



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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18 February 2026

Dear Ateneo de Zamboanga University Community,
especially our students across all units,

Peace be with you.

Many of us begin **Lent** today, and in these same days our Muslim brothers and sisters begin **Ramadan**. In Zamboanga, where faith is lived side by side, **this overlap matters**. It gives us a chance to return to God while learning to care for one another more deliberately.

Lent invites Christians to go back to what is essential: prayer that steadies the heart, fasting that clarifies desire, and almsgiving that trains us to love beyond ourselves. Ramadan is also a season of return for our Muslim community, marked by prayer, self-discipline, and generosity, rooted in trust in God's mercy. These traditions are not the same, and we should not pretend they are. But both can form in us a similar freedom: the ability to say no to what numbs us, and yes to what makes us more attentive, more compassionate, and more truthful.

To our students: please receive these weeks not only as personal devotion, but as **companionship**. If you carry ashes today, carry them with humility. If you fast in Ramadan, may your discipline be protected from judgment and from the pressure to perform. And for all of us, Catholic Christian, Muslim, or still finding your way, let this season soften the atmosphere on campus. Be slower to mock. Be quicker to forgive. Notice the classmate who is carrying something heavy but saying nothing.

A Jesuit university should be a place where faith deepens our humanity. So I ask our community to accompany one another in simple, concrete ways:

- **In prayer:** pray for one another by name. Pray for peace in our city and region. Pray for families that are struggling.
- **In deed:** choose daily acts of mercy that cost something. Listen without dismissing. Speak without contempt. Give without needing credit.
- **For our common home:** let your discipline show in simpler living. Waste less. Bring your own bottle or mug. Segregate properly. Save energy when you can. Care for creation is part of how we honor the Giver of life.
- **Beyond campus:** keep your eyes open to the poor, the displaced, and the unseen. Real devotion widens the circle.

May these sacred weeks teach us to hunger for what truly gives life: God's mercy, and the grace of doing good together.

Accompanying you all in prayer,

(ORIGINAL SIGNED)

Fr. Ernard M. Andal, SJ

President, Ateneo de Zamboanga University