely funded by monies solicited from various Jesuit theologates in Europe. "You have the money," I argued, "We have the students of theology." When it was finally finished, we had a new space to complement our existing classrooms and formidable library in the Loyola House of Studies (LHS). This included administrative spaces, additional classrooms, a computer lab, a chapel, institutes for particular theological disciplines, and a special space for administrative convocations and academic ceremonies, now the *Tipanan ni San Ignacio*. The Sin Center was originally oriented north and attached to a kitchen in the back. Much has changed since my time. The courses and degrees have developed. The faculty and student population are now more internationalized. But I think many elements remain from my time between 1995-2000, namely:

- The idea of theology as *Salubong*.
- The Theological Hour reaching out for conversation with our world.
- LST as an influential Philippine theological faculty conferring ecclesiastical degrees in its own right.
- The Horatio De La Costa Center: a space dedicated to theological formation. Some call it "the Titanic" not because it is headed towards collision with an iceberg, but because its height commands vistas of hope with open arms. Against powerful winds, or moved by a gentle breeze, it reflects on God's self-revelation and refracts its light onto the shadows of our world.



Fr. Joel Eduque Tabora, S.J. *had served as president of several institutions. He was LST's sixth president from 1995 to 1999, the president of Ateneo de Naga University from 1999 to 2011 and of Ateneo de Davao University from 2011 to 2023. During this time, he also served as the president of PAASCU from 2012 to 2021. He is currently a formator at San Jose Seminary and works at the JJ Carroll Institute on Church and Social issues.*



L to R: Thérèse of Lisieux, Carlo Acutis, and Pier Giorgio Frassati lived in different eras but shared a passion for living their faith to the fullest.

Faces of Holiness: Two Asian Servants of God for Trying Times

By Kerr Nell S. Deliva

For decades, the European faces of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux or Pier Giorgio Frassati have defined the image of youthful sanctity. With the recent canonization of Saint Carlo Acutis, that image has been updated to the 21st century. However, a new chapter in hagiography is being written, not in the digital cafés of Milan, but in the slums of Metro Manila and on the church steps of Lahore.

The "trying times" for young people in Asia are not always the crisis of digital indifference; they are often the raw, tangible crises of poverty, illness, and persecution. In this landscape, we find two extraordinary witnesses: Servant of God Darwin Ramos and Servant of God Akash Bashir. Though not yet canonized, their lives are perhaps all the more relevant for it. They are "saints next door" in the most literal sense—their causes are our causes; their world is our world, and their lives chart an inspiring example to all of us.

As students of theology in the Philippines, their stories are not just inspirational; they are incarnational. They offer two distinct, powerful models of *kenosis*—the self-emptying of Christ—lived in the Asian context as we know it.

Darwin Ramos: The 'White Martyrdom' of Joy

Darwin Ramos (1994-2012)[1] embodies the “white martyrdom” of slow, redemptive suffering. A Filipino street child from the slums of Pasay City, his life was marked by what many would see as unmitigated tragedy. As a scavenger, he contracted Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a brutal disease that progressively weakened his entire body, leading to total paralysis and respiratory failure.

Here, the "problem of evil" is not a textbook chapter; it is a lived biography. Where was God in his suffering? Darwin’s answer was not a complex theodicy; it was marked with a simple and radiant joy.



Darwin Ramos (Facebook: Servant of God Darwin Ramos: Cause for Canonization)

> *masayang-masaya ako*

Rescued by the *Tulay ng Kabataan* Foundation, Darwin spent his final years in their care. Though his body failed, his spirit ignited. He refused to be defined by his illness, embodying the title he is now remembered by—a true "joy-giver." In the midst of his suffering, he did not speak of despair. Instead, he famously expressed, "*Masayang-masaya ako*" (I am very happy). His mission, as he saw it, was not to be healed, but to heal others through his smile and his unshakeable faith.



This is a powerful *kenosis*. It is not the emptying of a single, heroic act, but the slow, patient surrender of his will to God's. In a world obsessed with strength, productivity, attention, and self-actualization, Darwin’s holiness is a radical counter-witness. He found Christ not despite his powerlessness, but in it. He lived the Beatitude, "Blessed are those who mourn," and transformed it into, "Blessed are those who give joy."

[1]https://www.ucanews.com/news/vatican-names-filipino-boy-servant-of-god/85336



Top Left: The parents of Akash Bashir, Emmanuel and Naz-Bano, with his brother Ramish. (Photo: CNS)
Left & Top: Photos of Akash Bashir

***Akash Bashir: The 'Red Martyrdom' of* Communion**

Akash Bashir (1994-2015)[2] offers a different, fiercer witness – the "red martyrdom" of a final, decisive sacrifice. If Darwin's *kenosis* was a marathon, Akash's was a sprint—a single, earth-shattering moment that defined eternity.

Akash was a 20-year-old Salesian student and volunteer security guard at St. John's Catholic Church in Lahore, Pakistan. On March 15, 2015, as over a thousand faithful celebrated Sunday Mass inside, a suicide bomber rushed to the church gate. Akash, standing guard, refused to let him pass. He grabbed the man, held him, and spoke his last words: "I will die, but I will not let you go in [inside the church]."

The bomb detonated, killing them both, but Akash's body absorbed the blast, saving the entire congregation. This act carries a profound theological weight. It is both Eucharistic and Ecclesiological. In the most literal way possible, Akash Bashir gave his body and blood for the *Ekklesia*—the gathered community. He lived the very words of the Gospel that were likely being proclaimed inside: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

His was not the holiness of the cloister; it was the holiness of the threshold. He is a saint of the church door, the liminal space between the sacred and the profane, the safe and the dangerous. For a generation often seen as non-committal, Akash's final, definitive "yes" to Christ—spoken with his own physical body, is a testament to the ultimate commitment, a concrete covenant of love with God.

[2]https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2022-02/pakistan-church-first-servant-god-akash-bashir-lahore.html

The Blood and the Water

There is a thread that binds these two paths together. We find it in St. Thérèse of Lisieux and her confidence that "all is grace". Darwin shows us the grace of receiving, finding God in the weakness of the sickbed. Akash shows us the grace of giving, finding God in the strength of the final sacrifice.

But perhaps the most striking image is found in the Divine Mercy itself. In these two young men, the two rays flowing from the heart of Christ are made flesh in the Asian Church. Akash embodies the red ray—the blood of sacrifice and life given for others. Darwin embodies the pale ray—the water of purification, washing away despair through the long "white martyrdom" of endurance.

We are challenged to offer the "red" of our courage when the faith is under fire, and the "white" of our joy in the slow grind of daily study. Yet, distinct as they seem, these paths ultimately converge. In Darwin and Akash, we see that the courage to die and the openness to suffering are but two pulses of the same Sacred Heart—bridging every divide to lead us back to the infinite mercy of God. ✝





Kerr Nell S. Deliva *is a Supervising Legislative Staff Officer in the Philippine Congress (House of Representatives). His work focuses on the legislative budget process, from taxation (revenue generation) to appropriations (expenditure authorization). He holds an MPM from the Ateneo School of Government and a BA in Public Administration from UP Diliman. His current theological scholarship at LST (as a graduate student) examines the intersection of governance, law, and fiscal administration.*

The Ralph B. Gehring Library turns 70: A Journey of Incredible Growth

Interview with Fr. Richie Genilo, S.J.

By Shimbo Pastory, C.S.Sp.

*In his article in Landas Journal (Landas 6, 1992, p. 110-12), Fr. Ralph Gehring S.J. testified to the considerations of the Loyola School of Theology (LST) Library as 'the best Theological Library in East Asia' even before it bore his name four years later. Here, in his capacity as its director, Fr. Richie Genilo, S.J. (RG) discusses the success story of The Ralph B. Gehring Library of LST with Tinig Loyola (**TL**) as it turns 70 years old.*

TL: What is the story of the Ralph B. Ghering Library and the events that shaped its 70-year journey?

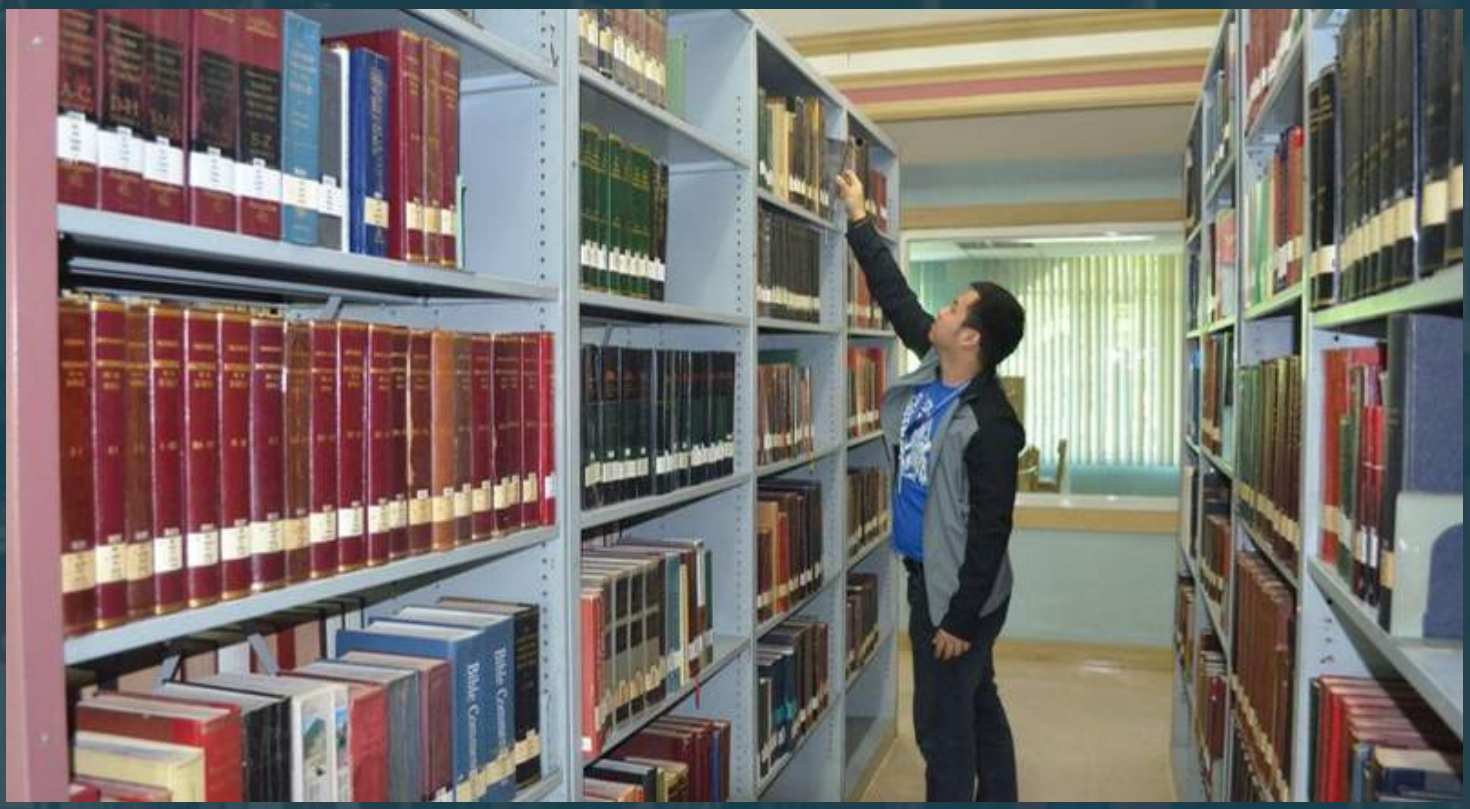
RG: The library's beginnings date back to 1955, when collections from two Jesuit institutions, San Jose Major Seminary and Berchmans College, were merged to form the core theological collection that would become the LST Library. Owned by the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus, this collection comprised about 25,000 volumes. When LST was established in 1965 inside the Ateneo campus, the collection was transferred to the school's new library building. Rev. Fr. Ralph B. Gehring, S.J., was the first librarian of the LST Library. He worked closely with the initial library staff, notably Ms. Crisanta Rosales, helping organize, develop, and expand the collection to serve students and faculty alike.

The library collection was donated by the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus to LST in 1996, the same year of Fr. Gehring's death, marking a key institutional milestone in the library's history. In recognition of Fr. Gehring's dedication as librarian, scholar, and priest, the library was named The Ralph B. Gehring Library.

Major renovations were undertaken to expand the library space and reconfigure the layout of the library facilities and collection. On June 21, 2000, the library's renovated facility was blessed by Most Rev. Angel Lagdameo, Archbishop of Jaro.

TL: Tell us more about the growth of the library collection and what makes the Ralph B. Gehring Library collection uniquely valuable in supporting theological research and holistic formation today.

RG: Over the decades, the Ralph B. Gehring Library has grown significantly. What began as a collection of 25,000 volumes expanded to approximately 80,000 books and 25,000 periodicals, covering theology, philosophy, pastoral ministry, spirituality, and other related



disciplines in support of the programs and courses offered by LST. This has made it one of the leading theological libraries in Southeast Asia.

The library collection has significant resources in biblical studies, systematic theology, Jesuit history, and Ignatian spirituality. The general collection continues to grow through the regular purchase of books recommended by faculty and students, as well as donations from Jesuits, faculty, and alumni.

The library's periodical collection is maintained through journal subscriptions and an exchange program between LST's *Landas* journal with other local and international theological journals. LST provides access to digital editions of journals through its EBSCO subscription. The library also provides access to the theses and dissertations of LST students in the civil and ecclesiastical degree programs.

The library's collection spans three floors of the building. The main entrance to the library is on the third floor. This floor contains the circulation counter, library users' lockers, study rooms, computers, card catalogues, and the library's OPAC terminal, where users can search the library's collection online. This floor contains the class reserved shelves, the theses and dissertation collection, and the reference collection.

The second floor contains the periodical section and the special collection room. There are also restrooms, cubicles, study tables, OPAC terminals, meeting rooms, and a student rest area. The first floor houses the library's general collection, including pamphlets and oversized books. There are also restrooms, OPAC terminals, and study tables.

TL: How has the library served its users? What collaborations with local or international institutions do we have, and how have digital tools and online access changed the way we work?

RG: The library's primary clients are the students and faculty of LST. The library also has agreements with other Ateneo-based institutions (e.g., EAPI,

FIRE, AdMU Theology Dept., etc.) that allow their students and faculty to conduct research at the library. Outside researchers can also request to use the library for a nominal fee.

Qualified library users can borrow books in the general collection for two weeks at a time and may renew them. Periodicals, references, books in the reserved shelves, theses, and dissertations may not be borrowed. These, however, may be photocopied in coordination with the library staff and the photocopying service in the LST premises. Advanced graduate students in LST may reserve cubicle space to work on their theses or dissertations. Apart from the EBSCO digital journal access available to LST students, library users can also access the library's digital subscription to the *Civilta Cattolica* journal on a dedicated terminal.

Behind the scenes, the hardworking library staff process the cataloging of new books, maintain and renew the periodical collection, facilitate the borrowing of books, receive and reshelve returned books, bind periodicals, repair damaged books, assist in the photocopying of materials, stock the faculty reserve shelves, and perform other essential tasks to keep the library running smoothly and efficiently.



One unique feature of the library is its card catalogue system. While other libraries have ceased using card catalogues in favor of an exclusively online library search platform, the LST library maintains both a card catalogue and an OPAC platform to ensure that physical records of the library's collection are accessible to users even if the OPAC system is offline.

TL: What challenges do you encounter as a significant arm of such a massively diverse institution like LST?

RG: Maintaining and developing a library collection like that of the Ralph B. Gehring Library presents many challenges. The first challenge is to keep the library collection relevant to the expanding needs of LST's faculty and students. The library committee, faculty, and students are encouraged to recommend books and journals related to LST's programs and the research projects of our students and faculty. Current and emerging issues and movements that concern the Church's mission and ministry (e.g., synodality, care for the environment, safeguarding of children and vulnerable persons, migration, inter-religious dialogue, vocation accompaniment, etc.) also inform the library's collection development.

We also take seriously the fact that the growing international character of the school's student body and faculty calls for a diverse collection that reflects the contexts in which students are being formed to serve the Church in Asia and the rest of the world.

A second challenge is providing adequate space for a growing library collection. To ensure that there is enough space for new books and periodicals, the library periodically weeds out outdated, unnecessary, and excess copies of books and donates them to faculty, students, and other libraries that may need them. Certain periodicals are no longer available in physical form but are

accessible digitally through the library's EBSCO subscription. The creation of a special collections room will also help free up space in the general collection section.

A third challenge is maintaining the collection's physical integrity. Proper temperature control is essential to keep the library collection dry and mold-free. Regular cleaning of books removes accumulated dust. Pest control is necessary to prevent insects from damaging the books. Darkened and damaged labels need to be replaced, and broken bindings need to be repaired. Regular inspection of the books on the shelves is necessary to recover and reshelve misplaced books. Security measures are implemented to prevent book loss. Books are periodically repositioned on the shelves to accommodate new acquisitions.

TL: What vision and projects do you have planned for the Ralph B. Gehring Library?

RG: An important ongoing project of the library is rescanning the books in the general collection to correct those that have been erroneously encoded or to restore those that failed to enter the OPAC system during the library's collection data transfer from an older library computer system. Though tedious and time-consuming, the project has recovered many books that were previously not searchable in the OPAC system. Once the general collection has been scanned and confirmed in the OPAC system, the library will begin a long-overdue inventory of its collection.

The library is creating a special collection of pre-1900 books to be housed in a dedicated room to protect their fragile condition and make room for new acquisitions on the general collection shelves. The project has already discovered books published as early as the 1700s. Due to the age of these books, they can only be used in the library under the supervision of the library staff. This project requires the construction of additional shelves and the careful selection of the books to be added to this collection.

Another major project planned is the encoding of the periodical collection into the OPAC system to allow library users to search for periodicals more easily.

These projects and others will be included in the library's development plan, aligned with LST's strategic plan for the next 10 years.

Looking to the future, The Ralph B. Gehring Library remains a crucial theological resource not only for LST students and faculty but also for researchers from other seminaries and schools of theology. Adapting to the academic and pastoral needs of the LST community and reading the signs of the times with the Church, the Ralph B. Gehring Library will continue to provide the resources necessary to enable LST to offer integral formation to present and future pastoral ministers in the service of the Church and of the world. Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.



Shimbo Pastory, C.S.Sp. *is a Tanzanian, a religious of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans), and a theology student at Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University. He is also journalist and a weekly social development columnist for The Citizen Newspaper, published in Tanzania.*



Loyola School of Theology in 1965.

Looking BACK & FORWARD

The past, present, and future of LST

By Fr. Eric Eusebio, S.J. and Rev Bien Cruz, S.J.
Reference: LST Statutes of 2020

Loyola School of Theology (LST) stands as a beacon of academic excellence and spiritual formation in the Philippines. Situated in Quezon City, within the Ateneo de Manila University campus, LST plays a pivotal role in shaping the theological landscape of the country and beyond. As an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology, it not only educates seminarians, priests, and religious, it also forms lay leaders equipped to serve the Church and society at large. Its mission aligns with the vision of a theology that is both deeply rooted in the Catholic tradition and responsive to contemporary challenges, particularly in the Philippine and Asian contexts.

LST's history reflects a journey of resilience, adaptation, and growth. Its roots can be traced to the founding of Colegio de San Jose in 1601, which laid the foundation for priestly formation under Jesuit mentors in the Philippines. This marked the beginning of a legacy that would influence generations of Church leaders. In 1621, Pope Gregory XV issued a brief authorizing the Archbishop of Manila to confer degrees, including degrees in theology, on the candidates presented to him by the Rector of the Jesuit College of Manila, in which the students of the Colegio de San Jose attended lectures. This marked the beginning of Jesuit theological education in the Philippines. Over the

centuries, the institution has undergone significant changes, each contributing to its evolution into a premier center for theological education.



Colegio de San Jose 1875-1915 on
Calle Cabildo corner Calle Anda



The main entrance to the building of the Facultades de Medicina y Farmacia, Colegio de San Jose, Universidad de Santo Tomas, 1887

The expulsion of the Jesuits from the Philippines in 1768 disrupted their educational efforts. Despite this setback, the Colegio de San Jose persisted under the administration of the secular clergy and later became part of the University of Santo Tomas in 1875 as a school of medicine and pharmacy. The Jesuits regained administration of the Colegio de San Jose in 1910, renewing their focus on priestly education. This period marked a revitalization of their mission, culminating in the recognition of San Jose Seminary as an interdiocesan seminary for the entire Philippines in 1953 by the First Plenary Council of the Philippines. This milestone underscored its national importance and its role in shaping the clergy of the country.

A significant transformation occurred in 1965 when the Provincial Superior of the Society of Jesus in the Philippines, Fr. Horacio de la Costa, with the authorization of the Jesuit Superior General Fr. Pedro Arrupe, opened the Loyola House of Studies “School of Theology and Ecclesiastical Studies” (STES). This initiative combined the philosophy faculty of Berchmans College in Cebu City and the theology faculty of San Jose Seminary at Highway 54, creating a unified academic institution dedicated to theological education. Classes commenced at the current site within the Ateneo de Manila University in 1965, and the institution adopted the name “Loyola School of Theology” in 1972. This marked the beginning of a new era for LST, as it expanded its academic offerings and solidified its reputation as a center of excellence.

LST’s affiliation and eventual aggregation with the Theological Faculty of Fujen in Taipei in 1984 and 1994, respectively, were other significant milestones. This enabled the school to grant the canonical degrees, further enhancing its academic credentials. On 13 August 1999, LST achieved a historic milestone when it was officially established as an Ecclesiastical Faculty of Theology, authorized to confer degrees in Sacred Theology, including the Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology (STB), Licentiate in Sacred Theology (STL), and Doctorate in Sacred Theology (STD). This recognition underscored LST’s commitment to academic rigor and its role in preparing leaders for the Universal Church.

Today, LST is a vibrant academic and spiritual community. In the First Semester of the Academic

Year 2025-2026, LST boasts a diverse student body of 534 individuals. This includes seminarians, priests, religious, and lay students. Of these, 50.2% are Filipino, while 49.8% are international, representing 48 countries, 87 religious congregations, and 42 dioceses. Such diversity underscores LST's transition from primarily serving the local Church to becoming a center for the Universal Church. Its students and graduates contribute to the Church's mission worldwide, serving in various capacities and addressing the needs of their communities.

LST's reach extends beyond its campus through affiliations with two key theological centers. St. John Vianney School of Theology in Cagayan de Oro, Philippines, affiliated with LST in 2017, and its status was renewed in 2023. Similarly, St. Joseph Jesuit Scholasticate Theological Institute in Saigon, Vietnam, affiliated with LST in 2018, and its affiliation was renewed in 2023. These partnerships reflect LST's commitment to theological education and formation across the global Church. By extending its academic and spiritual resources to these institutions, LST contributes to the formation of Church leaders in diverse contexts, enriching the Universal Church's mission.

LST's contributions to Philippine society and beyond are manifold. As a center for theological reflection and pastoral formation, it serves as a vital resource for addressing contemporary challenges. Its graduates, equipped with rigorous academic training and spiritual depth, go on to serve in various regions of the world. Whether ministering in parishes, teaching in seminaries, or engaging in social justice initiatives, LST alumni embody the Jesuit ethos of being men and women for others. This commitment to service reflects the institution's mission to form leaders who can respond to the needs of the Church and society with wisdom, compassion, and faith.

LST is deeply committed to serving the poor and sharing the joy of the Gospel. Inspired by the Jesuit tradition of promoting faith and justice, the institution integrates this mission into its academic and pastoral programs. Students are encouraged to engage in outreach activities, social justice initiatives, and ministries that address the needs of marginalized communities. By fostering a culture of service and solidarity, LST ensures that its graduates are not only knowledgeable in theology but also deeply committed to living out the Gospel message in their lives and ministries.

The institution's impact extends to its academic programs, which are designed to address the needs of the contemporary Church. These programs provide students with a solid foundation in Catholic theology while encouraging them to engage with contemporary issues.



Diversity of the student population: LST Year-end-gathering 2025.

By fostering a spirit of inquiry and dialogue, LST prepares its students to navigate the complexities of modern ministry and leadership.

LST's current 73 dedicated faculty members and many others who have taught in LST are the cornerstone of its success. Composed of theologians, scholars, and practitioners from various fields, the faculty brings a wealth of expertise and experience to the classroom. Their commitment to academic excellence and pastoral formation ensures that students receive a holistic education. Faculty members also contribute to theological scholarship through research and publications, enriching the broader academic community. This dedication to intellectual and spiritual growth reflects LST's commitment to excellence in all aspects of its mission.

The institution's facilities and resources further enhance its academic environment. Located within the Ateneo de Manila University campus, LST benefits from state-of-the-art facilities, including libraries, research centers, and conference spaces. These resources provide students with the tools they need to excel in their studies and contribute to the Church's mission. Additionally, the campus's serene environment fosters reflection and spiritual growth, creating a supportive space for theological education and formation.

LST's impact on the Universal Church is evident in the achievements of its graduates. Over the years, LST alumni—some of whom have been appointed by the Holy Father as bishops—have gone on to serve in various capacities, from parish ministry to academic leadership. Their contributions reflect the institution's emphasis on academic excellence, spiritual depth, and a commitment to service. By forming leaders who



are prepared to address the challenges of the contemporary Church, LST fulfills its mission to serve the Universal Church with distinction.

The institution's global reach is further exemplified by its international partnerships and affiliations. These collaborations enable LST to share its resources and expertise with theological centers around the world. By fostering dialogue and cooperation, these partnerships enrich the global Church's mission and contribute to the formation of leaders in diverse contexts. This commitment to global engagement underscores LST's vision of a theology that is both deeply rooted in tradition and responsive to contemporary challenges.

LST's history and achievements testify to its enduring commitment to theological education and formation. From its humble beginnings in 1601 to its current status as a premier center for theological education, LST has remained faithful to its mission. Its journey reflects a legacy of resilience, adaptation, and growth, shaped by the challenges and opportunities of each era. As it continues to grow in size and influence, LST remains steadfast in its mission to prepare leaders who will serve the Universal Church with wisdom, compassion, and faith.

In conclusion, the Loyola School of Theology stands as a testament to the Jesuit tradition of academic excellence and spiritual formation. Its rich history, vibrant present, and promising future reflect its unwavering commitment to theological education and formation. By preparing leaders who can address the needs of the Church and society, LST honors its Jesuit heritage while embracing the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Through its mission, LST continues to shape the theological landscape of the Philippines and beyond, contributing to the Universal Church's mission of faith, justice, and service for the greater glory of God and the service of Mother Church and all mankind. ✠





Fr. Eric Eusebio, S.J. *completed his tertianship at the Loyola House of Studies in March of 2010. He was elected Vice President for Academic Affairs at LST and held this role until 2016 before returning as Vice President for Administration from 2017 to 2019. In May 16, 2019, he became LST's 10th President and went on to serve two terms until May 2025.*

Rev. Bien Cruz, S.J. *graduated from Ateneo de Manila University College in 2014 with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a minor in Sociology. He entered the Society of Jesus on May 30, 2015, completed his Bachelor of Sacred Theology and Master of Arts in Theological Studies at LST, and was ordained to the diaconate on October 11, 2025.*



LHS-LST Thanksgiving Mass with Benefactors

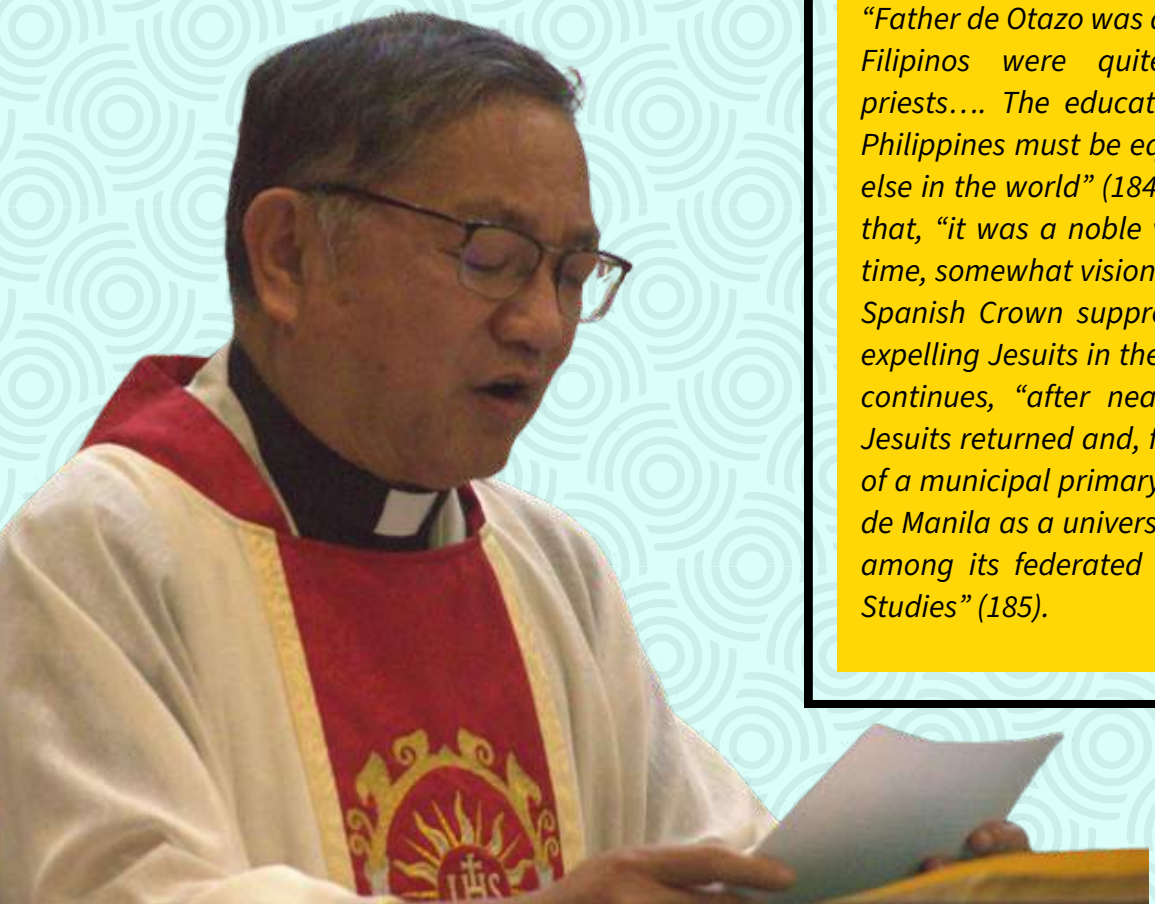
Mass Homily (January 17, 2026)

By Fr. Manoling Francisco, S.J.

As we celebrate this Thanksgiving Mass on the 60th Anniversary of Loyola House of Studies and Loyola School of Theology (LHS-LST), allow me to share some reflections on the establishment of LHS and LST 60 years ago, the ever-changing signs of the times, and the ongoing mission of LHS and LST.

A Historical Overview

From "The Good Way", keynote address delivered by Fr. Horacio de la Costa, first Filipino Provincial of the Jesuit Philippine Province, at the opening convocation of the Loyola House of Studies, dated July 15, 1967:



> *In May of 1724, in Intramuros … the Jesuits of the Philippine Province held a provincial congregation…. Among the postulate [petitions submitted to Father General in Rome] was one proposed by Father Diego de Otazo. Father Otazo claimed that many of the parishes then being administered by the Society were already developed to the point where they could be turned over to the diocesan clergy. If this were done, it would enable the Jesuits to concentrate on a few colleges, one or two in Luzon, two or three in the Visayas and Mindanao, where they could devote themselves to the training of native priests (183).*
>
> *"Father de Otazo was at pains to prove that native Filipinos were quite capable of becoming priests…. The education given to priests in the Philippines must be equal to that given anywhere else in the world" (184). Fr. De la Costa comments that, "it was a noble vision, but perhaps, at that time, somewhat visionary." Four decades later the Spanish Crown suppressed the Society of Jesus, expelling Jesuits in the Philippines. Fr. De la Costa continues, "after nearly a century of exile the Jesuits returned and, from the modest beginnings of a municipal primary school, built up the Ateneo de Manila as a university that can proudly include among its federated units this Loyola House of Studies" (185).*

Thus, Loyola School of Theology was established in 1965 as the School of Theology and Ecclesiatical Studies (STES) within the Loyola House of Studies. Its primary task was "to provide theological formation for the scholastics of the Society of Jesus, the seminarians of San Jose Seminary, and the scholastics of a number of other religious orders." Prior to the establishment of LHS and LST, Filipino Jesuits were sent to the United States for their theological formation; the Josefinos, on the other hand, to their seminary in the old Highway 54. Now, both Jesuit scholastics and Josefinos underwent theological training together in LST, which became an independent entity affiliated with the Ateneo de Manila University in 1968 with Fr. Catalino Arevalo as its first president. I learned from Fr. Art Ferrer that among the first Filipino Jesuit scholastics to take up theology in LST were our well-loved novice master and missionary in Bukidnon, Fr. Matt Sanchez, S.J., and my former Ateneo de Manila Grade School Headmaster, Fr. Loy Cuerquis, S.J.

Changing Signs of the Times

The 1970s witnessed the emergence of Filipino nationalism, which was characterized by resistance to the authoritarian rule of Pres. Ferdinand Marcos, Sr, who declared martial law on September 21, 1972 and denunciation of US-imperialism, which was evident in the presence of US military bases and economic treatises that were onerous and exploitative.

When LHS and LST were established, we were a people asserting our national identity. Nationalism became a clarion call among student activists, academicians, artists, writers, including economists and industrialists. Today, 60 years later, amidst widespread corruption, the deteriorating quality of life, and ever-widening inequality, we are a people searching for our soul. We have allowed populist regimes to undermine democratic institutions and rule with impunity. We have tolerated and even fueled systemic corruption in all levels of society. At the same time, in a society becoming more secular, consumeristic and individualistic, the Church, arguably, has become less relevant. Her prophetic voice less compelling.

Six decades ago, one vision of LST was to create a Filipino Theology. The aim was to teach and preach, research and write in the vernacular. While this remains an enduring goal, today, language is no longer restricted to human communication through words. Our means of communication have evolved to include social media. Facebook and TikTok have become postmodern languages. Today, artificial intelligence (AI), even in its stage of inception, is reshaping our modes of thinking and





communicating. Will AI eventually undermine critical thinking, suppress creativity, and originality?

From the Philippine national context to the milieu of LHS and LST 60 years ago. Who were the first members of the LST community? Fr. De la Costa, in his welcome address in 1965 enumerates:

> *… this year you have on your faculty, besides Jesuits and lay professors, three professors from the Congregation of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. We certainly bid them welcome. And among your student body, you have not only Benedictines, Passionists, Oblates, and Sacred Heart Missionaries, but men from Ceylon, Hong Kong, India, Korea, Thailand, and China, in addition to Filipinos and Americans. It is almost a small Pentecost that we have here.*

After 60 years, this small Pentecost has grown into a larger Pentecost, a more international gathering of faculty and students.

Based on the demographics provided by Fr. Rogel Abais, S.J., this School year 2025-2026, we have a total of 534 enrollees, 268 Filipinos and 266 international students, representing 48 nations from 5 continents. In terms of faculty, we have 32 full-time and part-time Jesuit professors, 48 full-time and part-time non-Jesuit professors. And today we have amongst us three former LST Presidents, namely, Fr. Joel Tabora, S.J., Fr. Jose Quilongquilong, S.J., and Fr. Eric Eusebio, S.J.

In its inception, the primary task of LST was to form Filipino religious and secular priests who would serve the Local Church. Six decades later, LST envisions forming men and women, religious, diocesan, and laity to serve the Church in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and other parts of the world. What does it mean for LHS and LST to form ministers who will proclaim Christ as Lord in places where Christianity is a minority or not welcome, where the Christian Faith cannot be proclaimed publicly? What does it mean to dialogue with cultures today—a variety of ethnic cultures, the scientific and technological mindset, the secular culture of the global youth?



Same Mission, Changing Context

In 1967, Fr. De la Costa exhorted, "Your task today, tomorrow, and in the years to come is the training of priests for the People of God" (185). Sixty years later, what does it mean for LHS and LST to form priests and other ministers for the People of God in a vastly different world? Perhaps we can recall the inaugural address of Fr. Renato Repole, S.J., the 11th LST President, delivered on Aug 29, 2025:

> *LST exists not just to teach theology or the content of the Faith but to train students to theologize or do theology in context; not just to memorize dogmas or teachings but to grapple with and make sense of the various issues that confront us believers, using the tools of Faith and Reason, and everything else that helps. An important aspect of this task is to develop our critical thinking, discernment, and communication skills.*

Moreover, Fr. Repole clarifies that "theological endeavor must not only remain abstract and academic, but also pastoral and missionary, impacting the lives of the poor and marginalized and other societal issues. This implies that theology and theologizing must not only happen and end in the classroom but must speak to and impact the lives of, especially, the disadvantaged."

Conclusion

Finally, Vatican II, which was convened while LHS and LST were being envisioned and constructed, the Church had rediscovered collegiality, the communion of the Holy Father with the bishops of the local Churches. This had led to greater collaboration among the local churches with Rome and a recognition of the fullness of the universal Church in every local Church. At the same time, *Lumen Gentium*, the Constitution of the Church, promulgated by Vatican II underscores the universal priesthood of the baptized, which has led to the recognition of the dignity of the vocation of the lay faithful and their greater participation in the life of the Church. The convergence of movements advocating the decentralization of Rome and declericalization, together with the recognition of the distinct charism of the lay faithful and promotion of their participation in pursuing the mission of the Church, has led to the emergence of a Synodal Church, a Church that journeys with Christ, a Church that fosters communion, participation, and discernment for mission.

Sixty years after, the world has become a different terrain, and the Church strives to become a more inclusive and participative Church. The mission of LHS and LST remains the same: "to form priests and ministers of the People of God". How this continuing mission will adapt to the changing circumstances of the world today will require communal prayer and discernment, courage and conviction, guidance and wisdom from the Spirit of God. We thank the Lord for the past 60 years of forming servant-ministers of the Church. We pray for disponibility to the promptings of the Spirit—that we be ever attentive to the Word of God, be intimately attached to our Lord Jesus, and be fervent and faithful in forming priests and ministers who will serve the Church and the world today and the years to come.



Fr. Manuel "Manoling" Francisco, S.J. *holds a Doctorate in Systematic Theology from the Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Massachusetts and currently serves as Assistant Professor of Theology at LST. He has composed over 150 songs that are staples in Filipino Catholic liturgy, including Tanging Yaman, Sa 'Yo Lamang, I Will Sing Forever, and Hindi Kita Malilimutan.*