

ASMPH 2019 Valedictorian Speech

Jerahmeel Aleson L. Mapili, MD, MBA

To our commencement speaker, Ms Maria Ressa. President of the Ateneo de Manila University, Fr. Jose Ramon Villarin SJ. Vice President of the Ateneo Professional Schools, Dr. John Paul Vergara. former Vice President of the Ateneo Professional Schools, Dr. Antonette Angeles. Vice President of the Loyola Schools, Dr. Maria Luz Vilches. ASMPH Dean, Dr Cenon Alfonso. AGSB OIC-Dean, Mr. Luisito Montalbo. Former ASMPH Dean, Dr. Manuel Dayrit. ASMPH Associate Dean, Dr. Raymundo Baquiran. Registrar of the Ateneo Professional Schools, Mr. Rey Reyes, our mentors and faculty, staff and administrators, parents, guests, and fellow batchmates, a pleasant afternoon to all!

It is with great honor and humility to be standing in front of all of you today, 2019! I promise to make this short and sweet but I can't assure you that it will be as quick as Mon Doms or Jethri answering a 240 item exam. But... I'll try anyway.

5 years ago, ASMPH took us in with open arms and hopeful hearts, seeing in us our individual capacity to heal, and believing that we will one day transform lives. Throughout the 5 years, much has been said and done, and indeed it has been a testament to our sacrifice, our grit, and our unrelenting passion...of pushing ourselves beyond our boundaries just to be where we are today. So first of all, congratulations 2019! We made it!

Today, we begin the arduous journey of going down from the hill, of undertaking the daunting task of being Sons and Daughters of Loyola, of finally spreading our wings and flying high. However, what happens after today is still uncertain to most, if not all, of us. And the uncertainty had me questioning whether or not we are really ready to go down from the hill? Are we really prepared to soar high? So to answer these questions, I went to none other than our favorite inspirational source...and you all know what that is: the stampita.

So as I was scanning them, *sabi ko sa sarili ko "anu ba to? puro tungkol sa clerkship at sa doing your best"* None of them really spoke loudly to me telling me that we were indeed ready to go down from the hill. It wasn't until I chanced upon Dr. Chelle De Vera's stampita that I found the answer, *naalala niyo pa ba nakasulat dun???* "2019 rocks!" was what was written and it reminded me of what we all inherently possess so that we can all fly high, and that's the "2019 way".

So today, dearest 2019...allow me to share a few stories and take you back to the past 5 years, to remind us all of who we are, and to give us a recollection of the "2019 way".

1. F19HT

The "2019 way" is about the F19HT.

Fighting for what we believe in is one of the things that really astonishes me about the people here today. From fighting for our individual advocacies inside and outside of school with Kythe, Eskwela, AMDG, ACSIS, and the PH council just to name a few, to being very meticulous about the school's curriculum especially way back in YL6 (I know we all remember that), and even to pushing for the dress code change of today's ceremonies (thank you Kang), we always had this exquisite way of exuding a sense of fight for the things that what we truly believed in. Of all the things that defines our F19HT however, it was most evident when we all came together under the crazy idea of LA Rellora. His idea to create a full-length film, which eventually became "*Mga Kwentong Tsubibo*". From acknowledging our potential to do greater things, LA and his team challenged us to fight for what we truly believed in. That is, to portray to the world through film and art, the social realities our countrymen face and to evoke a response to that awareness. It was particularly during the first public launch of Tsubibo back in Nov 2016, that made our testament to fighting for what we truly believe in shine the most. So thank you, LA, for your crazy idea made the fight in all of us stand out.

The F19HT however is not limited to the people who will get their MDs and MBAs today but, If I may, even more so to those who have left school but otherwise fought for what they truly believed in. I still cannot fathom how one of my closest friends, Jhanna, who, during her stay here in ASMPH, literally got a perfect score in every exam in YL5, went on to do Epidemiology instead. I still cannot believe how the top 1 student in our batch in YL6, my anat and lab group mate and dear friend, Aeiou, would otherwise go to the other side of Katipunan, wear a different color, and meddle with pipettes and fancy molecular biotech machines. I still cannot believe how Captain Jed who was 1 year away from finishing med school and getting that MD and MBA would rather wear a cap than don his white coat. They may have all left school but they all had one thing in common, they all fought for what they believed in, truly showing us what it meant to live the "2019 way".

I can still remember that time during my immersion in Northern Samar back in 2016 when my and my companions sat on the beach with the stars shining bright as we chatted about our plans in the future. At that time, one of our classmates, one whom I always saw as someone who would become a great physician one day, was unsure if she would continue to go on with YL7. We tried to convince her to stay for at least one more year but our conversation ended with her telling us, "Medicine is really not for me but I have to fight for what I believe in". She eventually didn't continue with YL7 and instead drew a comic strip for all of us which told us that hopefully our nameplates become heavy not because of the burden we carry but because of the love that we have. She is our dear friend, Momo, and it makes me happy that she is here with us today.

These are just 4 of the many other inspiring individuals from 2019 who have been a testament to the "2019 way", to the F19HT that we always had in ourselves. I hope we bring that F19HT as we go down from the hill. The F19HT for what we all believe in truly starts today.

2. L19HT

The "2019 way" is also about the L19HT.

It was only when Fr. Jett told us after the launch of Tsubibo that we were "the light" that we began to acknowledge how much light we really had in us. "*We are the light*", we always said, as we let our luminescence shine on each other. Back then I always believed that being the light was inherent in all of us as it manifested in everything that we did as a batch. However, after hearing Julianne pray the prayer of Cardinal Newman during one of the Boards Review days saying "Shine through me, and be so in me", did I come to a different perspective of our radiance. Being 2019 not only meant being light, it meant being prisms who were blessed enough to receive light and scatter it to make wonderful colors.

It is my hope therefore that our dispersion of light will not just shine to create wonderful colors but that we too may shine bright in order that we may see more clearly and give due gratitude to those who have graced their own light on us for us to scatter.

I hope we see clearly our Divine Healer, the one who never ceases to show us the gift of meaning and grace in our mission of making the world a better place.

I hope we see clearly our parents and guardians who have been with us since the days that all we knew in life was nothing but the rooting reflex. Thank you dear parents for the gift of allowance and *baon*. But most importantly, thank you for being there when no one else was there for us, for lifting our spirits up, and for believing in our dreams.

I hope we see clearly our loved ones and special persons, the people most near and dear to us for it is with them that we grew into better people, better doctors. Special thank you to Ayi who has seen me at my worst and brought out the best in me. Thank you for being my best friend and for accepting me for who I am.

I hope we see clearly the light given by our mentors and teachers, that light from their willingness to spend their time and effort hoping that their work will produce doctor-leaders in us. Thank you for being our second parents here in Ateneo. Thank you for always pushing us to our boundaries, and for shining much light on us so as to change the way we ourselves scattered it.

I hope we see clearly the light from our administration and staff for their work has created an environment for us to excel. *Ibang klase talaga sila!* Special thank you to Ma'am Belle who was my partner in crime back in YL7, helping me get in touch with module coordinators weeks before actual modules just to make sure that these bunch of doctors had all the learning materials in advance. And special thank you to Ma'am Nympha, *alam mo na iyon! mahal na mahal namin kayo!*

Most of all, I hope we see clearly the light of the lives of our patients - both from the past and in the future, who made us and will make us understand the work that we have to do and the sacrifices that we have to make to become better physicians, better healers, better people.

Yes dear friends, scattering light is indeed beautiful but we didn't have it our way all the time for there was darkness along the way - the post-exam heartbreaks, the numerous sleepless nights, the StraMa Drama, the mistakes we made in patient care, our first patient mortality. But without a doubt and I think everyone would agree with me on this: that the darkest of our days here in Ateneo was when we had darkness from within, and that was when we lost Patrick to brain cancer back in YL7. I could still remember that day when everyone had their heads down, pretending to focus on studying for that Clinical Pharma OSCE and Compre Exam (sorry Doc Cabigon), but in reality we were all ugly crying deep inside. It was a moment which left us all wounded and had created more kinks in our inner prisms. The catch however is that with wounds and with kinks, the ability of prisms to bend light and scatter it is enriched, consequently making us shine brighter.

It is with this realization that I also hope that the light we scatter does not shine too bright that we overlook the darkness we all face, for these are the very moments which allow us to shine brighter. With that, it is my hope that we all continue to scatter light and taint the world with a little more color.

3. Walangi19

Lastly, dear friends, the “2019 way” is about walangi19.

When I decided to enter ASMPH, all I really wanted to do was to study hard to be the doctor I once dreamt of becoming – nothing more, nothing less. Life, on the other hand, had other plans for me and threw me into a bunch of very talented and smart individuals. *Nung nagpaulan ata si Lord ng blessings at katalinuhan, ASMPH 2019 sumalo ng lahat.* However, more than the talent and the brains was the willingness of each one to share a little bit of themselves, and that definitely changed my outlook on my training here as a physician. I can still remember back in YL5 when everyone was struggling with anatomy that Jeff got out of his way to teach us the formidable brachial plexus. That for me was what really started a culture of sharing oneself for the benefit of all. I can still remember Cea and Tomas patiently teaching us non-dancers how to dance for Keeshia and Raph’s performance in Luxe. Oh, can I imagine how much of a struggle that was. And I can still recall how we all tried to pool funds for our scholars whose scholarships were suddenly withdrawn a few years back. And the list just goes on and on and on. So thank you for sharing a bit of yourselves to 2019, thank you for bringing out the best in people, and for creating the culture of walangi19.

It is because of this strong internal culture we had as a batch that allowed our passion to overflow. It created an environment which put a premium on the things bigger than ourselves, and these are the things which really mattered. I can still recall the day Dustin, our then incoming EO in YL6, presented the idea of adopting our own community to aid during our stay here in Ateneo and hopefully beyond. I was excited for it to become reality, *sayang lang at hindi natuloy.* Let us also remember that the funds raised from Tsubibo under the leadership of Vincent Tang has helped the QC Health Department get necessary research input for improving their health programs. And let us not forget that the TMC Brain Tumor fund which we raised back in YL7 has already helped at least 4 patients, especially those from the TMC Divine Mercy program, get the necessary neurosurgical treatment they needed. Thank you 2019 for speaking truth to me, and reminding me that everything was for a purpose way bigger than our individual selves. Thank you for proving to me that when there is much love then it is bound to overflow.

It is with you that I realized that my potential as an individual is multiplied manifold when I did things together with people dear to me. It is with you guys that made attaining "No Removals" feel so much better than individually getting a high score. And I keep hoping that with you guys, through our hard work, determination, and togetherness, we will achieve 100% in the upcoming Physician Licensure Exam.

Thank you 2019 for being brothers and sisters to me. Thank you for sharing the joys and the tears, the sorrow, and the triumphs. Thank you for making me feel that I belong and for making me believe that together we can make great things happen. Thank you for making our motto more than just a motto, thank you for giving life to walangi-19.

[Conclusion]

Dearest batchmates, today begins our arduous journey of going down from the hill because now, we face an even bigger ordeal beyond the 4 walls of the classroom, beyond passing modules and exit exams, and beyond merely surviving 36-hour duties. Today, we ask more passionately: "*Pilipinas, kumusta ka na?*" Today we open our eyes and ears, because behind the veil of abuse and greed from those in power, is our beloved country that deserves to be heard, loved, and served. Today, we listen to the plea of our health system that still wails and aches manifesting itself through the many Filipinos whose lives have been short-changed because of the systemic injustices, no matter how big or small, which still paralyzes the last, the least, and the lost. Today, we empathize with the cry of those who have no access to available healthcare. Today, we remember the unjustly killed, of what our government would label as collateral damage. Today, we remember the many faces of those who have succumbed to financial crisis because of astonishing healthcare costs.

Today, more than anything else, is the silent recollection of our fight, it is the solemn invitation to scatter light on our ailing health system, and it is our unified oath of commitment to, in one way or another, contribute to its healing.

Friends, it has already been 5 years since ASMPH took us in, and now it's time for us to take flight. Let this day be a reminder of the potential that the school had seen in all of us back in 2014. Let our wearing of the toga, the cap, and the hood be the celebration from which we will draw the strength and courage to carry on. Let our walking down the aisle be our march of allegiance to the mission that the Ateneo has set forth for us to fulfil. Let our acceptance of the diploma be the mirror through which we will realize our capacity to heal and believe that we will one day transform lives. Let our transferring of the tassel be the recognition of what we have done and who we are bound to become. Let our shaking of Fr Jett's hand be the gesture by which we will commit to living out the ideals and principles of an Atenean physician - an outstanding clinician, a dynamic leader, and a social catalyst. And let our taking of a dignified bow be the reflection of our Patron's humble surrender to the creed of the Society of Jesus: *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam Inque Hominum Salutem* - For the Greater Glory of God and the Salvation of Souls.

2019, we are now ready to go down from the hill and I fervently believe that everyone behind us will be watching with pride as we all soar high. It is my hope that we bring ASMPH and the "2019 way" wherever life takes us. So Be Great! Be Bold! Be 2019! Bring the F19HT! Scatter the L19HT! Walang i19! Thank you!

- END -