

A blessed and fruitful morning to each and everyone.

21st Century Learning is the digital learning. It is a one touch, one click, one access. I guess teachers and educators are also “in the flow” of the current changes to our educational system. But the demand of change is vital to the youth-the youth are vital to change. We, the youth seeks an education that can cater these changes. Inclusive education is one. Where everybody finds an opportunity to learn, to be respected, to be valued, to be an agent of social transformation- a change for betterment.

I am Jonas Aries Catungal Edades. – I belong to a poor but decent family. It may ring the bell when you heard “Edades”, my great grandfather is Victorio Edades, A national artist, The Father of Philippine Modern Art. A Dagupeno, A proud Filipino.

As a Catholic Student, I go to school every day, learn, inter-act with the community like any normal kid. But every kid has a story to tell.

I was 7 years old then, when I first felt my heart stop beating. As I hug my younger sister, our innocent minds were in distress. Not knowing what is really going on. Our eyes were searching for answers. But found nothing. Together, we watch our father shiver, fighting for life from death. We are left with one single question? When will be daddy coming back home?

On October 2 2007 , my father was diagnosed with Pheochromocytoma.

It is rare case wherein a tumor-growth is present in the adrenal glands that cause extreme hypertension and other internal complications and that may lead to death.

He is the 4th case in the entire Pangasinan and the only survivor among the four. I could remember when my mother carried my younger sister and dragged me to the different offices and clinics asking for consideration from a half million hospital bill.

Then this moment came. I saw the medical personnel giving applause as the nurses and surgeons, pushing daddy’s bed out of the recovery room was the first time I saw God, the day he survived the Surgery. But destiny had its own game and the clocks ticked. It is time. Again, my heart stopped from beating. The day we found that daddy has left. He died from asphyxiation and not from the battle he well fought. We are blessed for having dad for six months.

We are lost, bare-footed, broken. We are walking on the streets of Bagiuo City with only one thousand and five hundred in my mama's pockets, wondering on how we could survive the situation. Mama is a polio victim, I saw her endure the pain while walking, but what was more painful for a mother was to see her children suffering. We were looking for a place to help me and Jody. I was holding my Ate's hand and Kuya was carrying my younger sister. We were traumatized from what had happened.

A priest named Fr. Geraldo Costa, a CICM from Home Sweet Home was God's instrument to enlighten our heavy yoke. He helped us understand that perhaps the world will never work in our favor and yet, his beautiful soul lead our spirits to see God’s bigger plans than the tides in the storm.

I grew up with a thought of not having a father. I do not even know how to fix my broken toy. Then he came, fulfilling his promise to his “manong-par”. Daddy's younger brother came to our lives. He stood as my father throughout the years. He helped mama to raise me from a kid to a young man. A cub with a full-grown lion’s heart. He was there to fix the roof when the rain starts to pour. He was there to help us when the flood enters our house. He did everything he could just to make sure that we had a father-figure. He was there, to back us up.

And for the third time, my heart stopped beating. September 12, 2016, It was raining, It was pouring. For a great man has fallen. A father, A comrade, A friend. 3 gunshots filled the air, it was a deafening sound, a sound that still rings in my head. The three bullets were shot into my poor uncle's body. And with no mercy, the gunman approached my uncle who was already crawling on the ground, soaked in his own blood pleading for his life but mercy was not there during that day. He fired the 4th bullet on his head. Justice was denied. I had a breakdown when the news came up to me while taking my examination. I was totally torn apart. I was mad, lost, confused. I do not know what or how to react. There was a numb feeling inside of me. Because they have shown no mercy to a merciful man. I was raised believing that love is paid by love alone, mercy should have been paid by mercy.

I guess the lyrics of the song that goes “ Batang Bata ka pa at marami ka pang kailangan malaman at intindihin sa mundo” doesn’t fit my life well. God has proven to me that there is no age requirement for

challenges and to solve the puzzle chooses no age too. Life starts when you start to find the meaning of life itself.

As I grow up, I have learned that everything is a blessing but sometimes they are in sad disguise. My mama has to read 4 different novels every day, entitled: JOEL, JOLLY, JONAS and JODY, reading it non-stop. Not mentioning overtime days for spying on “Unpublished Content” you can never put into words. We may be lacking of “chaching” but our lunch boxes are always filled with love and bling. As a youth, we are blinded of so many things but we understand life as life slowly unfolds its secrets to us. We have to possess a 20/20 vision to see things not through our eyes but through our hearts.

Despite of all, my older sister passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers. My brother finally got accepted to a shipping line company and became a seaman. I, myself, with modesty aside, received various academic and non-academic awards and recognitions in our school, in the region and in the national level. And my younger sister slowly recovered from trauma and now performing well in her academics. Since then, little by little, we started collecting these pieces of memorabilia in our lives, putting them in the right place.

The disciples of Emmaus was with Jesus-we are with Jesus in the road of life. They recognized him in the “Breaking of the Bread” This is the Eucharistic presence of Jesus in our own lives, his presence in every moments in our lives. His willingness to be torn, to give us his life and be blessed. May we always recognize him in our brokenness.

I was wrong when I taught I saw God only when daddy survived the surgery. The truth is, he was with me, He was actually dancing with me. God loves me so much that He reveals himself in different faces of life’s events. That everytime my heart breaks and stopped from beating, I was only focused in my heart, attending only to what I feel. But now, I look things in different perspectives. I am blessed every single day of my life through the people that surrounds me who are enriched by God with love. In which they became instruments of God’s love.

I wonder if I was not a Catholic School student , I wonder if CEAP is not there for us. Thank you CEAP for journeying with us in sustaining the call to holiness despite the many difficulties and challenges the youth are on to. Who walks with us in our journey everytime we turn the page of our book and enter another chapter in our lives. Thank you Catholic Education. You play a vital role in our lives. In behalf of the youth in the island of Luzon, we thank God for such a spiritual and academic formation, crafting us to be better citizens of our dear country.

So look at me. I am not just a student from St. John’s Cathedral School, Dagupan City of the Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan. But I am your student. I am a CEAP student. Remember me, and remember every child, we need you. Thank you Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines.

Once again, I am Jonas Aries Catungal Edades, a son, a brother, a friend, a classmate, a student, a Johannine a Filipino, a Catholic Christian – I was broken yet willing to be broken more, to be torn, to be loved. Because through my brokenness, I am blessed.

And by the way, Happy World Teachers day. God bless us all.