

## PUBLIC APOLOGY

With a deep sense of humility, allow me to express my sincerest apologies to everyone who has been caused pain and offense by the recent turn of events at Saviour's Christian Academy. Personally, I have apologized to the families of the three students—Carl Andrew A. Abadilla, Kleinee Xieriz Bautista, and Samuel G. Respicio—during a dialogue held on August 8 at the office of the Department of Education - Division of Laoag City.

As proper authorities are now looking into this controversy, I will refrain from discussing details of the issue, except to say that the policies we craft and implement in the school are well-intentioned and have the best interests of our students in mind. Through academic excellence and Christian formation, we have, in the past 24 years, labored hard to help the youth become responsible and productive members of society, competitive in the global village yet deeply grounded in and proud of their Motherland.

It saddens me immensely that this issue of campus discipline has morphed into a war against “linguistic injustice and cultural disrespect” where I am pictured as chief enemy. I came to the Philippines in 1987 and have, since then, served as pastor, friend, and family to countless Ilocanos from all walks of life. I could never thus intentionally and wilfully do anything that will demean Ilocanos—they who have accepted me as one of their own. Moved by their unparalleled hospitality, I always try, in the best ways I can, to carry out initiatives supporting local communities, especially the poor, oppressed, and marginalized. As a missionary, I fully realize the importance of the vernacular in getting the message across, and so majority of our church services are conducted in Iluko. At SCA, we take pride in a vibrant multicultural environment that has attracted students coming from various ethnolinguistic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Again, I apologize to everyone who may have been offended by the issue even as I reassure the public that all steps will be taken to review our school policies and our student handbook to seamlessly comply with existing government regulations and to be further sensitive to the cultural sensibilities of our people. We acknowledge this humbling experience as a learning opportunity that will allow us to serve our students in better ways.

We welcome the rich public discourse this issue has generated, and hope that at the end of the day all these will translate to courses of action we can collectively take in the pursuit of a truly responsive and nationalist education agenda.

I wish everyone God's peace and blessing.



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