

ENRICHMENT IN TIMES OF CHANGE

By
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I am honored to invoke the presence of the Lord who has been very kind and loving for having kept us safe on our way here. We come from different places to pay homage to the institution that has made us what we are today. Yes, we are here tonight because we remember Central Philippine University, and we would like to remember our university with pride and gratefulness in our hearts for having made us the kind of individuals we had hoped we will become. Indeed, all of us have traveled far and wide in our quest to make better people out of ourselves. Some of us have moved mountains to attain success in our fields of endeavor. We have made sacrifices along the way, so we can harvest the rewards that we are experiencing now. Some of us, on the other hand, had a smooth-sailing ride to the platform of success. Yet whatever route we took in order to get where we are right now, we find it inevitable to return – to return to home, and that home is Central Philippine University.

This global reunion is not just a reunion, in its simple definition. Yes, this affair is an opportune time to see former classmates and schoolmates. It is a time to have updates on each other's lives, to share stories of our successes thus far and the plans that we have for the future. It is also a time to remember, with fondness, the times and experiences we've had at Central – retell stories of our pranks and childishness in class, perhaps smile at the memory of former boyfriends, and girlfriends (and how we find it amusing now), remember former teachers, especially the ones who inspired us to dream and follow our dreams, recall our rich student life at CPU, with all the activities that enriched our views of the world and complemented our rigid and competitive academic life. We also bring to mind CPU in its physical sense – how the Roblee Science Hall has become an indelible structure in some Centralians' minds, how you had played soccer at the big field, or how the Halfmoon Drive had been a silent witness to all your stories, good or bad. Yes, this is the essence of the reunion – to recollect the many different activities and experiences that have filled our buckets of memories, all through the years.

This 6th Global Reunion is also a good time to think about the last time you were at CPU – how you entered the gates of our Alma Mater with hearts full of anticipation and pride at what our dear Central has become. Truly, Central Philippine University has achieved more than what it has hoped for. We have worked hard to continue the legacy of our forebears – the American Baptist Missionaries.

The 24-hectare campus, then with its humble beginnings and structures, now stands strong and firm with all the many improvements and developments thus far. Many of these changes were brought about during the tenure of my predecessors. For the last twenty months CPU has experience more changes in response to new challenges. We have the packaging Testing Laboratory donated by Dr. Lejo Brana, the first of its kind in the Philippines; the completion of the Lifestyle Learning Center established through the efforts and generosity of Dr. Noel Nequin and many alumni and friends of CPU; the improvements in the Theology women's dormitory supported by the Nursing class of 1969 and several engineering alumni; the Nursing Skills labs and other improvements at the LDT building supported by the nursing alumni notably the various class chapters such as the class of 1971, 1977, and more; improvements to the Gymnasium ventilation system; new Sound system for the RMA; and many renovation projects because of our aging buildings such as Roblee, Lopez, Franklin, Weston, Valentine, and many more projects made necessary by the devastation brought about by Typhoon Frank.

Today's generation of Centralians now bask at the chance of maximizing their academic life in preparation for their professional career through the equipment and facilities that we have acquired all these years. They are now able to compete with graduates from other schools. Our faculty and staff have never stopped thinking of ways to improve our university. We now have an army of capable, able, and well-prepared personnel that prepares our students to become competitive and well-trained in their areas of specialization. Our teachers are given the opportunity to undertake higher education so that when they return to Central, they are able to become more effective in their craft. Our curricula are up-to-date with the ever-changing needs of industry. Our library has never ceased to acquire books and other materials so that we can maximize learning. We have upgraded technology to make office work and enrolment so much faster and more convenient. All these things we are grateful for, especially to you, alumni and friends, who have given back to Central Philippine University. Your donations and help are not without a good result. We make it our mission to be good stewards of all that you have shared with us.

Let me share with you our KEY DIRECTIONS for the next 5 years.

a. Maintain full autonomous status. In March 2009 the full autonomous status granted in 2005 was extended for five years to 2014 and we want to maintain that status beyond 2014.

b. Upgrade ISO certification from ISO 9001: 2000 to ISO 9001:2008 which will be accomplished this year.

c. Acquire Center of Excellence (COE), and Center of Development (COD) status for some programs. The Chemical Engineering program has already attained and maintained the COD status.

d. Acquire Level IV accreditation the highest level of accreditation enjoyed by only 5 universities in the Philippines.

e. Maintain TESDA registration of many programs in order to obtain grants-in-aid from the government for many students who are in need.

f. Strengthen Christian ministry programs and emphasize CPU's core values – Faith, Character, Justice, Stewardship and Excellence. This year I appointed the first woman officer in charge of the Chaplain's office.

g. Promote participatory governance and administration. We value the talent and the collective wisdom of our faculty and staff.

h. Expand personnel development and productivity programs. Thanks to the support of the alumni.

i. Involve more personnel in research and outreach programs.

j. Speed-up the upgrading of services and facilities.

k. Sustain financial performance and condition. I am proud to say that the university is financially healthy in spite of the global recession.

The number of students peaked in 2003-2004 and has gradually decreased from over 13,000 to 11,741 in 2008-2009 following the national trend. The college of nursing has suffered a drop of over 600 students the last two years. However the total no of CPU students increased to 12,199 this school year due to the increase in other colleges except nursing, education, and theology. The Freshman class of the college of medicine increased from 16 two years ago to more than 70 because of the excellent performance of our

graduates in the board examination. The College of medicine is 7 years old but it is ranked in the top ten schools out of 38 in the Philippines. In terms of board exam record, our college of nursing is ranked no. 1 for schools with more than 400 board passers.

We have expanded our International Linkages. We have exchange programs for students and faculty with Pyeongtaek University (4 students and 1 professor), Kongju University of Communication and Arts (two professors), and Songsil University in Korea. We also have similar program with Chang Jung University, and Chung Hua University in Taiwan.

We have extension classes in Business Administration in Thai Nguyen University of Economics and Business Administration in Vietnam which is located 50 km north of Hanoi. We will open an Accountancy and MBA programs in Vietnam sometime this school year.

Last year we started a Doctoral Program in Management for Executives, managers, professionals, educators, government officials from China.

This year we started a Sports and Evangelism program for Korean students who are pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Physical Education and at the same time preparing for international soccer competition. Their first schedule as CPU players is a tournament in Thailand next year.

As we continue to think of ways to improve our Alma Mater, and to make it more attuned to the global realm, we stop every once in a while to look at the developments, and we know why we have them. We know we are in the hands of the Master Teacher and the Great Provider who has sustained us all these 105 years.

The Lord is indeed very kind and generous to us Centralians, and we cannot thank Him more. We would never have achieved this much if not for His love and compassion for us. The only way to thank Him is to put His blessings to good use. We will continue to share our blessings with those around us, and use it to improve the lives of others. Only then can we become truly worthy of His gifts, and His words in Matthew 25:21 will resonate, *"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness"*.

As we continue to reminisce and enjoy the rest of our activities for the 6th Global Reunion, we put to heart our theme, *Enrichment in Times of Change*". It is very appropriate indeed, to the state of being of our beloved Central

Philippine University. We are living in a world that is ever-changing, with new technologies coming out every so often, with needs that arise very fast, and with events that transpire at an instant. We cannot sleep on these changes happening around us. We must be adept and well-prepared to handle and face the rigors of modification. This is why we enrich ourselves with knowledge, and we complement our simple lifestyles with the fast-growing and rapid turnabout of events in our environment. This is how we respond to change, yes, but then again, as Centralians, there are things that cannot be changed. First, there is always the Central Spirit that binds us all together, wherever we are in the world. It will forever be in our hearts, an inextinguishable flame that keeps us connected with the rest of our kind. It erases the kind of alienation we feel when we are around strangers, regardless of the differences in generation, gender, and culture. Then, we have our permanent goal – to strive for EXCEL or Exemplary Christian Education for Life. This is non-negotiable for us Centralians. We teach, for we are an institution of learning, but we teach with a heart. What we teach is founded on the values and ethics that have been provided by the Master Teacher. The core values that we subscribe to – FAITH, CHARACTER, JUSTICE, STEWARDSHIP & EXCELLENCE. This is our unchanging reality – that the Lord and His teachings are the only basis on how we live our lives. Yes, we will never stop making improvements and developments for Central Philippine University, we will never renege on our promise to provide excellent education for our students, but we will also never stop making the Lord the center in our quest for academic brilliance.

One hundred and five years ago, our forebears undertook quite an impossibility, but they emerged victorious. Through this achievement, let us not forget the words of the great Nelson Mandela: "After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb". As stewards of our forebears' realized dream, let us climb more hills and hurdle more changes that will come our way. Together as Centralians, and individually as people with our own dreams and aspirations, let us not stop making our lives, and the lives of those around us, better. Let this be our aim, let this be an inspiration for us all here tonight. As we seek greater heights for ourselves and our Alma Mater, we continue to live up to our theme of enriching lives in times of change.

Our God is a gracious and merciful God, a God who answers our prayers, who calls us to do the right work, who light paths and open doors.

When I reflect on the gifts we are given from God- those seen and unseen, I am drawn to a well known passage from Luke chapter 12. Here, Jesus tells us simply, "To those whom much has been given, more is required."

It is this clear instruction that has guided my thinking about the work ahead for CPU and for my service as president. Ours is a rich legacy. Our past leaders, the American Missionaries have been people of vision, and people of courage. People who sought to forego the easy way in favour of the right way. For this tradition we must set out on the next leg of our journey and find our renewed determination. From this understanding of our place, we will write the next chapter in the life of CPU.

I do not pretend to know nor can I predict what will come of our working together. Only God knows the journey in store for us. But when our watch at CPU is over and we are swept away from this earth, what will the generations who follow us say about our response to the moment?

Will this moment propel us to grow into one of the finest and most influential Christian Universities in the Philippines? in Asia?

Will this be the moment when CPU dedicates itself to make a superior faith-based education accessible and affordable for students and their families?

Might this be the moment when the university began to spread its light in the Philippines, in Asia, exporting its unique learning experience.

Will it be said that from this moment, we gave out of gratitude, all that is required?

We must do these because our country needs CPU graduates more than ever. I believe that good governance in the Philippines can only be attained with more CPU graduates at the helm.

This is why I have accepted God's call to serve as the fourth Filipino president of CPU.

Let us enjoy the rest of our activities for the 6th Global Reunion. It is my utmost pleasure to be able to address you tonight. We will all go home after this, grateful for the opportunity given us to be here. As we go back to our dear Central Philippine University, we will have good stories to tell Centralians back home about how we have inspired one another into becoming catalysts for change. For in the words of the president of this great country the United States of America, *"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek"*.

May God bless each one of us in this endeavour. And may God prosper the work of our hands.

Thank you very much. To God Be the Glory.