

MSGR. GERARDO O. SANTOS

CEAP NATIONAL CONVENTION OPENING REMARKS

September 22, 2010

heLLow p0Wb! (Hello po!)

gud m0RN1ng ♥ xD ♥ p0whb... (Good morning po!)

KuMuZTab POwh k@yoWNg Labat? (Kumusta po kayong lahat?)

s@nAb NAging mAayOwZ namAn Pow anG !Ny0wng biyah3 pu@Punt@H ♥ xD ♥ DI+0w ... jejejejeje! (Sana naging maayos naman po ang inyong biyahe papunta dito, he he he he)

* * *

Nagtataka siguro kayo kung bakit ako ganito magsalita. Hindi pa naman po ako nakisali sa mga jejemon; pero, ang JEJEMON ang tinaguriang salita ng taon. At kung tayo ay magiging makabuluhan sa ating mga kabataan ay dapat maabot natin sila sa kanilang kinatatayuan.

So at the beginning of this convention, we challenge ourselves by asking: “Naaabot nga ba natin ang kabataan?” Have we reached out to the youth enough to influence them with the kind of Transformative Catholic Education that we are supposed to be espousing in our academic institutions?

Just **last** Sunday, September **19, 2010**, the Pope beatified one of the greatest converts to Catholicism who ever-lived - Blessed John Henry Newman or Cardinal Newman for most of us who have been acquainted with his life and writings in the seminary. Blessed Newman was an Anglican minister who was known for his intellectual influence among his students in Oxford in the 19th Century. His constant search for truth and uncompromising principles led him to find what he was looking for in the Catholic Church. At the time that it was not popular to do so, he converted to Catholicism.

His writings and his example influenced a lot of people during his time and even up to the present. In his book- Theology of Conscience, he discussed the importance of developing a healthy conscience to guide us in our decisions. He said that our conscience is the voice of God within us in making decisions in our daily lives. And in the process of cultivating a moral conscience, the family, the school and the community play a very vital role.

The White Rose Movement- an anti-Nazi group of students who defied Hitler by distributing leaflets in the University of Munich and were mostly martyred was influenced by the book of Blessed Newman. These young people were tortured and were eventually decapitated but did not give up their idea of a moral society based on justice and love. They dared to defy the so-called anti Christ – Adolf Hitler. Their well-formed conscience could not stand their immoral society under Hitler.

Another person who has been strongly influenced by Blessed Newman as a young German is our present pontiff, Pope Benedict XVI whose strong moral conviction is an

echo of the philosophical influence of Blessed Henry Newman. And it is providential that Pope Benedict VII presided over his beatification.

As educators, the challenge is for us to produce engaged and responsible citizens for the THREE Cs – Christ, church and country. We must be able to form men and women of character who are an embodiment of Christ’s message to the world; men and women of conscience to lead our church and nation; men and women of compassionate service who are agents for social transformation. **Are we succeeding with our young students as Blessed Newman was with the young – one of which became our present, beloved Pope?**

How do we do this **then**? First, we begin with ourselves. As far back as the Davao convention, we have seen the need to get our act together, go back to our preamble, review our Constitution and By-Laws and strengthen our organization by defining our strategic directions.

To effect transformative leadership and the delivery of quality programs and services, CEAP should be a strong national association with a **highly-empowered regional** base. Regionalization was the answer. We have to recognize that CEAP is only as good as its regions and so we put the best practices of these regions to strengthen our organization.

I then wish to acknowledge all the dynamic regional directors of the CEAP and extend my deepest appreciation to them. They have worked very tirelessly not only for their respective regions but also in strengthening our organization through various initiatives. I would also like to thank the bishops of the different dioceses who have gotten their priests involved in the Catholic Schools.

Secondly, since our task is not an easy one, we need to go beyond our organization and establish networks and linkages. We have to recognize the fact that we live in a global village where collaboration is the key that opens up possibilities. This is no longer a time for lone rangers. No matter how big or small a player you are in the field of education, I cannot begin to emphasize the fact that our strength is in cooperation and not competition where the victory of one is the victory of all. CEAP, however, is not supposed to be equated only with big schools, rather CEAP must be seen as the struggling schools, the schools that are undergoing survival issues, or small diocesan schools and mission schools run by religious organizations. In other words, CEAP must give preference to those who are not given preference -- that is option for the poor and CEAP is found there. Thus, we network for the sake of the small struggling schools. We have to network with international and local associations, the national government and non-government organizations, to represent the interests of Catholic education and undertake common initiatives in the light of the teachings of the Church.

The next step is to get involved. This is the right time for engagement. President Noy actually gives us the cue in his SONA, and I quote:

“Tungkulin po ng bawat Pilipino na tutukan ang mga pinunong tayo rin naman ang nagluklok sa puwesto. Humakbang mula sa pakikialam tungo sa pakikilabok. Dabil ang nakikialam, walang-banggan ang reklamo. Ang nakikilabok, nakikibahagi sa solusyon.”

This is advocacy. As an organization, we need to constantly review how we help shape education in the country and be able to influence policies. We have been working hard on this aspect too. In fact, last July 16, our Advocacy Commission held a summit to prepare CEAP for engagement with the new administration. In the said forum, which

was graced by no less than CEAP's very own -- the new Secretary of Education Br. Armin Luistro, FSC, a sustainable network of advocates for CEAP across the country was created and action plans for implementing the major policy positions of the association were drawn.

Through various advocacies and by strengthening communication among regions, we have ensured a pro-active, synergistic response to prevailing and emerging issues and concerns of private education, firmly grounded on Sacred Scripture and Church teachings. For as Pope John Paul II said in his encyclical, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* “*if need be, [we] must have the courage to speak uncomfortable truths which do not please public opinion, but which are necessary to safeguard the authentic good of society.*”

And finally, as we influence policies in the national government; in our own backyard, we must also work on implementing the association-wide pillar programs on Justice and Peace Education, Engaged Citizenship, Environment and Sustainable Development Education, Poverty Reduction, Gender and Development, and Youth Empowerment and to integrate these into our schools' curricular and extra-curricular offerings. Catholic education, after all, must target both the personal and social spheres – the integral growth of the individual.

This year's convention actually highlights one of our pillar programs – Environment and Sustainable Development Education. It is also a continuation of the convention thrust of Stewardship which we started last year. Last year in Manila, we focused on Leadership as Stewardship. This year we focus on Stewardship of Creation. Fr. Greg Banaga will give us the overview of the three-day convention later but suffice it to say that all our efforts – from the programs, activities and services to the regional and national conventions should always allow us to reflect and examine ourselves and the organization and our bottomline.

And so I am back where I began, with the question: “Naaabot ba natin ang kabataan para mahubog sila ng maayos?”

Bakit pa tayo nasa paaralan kung hindi tayo makakahubog ng mga PINOY na may pagmamahal sa Inang Bayan at makakatulong sa pag-asenso nito? Dapat makapaghubog tayo ng mga kabataan na makikilahok upang ipahayag ang mensahe. Si Kristo ang mensahe; Simbahan ang ating bayan; at ang bayan ay dapat mahalín at pagsilbihan.

Tayo'y magtulungan para sa kabataan!

* * *

y3@r poW n6 k@bAtAAN ng@Un powz ♥♥♥♥♥. yEar k0W pOwSSsszz (Year po ng kabataan ngayon. Year ko po!) ☺

m@ram1ng ZualAmat ♥ xD ♥ p0wh poWZ! (Maraming salamat po!)