

**Ateneo Senior High School Commencement Exercises**  
**Message to the Graduates**

by Fr Karel S San Juan SJ  
Ateneo de Zamboanga University President

Dear Senior High School graduates, I look at you now, and I am filled joy. As President of the Ateneo de Zamboanga University, I am happy to witness your graduation and give your diplomas with much pride and gratitude, and this is because of many things.

First, you are the first batch of students in the new K to 12 curriculum, the very first, pioneering batch of Senior High School students of the Ateneo de Zamboanga University. Everything and everyone is new. The curriculum, the teachers, the administrators, the facilities. Such was the case in all schools in the country. Yet, you, pioneer Senior High School students, you plunged into this new world with great attitude and behavior. You were open. You were cooperative. You were amazing.

This was tested very early on. Barely a month after school opened, two years ago, on July 7, 2016, when fire consumed our beloved Brebeuf Gym, you evacuated your building without panic, very orderly, very quickly. We the administrators did not have to worry for you. You, like mature students, led your way, and helped yourselves, and even helped others, to safety. You were open, you were cooperative, you were amazing.

And then the two years came and went, rather very quickly. With all the new things we were implementing for the first time, like new subjects, new strands, new curriculum, new requirements like work immersion, new student activities, and so on. Because of these, things were not easy. We struggled our way forward. We hit and missed. We fumbled along the way, but we also did achieve much, very much, and hence we are here on graduation day. You were open, you were cooperative, you were amazing.

You came from different schools all over the city and all over the region. Most of you were new to this place called Ateneo. Whenever I met you and ask you if you feel at home, you would always say, yes, Father, Ateneo has become home to us. Ateneo has been a friendly place to us. You learned Ignatian and Jesuit spirituality. You learned what magis is about, that it means giving and being more, being generous of one's self. You learned that cura personalis is about caring for others especially the poor. You learned that in the Ateneo we do things not just for the self but in the service of God and country, pro Deo et patria; not to promote our selves but for the greater glory of God, from whom all good things come. You learned that to be Atenean is not

to be self-entitled, not to be proud and arrogant, but to be humble, to serve, to lead, to be a humble servant leader. In two short but very intensive years of Grade 11 and 12, you learned how to be an Atenean more deeply, more meaningfully, more joyfully.

And so we feel so much of this joy this moment of your graduation. A joy that comes from the pride and gratitude of being the first ever batch of the Ateneo de Zamboanga University Senior High School.

I would like to honor and salute the pioneering administrators, faculty, and staff led by Fr Principal Rey Reyes and Assistant Principals Mrs Raisa Ponce-Austerio, Mrs Lorelei Macrohon, and Fr Koko Parilla. Your combined expertise, care for our students, and patience have made all these possible. Thank you, congratulations! We give you a round of applause.

I would like to thank our parents, loved ones, guardians, and family. We offer you all these fruits of our hard work. All these are possible because of you and your love and sacrifice for your children. We honor you, we salute you, congratulations to you! We give you a round of applause.

I would like to thank those men and women behind the scenes: our security personnel, our physical plant and maintenance workers, our central services, our household help, drivers, those who attend to our many needs at home and in school, our donors and benefactors, our many friends. We thank you, we give you a round of applause.

And finally, you, our graduates. As I said at the beginning, you were open, you were cooperative, you were amazing. And I would like to add: you are blessed by God, you have been blessed by God. You are now blessed with an Ateneo education with an Ateneo diploma. Don't and never take this for granted. Carry this with pride, honor, and responsibility. Always remember what the Ateneo stands for. You will be an Atenean forever. Come home to the Ateneo! I hope to see most of you at the Ateneo de Zamboanga University college. Congratulations! Muchas gracias a todos!