



Office of the President

Ateneo de Zamboanga University

The Jesuit University in Western Mindanao, Philippines
Since 1912

In Consortium with:
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Xavier University - Ateneo de Cagayan

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Dear **Ateneo de Zamboanga University Community**,

We join the universal Church—and the countless people of goodwill around the world—in mourning the death of Pope Francis, a beloved shepherd and, for us Jesuits, a brother in the Lord.

Much of what I share here echoes the words of Fr. Arturo Sosa, SJ, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, whose letter to us Jesuits speaks with great depth and tenderness. But I also speak from the heart of our university, a community shaped by the same Gospel that animated Pope Francis's life and leadership.

For more than twelve years, Pope Francis served the Church with courage and compassion that felt both prophetic and familiar—familiar because he spoke the language of everyday people, and prophetic because he never shied away from the hard truths of our time. He called us to care for creation, to dismantle walls of indifference, and to reimagine the Church as a community that listens, walks, and prays together.

He reminded us again and again that prayer is not an escape but an encounter. That joy is not surface-level cheerfulness but the fruit of knowing we are loved, even in our fragility. And, that being Church is not about winning arguments, but about washing feet.

As a Jesuit, he challenged us to be what he himself tried to be: a servant of the joy of the Gospel, always seeking the consolation that comes from Christ, and offering that consolation to a world full of crucified lives. He believed that the Spirit speaks not only through popes and bishops but through the hearts of ordinary people—especially the poor, the displaced, the wounded.

We at Ateneo de Zamboanga are heirs of that same mission. And in this moment of loss, we are also reminded of the responsibility: to keep walking, praying, discerning, and loving in the spirit of Jesus—joyfully, humbly, and with others.

We entrust Pope Francis to the God of mercy whom he served so faithfully. May his memory stir in us not only grief but gratitude. And may his life continue to challenge and inspire us to be builders of hope, dialogue, justice, and peace.

O God, grant eternal light and rest to your servant Francis, and teach us, too, to walk the path of your joy.

With the Hope of the Risen Christ,

(ORIGINAL SIGNED)

Fr. Ernald M. Andal, SJ
University President