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The power of beauty

Young Filipina thinkers reflect on the concept of "beauty" and its inherent powers to transform, inspire and attract, for the final phase of the UNIV National Congress. UNIV is an annual international gathering of university students in Rome, began in 1968 through the inspiration of St Josemaria Escriva.

06/18/2012

While many self-styled “gurus” preach about how to become

beautiful, few there are who ask about the more essential question: what is beauty?

Rising to the rescue are young thinkers reflecting on the concept and its inherent powers to transform, inspire and attract. Their venue? The UNIV Congress.

Held at the Tanglaw University Center in Quezon City on 14 January 2012, the UNIV National congress was the final phase of a year-long preparation that lead up to an annual international gathering of university students in Rome.

Organized by the Institute for University Cooperation (ICU), UNIV began in 1968 through the inspiration of St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei. He exhorted university students to exercise their freedom responsibly and fanned their desires to serve by helping find solutions to contemporary problems

through research. St. Josemaría Escrivá was canonized by Blessed Pope John Paul II ten years ago on 6 October 2002.

“UNIV challenged us to think and study about topics outside of our comfort zones, reminding us that we live in a world of infinite possibilities. Writing for UNIV exposed us to literature on philosophy we could never have encountered in the realms of scientific literature”, says Lou Aguinaldo, a student from UP-Manila.

Chichi Robles, broadcast journalist, founding member of Creative Media Professionals Guild of Asia and the Pacific, and currently Managing Director of the Corporate Communications Office of the University of Asia and the Pacific opened the congress with a keynote

speech on this year's theme
Pulchrum: The Power of Beauty.

A total of 8 papers were chosen for presentation in the congress. Writers represented UP-Diliman, UP Los Baños, UP-Manila, UST, UA&P, PWU-JASMS, and ADMU.

The paper "Inspiring the Disenchanted: Rediscovering Beauty" prepared by Christine Besana of UP-Manila, Renee Villanueva and Anna Violeta of ADMU, dealt with man's concomitant role as creator and spectator of beauty. Quoting Pope Benedict XVI who said that "true beauty moves us into action", it proposed sharing the beauty one discovers.

INNER BEAUTY

An interesting study on women in politics in "Political Beauty Contest: Philippine Politics in Focus" by UA&P students headed by Marietta Trimpe

suggest that though appearance may attract voters at the outset, they ultimately look for dedication, competence, intelligence and trustworthiness in public servants.

Some papers examined man's perception of beauty. In "Does Portrayal of Skin-deep Beauty in Ads Distort Female Adolescents' Self-Concept?" by Mariel Santiago and Reginet Samson of PWU-JASMS, earlier studies that images of attractive, physically appealing models and celebrities in ads can disfigure the concept of beauty and cause poor self-concept among women were validated.

"Beauty Unseen: The Concept of Beauty of Blind Filipino High School Students" presented by Paulina Miranda from UP Diliman, showed that the blind are by circumstance and condition more predisposed to appreciate inner beauty.

Sharing her insights on the experience, Isabel Diaz, a co-author said, “The whole process of interviewing the blind, who have a lot to offer to society, and writing the paper made us see life from a different perspective and appreciate the true meaning of beauty, one that goes beyond what is physical. But most of all, through this experience, we were able to see the beauty in all things even in difficult moments – and also in devastating events- that come as part of life.”

In "Space and Aesthetics: A Phenomenological and Multisensory Approach," Geollette Esguerra (UP-Diliman) explored the use of the aural, olfactorial, degustatorial, and tactile senses in the “experience” of cities and the environment.

Angela Cielo and Marie Quilnat of UPLB presented beauty as the object of intelligence in their work,

"Religious Formation among University Students as a Path to Discovering the Beauty of the Truth." They affirmed that the four primary standards of beauty (actuality, proportion, radiance, and integrity) [Summa Theologiae, I.39.8c] are present in the truth.

The event was capped by the closing remarks of Dr. Daisy Lopez, former UNIV Philippines National Coordinator from 1993 to 2011 who congratulated the participants for a job well done. She insisted on the power of beauty as a vehicle of transformation: cultivating and refining our aesthetic sense to contribute "light" to the world.

Manila Bulletin

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(01/30/2026)