

## Message of Gratitude to Fr. Adolfo Nicolás

I would like to speak in behalf of the Philippine Province expressing our simple but deepest gratitude to Fr Adolfo Nicolas - or Fr Nico as we have known him ever since. As we know only too well in occasions such as these, words fall short of saying what we want to express from our hearts. Nonetheless, we can only try. Let me begin by simply saying: Fr. Nico, thank you.

We thank you for your work for the East Asian Pastoral Institute (EAPI). We thank you for your valuable contribution to the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP). We thank you for your guidance and direction for the whole Society of Jesus. But more than all the work you have done in all these different roles in the Society, we thank you for simply being Fr. Nico to all of us. I recall brother Robbie Paraan's wonderful piece on you. He quoted you as saying to the scholastics, "Be yourself. You will never go wrong with being yourself. But let Christ touch you and enter into your life".

Thank you, Fr. Nico for being yourself and letting us experience through you the presence of Christ whom you no doubt invite daily into your life all these years. Thank you for giving the Philippine Province and all the Jesuits living here the special privilege of encountering you ever since you retired. By the way, we thank you for your trust and confidence in the Philippine Province men by taking away two of Provincials—Danny Huang and José Magadia—even before they finished their terms.

As you may have been made aware by the organizers of this event, this was meant as our simple way of honoring you. Yes, we know that you are one who does not wish to be in the limelight. But allow me to say that I believe this only reflects that you are a man of the Spiritual Exercises. As Fr. Bill McGarry told me on several occasions, "A man of the *Spiritual Exercises* is allergic to the limelight." You may not like all these fuss about honoring you but you have allowed it only because you believe it is for EAPI and not for yourself. Moreover, this event has turned out to be a *despedida*, a farewell for you as you return to Japan, one of the many special homes in your life as a pilgrim. Well, Fr. Nico, even if you did not want a *despedida*, we would have pushed for it anyway because it is a good excuse to have a good meal and get together for all of us! Thank you very much for allowing yourself to be used!

Finally, on behalf of the Philippine Province allow me to say that we remain committed, as you yourself had always been, to the work of EAPI in its providing a home for healing and renewal for men and women of diverse backgrounds, cultures and religious traditions. Once again, Fr. Nico, thank you for allowing us to experience your reassuring presence in our midst. You may not be here in the Province for much longer but we hold you dear in our memories and in our hearts for helping each one of us come closer to our Lord. God bless you always. +AMDG+

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