**COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

Central Philippine University

**Faculty and Staff Assembly**

June 21, 2019

**INTRODUCTION**

A story of a rather pious devotee who believed that the best way of identifying with the passion and suffering of Jesus was to carry a wooden cross and walk around the town square. He believed that God would cleanse him of all his transgressions after the “sacrificial act”. He had done this ritual every Good Friday when the sun shone fiercely.

On one Good Friday, as he was preparing for the usual rite, a man came up to him and asked if he could share the load. “Luyag ko mag pakig-ambit sa pagpas-an sang imo mabug-at nga lulan”, he said. The devotee thought it wasn’t a bad idea at all so he agreed. The devotee placed the cross on his shoulder as Jesus did. The second man was to carry the foot of the cross. And the walk began. After a while, the devotee felt an unusual heaviness. The farther he trudged, the heavier the cross got. He turned around to see what was causing this. Nakita niya nga ang tawo sa likod, nagakabit imbis nga magpas-an sang krus.

Sa kabuhi, may nagapakig-ambit sa pagkarga sang aton nga palas-anon. Pakig-ambit nga nagapabug-at.

**TRANSITION**

You will concur that this is everyone’s experience. And I can understand why at the start of the school year, you have deemed it wise to talk about sharing the load: Paghi-ambitanay.

I need not tell you that sharing the load is foregone conclusion. No one is going to refute me when I say that, especially for us, teachers, paghi-ambitanay is a necessity. Why do I say this? Because teaching is a lonely task. At the end of the day, even after an enjoyable class session, you return home to work on your lesson plans – alone. You grade test papers – alone. You record grades – alone. Further to this, teaching exposes your vulnerability as you face students and even colleagues who challenge you and who are out to prove that you’re wrong. Also teachers are open to criticism and attack. And I will say this at the risk of being reprimanded by the authorities: Teachers at CPU are often subject to unfair expectations and great demands.

In that context, the organizers of this Assembly hit the nail on its head when they chose this particular theme: Paghi-ambitanay: One God – One Heart – One College. The thematic formulation may have undertones of exclusivity… “nepotistic prejudice which conveys the idea that everyone else is wrong except CAS. Allow me to suggest a different perspective.

The faculty and staff of all the colleges and departments have been required to formulate their respective goals…to articulate their functional objectives. And while each college has its own particularity and nuance, reflecting on Galatians 6:9 and 10, for me, there is only one goal for a Christian institution of learning like Central Philippine University. Verse 9 says: “Let us not grow weary in well doing…”That is the goal: being involved and persisting in WELL DOING. That is the objective that keeps the heart of those who work here throbbing. That is the reason for being of not only CAS but of the whole University. And what, for me, does it mean to be involved and not growing weary in well doing? If I am to understand St. Paul’s admonition to the church in Galatia, I am impelled to say that being involved and persisting in well-doing is to endeavor to make life livable for others. TO MAKE LIFE LIVABLE FOR OTHERS.

Meanders through the market place…get on a jeepney…sit in the corner of a teacher’s room and you will discover that most conversations revolve around how life has become difficult. And the talks are accompanied by sighs too deep for words. Life has become unlivable! And I say: you and I have no business teaching in the College of Arts and Sciences or at CPU, for that matter, if we have motives other than making life livable for others. And what is a livable life? I am sure you will immediately mention wages commensurate to the outputs extricated from the employees. That is important and even St. Paul had something to say about livable wages. But that is definitely not our primordial goal for life is more than pesos and centavos. The livable life that we are struggling to attain as we teach here is life where, in the words of an inspirational speaker, “there is freedom to be, to develop, to innovate, to make mistakes, to learn from one another… all the while feeling supported and affirmed. “Instead of suspicion and put-downs there is trust that builds teamwork within the College. How I wish that when we leave faculty conferences or when students leave the class, stress is held to a minimum since affection and compassion flow. How I wish that our administrators and accreditors would allow us to exercise what is called “management by friendship”. Jesus recognized his disciples as friends – neither servants nor subordinates. He practiced what I call the ethics of care. He genuinely and deeply cared for them. He never used them to chalk up “pogi points” that he may retain his accredited status with God. A livable life strengthens the lines of loyalty. It breaks down internal competition. It silences gossip. It builds morale. It promotes confidence and belongingness because people are not pushed to the margins even if they are outside the good graces of the powers that be. The principle of sharing…the principle of bearing one another’s burdens…the principle of paghi-ambitanay is planted deeply in the structure of the Christian life. It begins in the elemental level of sharing the material necessities of life. Its highest demonstration is what we want to continue to make visible in the College of Arts and Sciences this school year and beyond.

**CONCLUSION**

And so, what does paghi-ambitanay impel us to do? It is to strain after One Goal which is to persist and never grow weary in well doing…One Heart which is to nurture affection and compassion for people that you may work to make life livable for them. One College which is to make it a worthy vessel for bringing your hopes and aspirations to fruition. May the God of Wisdom, and Learning smile on your efforts to be faithful.

*(Delivered by Rev. Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes at the CAS Faculty and Staff Assembly on June 21, 2019 at Educational Media Center, Central Philippine University.)*