

Overall Synthesis of Diocesan HEIs Forum

By Fr. Daniel O. Presto

Keeping and strengthening the faith, ablaze with mission. These past 2 days, we have been inspired by the different talks focusing on our identify and mission both as Diocesan HEIs, and school administrators.

As we are celebrating the Year of Faith, and preparing for the celebration of 500 years of Christian faith in our country, this First CEAP Forum of Diocesan HEIs reminds us above all of our role and mission in the New Evangelization. Bishop Mylo, in his Homily yesterday, urges us,

1. "to trust in the Holy Spirit.
2. to develop and strengthen the Spirituality of Communion:
3. to teach the truth of the Gospel"

As place of encounters with Christ, schools, and in particular, diocesan HEIs, Msgr. Gerry expanded on the Mission and uniqueness of the Diocesan HEIs. Regarding Mission, he underlined the characteristics of Catholic universities and colleges as contained in the document Ex Corde Ecclesiae of Blessed John Paul II. These are "1) A Christian inspiration not only of individuals but of the entire school community. 2) Religious instruction integrated into the over-all education of the students 3). Fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Catholic Church. 4) An institutional commitment to the Service of the people of God and of the human family".

These characteristics are specifically embodied on which the Catholic HEIs stand, namely instruction, research, and community extension.

Regarding the unique character of Diocesan HEIs, Msgr. Gerry mentioned 3 important elements: Cpmmunio, Missio, and Stewardship. Diocesan HEIs particularly live their unique character in communio through

a/ "constant coordination between the HEIs and the presbyterium and the Bishop of the diocese,

b/ constant coordination between HEI and the lay groups in the diocese,

c/ building a consortium between and among diocesan HEIs in the areas of programs and research, to link and to dialogue, with symbiosis as a particular strategy".

Second, connected with Communio, is Mission. Diocesan HEIs can do particular mission to their respective locality, for example, extending training for priests who are handling schools, training for pastoral workers, among others.

And third, Stewardship challenges the diocesan HEIs through transformative education. And this is seen particularly through CEAP JEEPGY. We can give more to society through transformative education. As Catholic educators, we are stewards for the holistic education of the youth given to our care.

As we are facing changes in educational system, particularly on K-12, and typology for QA in Philippine HEIs, our speakers both from DepEd and CHED clarified on a lot of issues and concerns that beset us, especially among diocesan HEIs.

Bro Armin proposes in his talk that Catholic Education should also start re-thinking about its mission, particularly in areas where there are least support. Example of these are the 5M OSY in the next five years, the Indigenous Peoples, and the 200,000 street children. There may be others that need response from Catholic education.

Dr. Bautista added that quality education should also be the area that Catholic Education, especially the diocesan HEIs, should strive to work into,

Our first CEAP HEIs Forum is an occasion where we are gathered together for a common purpose, vision & mission, & faced with a number of concerns. We have already amplified these concerns through open fora; but we want them to be communicated to other stakeholders in education, namely, our respective bishops who are the chair of our Board, and the concerned government agencies.

The resolutions that we have agreed upon during the workshop this afternoon evolve from the different concerns with its roots in the different problems that we face, especially as diocesan HEIs, and from among the surviving schools among us.

We hope and pray that a number of these will be realized through our active participation, in communion with one another, and advocacy.

Till we meet again in the next forum.

May God bless us with our endeavors in Catholic Education!