



Twenty years ago, round about the years that many of you were born, the Philippines and much of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN were in the center of the biggest financial crisis in modern Asia, thus the Asian Financial Crisis. For example, twenty school years ago in 1997 to 1998, the economic growth rate reversed from 5.2 to -0.6; unemployment rate of 8.2 jumped to 10.6, inflation spiked from 5.7 to 9.4, and poverty incidence (the percent of the population that were poor) were at a high of 28 percent.

Twenty years after, in the school year of your graduation in 2017 and 2018, so much have changed. By the writing of this paper, the economy is projected to grow by just less than 7 percent making it one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Unemployment to this point is about 6 percent which is among the lowest in your lifetime. Inflation is projected to be 3 percent which by your lifetime standard is outstandingly low. But with so much change, poverty incidence remains high at 22 percent.

In connection with your time in the Ateneo, four years ago most of you were challenged to discover or to find out thus the theme “tuklas”. The purpose was to challenge you to discover your intellectual capacity and more importantly for you to find your role as men and women for others. As graduates of school year 2017 to 2018, the AEGIS challenges you to converge thus the theme “tagpo”. This time, I take this opportunity to challenge you to converge your intellectual capacity with your role as men and women for others.

We credit those who graduated before you especially those in the past twenty years for their use of their intellectual capital to reach the hard earned improvement in the Philippine economy. But going further as graduates of school year 2017 to 2018, I take this opportunity to challenge you as a batch to converge your intellectual prowess with your roles as men and women for others. I plea that you take the challenge as managers, engineers, scientists and artists for others to take your load to preserve the hard earned improvements in our economy, and more importantly, to champion our collective fight against poverty. I plea that you take this challenge all for the greater glory of God.

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