



SPECIAL REPORT

AY 2019-2020 PRE-OPENING ACTIVITIES THEME: "JOURNEYING IN INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP"

July 31-August 5, 2019

Contributed by Antonio Jose Galauran

(with notes from Ms. Claudine Alhambra, Ms. Kaye Evangelista, and Ms. Hannah Tayaban)

"As Catholics, what would be our role in preparing humanity for the future?" Sr. Evangeline Anastacio, SPC, President of St. Paul University Manila (SPUM), asked the audience of administrators, faculty, and academic and non-academic service personnel.

The gathering was part of the University's three-day pre-opening program held on July 31, August 1, and August 5 in the 3rd floor HRMTC Ballroom. The pre-opening is an annual event that welcomes the schoolyear with series of workshops and seminars for employees, as well as institutional updates on the accomplishments during the previous year and target goals for the incoming academic year.

Sr. Evangeline's daring question resounded the theme and challenge of this year's pre-opening program: "Journeying in Intentional Discipleship." She stressed how the program highlights the formation of employees who will serve as disciples, and in turn, will make disciples out of the youth.

She discussed the crucial role of Catholic schools in the formation of a holistic well-being, especially with today's world seeing a shift towards the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR), a turning point in history booming with technological automation. This era, she explained, is marked by high-tech, machine-driven inventions, including self-driving cars, robots, and artificial intelligence—technologies that could soon dominate society and influence academic institutions.

Day 1: Discipleship and Vision

The first day of the pre-opening shed light on today's technology-driven environment and focused on the topic: "Discipleship in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution."

Program OIC, Ms. Maridel Negradas, delivered the perspective setting to give the group an overview of the three-day program. Following the introduction, Sr. Evangeline delivered the President's Message, where she featured the institution's accomplishment for the academic year 2018-2019 and explained the context of the 4th Industrial Revolution. She emphasized the need for formators of youth who respect life and dignity, express solidarity with societal

issues, and practice care for God's creation. She ended her talk with an introduction of the management team and new employees for the incoming academic year.

Prior the afternoon programs, Fr. Dennis Lim, LC, of the Legionaries of Christ led the group towards an inward spiritual reflection with an Opening Mass. Fr. Lim was also the guest speaker for the talk later in the afternoon. In his comical yet empowering message, Fr. Lim, reminded the community how everyone, as a son and daughter of Christ, plays a crucial role in educating the youth and proclaiming Christ as disciples. He expressed how Christians should not treat Christianity as a mere intellectual system of facts, but a living relationship with Jesus. As Christian disciples, one ought to live out his/her role, maximize one's potential, and ripple this effect to other members of the community.

Another Dennis took off from Fr. Lim's discussion on discipleship, but more particularly tackled the role of educational institutions in the era of technological innovation. Br. Dennis Magbanua, FSC, President of De La Salle-College of St. Benilde Manila, delved deeper into the discussion on the 4th Industrial Revolution and pointed out how up to 375 million workers may have to switch jobs due to automation. He firmly remarked however, that teachers and formators could not be easily replaced. While robots can teach facts, only teachers and formators can inculcate values education and empathy. Br. Magbanua also urged the universities not to be in competition with one another, but rather, work together as formators of youth for society.

The first day concluded with roundtable discussions. The crowd was divided into two divisions, namely the Administrators and Academic Division as the first group and the ANTS and NAP for the second group. Each division tackled the influence of technology and the 4th Industrial Revolution in their respective lines of work.

Day 2: Spiritual, Mental, and Institutional Thrust

Day 2 commenced with an enlightening synthesis of the first day's activities led by Ms. Claudine Alhambra and a summary of the previous day's roundtable discussion facilitated by Dr. Joanne Popanes and Mr. Ajocrivipor Agojo. Both noted the importance of adapting to the new technological era, alongside its challenges, in order to remain relevant.

Sr. Jesusa Taccad, SPC, Vice-President for Christian Formation, spearheaded the talks on Day 2. In her spiritually-engaging address, she emphasized how each member of the community ought to act as a Christian formator, especially to the youth. She urged the audience to more actively and consciously partake in religious and spiritual activities, most especially since most Catholics' Catechism today was largely shaped during their youth days, hence pushing the need for adult faith formation.

Going beyond one's spirituality, Sr. Alegria Avellaneda, SPC, Vice President for Student Services, meanwhile challenged everyone to radiate Jesus to students. She imparted insights on the cases commonly encountered by the youth, including depression, family problems, career disorientation, teenage pregnancy, and bullying, and ended her session challenging the formator's role in handling students' spiritual and emotional health.

Giving expert insights into this pressing issue shared by Sr. Avellaneda was Mrs. Theresa Angela Duran-Dy from the Ateneo de Manila University RMT-CEFAM, who was the main workshop facilitator of the day. Mrs. Duran-Dy enlightened the audience on the topic of Mental Health First Aid Skills, bannering the theme as: "Journeying with the Young." She agreed that the most common mental health problems include depression, anxiety, ADHD, among others, but also clarified that mental health is not just a mere "youth" problem but a medical condition even of adults. She urged the crowd to erase the stigma of mental health and invited everyone, whether employees or students, to actively seek help and professional guidance.

Later in the afternoon, sessions were dedicated to updates on the accomplishments and plans of each academic and non-academic unit.

Mrs. Ma. Regina Cachero, University Registrar, delivered the updates from the Academic Services on behalf of Mrs. Ma. Encarnacion Dychangco. Mrs. Cachero shared some the accomplishments and directions of the division, accentuated by an active pursuance of advancing qualifications of faculty members in research, curriculum and instruction, accreditation and recognition, among others. She also provided insights on the re-accreditation status of all the programs visited in 2018 and 2019, and promoted the extension of the recognition of the Music and Nursing Programs as Centers of Excellence and Development, respectively.

Sr. Ma. Vicenta Estrella, SPC, Vice President for Finance, on the other hand, reported the financial and policy advancements of the unit, including a presentation of the new enrolment statistics and introduction of the brand new facilities in place. She likewise invited everyone to actively participate in coming up with alternative sources of revenue, institutional cost-cutting measures, and monitoring students with accounts receivables.

In compliance with Department of Labor and Employment Order No. 198 series of 2018 on occupational safety and health standards, Ms. Abigale Valenzuela was introduced as the newly appointed Safety Officer of the institution. Ms. Tina Ramos, Asset Management Officer, meanwhile explained the role of her office and discussed the monitoring process of various institutional assets from tagging, registration, transfer, down to the process of disposal.

Addressing employee concerns was Ms. April Bautista from the Human Resources Department. She gave reminders and updates, particularly on the attendance monitoring system, staff performance evaluation, and acts prohibited in the institution. Updates on the areas of software and systems, network, software applications, multimedia, were discussed by Mr. Peter Paul Ocampo of the Information and Communications Technology unit. As head of the institution's tech arm, he envisioned skills training of ICT personnel as a top priority and foresees an updating of the institution's WiFi and the upgrading of other offices such as the Quality Assurance and Public Relations Offices, as well as the Mass Communication Lab.

Promoting the institution's research drive, Dr. Jerome Cleofas of the Center for Research, Innovation, and Development showcased the various research projects completed by the department, including participation in local and international forums, exhibitions, and competitions. Beyond merely highlighting the program's accomplishments, Dr. Cleofas stressed the need for further research funding opportunities, hence the goal to partner with

government and private institutions. He also urged various departments in the University to actively participate in research projects.

Two new offices were introduced later in the afternoon. Dr. Amelia Butial, from the Career Development Academy (CDA) presented her office as the overseer of TESDA Skills Training and CHED's Adult Education Training Programs. Ms. Ma. Isabel Abear, on the other hand, was tasked to head the Academic Internationalization and Mobility (AIM) unit, whose primary job is to assist foreign students, especially in the graduate school level, and handle Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programs offered by the University.

Ending the day's talk were updates on Data Privacy projects given by Mr. Gerardo Guiuan, the institution's Data Privacy Officer. He shared various insights into the Data Privacy Manual of the University, which he reported, was recently forwarded to the National Privacy Commission. He likewise admonished everyone to actively participate in protecting individual and student privacy, especially given today's data-driven environment.

Day 3: Online and Offline Empowerment

The last day of the program, originally slated for August 2, was moved to a later date, August 5 due to inclement weather. But the recent heavy downpour did not dampen what would be a meaningful ending to the program.

Kicking off Day 3's seminar was a comprehensive recap of the previous day's activities by Ms. Kaye Evangelista. The quick refresher would be complemented by an audio-visual presentation produced by the documentation team, headed by Engr. Mervin Cequena, Hannah Tayaban, and Lara Aquino.

Day 3 tackled another pressing issue in the 21st Century: The Online Environment. Mr. Kevin Anthony Ingente of Globe Telecom led the day's discussion on "Online Responsibility and Etiquette." He emphasized the crucial role of creating a digital impact in today's age, while maintaining one's need to be internally conscious of what he leaves as a digital footprint. He argued how several online conversations today typically become prone to misinterpretation, hence the rampant scenarios of engaging in comment wars, or even the prevalently circulating "bystander effect," wherein humans become mere spectators of heated arguments or even real-world problems, thus creating an apathetic attitude among the youth and adults alike. Mr. Ingente closed his session by giving weight to the subject of digital thumbprint. He remarked that online responsibility begins with protecting one's data—from securing one's privacy with stronger passwords to being keen on what types of information one shares on various media platforms. An enthusiastic crowd would later engage in a question and answer, followed by the awarding of certificates and tokens. The activity ended with the closing remarks of Sr. Evangeline. Adding spiritual sustenance to the morning activities, Rev. Fr. Timothy de Belen, MMHC celebrated the Closing Mass, blessing the SPU Manila community with prayers for the year to come.

Spiritually and mentally-nourished, Day 3 concluded by breaking off the large group into divisions and offices. The said division meetings were conducted to allow the departments to

formulate and revise their own plans, in the light of the wealth of information acquired from the three-day program.

Brimming with excitement for the coming year, the SPU Manila community left the venue with a daunting responsibility: to become human formators in the era of advanced technology, rapid information and communication, and morphing student lifestyles. In view of such changes, Sr. Anastacio ended the program with a relevant challenge: "We are disciples, and we are to make disciples of our students."

NEWS BRIEFS IN PHOTOS

SPU Manila sent a delegation to The Paulinian Youth in Worship held in St. Paul University Philippines in Tuguegarao on 9-11 August 2019.



SPU Manila welcomed the new Chaplain, Fr. Timothy de Belen, on 5 August 2019.



The SPU Manila Music Therapy Program was presented by Ms. Annette Asuncion at The Philippine Society of Geriatrics and Gerontology (PSGG) 7th Annual Convention entitled "When Aged Care Matters: Gearing Towards the Next Decade." Theme: Seniors as Part of the Universal Health Care. The convention was held on 10 August 2019 in the Novotel Manila, Araneta Center.

