

Baccalaureate Mass, Elementary Department, AY 2020-2021
Acts 15:22-31; Ps 57; John 15:12-17

¹²This is my **commandment**: **love one another as I love you.** ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. ¹⁷This I **command** you: **love one another.**

We are still in the season of Easter. The gospel passage today begins and ends with the command to love one another. ἀγαπάτε ἀλλήλους. *Magmahalan kayo.*

What could be a more fitting parting word from this baccalaureate mass for our graduating students, for all learners of the elementary and junior high school department than TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER! *Magmahalan kayo!* That is what Christians do; that is what Letranites do.

Christian love is existential, not merely emotional. *Hindi lang ito damdamin, kundi diwa.* it is fundamental, radical, faith-defining, life-long. *Ito ay ubod at buod ng ating pananampalataya at buhay.* It is love that flows from GOD the Father to Jesus HIS Son, to us HIS disciples, and to each other. *Pagmamahal na bumubukal sa Diyos Ama tungo sa Kanyang Anak na si Hesus; dumadaloy mula kay Kristo tungo sa Kanyang mga alagad; nagsasanga't nag-uugnay sa atin sa isa't isa.*

It is founded on the specific mode of Jesus' act of love: laying down one's life for another. Its expression is not only about giving of things, but about giving of self, giving of life. *Hindi lang bagay ang binibigay, kundi sariling buhay ang binibigay.*

In the midst of this pandemic, when we are all facing disease and death, uncertainties, difficulties, fear, sadness, anger, hunger, these community pantries are truly good news. *Mga payak na paraan ng pagpapahayag ng pakikipagkapwa't pagtutulungan.*

But, let us be reminded that teaching and learning are perennial acts of sacrifice and generosity. *Ang pagtuturo at pag-aaral ay anyo ng pag-aalay at kagandahan-loob.* The value of knowledge is exponentially higher than the cost of matriculation. The beginnings of Letran attest to simple acts of charity, which have endured for more than 400 years; from Juan Geronimo Guerrero and Fray Diego de Santa Maria to generations of Dominicans and lay benefactors - helping the poor, teaching them, giving them hope.

The next point from the gospel is the new title bestowed by Jesus, ὑμεῖς φίλοι μου ἐστε. YOU ARE MY FRIENDS. *Kaibigan ko kayo*. An endearing definition of the state of sanctifying grace is “friendship with God.” *Ang nabubuhay sa ilalim ng nagpapabanal na biyaya ay kaibigan ng Diyos*.

That is why, here in Letran, the cultivation of friendships is very important. We make friends and we keep them; friendships from across socio-economic classes, genders, races, religious beliefs and political ideologies. *Ang Letranista ay palakaibigan – sa mayaman, sa mahirap, sa mga janitor, mga guwardiya, mga tindera, sa mga karaniwang tao, sa mga mabababang tao, sa lahat ng tao*. Several generations of alumni look forward to coming home to Letran because of their classmates, batchmates, schoolmates, because of their life-long friends, *mga kaibigang matalik at pangmatagalan*. And, thanks to the teaching of faith here in Letran, we even have friends among saints and blessed, most notably our brother Letranite, San Vicente Liem de la Paz.

Finally, the gospel teaching on love and friendship demands fruition. BEAR FRUIT THAT WILL REMAIN. *Mamunga ng bungang nananatili*. This translates into good deeds that are sustainable and enduring; like the impact of our teachers upon their students – impressionable, impressive, impactful. *Turong tumatalab sa natutuhang nananatili*. The 400 years of Letran are truly treasured in the lives of her alumni, her people in the past, present and future who have born fruit in kindness, in decency, in integrity, in all the virtues of knightly excellence!

And so, my dear students from the Elementary and Junior High School Department, my dear teachers and employees, let this Eucharist which we offer and partake of, lead us LOVE, FRIENDSHIP, and GOOD FRUITS, for Deus, Patria, Letran!