

*An excerpt from the commencement speech of*

## MR. RICO HIZON

Broadcast Journalist, BBC World News  
Commencement Speaker, April 18, 2013

Live from Singapore, New York, Paris, Washington DC, and now, in De La Salle University-Dasmariñas campus, this is Rico Hizon, reporting. Animo La Salle!

This is a great honor to be with all of you this afternoon. *Maraming, maraming salamat po*, Br. Gus Boquer, the president of the University and to the Lasallian community for this honor and for this privilege to speak before the graduates of the College of Liberal Arts [and Communication] and the College of Tourism and Hospitality Management. *Mabuhay kayong lahat!* Guests, parents, graduates, *magandang hapon sa inyong lahat!*

I am who I am today because of my Lasallian education. I am a BBC World News Anchor because of my Lasallian education. I am a proud Lasallian and I am a proud Filipino! I am here because I want to share with you my story; I want to inspire you because I know that each of the 700 graduates today can all be world-class.

But first of all, let me congratulate the parents and the teachers who are present here today. Every step the graduates took were taken with you beside them. None of them would have gotten this far without you, the parents and the teachers. Your education, your unconditional love, and devotion has thrown wide open the

door of opportunities of our young graduates.

More importantly, congratulations to the graduates! From up here where I stand, I feel so fortunate to behold this beautiful sight. I see before me a sea of faces, all eager to conquer the world out there. You are ready to leave behind your books and enter the challenging world of the work force, excited to place your own unique trail.

By now, graduates, I am sure in the back of your minds, you have everything planned. In two years, you would be able to afford a car. And I am sure after five years, your ambition is to set aside a down payment for your own







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# MR. PAUL ZALDARRIAGA

Finance Director, De La Salle Zobel  
Consultant to the President, De La Salle Philippines  
Commencement Speaker, April 18, 2013

I want to express my personal thanks to our beloved Sector Leader and [De La Salle Philippines] President, Br. Jose Mari “JJ” Jimenez FSC; our beloved Br. Gus Boquer FSC, president of De La Salle University-Dasmaringas; our esteemed administrators, teachers, dear parents, members of the graduating class of 2013, and fellow Lasallians for this distinct honor.

*“What is important is not who comes first, but that we finish the journey together.”*

With these words, Br. JJ set the tone for the Lasallian Mission which was to guide how each DLSU-D employee conducted themselves in support of the schools and the learning communities entrusted to their care.

Finishing the journey together is the one thought which I would want you to remember as the message of this joyful occasion, your graduation day. As alumni of a La Salle school, we all belong to the growing, privileged graduates who form the Lasallian family in the Philippines. Eighty percent of you are Catholics. Despite being the largest Catholic country in the Asia, and having been blessed by our Lord with bountiful natural resources, we are also among the poorest.

We are a country where 23 million Filipinos live below the national poverty line. And the yawning social divide between the rich and the poor remains a formidable social problem. While the richest Filipino own 50

percent of our nation’s wealth, the poorest of our countrymen account for only five percent of our national income.

More than any other time in human history, through the magic of the mass media and technology, we now live to be connected more to this world where news is delivered 24/7 through our radios, our tv sets, our PCs, our hand phones, and our tablets. Despite our differences, we are bound together by our humanity. We are, as described in the Latin words of our DLSP logo, *indivisa manent*. Meaning, we are permanently indivisible. We are one.

As Filipinos, we share a very strong sense of family. We will go into debt to care for our parents and [family].



Many of us will leave a job to attend to an ill father or mother and most certainly, we will never leave them alone in the care of strangers in an old folks' home.

To us, family is everything. This is both our blessing and our curse as a Filipino.

When we defend and protect our own from threats and harm, even at great danger for ourselves, that is a strength. We are inclined to support them to the extremes with little regard for our own. And we expand our families beyond our blood relations through the *Padrino* system (patronage) and by joining fraternities, exclusive schools, and social clubs. Friends, classmates, fraternity brothers and sisters, close business associates are now part of our extended family.

To the extreme, we defend our extended family members beyond what is right and at the expense of the common good. We are unable to see beyond the causes that serve only the interest of the few who belong to our intimate circle of family and friends.

I think our challenge as a graduating class is this: can we expand the invisible, limiting boundaries of our extended families to include more Filipinos and more communities? So that the causes and advocacies we champion [will] benefit more Filipinos and pursue the common good at all times? [Aspire] to lift the 20 percent of our population from the bondage of poverty and [open] avenues for them to experience a happy and fulfilled life.

Now how many of you will struggle and sacrifice to guarantee the future of less fortunate fellow Filipinos and their children?

As Lasallians, educated in one of the best universities in the country today, you have the destiny to fulfill and the duty to solve the country's ills so



*“What is important is not who comes first, but that we finish the journey together.”*

that your children will live in a world far better than yours. Free from the shackles of poverty and deprivation and blessed by the bounty of the harvest from a society that rewards individual initiative.

You have the power to create the future that you want. It is up to each one of you. And as our Lasallian centennial prayer goes:

*“You may not be the light, but you can be the spark.”*

Commit yourselves to the common good, shadowing personal aim and self-promotion for the benefit of our families, our communities, and our country. Get into business if that is where your passion is. But do it with the right patience and motivations. Business is all about people. Focus on building relationships and not wealth. Invest in nurturing the right relationships, not the rewards of wealth.

How different is a [Lasallian] graduate from his peers in the other





My wife and I had been abroad now for 28 years, and this is the first time in those 28 years that we have come back to La Salle. I asked her to come with me today because she was on the very same graduation ceremony when we graduated 28 years ago.

As I watch you taking your seats, I was reminded by the excitement of my own graduation in this university. It was [in] 1979. I was 19 years old and I had an air of confidence that came from youth. My girlfriend, now my wife, was [graduating as well]. Together, we were looking forward to landing our first paying jobs.

The world that we faced then was

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CEO and President, Bank of the Philippine Islands  
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very different from the world that you are facing today. Back then, the US was about to embark on over two decades of wealth expansion; Japan was an economic superstar; China was closed to the world; and India was wired with poverty. ASEAN was focused on fighting communism. Our country was eight years into martial law; civil institutions were under threat; and the combination of profit and spending and corruption were creating the conditions that will

lead our country to fall into its debt just four years later, in 1983.

Fast forward to 2013.

Today, it is the US that is recovering from a flash of crisis that is triggered by over-borrowing. Japan is entering its second decade of almost no growth and declining prices. China is now an economic superpower and second only to the US in global influence. The Chinese and Indian neighbours





and consumers have changed the global economic plans. ASEAN has shifted its focus to regional economic stability, with plans of free flow of goods, labor, and businesses within the region by 2015. The Philippines, barely able to borrow from the international capital markets in the 1980s, is now investment grade, able to borrow at rates lower than the Western nations, at the back of high single digit of growth rates, and better political governance.

One can easily conclude that the environment today is friendlier to Philippine graduates than the environment 30 years ago. However, there is no assurance that things will be easier to you than it were for me and my classmates. Change is the only constant. We have to prepare for change, to deal with it and embrace it. In fact, change is the result of global factors--discovering new technology, new sources of power, cataclysmic weather.

My son's guidance counselor told me that today's graduate will work for an average of total of six to eight employers over the course of their lives. Working at one job, or for one employer, from graduation until retirement will be an exception. While we cannot control the largest forces around us, we can make the right life choices that would put us in the best position to deal with change.

As an Economics graduate, I refer to making right life choices as making the correct "macro calls." I believe each and every one of us has to try correctly the following three *macro calls*:

The first one--what we choose to do for a living. You will probably spend more time working than sleeping, eating, or playing. You better try to be good at it, especially if you want to provide for yourself and your family.

The second *macro call*--where we choose to live. Being at the right place at the right time is a tremendous life advantage.

The third *macro call*--who we choose to marry. Most of us marry for love. I did. Having been married for 28 years now, I know that there is more to marriage than love. Those who grew up in happy homes, and those of you who have not, know this. A peaceful, stable home life is empowering. I know that a supportive spouse is a gem. Clearly, the right life partner is an invaluable asset.

If the right three *macro calls* will put us in the best position to handle and manage change, certain tenets are key to success to our work lives. I believe these tenets are as follows:

1. *Practice makes perfect.* The author Malcolm Gladwell makes the point that it takes at least 10,000 hours to make one expert in a particular field. This is true for businessmen, for doctors, law enforcers, for teachers, or for artists. You have to put in the hours.

2. *Do the little things well.* Most work is comprised of little things, where surprisingly the whole is worth more than the sum of the parts. How can you expect to do great things if you cannot do little things well?



3. *Focus on what will move the little.* While doing little things well is a prerequisite for survival, focusing on the things that matter will mean the difference between success or mediocrity, growth or stagnation.

4. *Have a vice towards action.* Waiting for things to happen is often an excuse for [timidity] or laziness. You have to make things happen. You have to make them happen now.

5. *Give energy, do not take the energy away.*

6. *Tolerate errors of judgement, not [errors] of principle,* in others and in yourself. Everyone will make errors of judgement and those who learn from their mistakes will get better.



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condominium unit. I am sure you are telling yourself, “Wow! If I plan for 10 to 15 years from now, I will be able to achieve all of this!”

Yes, life is good. Life is perfect. The world is ripe for picking and you are poised, with your Lasallian education, to pick it.

Then, real life happens.

When I accepted this invitation to speak before you today, I made a promise to myself that I will speak of the truth. And the truth is life is not all good and perfect because life is also hard. In fact it is very hard. It is meant to be tough.

That is why I am here where

I am today because life is tough for me. Life is hard because it is meant to chip away all the extraneous matters that are unnecessary in the art of living a good life. After every challenge, you are meant to shed things that weigh you down. Things like ego, pride, insensitivity, ignorance, arrogance, selfishness, laziness, complacency, and all the other bad habits that you have picked up along the way, habits that will keep you from becoming the beautiful and talented person that you truly are.

Life is hard and you will fail. I could tell you now that you will fail again

and again if you find yourself trying. This is what I experienced when I started my days as a production assistant in a local television network. My dream was to become a reporter, to become a news anchor. But when I applied for a job, you know what they told me? “*Rico, ikaw ang magtitimpla ng kape ng*

Failure is the key to a truly satisfying success. You will experience that moment in your life wherein you will fail spectacularly. But what will spell the difference between your becoming a spectacular failure or that situation turning out to be a spectacular story is how you pick up the shattered pieces of your

world that you previously believed to be indestructible.

Success is not coming from putting those broken pieces back together. It comes when you survey the wreckage. Pick and choose which pieces are essential and create something totally new and unexpected. Something you would never

have imagined possible prior to your failure.

Every single convenience, my dear graduates, that you now have at your fingertips is there because your parents, grandparents, and their parents experienced living without it. They have the imagination to envision it, they have the determination to create it. They fought for lofty ideals. A generation that experienced all the atrocities of World War II, your grandparents fought for peace. A generation who grew in depression under the Martial Law, your parents fought for justice.



*mga* anchorman. *Ikaw ang magprint ng mga scripts. Ikaw ang magedit. Ikaw ang news driver.*” I did all the dirty work from bottom up. I was just earning one thousand pesos a month for my job as production assistant while my other colleagues who graduated [from] De La Salle University earn P5,000, P8,000, P10,000 pesos in advertising, in public relations, and corporate communications.

But I told to myself, “I will persevere, I will work hard because I have a dream. I have an ambition to become a world class broadcast journalist.”

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universities? I think [this could be answered by] a quote from Ayn Rand, the author who wrote:

*A creative man is motivated by the desire to achieve, not by the desire to beat others.*

And this is the essence of the Lasallian education and philosophy.

It is a real privilege to graduate from a La Salle school. This privilege comes with a responsibility. By virtue of your education, you have been equipped with transformative powers to change the world for the common good. Now, may your generation stand up and step up to build on the foundations made and preserved by the blood and sacrifice of the countless Filipino patriots and heroes. I believe that is your Alma Mater's hope and prayer—that each of one of you will do your part to build a society that is better than the one you inherited.

*“You may  
not be the  
light, but you  
can be the  
spark.”*

[May] I quote from Jose Rizal's Noli Me Tangere:

*“There were those who kept vigil in the night of our ancestors.”*

*Hindi lahat ay nagpahinga at nanahimik sa gabi n gating mga ninuno.*

So my fellow Lasallians, as I end, I share the joy and pride of your countless fans, supporters, families, and friends who are with you on this happy occasion. Today, you are the stars. I reserve a special commendation for the teachers and parents for the sacrifices they have made on your behalf. This victory is theirs, as much as it is yours.

I extend my warmest congratulations to all of the graduates!

Animo La Salle!

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But errors of principle—cheating, lying, stealing—are cancers and should not be tolerated.

*7. Promote diversity in people and in ideas.* Diversity is strengthening. In-breeding is weakening. Nothing is more limiting than a parochial view of the world, especially in a world that becomes smaller day by day.

*8. Value people.* People are important. Positive relationships with other people give meaning to our lives.

Graduates, [Lasallian] education has given you a vast, vast opportunity set on every hard work that will lead to productive life. I and thousands of thousands of La Salle graduates here and around the world are testimony

to the opportunities that a good Christian-based education provides.

I wish you meaningful lives. One characterized by using the opportunities given you to create opportunities for others. That, more than money, power, or position, is the true measure of success.

May God bless you in all of your endeavours. Thank you!



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So now I ask each and everyone of you, what will your generation be fighting for? Will you be the generation that ends poverty? I dare you to believe that you are the generation that can end poverty. Your generation has the power to push us further to ensure that we take our rightful place among the Asian tigers of this century. I offer to you this challenge: We should not hold back. We have to move forward. Bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. Be a man for others and share your blessings as a Lasallian. I dare you to end poverty in the Philippines.

Will you be the generation that also ends racial inequality?

I dare you to dream. I dare you to believe. And I dare you to make it happen. I dare you to step out of your comfort zone and take chances. I dare you to fail, and to fail spectacularly. I dare you to succeed, and to succeed beyond your wildest dreams. I dare you to re-imagine everything you know to be true and create a new world where everything good is not merely possible, but truly achievable. I dare you to put your heart on the line and unleash your passion.

I see the excitement and fire burning

*What will your  
generation be  
fighting for?*

brightly within each and every one of you. You will face many things in life that will challenge its spark. Do not let that fire in your hearts die.

When you get your first employment opportunity, listen to my advice: work hard is number one. Focus on your job. Your first job, if you do well, could be your stepping stone to achieving your dreams and ambitions.

Secondly, be a team player. You have to be one of your colleagues. You have to listen to them, you have to treat them well. Learn from them and share your great ideas. Never burn your bridges.

And of course, look good at work.

You have to have good grooming. If you look good, then you will feel good and confident about yourself. Persevere through the good and the bad times, through hills and valleys, never give up. Graduates, you are creating possibilities for a brighter future.

Finally, to have a truly successful life is to have faith in God. Never lose faith in Him when you are down or when you are up. Through good or bad times, through failures and successes, never forget the Lord. Share your blessings because one of the major values of a Lasallian education is to be a man for others. Love and respect your parents. You are here because of them.

Remember, graduates, you are Lasallians. You are Filipinos. It is your responsibility to make your existence count because the world is counting on you.

Reporting live from this world-class educational institution, De La Salle University-Dasmariñas, this is Rico Hizon, reporting. Hail! St. John Baptist de La Salle! *Mabuhay ang Pilipinas! Mabuhay ang De La Salle University-Dasmariñas! Maraming, maraming salamat po. Mabuhay tayong lahat!*



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