

A PAST TO REMEMBER, A COMMUNITY IN MEMORY*

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It is good that Letran spearheaded an awareness program in the Intramuros community, particularly for the students.

I was invited to talk about Intramuros that centered on the theme of today's conference entitled "Rediscovering Intramuros Borderlines." When we say "borders," we mean, of course, boundaries. Limitations.

Surprisingly, Intramuros didn't have borders. Yes, there were stone walls that marked the city. And from within grew the city of Manila. But the walls weren't enough to enclose the minds, the traditions, and the customs of Manila. It spread beyond the city and into the provinces creating what we now consider as our heritage.

It is this heritage that we now have slowly forgotten. So now, as your theme today says, we have to rediscover the borders of Intramuros. Rediscover the past that grew out from within the walls.

It now will start with memory because as the famous of the Dominican graduates have said: *Ang hindi marunong lumingon sa pinanggalingan ay di makakarating sa paroroonan.* The past must be remembered. So let me start with what history I have regarding this place.

It's been three months since I assumed the position of Administrator of the Intramuros Administration. But my past with Intramuros goes beyond this job and the role I had played as a heritage advocate.

* Keynote speech of Administrator Anna Maria Harper on the occasion of the launching of the Letran Center for Intramuros Studies (LCIS), July 3, 2008, St. Thomas Hall, Colegio de San Juan de Letran – Manila.

In the early 1900s, my mother lived in Intramuros with her grandmother, who was working as a housekeeper for the Vizmanos family in a house on Calle Sta. Clara fronting Fort Santiago. She watched the American soldiers trooping the colors right there in the Plaza Mayor in front of the Cathedral.

If the Vizmanos' house still existed, I would probably still see it from my office at the Palacio del Gobernador.

Recently, I stood looking at the entrance of the fort with the carving of Santiago Matamoros and silently saluted my grandfather, Apolonio de la Cruz, who had walked out of that very gate to his execution a hundred eleven years ago, the 27th of February 1897.

A couple of months before, my father, newly arrived from Italy had watched Jose Rizal's execution in Bagumbayan, the same field in which my grandfather would meet his rendezvous with death leaving behind a widow with two young sons and a baby on the way.

Surely neither my grandfather nor my great-grandmother would ever believe if someone had told them then that their descendant would someday hold office where the Governor Generals once did.

Life is certainly stranger than fiction and definitely more ironic.

The past plays a large role in our lives. It will always be a part in a huge way in our memories. It is my wish, as IA Administrator, that the memory of Intramuros will be part of the students' life here not only in Colegio de San Juan de Letran but in the other schools of Intramuros and that the whole of the Walled City will be their campus.

My brother, who was a Letran alumnus, retained that memory of Intramuros in him. When Arch. Umberto Lammoglia passed away several years ago, he was continuously working on the history he had learned from this school. We had a past that we are trying to preserve. The Letranites are a part of Intramuros and it is up to you to make that past be a part of your memory. The Letran community is not just a community of the school. It is a community of a heritage in Intramuros

Thank you and good day.