

End of School Days: We Rack Our Brains and then Break Bread Together

Marivir R. Montebon

May 22, 2018



New York City – It's the end of school days at [Unification Theological Seminary](#) (UTS). We are in the home-stretch, gasping for oxygen in the last two weeks of the semester; we are overwhelmed by the school work and final exams.

As I write, it's my third day of no socializing, locked at home to finish school work. Meanwhile, my classmate Muriel flies the American skies from New York to Hawaii and back for work, and she tells me she is doing her homework in flight.

Last week, I told my Church History professor, [Dr. Michael Mickler](#), that my essay on the two movies about the [Third Crusade](#) caused me insomnia, when he asked how was I holding up. I meant to say the truth in jest, and we both laughed. I however danced for joy over Dr. Mickler's generosity when I found out my grade notched the A- level.

But the work is not yet done: One more week of struggle for assignments and exams.

On the last day of official school days in [Dr. Jacob David's](#) class in New Testament Foundations, we appropriately discussed about the [Apocalypse](#). Yes, the scary apocalypse or the end of days: the doomsday prophesies in the Books of Daniel and Ezra, and the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke which horrified me in my youth when they were portrayed horribly in Hollywood movies: [Damien Omen II](#), [Armageddon](#), etc.

"One cannot look at the Bible literally. Everything has to be taken in context. Context is meaning," that is Dr. David for you. This is my greatest take away from his class.

Dr. David has an impeccable way of relating the horrific events of the past to the current state of world affairs and our personal lives. He makes the Bible come alive by making it relevant to how we live in this post-modern era. Yes, context is meaning, even to a journalist.

Then there's my class on Ethics and Social Justice, a combination of unbelievable fun and depth, with [Dr. Keisuke Noda](#) as our professor. This is my most exciting class, because there are twelve of us in it. Dr. Noda, like a road construction worker using a jackhammer, drills into our heads to reason about ethics, and calls for our moral decisions over issues on health, life, politics, and other worldly affairs.

It's an incomparably fun and vibrant class indeed. At one time, classmate Anjo shouted "Revolution!" when Dr. Noda asked us what to do about our enslavement, conscious and subconscious, to corporations: from food, to fashion, medicine, news, and information. Heaven broke loose with our laughter that afternoon.

In the Social Justice and Ethics class, our personal levels of respect and tolerance of each other's views are always tested. Every time we open our mouths to speak, all listen. And while we do not necessarily agree with someone's point of view, we laugh it off. No one has an ["onion skin"](#) in that class.

I appreciate the fact that my classmates are truly supportive of each other, especially when they remind me of upcoming tests and projects. A special shout-out goes to Vanette and Roeline for this.

But the best part of my UTS classes this semester is the break time. Break time is eating time. I see cultural diversity at its best then. Most of the time, we share Filipino food with our classmates, teachers, and the administrative staff. So everyone here knows how delicious and irresistible Elena Bahian's [chicken adobo](#) is.

We also share Indian food, which makes me cry (because of the spice) but I eat more anyway, because it is so delicious. How conflicted can my palate can get!

I believe that we appreciate each other's cultural backgrounds through food. And while we are always grateful to classmate Elena as our food preparer, the treats from Dr. Noda (he offers Japanese tea in class) and Dr. David are equally delightful.

Director for Advancement Robin Graham was quick to point out that at UTS, "One never goes hungry. Food for the mind and food for the body." Eat and enjoy diversity. Agreed, and as proof, I put on more weight this semester. But my heart is full and life's journey has never been more fun, useful, and enlightening.