



June 2022 Issue

PARENTS FIRST

Monthly Bulletin for Parents of Southridge School



Last May 19 to 22, PAREF Southridge held its first face to face end of the year ceremonies since 2020. Moving Up for grade 10 and Commencement Ceremonies for grade 6 and 12. It is called commencement to signal a new beginning. A new beginning filled with greater challenges and academic demands. The grade six will step into the portals of high school; the grade 10, into senior high; and grade 12, to the adventure that is college.

Graduation is often marked by an adjustment period, as students leave the comforts of friends and situations they have grown accustomed to for many years. But 2022's graduation is even more uncertain, because, we are still in the midst of fears about what the corona virus has in store for the world in the months to come. Schools are planning to have some form of face to face classes for next school year, and everybody is both excited and uncertain at the same time. It is our fervent hope that all their experiences in online learning, and the skills they have acquired in two years of the pandemic, they have been well prepared and are eager to experience some sort of "road to normalization".

As you face a new school year, we hope you continue to be resilient, caring, and as enthusiastic to be able to do your best in any situation. Congratulations, CLASS OF 2022.

(For the Parents' First issue for June, we have compiled all the inspirational messages and speeches from the different ceremonies to inspire and encourage everyone to be hopeful for the "road to normalization" we hope to undertake in the coming months.)



Hope Remains

By: Atty. Mateo Escueta

Southridge School Alumnus

I am honored to join tonight's Grade 10 Completion Ceremony, a momentous occasion which resonates with me in several ways.

As a Southridge alumnus, it feels good to be home. Over a decade has passed, but memories of my days here are as vivid as ever. Some things don't change either--my blazer still fits me; it was oversized for my lanky high school self.

As a son of loving parents, I appreciate this opportunity to witness and share in the joy that fills the hearts of all the parents in this auditorium. Last weekend, when I signed the Roll of Attorneys at the Supreme Court of the Philippines, I was most excited about the fact that my parents stood behind me for one of the most defining moments of my life. Congratulations to the proud parents of Batch 2024; your sons' triumphs are very much yours, too.

Most of all, **to the students of Batch 2024**, I am here tonight for you. Allow me to address you as your kuya.

My fellow Southridge gentlemen, tonight, we not only celebrate this milestone. This is also a time of thanksgiving and a time of looking back.

Specifically, I praise you for not only completing Grade 10, but overcoming two schoolyears of online learning.

Even more, I applaud you, your family, and our alma mater, for enduring all the trials and the challenges created by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Let us not understate the unforeseen realities you and your families have experienced these last two years.

You woke up one day in March 2020 to a world you did not recognize. You spent majority of the last two years locked down at home not knowing how long this horrible pandemic will last. The virus was not the only threat to our health. The pandemic has caused immense mental and emotional anguish which spared no one.

You were deprived of making memories with your best friends in the classroom and off-campus. You must have felt robbed of one your greatest joys in life: friendship. Not even FaceTime, Zoom, or Discord could replicate the joy of being in the company of friends. I am sorry for the times this pandemic made you feel **disconnected or alone**.



But you are not alone. Thanks to the love and support of your family, especially your parents, you have made it here tonight. Your teachers and mentors are your constant companions in your journey, too. Friendship will always shine like a light no matter how dark the tunnel seems. There's God. And there's also love... but you can talk to your parents about love when you're a little older. Speaking of parents, know that your parents want nothing more than to understand your heart and your mind. If something lights up your world, tell your parents about it; watch see your parents light up just seeing you light up. Just like Stitch said, Ohana means family. Family means no one gets left behind.

You were unable to play your favorite sports, activities, or discover new hobbies. You must have felt so frustrated being held back from discovering more about yourself at this stage in your teenage years--learning who you are and what you are passionate about.

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After all, self-discovery is one of the most memorable, meaningful, beautiful chapters of youth. Regrettably, this pandemic has likewise caused feelings of being stuck in limbo. Perhaps you doubted whether attending online schooling or tending to your other responsibilities even mattered. Maybe you also felt misunderstood unsure of yourself, unsure of the feelings you could not name, unsure of your place in this world. **Helpless. Stuck.**

But you are not helpless. You are not stuck. You are all bright, promising young men. Like Master Yoda's Jedi Younglings. The fact that you are here tonight shows that you are not just competent, but full of potential. You are strong in the force. Challenge yourself to new heights. High ideals; best effort. Remember what Master Yoda said, "Much to learn you still have."



"Know that your parents want nothing more than to understand your heart and your mind. If something lights up your world, tell your parents about it; watch see your parents light up just seeing you light up."

Perhaps, worst of all, you experienced loss. I fear when this pandemic finally ends, the greatest thing we will have in common is not that we survived, but what or who we lost. I am sorry you were struck with **grief. Still, there is much grace that surrounds grief.** Gandalf the White puts it well, "Hope remains."

Truly, this pandemic has brought so much darkness to the world. All the hardships and indescribable feelings you experienced are real, valid, and unique to you. The pervasive effects of this pandemic do not exempt anyone, regardless of privilege, social status, age, or simply because you were "safe and comfortable" in the confines of your home with more than your basic needs.

And yet here you are tonight, Batch 2024. How did you accomplish such a feat? **Resilience.**

Resilience is defined as the capacity to recover from difficult life events, according to **Katie Hurley**, a child and adolescent psychotherapist and published author. Resilience is the ability to withstand adversity and bounce back from difficult life events. Resilience is how people are affected by and adapt to things like adversity, change, and loss.

Likewise, Hurley notes that being resilient does not mean that people don't experience stress, emotional upheaval, and suffering. Rather, resilience entails working through emotional pain and suffering.

Gentlemen of Batch 2024, ask yourself: how do I respond to my brokenness? To the moments I feel small? To the times I feel defeated or disappointed with myself or with things beyond my control? As your self-appointed kuya, let me share with you some of the answers I've learned; I think you can relate.

Resilience is not mere perseverance. Perseverance refers to the act of trying until you succeed. On the other hand, resilience refers to the mindset or the capability of a person who is able to stand up anew, rise up for the better in the face of darkness, and the most difficult times in life. Resilience teaches you to respond to the worst of times with the best of yourself.

Resilience shows there is grace in pain, love in heartache, and lessons to learn in the bitterness of falling short. Resilience also shows that falling short and failure are dissimilar. That you are not your shortcomings, but who you choose to be or work towards when life does not go your way. That no matter the grade or score, you can honestly tell yourself, "I am learning. I am doing my best to get there. I am not yet done."

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Resilience is not perfection, but forgiving yourself, acknowledging your mistakes, accepting that you do not hold the winds of life, but you can control how the winds move you. Resilience is an essential virtue in the pursuit of excellence. What is resilience if not excellence in action?

Resilience does not trivialize but acknowledges grief, anxiety, stressors, big emotions, and weaknesses--resilience recognizes you are human, but always capable of becoming more. That in moments you feel small or insignificant, the most empowering realization is that you can decide how to respond. You always have a choice. Do not belittle yourself or your feelings. Embrace them; get to know them like an old friend; loving yourself also includes caring for your mental and emotional health. Resilience also means telling your parents or loved ones, "I'm not okay," or "I'm sad," or "I'm worried."



Resilience teaches us to be kind, to empathize with ourselves and, consequently, learn to understand and empathize with others who have their own struggles. Resilience does not entail comparing our pain with others, but meeting them and helping in what little way we can.

Someday, resilience will also help you develop your relationship with God. I hope resilience will help you see that God's plan for you is far better than you can ever dream for yourself. Resilience teaches hope, faith in God, and, most of all, love.

Resilience should move us to love. Make no mistake, gentlemen, there is no such thing as loveless resilience.

Resilience forges a grateful heart which always sees beyond grief and finds God's grace lining the horizon of life. Don't forget to be grateful for your teachers, who also overcame their own challenges in this world of remote learning. Be grateful for the little wins, the smallest of blessings, simplest acts of kindness. Remember what this pandemic taught us about what truly matters in life. Choose humility regardless of your title, your status, or your achievements

My little brothers of Batch 2024, clearly, tonight your resilience shines with the help of your teachers, the love of your family and friends, and God's grace. Look how far you've come. Imagine how much farther you shall go each time you respond to life's sorrows and challenges with a resilient heart.

This is why we can say with full sincerity: we are most proud of you, Batch 2024.

Though what lies ahead is unknown, your achievement tonight proves you have what it takes to endure. You rose against historic, unfathomable odds--this also proves you are more than ordinary. Life is full of changes, but, truly, nothing about the last two years was ordinary--a raging pandemic; a tyrant's invasion of a sovereign nation; historical revisionism; a great dichotomy between the rich and poor; our countrymen divided due to political differences; and more. There is much work to be done.

Do not allow life's injustices to harden your heart, to jade you, and to turn you into a callous, apathetic person. Remember, resilience strengthens you not for yourself, but to **BE** for others, too--a light in the world, person of integrity for others.

This world, our country, needs all the good that you can do, all that good that you can be. Soon you will realize much shall be asked of you, too. I pray you rise to the call of life and discover who you are in the process--as God Himself has designed.

Congratulations, Batch 2024. You did it. And you shall do more. For now, you deserve to celebrate and have fun--lots and lots of fun. Stay humble. Stay grateful. Choose kindness and empathy.

Thank you and good night.



A Wonderful Gift

By: Dr. Manuel Damian

Southridge Dad

Mr. Dakila broke the news to us almost two weeks ago. At first, I thought it was a disciplinary meeting involving Magnus. I thought he missed the graduation practice, so I hurriedly called my wife and told her, "Mr. Dakila texted, and he said he wants to talk to me regarding Magnus and the graduation." Cutting the story short, it was about graduation, but it was not a disciplinary meeting. Mr. Dakila actually announced surprisingly wonderful news and hence, I am delivering this speech in front of all of you now. Going back, Mr. Dakila told me that it was customary for the father of the valedictorian to give the speech. A tradition that goes back. Personally, I saw this as a chance for me to express the gratefulness I am feeling right now.

You see, I have come to realize that Magnus's Grade School journey has also become my journey of self-realization and redemption. As we journeyed together through this phase in his life, I began involving myself as a Southridge father in Parents Fora, participating in recollections and life coaching activities, attending soccer tournaments on weekends, going along to Father and Son camping trips, and yes, one of the most anticipated annual events in Southridge - FATHERS DAY! With these experiences, I have evolved into a person I never thought I could be- a more patient, tolerant, more grateful, and even more prayerful parent.

You see, I had a tumultuous childhood where physical and verbal punishments were considered norms for instilling discipline. My family was not closely knit. My siblings and I barely expressed our feelings to our parents, whether it be joy or sadness. I never recalled a moment where I could confide to my parents about my problems. This is the reason I always see myself and Magnus as complete opposites. He was always showered with love and affection. He could always run to us for anything. He could talk to me about anything under the sun.

The unpleasant life experiences did not stop me from pursuing my dreams. I pushed myself to become a better person with the help of so many people I have met along the way. When I became a Southridge parent, the school further honed my persona because it continually guides and teaches us how to become the best parents we can be for our children. I think all of you will agree that Southridge also gave us a solid foundation on how to rear our sons to be Men of Character through its New Parents Education and Middle Childhood Programs.

Our sons are lucky to attend school such as Paref Southridge where they are molded and guided to become virtuous children, excel not just in academics but also in sports. Whenever I bring or fetch my son to school, I am always greeted by a smile from the kids, even if I do not know them personally.



"With these experiences, I have evolved into a person I never thought I could be- a more patient, tolerant, more grateful, and even more prayerful parent."

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It brings me so much joy to see the students visit the Chapel before they begin their day. I love seeing them support one another during varsity trainings, competitions and even when they try help one another finish their assignments in the library. All these experiences compounded Magnus into becoming what he is right now, a young boy who loves sports, a student who strives hard to achieve academic excellence and most of all, he has grown to become an exceptionally fine young gentleman.

When the pandemic hit, we were worried that the new norm might affect the well-being and learning progress of our kids due to the absence of human contact and the prolonged isolation from our families, friends, and schoolmates. Online classes demand considerable self-discipline and motivation. But with the virtues instilled in our sons, they were able to forge on with their pursuit of academic excellence despite the setbacks and adjustments brought about by the pandemic. Whenever I see their perseverance and enthusiasm to learn the modules and complete their performance tasks despite the numerous challenges of online classes, it inspires me to endure any struggles with fortitude and patience that I always see in these fine young gentlemen.

As we tread on to this new journey called High School, let me thank you, Class 2028 especially my son, Magnus, for showing me that no matter how hard the situation, how people may treat you unfairly, how uncertain the future may be or whatever life hurls at you, perseverance, virtues and the pursuit of good will always mold you to become Men of Integrity.



I would like to commend the advisers, teachers, and the mentors for always guiding our sons especially with their schoolwork and activities. The adjustment from face-to-face classes to online teaching is not easy and we appreciate all that you have done to keep our boys interested in learning despite all the temptations and struggles.



The teachers have also regularly expressed utmost concern for the children's well-being during the pandemic. Thank you for your compassion and care. To the school administration and officers, we give our gratitude for keeping us parents updated with the latest issues and news about the school and its plans moving forward. You have given so much support not just for our kids but for us parents as well. To our co-parents, thank you for the friendship. I give special mention to the soccer parents. I miss seeing all of you during our weekend tournaments and the chance meetings we have during the kids' varsity training practices in school. To the school maintenance staff, thank you for always finding our sons' lost items and safekeeping them. Thank you for helping them carry their bags up and down the stairs. Thank you for being their kind helpers in school. Big thanks also to the security officers for keeping our sons safe and protected. Thank you for always helping the parents find their sons during dismissal.

I would also like to say a very heartfelt thank you to my wife, Karen, despite her busy and sometimes swamped schedule, she still manages to teach and guide Magnus and make sure that his assignments, performance tasks and modules are already done and submitted on time. Like all Southridge mothers, she has always given her full support for our son in whatever endeavors he wishes to pursue.

Lastly, all of these would not have been possible without the guidance and blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ. We give all the glory to Him.

To our sons, thank you for this wonderful gift you have given us. What a great achievement you have done. Keep forging on as you enter a new phase in your lives. Enjoy the moments and the friendships you have made and will be making in this wonderful school. Continue to persevere and work hard to fulfill all your dreams. Be the best person you can be and never forget to bring with you all that Southridge has taught you. Thank you and Godspeed and good night. Mabuhay ang Southridge. Mabuhay ang Class 2028.



Strength and Power of the Young

By: Doris Fernandez Ferrer
Executive Director (PEAC)

A pleasant day to all the distinguished and honorable members of the faculty, students, and guests. I am extremely privileged to be with you today at the 7th Completion Ceremonies for the Junior High students here at PAREF Southridge Afternoon JHS. As mentioned in the introduction, I am Doris Fernandez Ferrer, the current Executive Director of the Private Education Assistance Committee or PEAC. I think it was mentioned in the introduction that PEAC co-implements the JHS ESC and SHS VP programs of the Department of Education, and many of you here are grantees, “mga iskolar ng bayan”.

Upon being invited to deliver this speech, I was told that this would be a historic event for the school, being the first completion ceremony to be held in school two years since the onset of the pandemic. So, it is with great honor that I stand before you today to celebrate this milestone event.

For the past few months, our country has lived through historic times, hasn't it? In our battle against historical revisionism and disinformation, in our fight for good governance, every single day felt monumental. Thousands upon thousands of people flooded the streets and the online space. No one wanted to waste a single second.

And for many of us, the past two weeks triggered a lot of intense emotions. But like Taylor Swift says in her song, which recently resurfaced in local Spotify charts, because of how closely it describes the state of our nation: **“They think that it’s over, but it’s just begun. Only one thing can save us – only the young.”**

I will admit that I, too, was and am heartbroken. But if there is one thing that I never felt during this whirlwind of events was hopelessness, especially having known and more importantly, witnessed just how much this generation after mine - your generation, cares.

The quality of our lives is largely determined by how we respond to every situation we find ourselves in. Not everything is going to go as smoothly as we want it to. And as you get older, you will find that things rarely do. In a perfect world, there should have been only one sensible result in the recent presidential race. Unfortunately, we do not live in a perfect world. It is incredibly easy to let that fact of life demotivate us. Because why bother, right? Why bother exerting the effort when there is no guarantee of a win? Why continue fighting when the other side is relentless in its attacks? Why love a country that continuously appears difficult to love?

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“I am comforted by the thought that all of you have been given an education that promotes such noble values, especially service and love for the truth, both of which are exactly what we need in today’s society...”

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The answer is simple. Because it is the right thing to do.

And I am not here to deliver any new information on the next steps to take. In fact, you need only to remember the core values on which your institution grounds itself on: **service to God and others, love for the truth, order and hard work, optimism and cheerfulness.** Influenced by the teachings of St. Josemaria Escriva, this institution not only acknowledges that all men are called to a life of holiness; but also that work and the circumstances of everyday life are occasions for growing closer to God, for serving others, and for improving society.



I am comforted by the thought that all of you have been given an education that promotes such noble values, especially service and love for the truth, both of which are exactly what we need in today's society – one where it has become increasingly easy to fall into the trap of an “us versus them” mentality; one where it has become increasingly easy to get entangled in a web of lies, all claiming to be truth. But filter these so-called truths through a life that has been dedicated to genuine service to God and others, and you will see how easy it is to sift out noise.

And I am a firm believer that the younger generation is already so much better than us at doing this. In the face of large corporations and their unethical practices, how many of you are using your social media to advocate for causes close to your hearts? In the face of a culture that equates being vocal with disrespect, how many of your group chats are alive with political discussions? How many of you went out into the streets, lending your voice and volunteering to fight for your future? Our privilege makes it easy to shut reality out and focus on ourselves, and yet, here you are, working together to bring attention to violations that you believe need to be properly accounted for, and to people that you believe need to be heard.

My dear graduates, I hope you never lose sight of the real questions that life is asking of you. More than figuring out which strand will help direct you towards the career that generates the most income, or choosing which school to attend, I hope you also take the time to reflect on your answers to questions much bigger than you: How do I show my love for my country? Whom do I want to serve? What barriers can I help tear down?



With every step of yours in this next chapter, I hope you discern whether or not it is guided by the eternal truths; whether or not it ultimately instills in you a deeper love for the world and its people. You see, all of us have special strengths, and it is the combined efforts of these strengths that will heal the brokenness that pervades this world. Once you identify what yours is, please have the courage to tread the path on which it is not only maximized but as well as directed toward the good.

The pursuit of long-term and meaningful goals will always be filled with obstacles, but you are more equipped to direct the tides of change than you think. The work may be hard, but the payoff will be worth it.

Congratulations, graduates. And here's to the strength and power of the young.





Message of Virtue and Hope

By: Miguel E. Alcabao

Southridge Parent

Before anything else, I'd like you batch 2022 to pat yourselves on the back and congratulate yourselves by shouting as loud as you can: "hooray!". After I say Hiphip, shout "hooray" as loud as you can. Hip Hip . . . Shout also hooray for your parents who have sacrificed so much for you to reach this point. Let us also give a big hand to the head PCs and PCs who have tirelessly taken care of us all these years.

This occasion reminds me of the time when we graduated 38 yrs. ago in 1984 from this very school. Yes, first batch. The first time we sang Gaudeamus Igitur was during our graduation. There were only two bldgs. at that time: the main bldg. where all our classrooms and the oratory were, and the multipurpose bldg. which eventually was converted into the chapel and auditorium. We had an open cemented basketball court and a soccer field that was so uneven that there would be puddles during rainy season. Beyond the perimeter of the school, there was just cogon grass. So even if we wanted to escape the Southridge concentration camp, there was nowhere to go.

A lot has changed since then. Now, there are more structures: a bigger bldg. which houses the classrooms, a beautiful chapel, the shrine of Our Lady,



"Virtue information is like building a sturdy ship, a sturdy Vinta, a sturdy Vinta which will be able to sail through the rough seas of life...virtue gives us strength for us to turn the helm and steer the ship towards the sun peering out at the edge of life's storms."

a nice and quaint auditorium, a basketball court that is now covered and a high-tech turf field that is very even. You even have Madison to go to if you wanted to escape.

But there is this one thing that has remained the same. Aside from the fact that Mr. Escasa is still here, there's this one main message that Southridge has been trying to instill into us year in year out since the beginning. This message is contained in the school's emblem: Viriliter Agite to act manly, or to act like a man. Two latin words come into mind with the word viriliter: virtus which means virtue and a more root latin word vir which means man. What this essentially means is that for a man to be perfect he must be virtuous.



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Every month Southridge reminds us to strive to practice these virtues: charity, industriousness, responsibility, order, virtue of poverty and simplicity and many more. Our parents and Southridge have presented to us many situations to elicit these virtues from us. We often fail in the practice of these virtues, but sometimes we also succeed. I challenge you Batch 2022 to strive to practice these virtues till the end of your lives. These very virtues will help us become closer to God. These virtues will help us become better performing students in college. Eventually, when we get married these virtues will help us be the best husbands that we can be for our wives. These virtues will help us be the best fathers that we can be for our children. These will help us become the best professionals and businessmen that we can be. Ultimately, we practice these virtues in order to know, love and serve God in this world in order to gain everlasting happiness in heaven. True to the emblem of Southridge, virtue formation is like building a sturdy ship, a sturdy Vinta, a sturdy Vinta which will be able to sail through the rough seas of life. Together with building the ship, virtue gives us the strength for us to turn the helm and steer the ship towards the sun peering out at the edge of life's storms, the sun whose warmth only comes from the love of its Creator.

For those of you who feel that you haven't achieved much. Don't be discouraged. What is more important than achievement is the struggle, the effort that we put into the things we do. You have this role of showing other people how to struggle to become good, in spite of the in spite of. A few months ago, Poncho my son asked me: "Pa can I join a baseball tournament?". I was hesitant to allow him because of two things: 1) Poncho was not able to practice for the last 2 pandemic years because I did not allow him to; and 2) His would be team mates have been practicing even during the pandemic.



I told Poncho: "You would be benched for the most part." You know what he said? He simply said: "So what?!". Instantly, I was reminded by my son of the virtue of perseverance to achieve what you want to achieve. Can you believe that? Me, an aging alumnus of Southridge, being reminded by a graduating Southridge student about a virtue.

For those of you who have achieved a lot at this point, achieve more and serve as an example, an inspiration to other people to do good. Because of your achievements, people will look up to you and emulate you and your good works. Someday, you will naturally become leaders who will transform society into a more prosperous and Christian one.

Philippine society needs all 103 of you. We need people of character, people of sterner stuff like you to combat a lot of evils that pervade in this society: corruption, falsehoods, fake news, and moral relativism. We have to show people what it is to be a morally upright person, what it is to be a person of integrity, what it really means to be a man.



To end, since this will be the last time that you will be singing Gaudeamus Igitur as a batch let me translate 2 stanzas of the hymn:

So, let us enjoy ourselves
While we are young
So, let us enjoy ourselves
While we are young
After a pleasant youth
After an unpleasant old age
The Earth will have us
The Earth will have us

Hurrah for the Academy
Hurrah for the Professors
Hurrah for the Academy
Hurrah for the Professors
Hurrah for each student
Hurrah for the student body
Forever may they flourish
Forever may they flourish
"Hip Hip!" Thank you congratulations and good luck!



Meeting the demands of the times: Growth in maturity, responsibility, strength of character, and independence

By: Dr. Vaughn F. Montes

Chairman and President

PAREF Southridge School Board and

PAREF Southridge Night School

Development Foundation, Inc.

Today's completion ceremonies give special meaning to the last lines of *Gaudeamus Igitur*:

Caros et commilitones disitas in regiones sparsos congregavit.

Friends and dear classmates, teachers, relatives dispersed and physically separated for two years by the lockdowns and quarantines congregate once more in this afternoon's ceremonies.

I congratulate the graduating students for accomplishing your studies under the unfamiliar, different, and demanding conditions which attended your last 2 years in Grade School or High School. I bid you Godspeed as you move on in your studies. I also congratulate your parents and the Southridge faculty for being there with you,

in big and small things, to overcome the difficulties and impedimenta you encountered under the lockdowns. There is a phrase from Virgil which is often quoted to the point of becoming a cliché during graduations. In the depth of tremendous trials in the founding of Rome, Aeneas uttered *Forsan et haec olim meminisse jubavit*. Perhaps someday these things will be a pleasure to recall.



"This pandemic has demanded of you, and your graduation this afternoon attests that you have met such demands, of achieving earlier a degree of maturity in responsibility, resourcefulness, flexibility, and resiliency than you would have otherwise acquired more gradually under the Old Normal. ...The pandemic has trained you to build academic muscle and strength of character in independence, in taking ownership of your own learning, in being self-starters."

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Years from now you will be recalling how you coped, improvised, and overcame the difficulties of online learning and asynchronous classes. There is still an ongoing assessment in the academe on the global impact of Covid-19 on learning. When you apply either for college, or your first job or graduate school, it will be noted that your last two years in school were under the Study from Home mode. You may have to be prepared to answer questions on the quality and rigor of your schooling.



I see things differently. I see you in front of me a graduating class which has been battle-tested from the difficulties of the online learning. I commend you for your courage, for returning to fight, for not giving up, for problem-solving the challenges of weak wifi, poor connectivity, the need to carve out a conducive setup both physically and in terms of daily schedule for studying from home. I commend you for all those times when you had to resist distractions and giving in to computer games and instead staying on and sticking to the asynchronous classes.

This pandemic has demanded of you, and your graduation this afternoon attests that you have met such demands of achieving earlier a degree of maturity in responsibility, resourcefulness, flexibility, and resiliency than you would have otherwise acquired more gradually under the Old Normal. While the pandemic has curtailed many of the usual youthful activities you would typically experience at your age, the pandemic has trained you to build academic muscle and strength of character in independence, in taking ownership of



your own learning, in being self-starters. To borrow from St. Josemaria, the period of forced inactivity is like a compressed spring which when released will carry you forward with a stronger force, much farther and faster. Hold fast to the strengths, agility, resourcefulness, independence, and maturity you acquired during the pandemic which will serve you well in your future studies, and which have been a great boot camp in leadership.

There are two remaining tasks: to honor the memory of those who we miss in this afternoon's ceremonies and to give thanks. We especially remember Dr. Oscar Olmos, Arby Lacsamana who made a difference in our lives and whose influence will live on in the lives and careers of our students.

It is hardly possible to be articulate in expressing gratitude particularly if it is deeply felt. But I do wish to give thanks to the parents, particularly to the HPCs of your batch, for your understanding and working with us to sustain the level of formation of your sons. I thank the school management and staff for your commitment and creativity. I thank the admin staff who maintained their presence and served at the school even during those lonely, empty days of the lockdowns.

We all have a lot to be thankful for.

I will not say goodbye, but simply bid you, *Agite quod agitis*.. Do what you have to do. Carry on.

Congratulations to all and have a good evening.

