

Ms. Lou Sabrina Ongkiko
2021 Metrobank Foundation Outstanding Filipino Teacher

Conferment Ceremonies

September 2, 2021

AMDG+ *Itay, para po Sa'yo. Gamitin mo lang po akong instrumento. Amen.*

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm proud to receive the award on behalf of my co-teacher awardees.

Being an "Outstanding Filipino" is not a title that is handed to us. It is already in us to begin with. Allow me to ask you a few questions:

Do you have an innovative spirit? Do you make sure that your lessons and projects mean something to the community? Then there is a Sir Jason Albaro inside you.

Are you someone who cares about other teachers and guides them to be better professionals? Then there is a Dr. Minerva Calimag within you.

Do you open yourself up to learn and adapt to the changing times to find ways to reach and communicate with your students better? Then you will find a Dr. Iris Isip-Tan in you.

Times have become harder for us. There is a pandemic we need to confront and we are expected to fix its ruins. But as an excellent Filipino philosopher and teacher, Fr. Roque Ferriols, once said, "*Huwag tanungin kung mahirap. Tanungin kung mahalaga.*" Ask not if it is hard. Ask if it is important. So no matter how hard, we teach anyway because it is important that we stand by our students at this time. And this is the key to unlocking the "Outstanding Filipino" within – we stand out when we stand up for things bigger than ourselves.

We thank the people who taught us to be brave enough to stand up for bigger things; whose love is the reason why we remain standing – our families and loved ones, our friends and mentors. We know how to love because they loved us first. We know how to believe in our students because they first believed in us. Most especially, we thank our students for being our reason, our "why." They are the beginning, middle, and end of everything we do as teachers.

I would like to conclude this by leaving a few thoughts for us to ponder on and draw inspiration from: when we are recognized as an "Outstanding Filipino," let's make sure to own it not just as a badge of honor but a call to mission. That as teachers, we are given the sacred task of recognizing, protecting, developing, and bringing out the outstanding person in every Filipino. And that moment when learners feel like winners, that is our true winning moment.

May all of us experience this victory and make it possible for every Filipino. Thank you!