

# From the Editorial of UST Students' newspaper: Varsitalian : RH bill, Ateneo, and La Salle: Of lemons and cowards

Going against the grain, going against the tide, going against popularity surveys, the University of Santo Tomas has upheld the stand of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) condemning the Reproductive Health (RH) bill as an anti-poor, social-engineering measure that not only denigrates the natural law but also runs roughshod over maternal health, kowtows to the contraceptive imperialism of the West, and generally blames the poor and their alleged overpopulation for the ills of society, when it's the Philippine state and its depredations—its mismanagement and appalling corruption—that are to blame.

UST is a Catholic institution. It is a pontifical institution—the second to be so named in world history. Nobody should question whether the University supports the Church's stand as the Gospel of Christ is UST's—and any Catholic institution's—pillar and foundation.

Professors who are affiliated with UST must respect the stand of the University against the RH bill as they are part of an institution which is fundamentally bound with Catholic faith and teachings. If UST professors don't agree with the stand of the CBCP, then they have a problem. The bishops are the successors of the Christ's apostles and possess the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church.

If faculty members of UST and other Catholic schools feel they need to invoke their academic freedom to make known their stand in conflict with the bishops regarding the RH bill, then they're free to do so. But they must resign from UST. They must give up their Catholic academic affiliation. They must have the courage of their intellectual conviction. Upholding their conscience, they must respect the Church and her teachings.

Recently, a number of professors from Ateneo de Manila University and De La Salle University have voiced their support for the RH bill. A close reading of the measure should show it promotes abortifacients.

A total of 192 Ateneo professors supported the RH bill in their Aug. 13 statement, arguing that the "RH bill can have a decided impact on alleviating pressing social concerns such as high maternal mortality ratio, the rise in teenage pregnancies, and the

increase in the number of HIV/AIDS cases, among others.”

Last Sept. 3, 45 La Salle professors joined the bandwagon, arguing that there is a need for artificial contraceptives as these can control the growth of the population and improve the quality of life.

It's quite shocking that Ateneo and La Salle professors should harbor naive and misguided thinking about health and social problems. How could they argue that an RH measure would be needed to lower maternal mortality when the Philippine government not too long ago had told the United Nations that it was on track to meet the Unesco millennium development goals by 2015, one of which was the lowering of maternal deaths? How could they argue that alleged high mortality must be checked by an RH measure when pregnancy complications are not in the Top 10 causes of women's deaths? How could they argue that contraceptives allegedly worth billions of pesos must be given to women to avert pregnancy risks when contraceptives have been known to cause cardiac problems, which are the No. 1 cause of death of Filipino women?

How could Ateneo and La Salle professors dismiss the medically established dangerous side effects of contraceptives when they are not even physicians?

In contrast, UST, which has the oldest and the foremost school of medicine in the Philippines and Southeast Asia, has always warned about the dangerous side effects of contraceptives. UST and her physicians surely know whereof they speak. They're scientists and experts, unlike the Ateneo and La Salle professors who are intellectual pretenders and interlopers!

But what's more appalling is that the Jesuit and Christian Brother administrations of Ateneo and La Salle didn't reprimand their faculty members for openly defying the bishops. Ateneo said it respects the academic freedom of its professors: it had nothing to say about the intellectual dishonesty of its faculty members who are teaching in and receiving high salaries from a Catholic institution who however chose to bite the hand that feeds them all in the name of academic freedom.

The Ateneo administration did not even clamp down on two theology professors who signed the pro-RH statement for violating the mandatum of the Catholic Church on theology professors to observe orthodoxy. Perhaps even worse, a Filipino Jesuit professor has been quoted by his student in the latter's Facebook as scoffing at the alleged threat of the bishops to remove Ateneo's Catholic title, saying that Ateneo in

any case does not have the word “Catholic” appended to its name, so what’s there to lose? We’re pretty sure Saint Ignatius would have no confusion on where to put that jesuitic Jesuit—in Heaven or Hell?—in his famous Spiritual Exercises.

The Ateneo and La Salle professors therefore have been treated with kid gloves by the Jesuits and the Christian Brothers. Although they’re religious and members of Catholic orders, the Jesuits and Christian Brothers have failed to uphold orthodoxy and defend the Church. As far as the RH bill and support for it among their faculty are concerned, they’re lemons. And as far as the Pro-RH Ateneo and La Salle professors are concerned, they’re dishonest and don’t have the courage of their intellectual conviction. Contradicting the bishops and defending the RH bill, they have clung on to their faculty membership in Catholic institutions. They want to have their cake and eat it, too. They’re intellectual mercenaries, nothing more, nothing less.

It is quite gratifying that UST has cracked the whip and reminded its faculty members that they’re members of a Catholic institution and should toe the line.

UST Secretary General Fr. Winston Cabading, O.P. has sent a letter to Prof. Clarita Carillo, Ph.D., vice rector for academic affairs and research, to reaffirm the University’s support of the bishops on matters of faith and morals.

“In the light of recent events where some faculty members of Catholic Universities have publicly expressed dissenting positions from the Catholic bishops on matters of faith and morals, we in the University would like to reaffirm our fidelity to the magisterium of the Church as the Catholic University of the Philippines,” Cabading stated in the letter.

UST was given the title of “The Catholic University of the Philippines” in 1947 by Pope Pius XII. Even earlier, in 1902, UST had been declared a “Pontifical University,” the second to be so named in history even ahead of European universities. Therefore, the University has embodied the ideals that Catholic universities must possess, including the Catholic “education” which the students must learn from their professors.

Cabading also stated in his letter that “all faculty members of the University are to refrain from teaching or expressing their personal opinions within the bounds of the University, anything contrary to Catholic faith and morals.”

As these professors have chosen to teach in a Catholic university, they must abide by

its teachings and beliefs. In the first place, the same is demanded of students. Cabading emphasized that such reaffirmation is “to safeguard the right of the students to a solid Catholic education.”

Faculty members are “obliged to uphold and show deference to their teaching authority whenever the bishops of the Church have spoken on an issue and have taken a stand in behalf of the Church,” the Dominican Patristics scholar explained.

Father Cabading has also clarified that professors, “if they are to speak outside the University of anything contrary to the position of the Church, they are to do so only as private individuals and never identify themselves as faculty members of the University.”

Every person is given the “freedom” to choose but that freedom is not absolute.

Professors, who are opposed to the University’s—and the bishops’—stand, have always the choice of leaving the University’s portals if they adulterate the Catholic education that the student is entitled to with their personal preference or personal position. The student of a Catholic school must receive Catholic teachings without adulteration, without debasement.

But is Father Cabading’s declaration contrary to “academic freedom?”

In the first place, academic freedom is not absolute. The Church does not say that a professor must always take the stand of the Church. In the first place, teachers and scholars should know that they’re applying for teaching positions in a sectarian institution.

The professors, before they apply for a university position, must know the background of a university. In this case, a Catholic university, like Ateneo, La Salle and UST, has a purpose over and above academic freedoms: the nature and function of a Catholic school are inextricably tied up with the mandatum given by Christ to the Apostles before He ascended to Heaven: “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Douay-Rheims Bible).

In short, over and above academic freedom, the Catholic university exists for evangelical purposes. By going against the stand of the bishops, the Ateneo and La Salle professors

are saying they don't agree with the Church's mission. If so, they're free to leave. In fact, they must leave. They must resign if they have the courage of their conviction. But alas, it seems intellectual honesty and moral conviction are in such short supply in Katipunan, Quezon City and Taft Avenue, Manila.

**['Reaffirm fidelity to the Church' UST reminds profs of values of Catholic teachings]**

UST OFFICIALS have reminded faculty members to respect Catholic teachings, citing the need to preserve the Catholic identity of the University.

Secretary General Fr. Winston Cabading, O.P., in a letter dated Aug. 23, requested Prof. Clarita Carillo, vice rector for academic affairs and research, to "issue a memorandum informing all faculty members of their obligations."

"In light of recent events where some faculty members of Catholic Universities have publicly expressed dissenting positions from the Catholic bishops on matters of faith and morals, we, in the University, would like to reaffirm our fidelity to the magisterium of the Church as the Catholic University of the Philippines," said the letter, a copy which was obtained by the Varsitarian.

The letter, which was disseminated by Carillo, said faculty members should "refrain from teaching or expressing personal opinions within the bounds of the University, anything contrary to Catholic faith and morals...in order to safeguard the right of the students to a solid Catholic Education."

Cabading said in an e-mail to the Varsitarian the release of the memo was a "pro-active move on the part of the Institute of Religion and the Office of the Vice Rector for Religious Affairs." Cabading wrote the memorandum before stepping down as head of the latter office.

Faculty members are also "obliged to uphold and show deference to their teaching authority" when bishops take a stand on an issue in behalf of the Church.

"The purpose of this premise is to see to it that all members of the Thomasian academic community resonate with one voice in giving the students a solid Catholic education," Cabading said in his e-mail.

He added that the memo "did not dwell on whether certain acts are offensive or not"

as “what is stated in the memo is already a policy.”

The policy also reminded all faculty members that “any statements or actions by faculty members [found] offensive to Catholic ideals and teachings may be a cause for dismissal after due process.”

“The memo was simply a reiteration of what is already explicitly stipulated in the 2011 General Statutes of the University, i.e. Articles 1, 39 par. 2 and 40 par. 3,” he said.

Cabading also said non-Catholic faculty members are also bound by the obligation to give students a solid Catholic education.

“Non-Catholic faculty members become accepted into the University to teach because we recognize their competence in imparting knowledge in their field. However, when they applied they already knew beforehand that they were applying in a Catholic institution,” he said, citing General Statutes 2011, Art. 39, par. 2, which “binds them to show respect to Catholic ideals in their research and teaching.”

For Faculty of Arts and Letters Philosophy professor Robert Montaña, the memo was a “preventive” measure against the positions taken by professors of other Catholic universities on the reproductive health bill.

“We (UST) have a lot to protect since Catholicism is concerned. This is not an overreaction since we are a royal and pontifical institution,” Montaña said.

But he said some parts of the memorandum should be clarified particularly the “statements and actions offensive to Catholic ideals.”

Likewise, Paolo Bolaños, chair of the Department of Philosophy, said it was “just normal” for the University to react that way.

“[The memorandum] is a blanket message to the faculty, reminding them that they should be careful and prudent enough [with what they say],” he said.

“A university, Catholic or otherwise has the prerogative [of determining] whether the faculty is qualified to teach and has the moral [tendency] for their institution,” Bolaños added.

However, the letter’s mention of dismissal as a sanction may appear as threat to the faculty, some of whom may not be aware of the contents of Catholic texts or Catholic

documents. What is “offensive to Catholic ideals” is also not clear, he said.

A professor who asked not to be named said the issue behind the policy is the “power of the faculty members to express [their] ideas.”

“It violates the academic freedom among faculty members since they will be restrained from expressing themselves,” he said.

Montaña, however, said otherwise: “[M]ali ‘yung interpretation na ‘yan na iniipit ‘yung freedom ng faculty to express themselves. Professors have their responsibilities both to the institution and parents of their students that expect pedagogical bias in favor of Catholicism.” Bernadette D. Nicolas and Cez Mariela Teresa G. Verzosa

### **[UST student paper calls Ateneo, La Salle lemons and cowards By Erika Sauler Philippine Daily Inquirer October 9th, 2012]**

It seems their quarrel has gone beyond basketball. Now they’re also quarreling about the reproductive health (RH) bill pending in Congress.

An editorial in the Sept. 30 issue of The Varsitarian, the student publication of the University of Santo Tomas (UST), slammed professors of Ateneo de Manila University and De La Salle University for supporting the controversial measure, calling them “intellectual pretenders and interlopers.”

The editorial was titled “RH bill, Ateneo, and La Salle: Of Lemons and Cowards.” The quarrel went viral in social media on Monday.

The Philippine Daily Inquirer called the Ateneo University Communication and Public Relations Office for comment, but a female official who refused to give her name said: “We don’t want to make a comment.”

The La Salle Office for Strategic Communications also declined comment, saying its media officer was on vacation.

The Varsitarian editorial said that since Catholic universities existed for evangelical purposes, the 192 Ateneo and 45 La Salle professors who declared support for the RH bill should resign to show conviction.

“But alas, it seems intellectual honesty and moral conviction are in such short supply in Katipunan, Quezon City, and Taft Avenue, Manila,” it said.

The editorial also criticized the Ateneo and La Salle administrations for treating their professors with “kid gloves.”

“What’s more appalling is that the Jesuit and Christian Brother administrations of Ateneo and La Salle didn’t reprimand their faculty members for openly defying the bishops,” the editorial said.

The editorial quoted a letter from UST secretary general Fr. Winston Cabading to the vice rector for student affairs and research reaffirming the university’s support for the Church on matters of faith and morals.

Cabading said professors should not identify themselves as faculty members of a Catholic university if they wanted to speak on anything contrary to the position of the Church.

“As far as the RH bill and support for it among their faculty are concerned, they’re lemons. And as far as the Pro-RH Ateneo and La Salle professors are concerned, they’re dishonest and don’t have the courage of their intellectual conviction,” the editorial said.

It also said: “It’s quite shocking that Ateneo and La Salle professors should harbor naive and misguided thinking about health and social problems.”

It said that, in contrast, “UST, which has the oldest and the foremost school of medicine in the Philippines and Southeast Asia, has always warned about the dangerous side effects of contraceptives.”

“UST and her physicians surely know whereof they speak. They’re scientists and experts, unlike the Ateneo and La Salle professors who are intellectual pretenders and interlopers!”